When the Perfect Mentor Is Outside Your Network

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Mentoring relationships can be transformational within any profession, but they may be especially helpful in STEM fields, particularly for scientists from racial minority groups and other historically marginalized and underrepresented groups. Whether considering a transition mid-career or finding your path forward within academia, a knowledgeable mentor can prove invaluable in helping psychological scientists evaluate next steps, build relationships, and connect with potential opportunities.

But how to find the right mentor—or, for those wishing to share their professional experiences and insights with others, how to find the right mentee?

Launched in 2014, the National Research Mentoring Network, an initiative supported by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, is a free social and professional networking tool that has matched and facilitated mentoring relationships using a variety of evidence-based best practices and online resources. In a recent webinar sponsored by APS's government relations team, Katie Stinson, NRMN's virtual engagement strategist, introduced the network's diversity initiative and demonstrated the platform's key resources. NRMN currently includes more than 18,000 mentors and mentees. While mentors can be anywhere around the world, mentees must be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident, or noncitizen U.S. national over 18 years in age.

"NRMN's mission is to establish a culture in which historically underrepresented scientists—in this case, mentees—are positioned to progress in their careers and contribute to the behavioral science research enterprise," said Andy DeSoto, APS's director of government relations, in introducing the webinar. Stinson, part of a small NRMN Resource Center team based at both the University of North Texas Health Science Center and Vanderbilt University, explained how NRMN's features enable a wide range of career-advancing functions at the individual level.

For instance:

- An algorithm-based matching system lets prospective mentors and mentees find each other, using filters for fields such as gender, race, interests, institutions, activities, and more.
- The My Profile and About Me section lets users curate their profiles for mentors and mentees to browse and instantly connect.
- One-on-one mentoring tools include video calling, instant-messaging, and structured and customizable goals.
- The My CV/Resume Builder tool lets mentees easily create, publish, share, and update a STEM-appropriate CV, as well as download others' CVs.
- My Publications allows people to sync from their ORCID iD and/or from PubMed.
- My Groups lets users join or form their own groups for discussions, video calls, and more
- The Opportunity Board includes jobs, postdocs, and more; users can opt to be notified whenever a new opportunity is posted.
- My Calendar indicates scheduled meetings and other events and can be synced with Outlook and other calendars.
- A growing library of career-development webinars is available on demand.

Among other recent refinements to the platform, a course on unconscious bias has engaged several hundred participants since it launched in July of 2020, with more courses to come, Stinson said. And additional enhancements are coming, thanks to funding at least through 2024.

Register to be a mentor or mentee at https://nrmnet.net/. Watch the APS webinar on the Funding and Policy page or the APS YouTube channel.

Learn about The APS Mentor Award**. Read** profiles of the 2020 Mentor Awardees**.**