

CLAIRE MEADERS

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PERSONAL STATEMENT

I'm Claire Meaders, and I'm a Biology Assistant Teaching Professor. As a kid I loved science, but then in college I had imposter syndrome. I wouldn't ask for help if I was confused - I thought that would show I didn't belong in STEM. The longer I've worked as a researcher and teacher, the more I've embraced that STEM is all about questions, but I've also seen that the feelings I had are common among my students and peers. I've mentored elementary school girls and taught them about biology, physics, chemistry and more. These girls identify as scientists. When I ask them what a scientist looks like, they draw themselves. The research and teaching I do now at the college level focuses on keeping students like my mentees interested and on track to pursue STEM careers. I use survey data to learn about student experiences, and work with faculty to address student concerns. I also developed a course for freshmen about study skills and growth mindset. It took me a long time to feel confidence in STEM myself and I love that my work I do now will benefit other young women who were in my shoes.

[Video Statement](#)

BIOGRAPHY

Assistant Teaching Professor Dr. Claire Meaders gets and keeps students of all ages excited about biology. Her contributions to STEM outreach and teaching have been recognized with an Angela Mathew Outstanding Mentor Award from Science Club for Girls, and with Certificates of Distinction in Teaching each semester she has led undergraduate lab course sections. Claire holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Cell and Molecular Biology from Brown University and a Ph.D. in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology from Harvard University. For her postdoctoral research, Claire was part of a collaborative team conducting interdisciplinary research focused on the transition between high school and college for students in STEM. She was co-awarded an Innovative Teaching and Learning Award from Cornell University's Center for Teaching and Learning for this work. Outside of lab Claire loves baking and baking reality TV shows, and recently ran her 12th marathon!

SEGMENT PITCHES

Imagine you are a student sitting in this lecture hall for a 50 or 75 minute lecture, surrounded by 300 other students who are essentially strangers to you.

I took a large introductory STEM course in a lecture hall like this one, and struggled during my first semester with feeling like I belonged in the classroom.

Research shows that the first year of college is a critical time point for students who are interested in STEM – after taking large gateway courses, many students switch majors out of STEM fields. There are a variety of factors that influence a student's decision to remain in STEM, but the instructional practices used by faculty can help foster a student's confidence and sense of belonging. STEM education researchers like me are interested in gathering data about what students experience, and how to improve students' experiences and learning within STEM classrooms. Ultimately we want to create classroom environments that can help the next generation of scientists succeed.

What is STEM and how can I choose where I fit?

For kids who aren't in college yet, how can they learn more about STEM, and if they have an interest in a particular field, how can they ask for help? For example, as a kid I loved biology but I thought that meant I should be a medical doctor. I never had role models who invested in me to learn about other options until I got to college. I think STEM can be overwhelming for many younger girls, and breaking it down by topic (and example careers) can be really helpful.