

# Is This Bridge Safe to Cross?

Fieldwork / Clinical  
Internship Experiences of  
Students with Disabilities

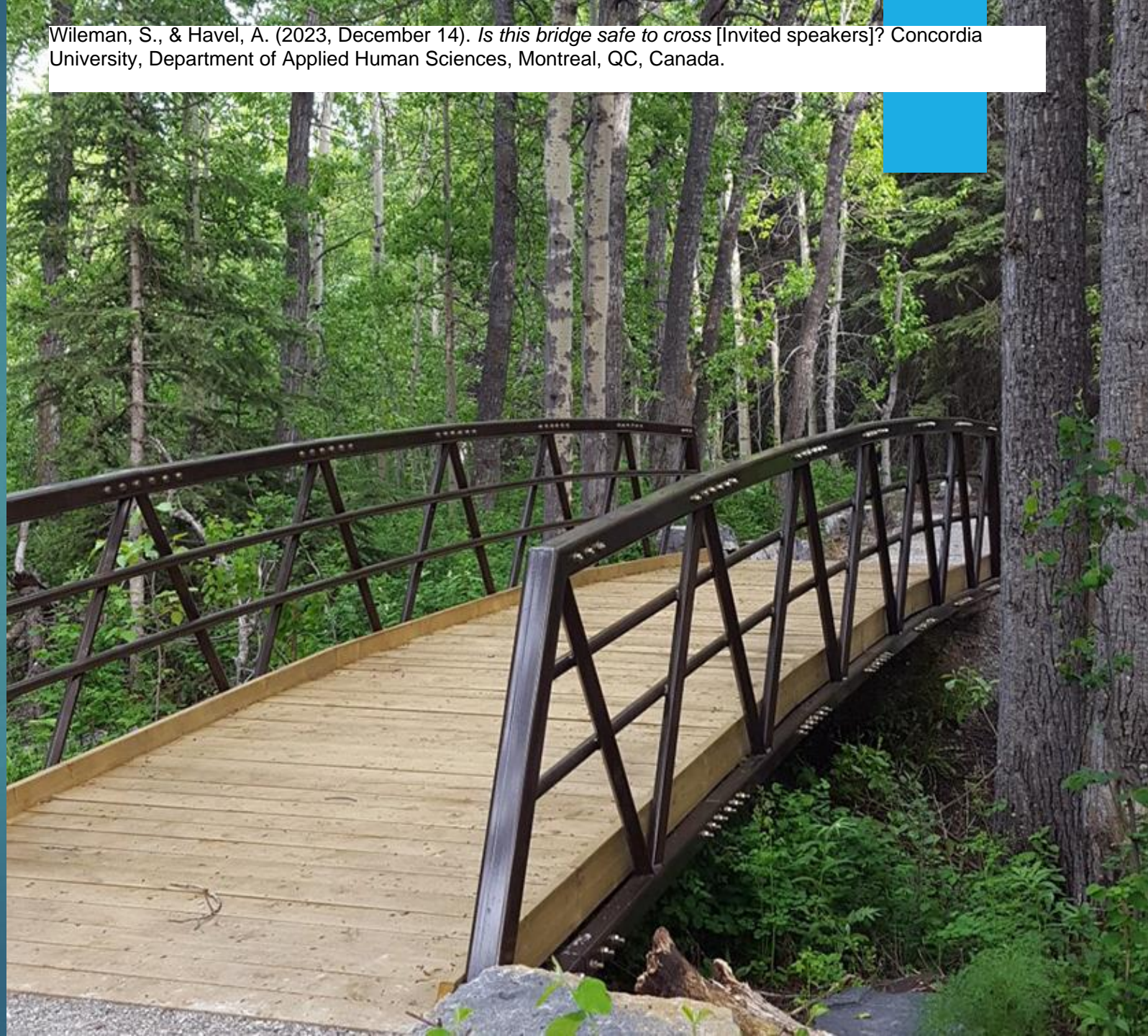
Susie Wileman & Alice Havel  
Adapttech Research Network

