Mentoring in Political Science

Kristen Renwick Monroe, for the *APSA Task Force on Mentoring*

This is the first article in what will be an ongoing column on mentoring to be published in *PS: Political Science and Politics* over the next three years as part of the Task Force on Mentoring, established by the APSA Council in the fall of 2002. The Task Force was designed to provide general advice and help with mentoring, with a special focus on the needs of women and minorities. This column describes the general goals of the Task Force and asks for volunteers to help in our work as we establish a more formal mentoring program for political scientists.

The *PS* column itself will vary in the kinds of articles it presents. Some issues will answer questions about mentoring as a general phenomenon, e.g., how do political scientists approach publishers or learn about granting possibilities. Other articles will focus on the problems particular to women and minorities —for example, we will feature interviews with notable women and people of color—while other columns might focus on concerns that affect many political scientists but which carry special salience for women, e.g., how to balance the demands of dual careers or resolve the tensions in juggling family and career. We also encourage APSA members to send questions you would like the members of the Task Force to address. (You may write anonymously, if you are more comfortable that way.) All questions about mentoring should be referred to Linda Lopez at the APSA (llopez@apsanet.org), to Kristen Monroe, Chair of the Task Force (krmonroe@uci.edu) or to the other members of the Task Force (listed below).

Throughout the next three years, the Task Force will have at least one member at each of the regional meetings to speak directly with political scientists who do not attend the national meeting. We will begin this practice by holding a brown bag lunch, open to all political scientists, at the Midwest Political Science Association Meeting in Chicago, on April 4, 2003. (The place will be listed in the program.) We also have scheduled a panel, immediately followed by a reception, at the APSA meeting in Philadelphia. Task Force activity information is easily accessible at the mentoring page on the APSA web site.

Background

The idea for a Task Force on Mentoring came from the Women's Caucus for Political Science (WCPS) but was expanded into an umbrella mentoring program to include other groups with special needs due to discrimination. A group of volunteers—including Susan Clarke, Sue Davis, Valerie Martinez-Ebers, Ron Schmidt, Katherine Tate, Martha Ackelsberg, Judith Baer, Gayle Binion, and Kristen Monroe—formed an *ad hoc* committee which drafted and submitted a proposal to the APSA Council in April of 2002. The Council approved the idea of a Task Force at the 2002 annual meeting.

The APSA Task Force proposed a mentoring program on a three-year trial basis. The mentoring program was designed to focus on the particular needs of women and to be administered in conjunction with the Women's Caucus for Political Science (WCPS). The original proposal conceptualized this mentoring program as part of a broader umbrella program that was to include African-Americans and Latinos. The mentoring program will work closely with the WCPS, the Black Caucus, and the Latino Caucus, as well as establish ties to more traditional mentoring programs currently underway in the sections or the regional associations. (The Task Force itself has at least one member who belongs to each of these caucuses.) One of our main concerns is to create a program that can provide the kind of general professional advice and support that is the heart of mentoring for all political scientists, while responding to the special needs of women and minority groups.

In constructing the mentoring program, we tried to address five related concerns: (1) the need for such a program, (2) the utility of mentoring, (3) how mentoring would work, (4)

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funding, and (5) the coordinating framework.

Why begin with a focus on women and people of color?

Although there has been visible progress in the status of women and people of color in the profession of political science, significant concerns remain. In particular, the initial focus on the recruitment of women and people of color into the profession is now linked to concerns about their retention and the broader question of professional development and advancement. Achieving tenure and promotion are critical but other aspects of professional development are also key, e.g., gaining recognition of one's research and teaching contributions, advancing through the professional ranks, winning grants, honors, and awards, and finding opportunities to serve in the profession. Although the markers of a successful and satisfying career are formally available to all political scientists, in practice women and people of color are less likely to achieve tenure, honors and awards, and professional advancement. In short, too few women and minority political scientists succeed in integrating as full and equal participants in professional life. For the APSA, this will mean a continuing deficit in the rates of tenured women faculty and further declines in membership support of younger faculty, especially women and minority faculty who fail to see opportunities for professional development available in the Association.[2]

Many factors contribute to these problems of retention, integration, and advancement. For example, many women and people of color are hampered in their efforts to earn tenure, advance, and become integrated in the profession because they are isolated on faculties and in academic settings where support is minimal or problematic. We hope that an APSA mentoring initiative will both mitigate this professional isolation by providing support for women and minority faculty members at critical career points, and position the Association as a key force encouraging the full integration of women and minority political scientists. We feel APSA needs to take immediate steps to create a climate and "opportunity structure" that increases the chances that more women and minority political scientists will develop successful and satisfying careers and professional integration. By sponsoring a mentoring project for women and minority political scientists, the Association signals its support for the full participation and integration of women and minority political scientists into the profession. Therefore, one goal of the Task Force is to provide support for minority and underrepresented groups, for isolated individuals, and to reduce burnout and increase retention rates, as well as to increase the opportunities for women and people of color to advance into leadership roles within the APSA hierarchy. We feel that having an officially-endorsed APSA program will be invaluable in helping coordinate the different regional and possibly state associations and will provide a formal body which can apply for the minimal funding necessary to keep such a program active.[3]

Why mentoring as a solution?

