Pay It Forward:

A New Mentoring Program for the Evolution Conference

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ABSTRACT:

Biology has had remarkable success in equalizing the representation of women among Ph.D. recipients, with near gender parity as of 2005. Unfortunately, women are lost from the field in disproportionate numbers, such that women hold only ≈30% of Assistant, ≈25% of Associate, and ≈15% of Full Professor positions in U.S. universities. The early stages of a career coincide with the years in which women (and men) are most likely to start families, a major obstacle to the successful establishment of a career. The challenges are even greater for racial or ethnic minorities, who have even fewer role models, but they can be ameliorated with quality mentoring from established scientists.

The Evolution TriSocieties (ASN, SSE, SSB) have always been on the cutting edge of evolutionary biology research. The new mentoring program presented here, in partnership with MentorNet, will establish the TriSocieties at the forefront in breaking down barriers to women and minorities in the sciences and will establish the TriSocieties as a role model for other professional groups.

What Is MentorNet?

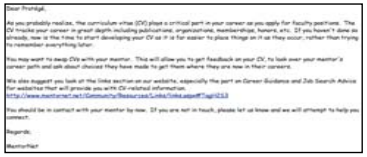
Founded in 1997, MentorNet is an award-winning nonprofit mentoring organization that matches established mentors with compatible protégés using a patent-pending system. MentorNet's goal is to increase the retention and success of women and other underrepresented groups in science, mathematics, and engineering.

The MentorNet program centers on an eight-month pairing, which includes weekly or biweekly e-mail discussion prompts to foster supportive relationships. The pairing begins with each mentor and protégé establishing a profile indicating their experience and academic interests. The MentorNet proprietary software then recommends suitable matches between established scientist mentors and early-career protégés, including undergraduates, graduate students, post-doctoral scholars, and assistant professors.

MentorNet has made nearly 25,000 matches since 1998, with mentors from both academia and industry. Protégés range from undergraduates to untenured faculty.

How Does E-Mail Mentoring Work?

Prospective mentors and protégés each fill out a profile, which asks for basic demographic information as well as interest level in discussing common mentoring topics, such as school or career options, work/family balance, research questions, self-confidence, or gender, race or disability issues. The MentorNet proprietary software suggests compatible matches between mentors and protégés, who are paired in one-on-one e-mentoring relationships that last for eight months. Both mentor and protégé receive regular discussion suggestions from MentorNet via e-mail designed to foster the relationship. A typical prompt looks like this:



For More Information

For assistance signing up or for more information, please contact Leah Larkin (llarkin@pacific.edu) or Heidi Meudt (HeidiM@tepapa.govt.nz).

How Do I Sign Up?

- To become a mentor, go to www.mentornet.net/mentor
- To become a protégé, go to www.mentornet.net/protege
- Click on JOIN US
- Fill in your contact information to join the MentorNet community

- Create a profile

MENTORS: Be sure to specify "Evolution Tri-Societies" as an ABSOLUTE REQUIREMENT

- Wait for your match(es)
- Connect with your mentor or protégé!

It only takes about 15 minutes per week to participate!

Why Should I Become a Mentor?

*Serving as a mentor benefits everyone, including **you**!*

- Earn personal satisfaction from fostering an early-career protégé
- Hone leadership and mentoring skills applicable to interactions within your home institution
- Increase membership in your society by enhancing conversion of student members to professional members
- Diversify the membership of your society and your field with respect to gender, race, and culture
- Gain exposure to new intellectual ideas
- Forge potential new collaborations outside your current sphere

Why Should I Become a Protégé?

Become a protégé to help you navigate the early stages of your career:

- Get guidance from a more experienced evolutionary biologist who has overcome the challenges you face
- Develop increased confidence in your scientific skills
- Broaden your networking sphere
- Increase your chances of having the career you *want*, instead of the career circumstances hand you
- Develop a relationship with someone outside your department
- Get unbiased advice on challenges you might not feel comfortable addressing within your institution

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