

82nd Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference
February 13-16, 2022 – Des Moines, IA
Student/Professional Networking and Mentoring Discussion Topics

Networking questions*

- What one piece of advice would you give to someone interested in a natural resources career?
- What did you learn in your first jobs that helped toward your desired career?
- What skills/education/training are most important for someone just entering this field?
- Did you continue your education with graduate school? Did you take time in the field before returning for graduate school?
- How can I make the most of this conference and conferences to come?
- How are you active in AFS and/or TWS? How should I get involved to help my career? Are there other organizations you recommend?
- What's the best advice you've received in your career?
- What do you enjoy the most about your job? The least?
- What are the working conditions like?
- What's your funniest/craziest field story?
- What was your toughest yet most valuable experience?
- Can you recommend any resources, books, or websites?

Suggested topics for mentorship**

- Introductions and setting goals and expectations
- Career development skills
- Leadership topics
- Work-life balance
- Conflict resolution
- Creating inclusive environments
- Community building
- Resume building and review
- Navigating hiring and onboarding systems
- Communication skills
- Networking opportunities
- Professional development and continuing education
- Job shadowing

- Interview practice
- Volunteer together
- Attend a conference or workshop
- Identifying and applying for funding opportunities
- Self-care
- Time-management
- Personality and/or strengths assessment

Ideas for enhancing your mentorship experience*

- Establish expectations for professional behavior and conduct.
- Maintain mutual accountability and responsibility for all involved. Follow through on any commitments you have made.
- Think about the qualities you have found to be most helpful in previous academic or professional relationships. What do you wish had been different about any of your previous mentoring experiences? Draw on these experiences to support your new or current mentorship.
- Work together to identify commonalities as well as unique aspects of your lived experiences.
- Strive for mentorship that embraces cultural competency to validate identities and experiences, and support one another while navigating the profession.
- Keep conversations neutral or positive (whether these are conversations within or about your mentorship).
- Schedule meetings in advance or give adequate notice as needs arise to engage with each other.
- Summarize the outcomes of each mentoring session to help establish goals for your next meeting.
- Modify your mentoring experience as you go to what works best for you.
- Suggest and share readings, videos, or other resources you have found helpful or interesting that you can discuss during your meetings.
- Create a space where you can be your whole self without fear of disclosing information. A certain amount of personal disclosure is important to developing interpersonal relationships, but also remember that all involved have a right to privacy. Share as much as little as you would like to your comfort level.
- Maintain open and honest communication with mechanisms for feedback.

Sources:

* 2019 Joint AFS & TWS Annual Conference

**TWS <https://wildlife.org/mentoring/>