FOSTERING INCLUSIVE MENTORSHIP IN THE CONSERVATION PROFESSION
I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

• DURING TODAY’S SESSION, YOU’LL BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN POLLS
• THERE WILL ALSO BE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE VIA THE CHAT FUNCTION

COMMUNITY BUILDING

• IF A COMMENT MADE BY ANOTHER PARTICIPANT RESONATES WITH YOU, PLEASE CONSIDER REACHING OUT – THROUGH A PRIVATE MESSAGE – TO MAKE NEW CONNECTIONS
JAMILA BLAKE, AWB®
SHE | HER | HERS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
Do you currently have, or have you previously had, a mentor that has positively contributed to your growth and development?
WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REASONS YOU DECIDED TO JOIN TODAY’S SESSION?
MENTORSHIP

A COLLABORATIVE, MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP FOCUSED ON KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL BUILDING TO SUPPORT PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
MENTORSHIP VS SPONSORSHIP

SPONSORSHIP – A COLLEAGUE, TYPICALLY IN A MORE SENIOR POSITION, ACTIVELY ADVOCATES FOR SPONSEE’S CAREER ADVANCEMENTS
WHY IS MENTORSHIP IMPORTANT?

- Sounding board for advice and decision making
- Higher level of comfort and job satisfaction
- Support throughout education and career
- Organizational benefits
- Networking
- Leadership development
- Career advancements
DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE TAKING ON THE ROLE OF A MENTOR?

DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE THE RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP?
WE CAN ALL LEARN TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE MENTORS

- Imposter syndrome
- Age isn't an issue
- Reciprocal benefits of mentorship
- Value of connectors
MENTORSHIP STRUCTURES

- Formal vs informal
- Dyad, triad, collective, networks, online communities, etc.
- Peer and near-peer
- Student mentorship
- Workplace or profession mentorship
- Internship, assistantship, fellowship programs
- Professional societies or affinity groups
Typical Steps of Mentorship

Step 1: Identify a potential mentor
Step 2: Set expectations
Step 3: Engage in activities for positive growth and development
Step 4: Establish if and how you will continue your relationship
DIVERSITY
EQUITY
INCLUSION
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO FOSTER INCLUSIVE MENTORSHIP?
MENTORSHIP HELPS YOU TO SEE YOURSELF IN YOUR PROFESSION

- MOTIVATION
- SELF-EFFICACY
- CONFIDENCE
- CREATING A SPACE WHERE EVERYONE CAN BE THEIR AUTHENTIC SELVES
HELP ADDRESS BARRIERS TO RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- Isolation & Tokenism
- Green Ceiling
- Presumed Incompetence
- Stereotype Threat
- Implicit Bias
- Disregard of Gender and Sexual Identity
- Lack of Accommodations or Accessibility
Benefits of Connecting People with Similar Backgrounds

- Validation of identity
- Interpersonal comfort
- Trust
- Shared understanding
- Representation
- Networking and community building
- Psychosocial benefits
- More holistic engagement
WHAT IS KEEPING CURRENT MENTORSHIP PRACTICES FROM BEING INCLUSIVE?
FALSE SENSE THAT CURRENT MENTORSHIP PRACTICES ARE HITTING THE MARK

COMFORTABLE WITH TRADITIONAL MENTORSHIP PRACTICES

ONUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

LACK OF COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP

DISCONNECT BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND CURRENT OR PROSPECTIVE STAFF ON EFFICACY OF FORMAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS
Unrealistic Expectations

- Excess burden on underrepresented individuals currently in the profession
- Limited representatives in senior-level and leadership roles are consistently being asked
- Sense of responsibility on individuals from underrepresented communities
WHAT CAN WE DO TO FOSTER EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP IN CONSERVATION?
DEMONSTRATE YOUR VALUES

- Show that you value participation in mentorship programs
- Engage at all levels of your organization
- Ensure sustainability of the program
- Promote institutionalization of mentorship
AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT

- Identity-based mentorship pairing may often be the preference, but it is important to create effective mentorship across life experiences.
- Beneficial to have multiple mentors to offer different expertise, experience, and ways to engage.
- Deep-level similarities are also important.
PERSONALIZED RELATIONSHIPS BASED ON TRUST

- Expectations for professional behavior and conduct
- Establish trust between all involved
- Mutual accountability and responsibility
- Confidentiality
- Privacy
- Personal disclosure to your comfort level
Discuss Diversity Topics

- Be conscious of individual preferences and personal development
- An opportunity for self-assessment and growth
- Move away from colorblind views and toward being culturally responsive (can apply beyond racial identity)
- Benefits to mentor
- Address implicit bias directly
- Value of mentoring through groups with shared identity
AVOIDANT

ISOLATING

INCONGRUENT

CONGRUENT

INFUSING
MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT AT ALL STAGES

- K-12, COLLEGE, EARLY CAREER, ESTABLISHED PROFESSIONALS
- MENTORS NEED TOOLS, TRAINING, AND EDUCATION
- PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR EVERYONE
- BE PREPARED TO ADAPT
Cultivate a Supportive Community

- Encourage Connections
- Create a Safe Space
- Improve Outreach
- Disseminate Best Practices
- Ensure Everyone Feels Invited and Welcomed
EXPLORE POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Expand your network and resources
- Identify opportunities for collaboration and increased capacity
- Garner shared knowledge and learning through experience
- Partner with organizations that have shared vision and goals
- Partner with companies that can help to streamline mentoring platforms and provide resources
ENSURE MECHANISMS FOR FEEDBACK

- Evaluate how to better support participants
- Be prepared for negative experiences
CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE VIRTUAL WORKPLACE

- Create safe spaces
- Can adapt from in-person meetings
- Draws on emotional and social support of mentorship
- Validate mentee’s feelings, while authentically sharing your own experiences
Look at existing programs

- Collect information on successful mentoring programs and/or programs that incorporate a mentoring component
- Adapt existing programs to fit your needs and group
What are some of you, or your organizations, doing to foster inclusive mentorship?
EXAMPLES

- American Fisheries Society’s Hutton Junior Fisheries Biology Program
- The Corps Network
- Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program
- Environmental Leadership Program
- Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences
- Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science
A SPECIAL THANK YOU

NAOC DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE
NAOC STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
NAOC STUDENT BODY
jblake@wildlife.org
www.linkedin.com/in/jamila-blake
JBLAKE17