Institute for Accessible Science

The Institute for Accessible Science (IAS) was established in 2010 through the NIH Director’s Pathfinder as a nationwide initiative to promote the inclusion and retention of people with disabilities in biomedical science careers through practical laboratory experiences, assistive technology (AT) development, student and educator support, and research. IAS develops strategies to break down both physical and attitudinal barriers that people with disabilities face in science, particularly in their transition from postsecondary to graduate or professional education and subsequent careers in STEM.

The long-term goal of the IAS is to elevate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in biomedical science and engineering careers by addressing the unique needs of the individual to promote their independence and success in education and research. Critical to this mission is to enable people with disabilities to be more effective and self-sufficient learners when performing typical laboratory tasks by providing innovative AT and accessible instruments, practical learning experiences, and professional enrichment opportunities and support during their education and pursuit of a career in research, healthcare or industry.

The IAS includes facilities for the Accessible Biomedical Immersion Laboratory (ABIL) located within the Discovery Learning Research Center (DLRC) and AT research and development at Mann Hall.

- **IAShub**: online community for sharing knowledge and tools for accessible science. IAShub.org provides targeted information about accessible lab design, lab AT, research funding and other disability-related concerns. IAShub.org all IAS-led activities, including research fellowship programs, 3-D lab practice simulations, access to biomedical lab accommodation solutions, as well as the online role model video series.
- **Accessible Biomedical Immersive Laboratory (ABIL)**. ABIL offers a learning and research testbed for people with disabilities to train and acquire practical lab experiences and where innovative and customized lab AT and techniques can be evaluated. ABIL offers enhanced accessibility, ergonomic usability, and attention to lab safety for individuals with disabilities.
- **Development of laboratory AT and accessible scientific instrumentation**. Specialized AT enables people with disabilities to perform lab research and medical techniques with minimal assistance. Current projects include network sharing of accessible scientific instruments (e.g., AccessScope for quadriplegic users or those with low vision), accessible HCI methods, and assistive robotics.
- **Research fellowships for students with physical impairments**. Summer research fellowships allow undergraduate students with disabilities to gain practical experiences of working in a research lab and explore those challenges that may hinder their pursuit of a science education.

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