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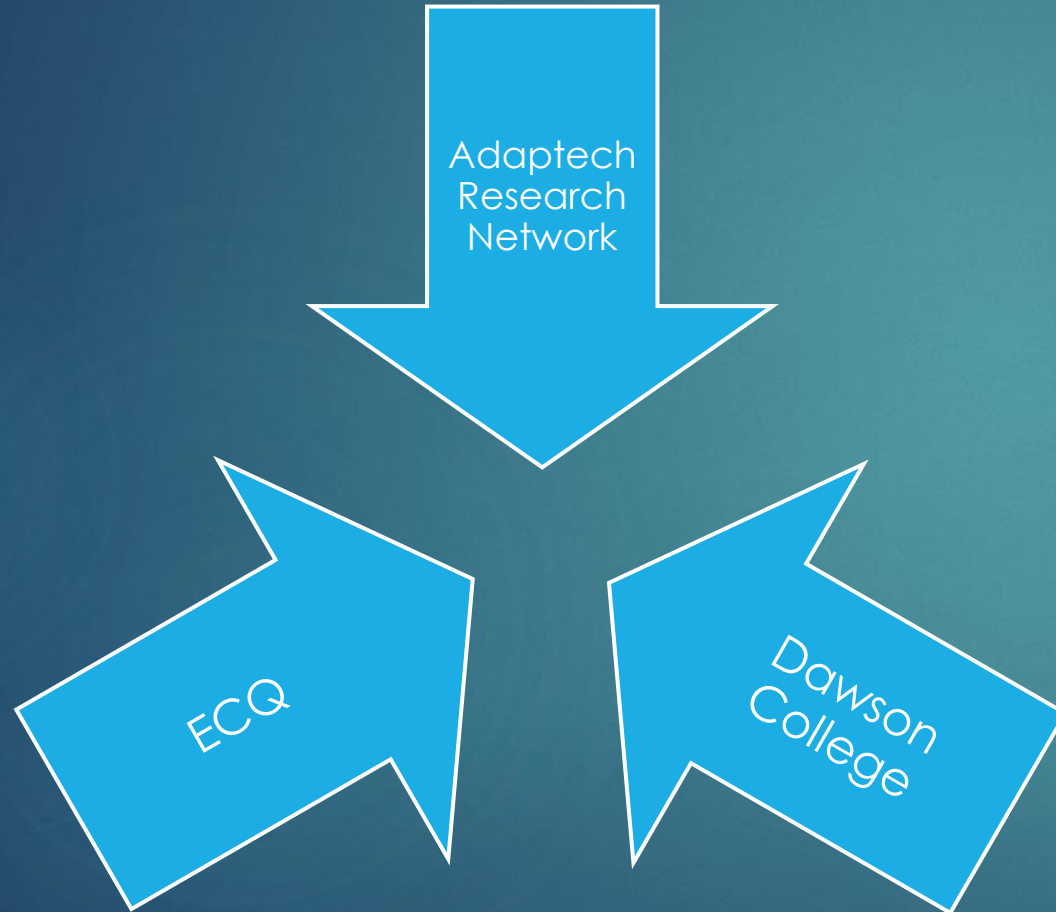
Concordia University, Department  
of Applied Human Sciences

Centre for Human Relations and  
Community Studies

Wileman, S., & Havel, A. (2023, December 14). *Is this bridge safe to cross* [Invited speakers]? Concordia University, Department of Applied Human Sciences, Montreal, QC, Canada.



# Who Are We?



# Why Now?

- ▶ UD
  - ▶ Success stories vs. Pushback
- 
- Two blue arrows pointing towards each other, one from the left and one from the right, positioned between the 'Pushback' and 'Competencies' items.
- ▶ Competencies

# Canadian Post-secondary Students with Disabilities

- **18 – 34%** (Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2020, 2021; Fichten et.al., 2018, 2019)
- **↑ Accessibility supports in academic settings** (Fichten, Havel, Tremblay et.al., 2022)
- **Need for equitable access in clinical internships** (Neal-Boylan, et.al., 2018)

# Review of Literature

Mainly focused on

- Mental health concerns
- Psychology, Social Work, Law programs
- Frequently requested accommodations

Takeaways

- Importance of, and barriers to disclosure
- Need for mentorship
- Differences between visible & non-visible disabilities
- Lack of policy



# Annotated Bibliography

Neal-Boylan, L. J., & Miller, M. (2017). Treat me like everyone else: The experience of nurses who had disabilities while in school. *Nurse Educator*, 42(4), 176- 180.

Gross, E., et.al., (2023). Professional practice placement as a unique challenge for students with disabilities in health and human service educational programmes. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. Advance online publication.

# Goals of the Project

- ▶ Explore facilitators and barriers
- ▶ Include voices of three stakeholder groups
- ▶ Create 'deliverables'