Mentoring programs provide the scaffolding for effective career development and professional integration. Mentoring programs link more experienced political scientists with younger scholars at earlier career stages. Both groups benefit from this experience. Younger scholars gain strategic knowledge, career insights, and information essential for successful careers along with the support and encouragement offered by the mentor. Mentors learn innovative teaching and research approaches, stay abreast of new thinking in their fields, and enjoy the fresh views of younger colleagues.

For a fortunate few, faculty mentoring programs at their universities structure these linkages and networks. For the majority of the profession, however, such mentoring programs are not among the informal pleasures of everyday life on a faculty. Most women and people of color remain in the minority in their departments and often lack the opportunities or support to find a mentoring relationship. An APSA initiative would overcome this uneven availability of mentoring opportunities and make it possible for women and minority political scientists to develop mentoring relationships independent of their individual work situation or geography.

The mentoring program will give special attention to women of color, gays and lesbians, Latinas/Latinos, and Asian women, since members of these groups are subjected to several forms of discrimination. Since a significant number of political scientists work outside university settings, it is also important to provide mentoring services appropriate for women and people of color in non-academic positions. We will contact these APSA members via the WCPS, Latino Caucus and Black Caucus roster and by informal contacts with political scientists known for their work in non-academic positions. (Please, volunteer.) Women and minority political scientists outside of academia face many of the same kinds of problems and obstacles that affect academics, including a lack of full integration and acceptance in the field.[4] They, too, would benefit from mentoring. Such a mentoring program also would increase the relevance of the Association by helping to build the networks between non-university political scientists and university-based professionals. **If you are interested in volunteering for this part of the mentoring program, please contact Linda Lopez (llopez@apsanet.org).**

How should mentoring work?

The first goal of the Task Force is to identify how the mentoring program can address our target audiences' key and then to develop a mentoring program appropriate to the Association's capabilities and constituencies. Based on our review of existing mentoring programs, we propose a program with the following general outlines, although we welcome suggestions via Linda Lopez or at one of our sessions at the APSA (September) or the Midwest (April).

(1) Mentoring will be voluntary and confidential although departments could include participation in mentoring in their rostering descriptions.

(2) Mentoring will operate through email listings of mentors and mentees maintained by APSA (as in the Bunche program).

(3) The program will be driven by the mentee contacting mentors by email.

(4) Participants will agree to a minimum one-year link. All participants will be asked to provide baseline information for evaluation purposes at the end of the three years in which the Task Force operates.

(5) The Association's role is coordination without centralization. Email lists

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will be maintained by the Association with secured password access. APSA will document the participation of mentors to their departments, recognizing their service contribution to the profession.

(6) APSA will support mentoring activities at the national and regional meetings, working with the regional associations as much as possible.

(7) APSA will evaluate the effectiveness of the program after a three-year period.

Martha Kumar (joyntkumar@aol.com) **and Ron Schmidt, Sr.** (rschmidt@csulb.edu) **are the Task Force members in charge of the basic conceptualization of mentoring.** **They would like to hear from anyone familiar with mentoring programs willing to help design the program and reach out to establish ties with more traditional forms of professional mentoring**.

Funding and fundraising

Since these issues are in the foreground of many debates on faculty development, foundation funding might be sought to support and expand our initial program, should it be justified. The APSA has provided initial funding in the form of set-up costs and is providing the critical staff time necessary to coordinate activities, set up the web site, assist in preparation and submission of external grants, etc. Eventually, however, we hope that external funding and contributions can fund much of the mentoring program, with minimal APSA contribution. The NSF Advance Program may be one source of external funding. Susan Clarke is the Task Force member in charge of investigating additional funding sources more thoroughly. We encourage members willing to help Clarke (clarkes@colorado.edu) form an exploratory group to investigate funding sources and prepare such a grant in conjunction with APSA staff. Beyond this, we are suggesting the APSA establish a fund to which APSA members could make contributions in honor of a beloved mentor. This money would go toward financing the mentor program and the honoree's name would be posted/ listed in relevant APSA material identifying bequests.

Coordinating structures

We have two critical goals: (1) to encourage volunteers to participate in the program and (2) to ensure coordination and communication among, and to learn from, already existing mentoring programs for women and minorities, as well as the traditional mentoring programs in existence in the sections, the regional associations, or within the APSA itself. Contact Linda Lopez for inquiries. She will coordinate communication among all the groups under our umbrella structure.

IMMEDIATE ACTIVITIES

Organizational meetings

The initial meeting of the Task Force is scheduled for the Midwest Political Science Association meeting in Chicago in April 2003. This meeting will be on Friday (April 4) at noon, with the location announced in the official program of the Midwest. A second meeting is scheduled at the APSA meeting in Philadelphia in September 2003. Both of these meetings will be listed in the official programs. One member of the Task Force will attend each of the regional meetings to meet with members of the association who may not attend the national meetings and to establish contacts with groups engaged in more traditional forms of mentoring.

