

To: SSSP 2020-2021 Board of Directors
From: Bhoomi K. Thakore, Chair, SSSP Mentoring Program Committee; Member, Board of Directors
Subj: 2020-2021 SSSP Mentoring Program Committee Report
Date: July 28, 2021

The 2020-2021 Board of Directors initiated the re-visioning of the SSSP Meeting-Mentor Program, and the new SSSP Mentoring Program was approved by the membership during this year's SSSP Elections. The Board approved Bhoomi K. Thakore, Heather Dalmage, and Melissa Maxey to serve as the members of this year's Committee.

The Committee met and conducted listening sessions with previous SSSP mentors and mentees. Using this information, we revised the application documents to include more open-ended questions on the Program applications for mentors and mentees. These included items for mentors to identify specific aspects of professional and personal expertise, and items for mentees items on aspects they wished to be paired.

In 2021, we had 43 mentors paired with 76 mentees. Mentors were assigned between 1-3 mentees, and aligned as best as possible based on the information shared on the application (e.g. research areas, expertise of mentors). The mentor-mentee pairs were notified on July 27, 2021, and were provided an information sheet with some best practices (see attached).

This year's applications suggest that mentees are mostly PhD students/candidates, and looking for immediate guidance throughout the year on such topics as the job market, dissertation progress, research, publishing, etc. Many mentees included information about their social identities through which they wanted to be paired, including race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disabilities.

The Board approved a rotating committee, with members serving 2-year appointments. The committee will be comprised of 2 Board Members and the 2 Student Board Members. The 2021-2022 committee members will be Bhoomi K. Thakore (Chair, 1 year term), Lydia Hou (1 year term), Shaontá Allen (2 year term), and one TBD 2021-2022 Board Member (2 year term).

Recommendations for the 2022 Mentoring Program:

1. Revise the Program applications to streamline the pairing process. For example, create a list of possible mentoring areas/topics, having mentees select the top 2-3 mentorship needs, and having mentors provide more information on any and all topics they can advise on through this Program. The application could also include a field to identify pairings from previous years, so as not to duplicate connections.
2. Revise the program to include key parameters, including but not limited to encouraging an in-person first meeting at the conference, and quantifying the

frequency of meetings through the year, as well as considering other kinds of virtual programming that could be offered throughout the year (e.g. mentor training, panels and social events).

3. Create more connections between the Mentoring Program and the Annual Meeting. At minimum, this would include advertising relevant sessions to program participants; eventually, working with the President and Program Committee on sessions that address member needs (e.g. job market, publishing). This could also be done effectively through the Divisions (as Division-sponsored or co-sponsored sessions).
4. Identify mentors who are more seasoned members of SSSP, to include past and current Board Members and other members in leadership positions. This includes working with the Board and the Divisions to identify “good mentors” (i.e. members who are involved with the organization, who want to be more involved, or who are just good mentors in general). Even a seasoned mentor willing to work with 1 mentee can help with the lift of this Program.
5. Continue to evaluate the objectives of the SSSP Mentoring Program, to include SSSP goals of recruiting new members, retaining members, and identifying long-term members to excel to leadership and elected positions. These objectives can have much larger implications for the future and longevity of SSSP.

Finally, I conclude with my thanks to the 2020-2021 Committee Members for their service, and to the SSSP Administrative Office, including Kelsey Whitaker, for assistance with editing the applications on the website, creating the spreadsheets, and distributing the program pairings, and Michele Koontz, for just about everything else!

Respectfully submitted,

Bhoomi K. Thakore,
On behalf of the 2020-2021 SSSP Mentoring Program Committee

2021-2022 SSSP Mentoring Program Information

The SSSP Mentoring Program is designed to facilitate virtual interaction between members of SSSP who wish to be paired with a mentor or mentee. The primary objective of this virtual program is to facilitate connections between mentors and mentees for at least 1 year (summer 2021-summer 2022).

Please refer to the contact information for your mentor/mentee(s) in the email from SSSP.

You have been matched! Now what?

- Prior to August 5, 2021, mentors please initiate contact with your mentees.
- Introduce yourself, exchange contact information, and schedule your first virtual meeting.
- **NOTE that the SSSP Annual Meeting portal provides many opportunities for breakout meetings - consider scheduling your first meeting around a reception, plenary, panel, or presentation where one or both of you will be in attendance.**
- Mentors and Mentees can also share CVs/resumes or webpages with each other prior to the first meeting.

Some Best Practices for Mentors:

- Ask mentees about their professional goals and priorities so that your advice and feedback aims at achieving those goals. Keep notes for yourself on your mentee(s).
- Listen carefully to your mentee and center your meetings on their goals and needs. Solicit whatever information you need prior to each meeting.
- Be clear about your boundaries and preferences for meetings and communication. Set up frequency and time limits of meetings over the course of the semester/year.
- Be transparent with your mentee. It's ok if you don't know something or can't advise on everything.
- Find opportunities to connect your mentee with others in your network who might be better at helping them with certain issues or who could become future collaborators or mentors.
- **Don't forget to advise on opportunities for getting more involved with SSSP!**

Some Best Practices for Mentees:

- Prior to the first meeting, share with your mentor a few areas or topics you wish to discuss.
- During your first meeting, state clearly what you hope to obtain from your mentor during the course of the program. They will say "yes" to what they can help with, and "no" to other requests. Do not take "no" as rejection, but as clarity in expertise and capabilities.

- Take on the work of setting up subsequent meetings. Some mentors may need 1-2 weeks minimum time in advance to schedule meetings. Plan for each meeting and send a note ahead of time to your mentor stating what you'd like to discuss.
- Respect time boundaries. Listen to your mentor and understand that this mentoring fits into their multifaceted life. If you need to reschedule, make sure to give at least 24 hours advance notice.
- Mentors are working professionals, and sometimes emails get lost. If you do not hear from your mentor in a reasonable timeframe, it is acceptable to email them again to follow up.
- Research your mentor - consider opportunities where your mentor can provide introductions for you to people in their networks or at their institutions.
- Respect the primary purpose of this mentoring program: to provide guidance over the course of the academic year. While some mentors may be willing to discuss personal issues and identities, others may not. Ask and then take their lead. Recognize that the mentors in the program are not trained therapists.
- Listen to your mentor. While your mentor may or may not seem like a perfect fit for all of your needs, they undoubtedly have something they can offer in your development and growth.
- However, this is your career and your life. You do not have to follow everything your mentor says. Take input from a variety of sources and make your own decisions.

Take this relationship seriously, but don't be afraid to consider whether or not this relationship is the best fit for both parties at this time. **If there are any concerns with your mentoring pairing, please contact Bhoomi K. Thakore, bhoomi.thakore@ucf.edu, Chair, SSSP Mentoring Program Committee.** Any concerns will remain confidential.

Created by the 2020-2021 SSSP Mentoring Program Committee, with aids from the Mentoring Programs of the ASA Section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements (CBSM) and the Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Sciences (IAPHS).