# Method

## Advisory Board Meeting

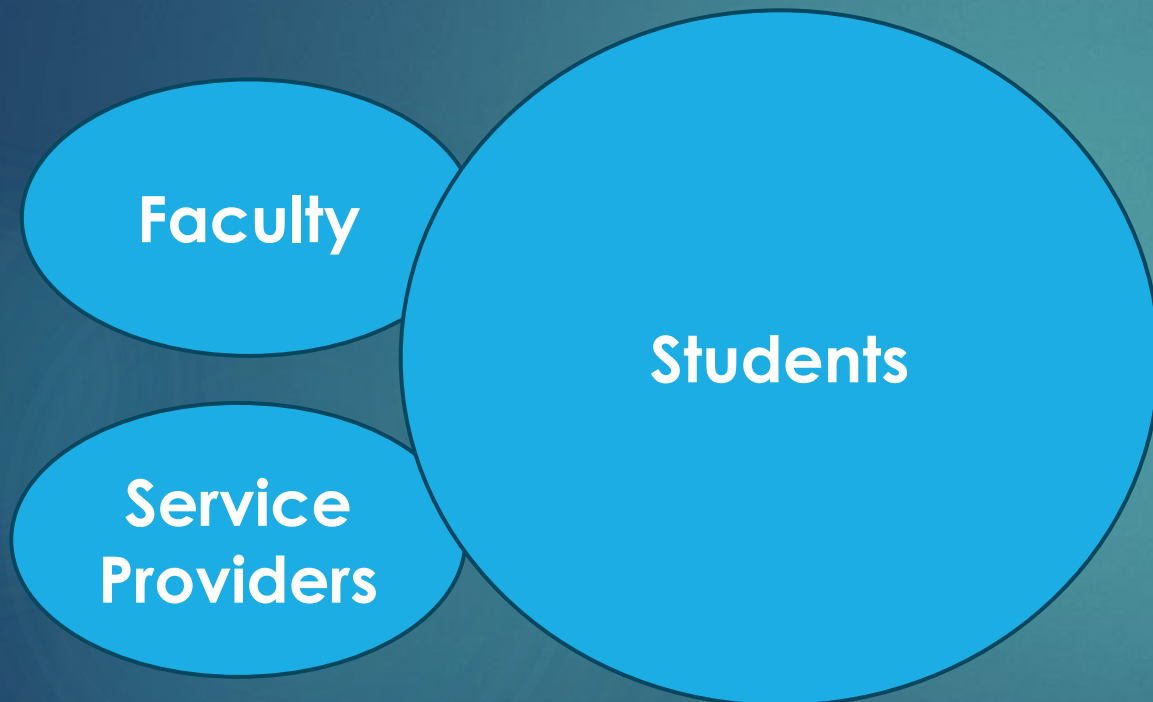
- Faculty
- Dean
- Students with disabilities
- Accessibility Centre Advisor
- Pedagogical Counsellor

## Individual Interviews x 3 groups

- Faculty fieldwork/clinical supervisors (n. 10)
- AccessAbility Centre advisors (n. 8)
- Students with disabilities (n. 14)

## Thematic Analysis

# Questions We Asked



- Facilitators
- Barriers
- Resources
  - assistive technologies
  - strategies
- Role of the college
- Recommendations



# Questions

1. Experience with disability and fieldwork/clinical internships (only faculty and adapted services counsellors)
2. Barriers in fieldwork/clinical internship
3. Facilitators in fieldwork/clinical internship
4. Specific challenges faced by the participant group
5. Resources that could be helpful
6. Assistive technology that could be useful
7. Useful strategies/techniques/recommendations
8. Disclosure / self-identification
9. Success experiences (students only)
10. Challenges faced by the college (only faculty and service providers)
11. Resources that would have been helpful

Theme	Description of theme	% of participants who mentioned each theme		
		Students n=14	Faculty n=7	Accessibility Advisors n=8
Accessibility supports	Information about accessibility supports, functional limitations, and concerns regarding the clinical / internship setting	79%	100%	100%
Communication	Communication between accessibility advisors, faculty, on-site supervisors, and students	36%	71%	100%
Self-identification by students with disabilities	Attitudes and reactions to sharing of a disability, as well as possible benefits and disadvantages of sharing	100%	100%	25%
Knowledge	Knowledge about disabilities and the related accessibility supports as well as about internship sites	29%	100%	100%
Policies / legislation	Comments related to policies, legislation and procedures as well as concerns about students' rights and responsibilities	0%	43%	63%
Support/ strategies/ resources	Any supports and helpful strategies and resources	100%	86%	100%

# What Students Told Us

Need support for

- Communication
- Disclosure
- Assistive tech
- Mentorship / role models
- Visual representation of materials

