

Rutgers-Newark Department of Psychology's Diversity,  
Equity, & Inclusion Committee presents

# CAREERS IN STEM

A VIRTUAL PANEL DISCUSSION  
ON FRIDAY APRIL 8, 2022, 10AM TO 12PM ET

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## FEATURED SPEAKERS



**Dr. Itzamarie  
Chevere-Torres**  
Rutgers Office of  
Postdoctoral Affairs



**Dr. Juan Valdez  
Capuccino**  
Senior Medical  
Writer, BCB Group



**Dr. Kholud Dardir**  
Technical Specialist,  
Axinn



**Dr. Sally Blandford**  
Behavioral Science  
Analyst, Guidewell



**Dr. Laura Braunstein**  
Data Scientist,  
Colorado Department  
of Revenue



**Dr. Sonya Dougal**  
VP of Life Sciences,  
New York Academy  
of Sciences



**Dr. James Thomas**  
UX Research Lead,  
ROKU

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# SPEAKER BIOS



**Dr. Itzamarie Chevere-Torres | Rutgers Office of Postdoctoral Affairs**  
**PhD in Biology**

Itzamarie Chévere-Torres is the director for Rutgers Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. She is responsible for managing the daily operation of the office, establishing collaborations with key stakeholders universitywide, and developing and facilitating career development resources and programs for postdoctoral researchers. Itzamarie obtained her Ph.D. in biology from the University of Puerto Rico. She completed her postdoctoral neuroscience training at New York University and a second postdoctoral training at Rutgers University. Itzamarie is also a certified YouMap® career coach and facilitator.



**Dr. Juan Valdez Capuccino | Senior Medical Writer, BGB Group**  
**PhD in Cellular Biology & Neurophysiology**

Juan is a senior medical writer at BGB group who earned his PhD in biomedical sciences with a concentration on neuroscience from Rutgers University. As part of his research experience, Juan worked on ion channel biophysics. Before joining BGB, Juan was an associate consultant at Cello Health, where he developed strategies for biotech and pharmaceutical companies with therapies in early stages of development. Typical projects involved opportunity assessments, indication prioritizations, revenue forecasts, and therapeutic landscape evaluations. He has deep expertise in the fields of biophysics, oncology, and gene and cell therapy. At BGB, Juan is involved in a range of projects, including traditional pharmaceutical advertising, promotional medical education, payer marketing, and consulting services. As part of his role, Juan is responsible for developing impactful, strategically aligned, and scientifically accurate deliverables for BGB's different clients.



**Dr. Kholud Dardir | Technical Specialist, Axinn**  
**PhD in Chemistry & Chemical Biology**

I got my bachelor's degree in chemistry from Rutgers University. During that time I interned at ExxonMobil and Colgate. I then worked at Pfizer for three years as a chemist where I decided it was time to go to graduate school for a PhD in Chemistry and Chemical Biology at Rutgers University. I completed my thesis in Chemistry in the Material science and Engineering department studying nanoparticle synthesis and characterization for biomedical applications, including viral mutation and stem cell research, and for analytical spectroscopy enhancement. During my PhD I interned as a medical writer and at the Rutgers Office of Innovation Ventures as an Innovation Ventures Technology Ventures Fellow. From there I transitioned into a full time position with the Office of Innovation Ventures where I helped prepare technology assessments and marketing data for physical science, biomedical technologies, medical devices, and engineering technologies disclosed by Rutgers researchers. I then started in 2019 with Axinn, Veltrop & Harkrider LLP as a Technical Specialist where I evaluate patents and help advise clients on their business decision regarding IP rights.



**Dr. Sally Blandford | Behavioral Science Analyst, Guidewell**  
**PhD in Behavioral & Neural Sciences**

Dr Sally Blandford is a behavioral science analyst at Guidewell/Florida Blue. She holds a BA in Biology-Neuroscience and French from Washington University in St Louis and a PhD in Behavioral and Neural Sciences from Rutgers University. Prior to joining Guidewell/Florida Blue, Sally was a postdoctoral fellow and instructor at McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School for two years where she led several projects studying substance dependence. As an analyst on the Behavioral Science & Analytics Team at Guidewell/Florida Blue, Sally develops behaviorally informed insights and recommendations for a wide range of initiatives. Her work primarily involves designing quantitative surveys and experiments, writing white papers, conducting literature review, and analyzing claims data - all of which support the creation and implementation of behaviorally driven solutions at the company.



# SPEAKER BIOS



**Dr. Laura Braunstein | Data Scientist, Colorado Department of Revenue  
PhD in Neuroscience/ Experimental Psychology**

I am currently a data scientist working for the state of Colorado in the Department of Revenue. I completed my PhD in experimental Psychology at Rutgers Newark in 2011 in Dr. Mauricio Delgado's lab. I then completed a five year postdoctoral fellowship with Kevin Ochsner at Columbia University. I received both pre-doctoral and postdoctoral National Research Service Award fellowships, wrote grants, and published papers. However, I ultimately decided not to continue the academic path. In 2016, my family and I moved to Colorado and began a career transition to state government work. I have really loved the change and being able to apply my research and data skills in a new realm. As a data scientist, I write code to pull taxation data from SQL databases and prepare analyses and reports for the governor's office, the state legislature, and the general public



**Dr. Sonya Dougal | VP of Life Sciences, New York Academy of Sciences  
PhD in Cognitive Psychology**

Dr. Sonya Dougal serves as Vice President of Life Sciences at the New York Academy of Sciences. In this role, she leads strategic development and scientific oversight of the Academy's international portfolio of scientific workshops, conferences, and symposia across the broad spectrum of life sciences and biomedical research. For the past decade, she has held roles of increasing responsibility at the Academy including serving as a Program Manager of Life Sciences, Founding Director of the Academy's Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Initiative, and Director of Life Sciences Discussion Groups. Previously, she was Director of the Steven and Alexandra Cohen Veterans Center at NYU Langone where she oversaw the administration of a biomarker discovery program for Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury as well as a mental health clinic for veterans and their families. Dr. Dougal received her bachelor's degree with honors from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and her PhD in Cognitive Psychology from the University of Pittsburgh. She was the recipient of a Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award from the National Institutes of Health for her postdoctoral training as a cognitive neuroscientist in the laboratory of Dr. Elizabeth Phelps at New York University.



**Dr. James Thomas | UX Research Lead, ROKU  
PhD in Psychology**

James received his PhD in psychology from Rutgers University-Newark in 2013. He started his career in User Experience at Newark local Audible Inc, after which he spent 8 years as a UX Researcher focused on the digital personal investment experience at Fidelity Investments and later at J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. James recently accepted a position as a UX Research Lead at ROKU. He enjoys bringing his prior training in and knowledge of cognitive psychology to bear on understanding and solving complex user problems.