APSA meeting

For the next three years, the Task Force will organize one open session on mentoring at each APSA meeting. This session will be an open roundtable, providing a place where mentors and mentees can meet in person. Awards will be given to those mentoring grad students and junior faculty, and for efforts to bring women into APSA leadership roles.

Virtual mentoring

APSA will establish a virtual mentoring program, open to all of its members. Postings will be easy to follow—even for the technologically challenged! —via the APSA web site and will focus on mentoring as part of a structured plan for professional development. Some likely topics follow:

- How mentors can help mentees identify professional norms, individual strengths and weaknesses, and develop a plan to attain their goals (getting a job, tenure, publishing, etc.).
- How mentors can provide focus, critical feedback, and encouragement as well as direction.
- How co-authoring works to help share skills, knowledge, etc.
- Networking. How to introduce younger women to colleagues in different venues, including conferences. How to keep an eye out for opportunities that would help the other, such as calls for proposals, grant opportunities, reviewing opportunities, book chapters, etc.
- How to get published. How to advance through the ranks.
- Benefits to mentors: personal and emotional benefits of helping others and developing close relationships through self reflection often can improve one's sense of self, public recognition, and eye for one's own work, and can bring acclaim and extended influence within the discipline. As one ages—we all will get older!—mentoring will keep senior mentors in touch with fresh ideas, and avoid the sense of isolation about which some senior scholars have complained.

Mentoring Column in *PS*

Each quarter, the Task Force will publish a column in *PS* on mentoring. Some topics might include: a recognized mentor presenting an article about the rewards of mentoring and how the process of mentoring have worked for her; minority scholars writing about the particular issues that affect them; graduate students writing on how to survive grad school, dissertation writing, the job search, interviewing, campus visits, and negotiating an offer; junior faculty sharing their experiences on starting a new job, teaching, teaching with technology, research and publishing, books versus articles, service, keeping a tenure file, getting tenure, etc; senior faculty discussing changing research agendas, becoming a chair, becoming a Director of Graduate studies, a dean, an endowed chair, going to think tanks, coping with life after retirement and ; junior and senior scholars discussing sabbatical options, government/policy options, new teaching trends, program reviews and assessment, etc. Other

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professional issues more specific to one of our target audiences include: dealing with two career families family versus career stress in general, and balancing the demands of children versus career in particular. Other options include: an "Ask the Mentor" column, with members of the Task Force responding to questions by students or new faculty and interviews with some of the profession's more prominent women (one such interview with Elinor Ostrom is tentatively scheduled). We are happy to have volunteers for this column, which will undergo anonymous refereeing. **Please contact Kristen Monroe (KRMonroe@UCI.Edu) or Linda Lopez if you are willing to participate in any of the activities for this column**.

Mentoring Reception at APSA meetings

Since time is at a premium at APSA, we will schedule the APSA panel on mentoring late in the day, take the first hour for a formal discussion and then break into informal conversation over refreshments before the official cocktail parties start. In 2003, this panel is tentatively scheduled for late Friday or Saturday afternoon.

Program evaluation

One of the critical functions of the Task Force will be to provide feedback on the kind of mentoring that is most effective, the groups that should be targeted, and whether a more permanent structure is required/useful. Leonie Huddy has agreed to lead this evaluation, which will include a survey of participants. The survey will convey valuable information about the needs for mentoring and how best to respond as an institution. Online questions might include, e.g., What do you want most to achieve from mentoring, personal, professional, or substantive scholarly advice? How can we work best to integrate political scientists from outside academia into a mentoring program? What suggestions can we gain from other mentoring programs? **Volunteers interested in participating in this part of the program should contact Huddy directly at leonie.huddy@sunysb.edu.**

Notes

1 The members of the Task Force on Mentoring are Kristen Monroe, Chair, Susan Clarke, Irasema Coronado, Leonie Huddy, Julia S. Jordan-Zachery, Martha Joynt Kumar, Elinor Ostrom, Ronald J. Schmidt, Sr., and Laura R. Woliver. Sue Davis, formerly at APSA, also assisted in the draft of this paper.

2 The MIT Study suggests the problem is not disappearing at a fast rate and provides evidence that institutionalized action is necessary to remedy this problem. Details on the situation for women within the political science community and within the APSA itself are presented in an article by Kristen Monroe in the June 2002 issue of *PS*. Data from the largest single university in the country, the University of California, suggest that women are 50% of the population, 44% of all PhD.s, but only 25% of all the new hires at UC. For further information on the situation for women in academia, see Linda Valian, *Why so Slow?: The Advancement of Women* (MIT, 1998).

3 In past months, there has been much discussion among the members of the WCPS about how best to honor the memory of several female political scientists who have recently died. The existence of such a mentoring program would provide a useful site for such donations.

4 See, Valerie Martinez-Ebers, et al., "An Update on the Status of Latinos and Latinas in Political Science: What the Profession Should Be Doing," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 32 (December 2000): 899–903; Caroline Sotello Viernes and Samuel L. Myers, *Faculty of Color in Academe: Bittersweet Success* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000).

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