**RESEARCH SUMMARY**

# Experiences of Minority College Students with Disabilities in STEM

## A Quick Look

This study sought to gain a better understanding of the experiences of minority students with disabilities in their pursuits of a degree and career in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and their experiences with the Minority-Disability Alliance in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (MIND Alliance) program designed to support the accomplishment of this goal. Results provide insights into the experiences of STEM students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds with disabilities, and the influence of the MIND Alliance program on their academic success. Findings emphasize the importance of social supports from peers, family, and the university, as well as the proper handling of accommodations.

## Key Findings

* The results are presented in order of representativeness from general (Family, Peers, and Faculty and Staff), to typical (Others), to rare (Teachers and Staff).
* Having adequate interpersonal supports, meeting accommodation needs, and possessing certain individual factors were reported as playing key roles in postsecondary STEM success.
* The MIND Alliance was viewed as providing valued supports and services for this sample.
* Results show that postsecondary service providers, educators, and advisors must appreciate the importance of supportive relationships to educational success as well as the barriers and facilitators for achieving these relationships.
* Results highlighted continued need in improving climate in STEM education and faculty-student interactions.
* The MIND Alliance was reported as facilitating a sense of belonging and interpersonal support by a majority of participants.
* Providing adequate accommodations was another domain emphasized by participants.
* Multiple participants talked about the negative effect of an accommodation that was given grudgingly or with skepticism about the need.

## Putting It into Practice

* Disability service providers may provide direct mentoring and/or connect students from underrepresented backgrounds to mentors who tend to have fewer role-models than the general population.
* Disability service providers, in collaboration with faculty and staff, may identify opportunities to encourage more cooperative methods of teaching and assessment when specific instructors or classes display a culture of competition that appears to discourage interpersonal supports.
* Disability service providers and other administrators may incorporate programs similar to MIND as a means for facilitating healthy interpersonal support from peers and faculty.
* Disability service providers may work closely with academic and student affairs staff to design and implement programs policies, and services that go beyond the classroom to other areas of campus life, such as residence life, orientations, and other student activities.
* Disability service providers must be mindful in their marketing and promotion of accommodation services of a dual need to reach those needing accommodations but also to influence faculty and peers’ perceptions of the legitimacy and importance of accommodations on campus for students with visible and invisible disability.

## Learn More

* The Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) approach was used to interview, analyze, and report the data. Participants were recruited for interviews by email as part of exiting from the MIND Alliance program. [**MIND Alliance--Helping Minority Students with Disabilities Succeed in STEM**](file:///%5C%5Cfs01%5CCompany%20Share%5CTraining%5CQETAC%5Cwebsite%5Coffline%5Ccontent%5Cresearch-summaries%5C%E2%80%A2%09https%3A%5Cwww.wamc.org%5Cpost%5Cmind-alliance-helping-minority-students-disabilities-succeed-stem)
* Access to Advancement: [**An Audio Exploration of the National Effort to Increase the Role of Women with Disabilities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.**](https://www.womeninscience.org/series.php?seriesID=1)

## Source

* Cardoso, E., Phillips, B. N., Thompson, K., Ruiz, D., Tansey, T. N., & Chan, F. (2017). Experiences of minority college students with disabilities in STEM. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 29,*375-388.

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