Engage with community stakeholders to create fundamental research and translational innovations aimed at challenges related to disability.

George Mason University’s National Science Foundation-funded Research Traineeship (NRT) program is a bold, new model for community-engaged STEM graduate student training. Trainees will gain interdisciplinary skills in data science, sensing, and imaging; and engage in participatory design with community stakeholders to create data-driven solutions that enable individuals with disabilities to participate fully in needed and desired life roles and activities.

For details and to apply, please visit the CASBBI NRT Program website or contact Program Director Siddhartha Sikdar at ssikdar@gmu.edu.
Community-engaged Design Project

A core element of the CASBBI NRT experience is participation in a year-long community-engaged design project. Multidisciplinary teams of NRT trainees are immersed in community settings, challenging the traditional hierarchies between researchers and participants by engaging community stakeholders as full participants in the research process. The NRT trainees work with community stakeholders to identify challenges and needs within a community, formulate a research question, and engage in participatory design to develop and test ecologically valid solutions.

Who is eligible?

CASBBI NRT Trainees are Mason master’s and doctoral students. Our current cohort includes trainees from:
- computer science,
- cognitive and behavioral neuroscience,
- clinical psychology,
- bioengineering,
- special education,
- social work, and
- nursing.

If you are passionate about solving complex societal challenges and would like to learn how to work on interdisciplinary teams, communicate with community stakeholders, and translate your research ideas to commercial products, this program may be right for you! **Competitive funding packages are available.**

Community-engaged Design Project Spotlight

NRT Trainees Jillian Nelson (Clinical Psychology), Fahim Faisal (Computer Science), Lindsay Owen (Special Education), and Lily Spinelli (Social Work) are working with Northern Virginia public schools, service providers, and parent advocates to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on supportive services for secondary students with disabilities. They are currently developing a longitudinal cohort survey and tools to support families.

"The team science skills [I have learned enable] me to talk to people from different backgrounds, learn things from their perspective, [and] receive and share knowledge within groups so that we can produce better outcomes."

-2020-2021 NRT Trainee