

ASPA Section on Women in Public Service Mentoring Program Guidelines

The Mentorship Program through the ASPA Section on Women in Public Administration (SWPA) offers a mentor opportunity to student and young professional members of SWPA. Mentors will help their mentees productively engage with ASPA and SWPA, the public administration profession, and in their careers. Mentoring will include guidance for students and young professionals in networking and making the most of their SWPA membership at the ASPA conference as well as pursuing their academic and professional goals during the length of the program and potentially beyond.

Mentoring Program Timeline 2024-2025

Date	Activity	Notes
March 1, 2024	Release Application for Mentors Program	Official launch of program and start collecting information and applications from mentors
May 1, 2024	Release Application for Mentee	Official launch of application period for mentees - who will select two to three possible mentors
August 1, 2024	Match Mentees/Mentors	Create matches based on established criteria/guidelines.
August 20, 2024	Kick-off meeting with participants	Mentors and Mentees meet as a group via Zoom.
Ongoing	Virtual meeting Check-Ins	Check in with participants in a virtual meeting to get an update and assess the quality of matches
Spring 2025	Connect at ASPA meeting	If the ASPA meeting is held in person, find a time to meet if possible. If the meeting is not held or both mentor and mentee cannot attend, schedule another opportunity to meet virtually.
Summer 2025	Mentor/Mentee meetings	Wrap up and gain feedback on the program.
September 2025	Closing Meeting	SWPA will schedule a final virtual meeting of all mentors and mentees within the cohort. While the formal one year mentor/mentee program will end at this time, hopefully the relationships will continue.

Process

Applying to be a Mentor

SWPA Members interested in serving as mentors will complete an informational form listing their background, experience, location and areas of interest. This information will be used to help make the best match with the Mentees. SWPA will conduct outreach efforts to invite academics and public service professionals to serve as mentors

Applying to be a Mentee

Those selected as Scholars by SWPA for the ASPA conference will automatically be assigned a Mentor. Other SWPA members wanting to be assigned a mentor will complete an application listing background, areas of interest, location and desired outcomes from the mentoring relationship. Mentees will identify their needs on the application form. SWPA will coordinate outreach efforts with PhD program coordinators (listserv) to boost interest.

The committee determined that a more targeted marketing approach and social media push is needed to expand the scope of the SWPA mentorship program. We will also seek to add the mentorship application and details in the SWPA Newsletter for Springs and invite members to share with their social networks. The program committee will also coordinate outreach efforts with other associations (ASPA network, sections such as DSJ, SNAP, COMPA)

Selection and Matching

Members of the SWPA Professional Development Committee will review Mentor and Mentee forms and inform participants of their matches. It is the responsibility of the mentee to reach out to their assigned mentor and initiate a meeting to discuss goals and plans for the program.

Expectations

At the ASPA Conference (if in attendance) – Set up a time to meet at the beginning of the conference

- Attend the SWPA Breakfast together
- Mentors should attend the presentations of mentees and provide helpful feedback

Outside of the Conference

- It is recommended that mentors and mentees meet at least quarterly during the program year as well as meeting during the ASPA Conference. More meetings may be scheduled as appropriate for the goals established by the mentee and mentor. These meetings can take place in person, via phone or Zoom/Facetime (etc.) It is the responsibility of the mentee to initiate contact with their mentors.
- Keep the content of these meetings confidential unless otherwise discussed.
- Mentors and mentees will establish healthy and appropriate boundaries (e.g., when it is appropriate to contact one another, any topics that may be off limits, what means of communication is best, and so on). Both mentees and mentors are expected to respect those boundaries in all interactions.
- Be open in giving and receiving feedback. The mentor is expected to provide constructive feedback to the mentee and the mentee is expected to be open to the feedback. Healthy communication is key to the success of any mentor/mentee pairing.
- Possible content for meeting and mentor/mentee goals include:

- Expand the mentee's public administration network and provide your mentee with opportunities for exposure.
- Offer opportunities for career planning, advice, and analysis of current trends within the discipline.
- Discuss federal, state, local, and international issues within public administration.
- Plan for "Next Steps" in the mentee's professional development journey.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I reach out to my mentor?

Each mentee will be provided with their mentor's name and contact information. It is the responsibility of the mentee to establish contact with the mentor and work around their schedule. If you try to contact your mentor but are not able to get in touch with them, please contact Karen Sweeting (ksweeting@uri.edu). The key to any successful mentor/mentee relationship is communication, and we strongly encourage that mentees and mentors establish expectations for communication when you first meet.

2. How do I sustain the relationship with my mentor?

It is the mentee's responsibility to:

- Set up the appointments to meet your mentor — both initially and quarterly — throughout the duration of the program.
- Follow up at the end of each session to outline personal next steps and set up your opportunity to speak.
- Explore the possibilities for mentoring to be a portal for you to better understand the field, utilize your mentor as a helpful sounding board as you move forward in your career, and to give as well as get from this new relationship.

3. What should we talk about?

While the focus of each mentoring relationship varies, some ideas for mentees on how to best capitalize on this mentorship opportunity are listed below:

- Look for broad connections with your mentor (most strong relationships are not built solely on research interests).
- Ask your mentor to provide substantive feedback on the research you presented at ASPA's Annual Conference; to look at a paper you may have written and request feedback; or, whether an academician or practitioner, to explore potential opportunities for both near- and long-term professional development or enrichment.
- Find out what conferences or outside-the-workplace workshops that your mentor typically attends. Gather information on these events and explore whether there may be an opportunity to present on a panel session together.

- Explore areas of commonality, including, but not limited to, research interests, community service, geographical background, hobbies that provide personal fulfillment. For example, if your mentor has published in a journal that is of interest to you, inquire about their experience in getting published in that journal. Or if your mentor has connected with other public servants through a local volunteer organization, see if there is a near-by chapter.
- Share your career aspirations with your mentor. Talk about topics that make you passionate. Ask your mentor for feedback or recommendations on books, webinars, or even websites.
- Ask your mentor to share “lessons learned,” for good or ill, that may be helpful for you.
- If you are applying for a new position or graduate school, ask your mentor to review your cover letter or personal statement and offer feedback (if there is not a conflict of interest).
- If you are applying for a new position or graduate degree, share the positions you are applying for and ask your mentor for their perspective on the organization.

4. Are there additional tips?

There have been more than a few opportunities that have passed participants by because they:

- Were intimidated by the mentor’s professional role and title.
- Allowed the mentor to dominate the interaction rather than engaging the mentor in an intentional two-way conversation.
- Did not meet with their mentor for more than a one or two sessions or hit an initial roadblock that they never moved beyond.
- Did not explore what they had in common to consciously build a relationship that could sustain itself beyond in-person connections.

Please be mindful that mentors volunteer for this position because they want to see you grow and develop as a public servant. So, don’t be shy, intimidated, or reluctant to make a new ally.

5. Who can I contact for additional information?

If you have questions, please contact Karen Sweeting (ksweeting@uri.edu)

The SWPA mentoring program expands beyond the mentoring program. We are here to support each other and SWPA is a strong network of women committed to supporting each other.