

Leading Practices for Improving Accessibility and Inclusion in Field and Laboratory Science: A Conversation Series (Conversation # 1): Keynotes and Panelists

Dr. Oluwaferanmi Okanlami (Feranmi), *Keynote*

Dr. Oluwaferanmi Okanlami is the Director of Student Accessibility and Accommodation Services at the University of Michigan, where he oversees the office of Services for Students with Disabilities, two Testing Accommodation Centers, and the Adaptive Sports & Fitness Program. He is also an Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, and Urology at Michigan Medicine, and an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. “Dr. O” was born in Nigeria before immigrating to the US at a young age. He attended High School at Deerfield Academy and college at Stanford University where he also ran Track & Field, serving as captain his last two seasons and achieving Academic All American recognition. He then earned his MD from the University of Michigan before matching into Orthopedic Surgery at Yale. At the beginning of his 3rd year he experienced a spinal cord injury, paralyzing him from the chest down. After two surgeries and intense rehabilitation, he was blessed with some return of motor function, and navigates the world as a proud wheelchair user, managing the other long term sequelae of an incomplete cervical spinal cord injury. He went on to earn a Master’s in Engineering, Science, and Technology Entrepreneurship from The University of Notre Dame, and completed his Family Medicine Residency at Memorial Hospital in South Bend, Indiana. He served on the St. Joseph County Board of Health, appointed by then Mayor, now current Secretary of the Department of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg; and is on the board of the River City Challenged Athletes, a non-profit supporting the area adaptive sports teams. He was featured on Robin Robert’s Good Morning America Series “Thrivers Thursday,” and has a catch phrase, “Disabusing Disability[®],” hoping to demonstrate that DISability doesn’t mean INability. He is a member of the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honors Society, received Michigan Medicine’s Distinguished Early Career Alumni Award in 2020, and was given the “A Teacher’s Teacher Award” by the Academy of Medical Educators. Nationally, he serves as the Disability Issues representative on the Steering Committee for the Group on Diversity and Inclusion at the Association of American Medical Colleges, sits on the National Medical Association’s Council on Medical Legislation, and was by the White House Office of Public Engagement to participate in the Health Equity Leaders Roundtable Series dedicated to exploring perspectives around Access to Care. He was appointed to the America250 Foundation Health and Wellness Advisory Council and speaks around the country on topics related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, including, but not limited to creating a health system that is accessible to and inclusive of both patients and providers with disabilities, and providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities in higher education. He has been featured on CBS News, PBS News Hour, and MSNBC’s Morning Joe, and is passionate about adaptive sports and fitness, striving to provide access to physical fitness and inclusive recreational and competitive sports for all.

Dr. Gabi Serrato Marks, *Panelist*

Gabi Serrato Marks is a scientist and patient advocate based in Boston, MA. She earned her Ph.D. in marine geology in 2020 from the MIT-WHOI Joint Program in Oceanography and her B.A. from Bowdoin College. Gabi is the Senior Program Coordinator for Post-baccalaureate Training at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard and is co-editing a book with stories from disabled scientists (Columbia University Press). On the weekends, you can find her drinking iced coffee and spending time with her husband and two cats.

Alexis S. Mobley, MS, *Panelist*

Alexis S Mobley is a 6th and final year doctoral candidate in the Neuroscience and Immunology programs at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. She is a researcher in the Department of Neurology at McGovern Medical School under the mentorship of Jaroslaw “Jarek” Aronowski, Ph.D. and Louise D McCullough, MD, Ph.D. Alexis received her Bachelor’s degree in Biochemistry at Angelo State University where she worked with TP53 mRNA in bats and other mammalian species, discovering a 23 nucleotide insert unique to small bats. She then completed a Master’s degree in Biotechnology at Texas Tech Health Sciences Center – Abilene, working on T-cell receptor-like antibody conjugates and elucidating antibody promiscuity by developing labeled and unlabeled screening platforms. Alexis’s current work focuses on the communication between microglia and innate lymphoid cells in rodent brains that are affected by aging and sex differences. She was recently awarded the Ruth L Kirschstein NRSA Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research through the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) and is President, Interim Treasurer, and a co-founder of Black in Immuno, a series of “Blackademic” organizations focused on celebrating, amplifying, and supporting Black voices in immunology. Alexis enjoys mentoring students, working on effective scientific communication, and advocating for underrepresented groups. Outside of the lab, she serves on the Board of Directors and sings for International Voices Houston, a non-profit organization that uses choral singing to “create global harmony by celebrating and giving voice to human difference.” As hobbies, Alexis likes to read, play video and board games, and spend time with her family comprising her daughter and rescue dog, Izzy.

Dr. Katherine D. Seelman, *Panelist*

Katherine D. Seelman, Ph.D. is Professor Emerita, University of Pittsburgh. Until June 2016 she served as associate dean of disability programs and professor of rehabilitation science and technology at the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. She held secondary appointments in the School of Public Health and the Center for Bioethics, an adjunct position at Xian Jiatong University, China and served as senior policy adviser for the National Science Foundation-supported Quality of Life Technology Engineering Research Center. Dr. Seelman, who is hard-of-hearing, served as founding adviser to the University’s Students for Disability Advocacy, Co-chair of the City of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County Task Force on Disability and on the Advisory Board of the Area Agency on Aging. She served on a National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine committee on adult hearing health from 2015-16. In 2015 she was a member of the inaugural group inducted into the Disability National Mentoring Hall of Fame. President Barack Obama appointed her to his nine-member advisory Council, the National Council on Disability, in 2014. She was one of two from the U.S. serving on the World Health Organization’s 9-member international editorial committee to guide the development of the first World Report on Disability and presented the Information and Communication Technology section of the Report, for which she was a principal author, in 2011 at the United Nations. During the Clinton Administration, she served for seven years as the Director of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research in Washington, D.C. Her academic focus is on Science, Technology and Disability Policy, Disability Studies and Rehabilitation technology/assistive technology. She was the recipient of the University of Pittsburgh Chancellor’s Distinguished Service Award in 2007. She is widely published and the recipient of many awards