# What Faculty Told Us

Faculty Internship Supervisors need clarity

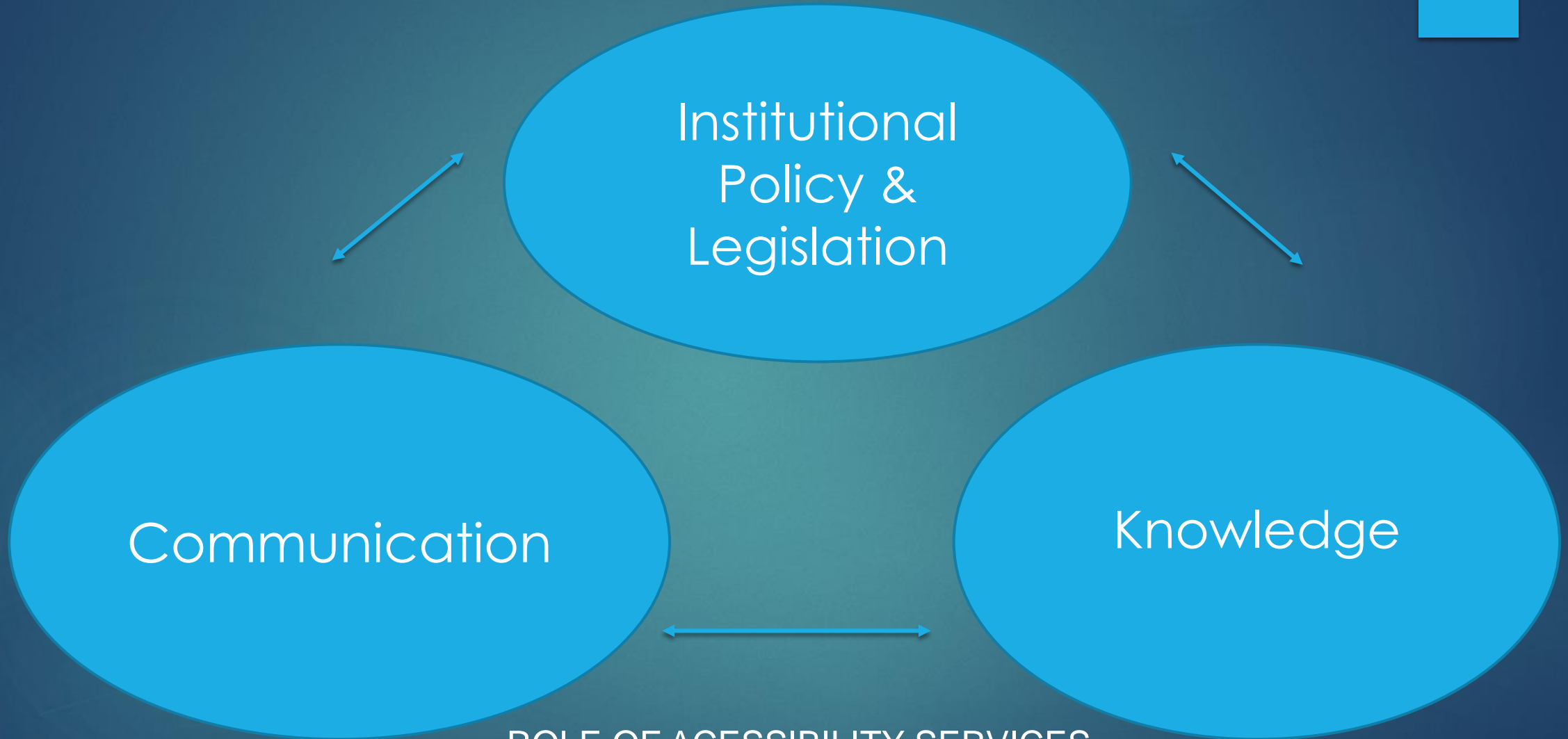
- Policy and protocol
- Confidentiality regulations
- Guidelines / best practices

# What Accessibility Advisors Told Us

## Need clarity

- Competencies being measured
- Fieldwork settings and appropriate accommodations
- College policy and protocol
- Best practices / models of success

# Emerging themes



ROLE OF ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

# Toolkit

## 1. Digital Handouts:

- ▶ Annotated Bibliography: Equitable Access in Internship Settings
- ▶ Is There a Law, or Not?
- ▶ Best Practices tip sheet
- ▶ UDL for Clinical Educators

## 2. Resources: What's Already Out There

<https://adaptech.org/research/internship-toolkit-for-students-with-disabilities-in-technical-programs/>

# 3. Videos

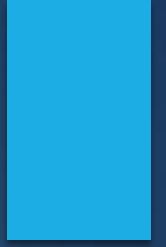
- ▶ How-to's demonstrating tech
- ▶ Video on how technology is being used in clinical settings (mentorship/role model idea)
- ▶ Video on disclosure



# Tech Tips for Internships



# Taking Tech to Internships



# Thank you!

Adaptech Research Network  
[www.adaptech.org](http://www.adaptech.org)

Alice Havel  
[ahavel@dawsoncollege.qc.ca](mailto:ahavel@dawsoncollege.qc.ca)

Susie Wileman  
[swileman@dawsoncollege.qc.ca](mailto:swileman@dawsoncollege.qc.ca)

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**Internship:**



**Campus to Career**