



Kaela S. Singleton, PhD

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW, DSPAN SCHOLAR

MENTORING PHILOSOPHY

“When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.”

– Toni Morrison

When seeking a mentor I tell my students to envision Beyoncé (or their own personal role models). The excellence of Beyoncé is that she doesn't make you want to be her, but instead *the most excellent version of yourself*. Her excellence while relentlessly persuasive is also *intentionally permissive*. To me, excellent mentorship involves these same principles. Thus, I aim to inspire students to be the best version of themselves in the classroom, lab, and within their community.

My ultimate goal as a mentor is to help students develop a professional identity. I will equip them with the intellectual and technical skills necessary to form hypotheses, ask and answer challenging questions, and foster an environment for professional development with an emphasis on expanding their 'soft' skills. My mentor and research philosophy follows these principles: **embrace and develop student's professional identity, meet students where they are & identify their strengths, and lastly foster diversity, equity & inclusion (DEI) as well as representation and accountability (R&A) in my lab, classroom and academic community.**

To me, the formation of the nervous system is similar to the formation of a successful, productive and happy scientific researcher. Both processes are driven by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, which interact to create a mature unique individual. Thus, I aim to accept and embrace the backgrounds of all students and **create an environment where their past and present experiences contribute to their ambitions and professional identity**. Through the hands-on problem solving nature of developmental neuroscience, I aim for students to find a sense of belonging and thrive, while contributing to their growth both in- and out- side of lab.

In order to provide students the space to grow, I am committed to meeting students “where they are” in terms of intellectual, technical and professional skillset. The development of a professional identity is multifaceted, on-going and essential to success. By meeting students within their comfort zone, I aim to build a relationship that extends beyond technical training and help them find their passion in neuroscience research. This involves implementing specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound goals for my mentees, **and tailoring their research experience to their strengths as well as identifying ways to improve their weaknesses.**

 @kss_phd

 @kss_phd

 Atlanta, GA

 KaelaSingleton

I will update my Teaching, Mentor and Service statements as I continue to train and educate myself and continue to share and cite the resources that have shifted my perspective in education, mentorship and service.

Kaela S. Singleton, PhD

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW, DSPAN SCHOLAR

MENTORING PHILOSOPHY CONTINUED

Last and perhaps most important, is my commitment to fostering **DEI and R&A** in my classroom, laboratory, and academic community. DEI and R&A are essential to creating a productive, creating and collaborative environment. I aim to foster **a sense of belonging within the scientific community** for my students. Most importantly, I want to quiet the insecurities students from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups experience in STEM and academia and replace those feelings with hope and confidence. Importantly, the ability to attack challenging questions from a unique perspective is enhanced when students feel included and supported.

Thus, the Singleton lab will *always* focus on actively engaging in and celebrating DEI and R&A through didactic training, open discussions, and workshops on implicit bias, racism, sexism, ableism, trans- and homo- phobia, as well as the intersectionality of these issues.

My role as a mentor, first and foremost, **is to hold myself, my academic institution and scientific community accountable for their actions** by uplifting the students I train, speaking up for them and compensating trainees for either efforts.

My motivation to be a mentor is rooted in my research interests. My career goals as a researcher, educator and mentor are enriched by the opportunity to promote DEI and R&A within my field and academic community, and cultivate the next generation of scholars.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kaela S. Singleton'.

Kaela S. Singleton, PhD
she/her/hers