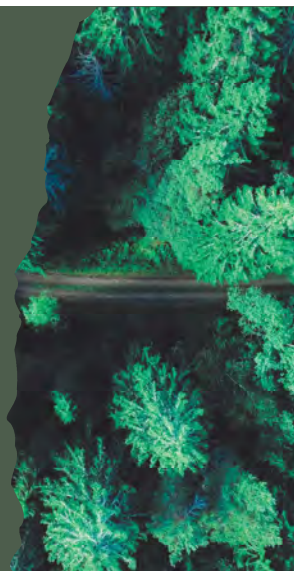THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Faculty of Forestry

Mentoring strategies
for developing future
municipal parks leaders

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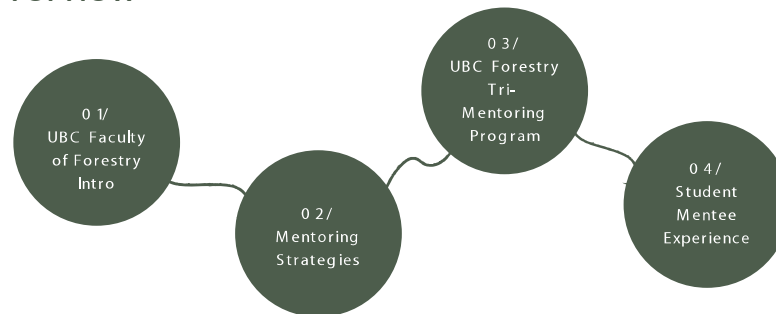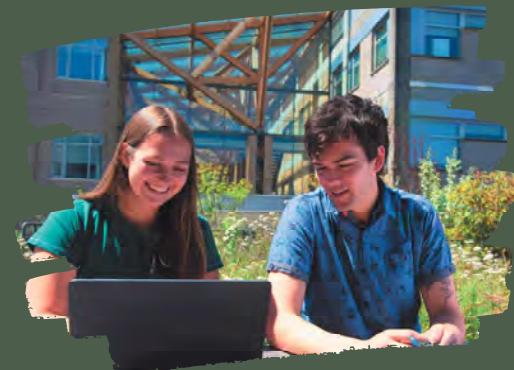
UBC Faculty
of Forestry

Offers six 4-year degree programs:

- Bachelors of Science in
  - Forest Sciences
  - Forestry
  - Natural Resources Conservation
  - Forest Bioeconomy Sciences & Technology
  - Wood Products Processing
- Bachelor of Urban Forestry

UBC Faculty
of Forestry

- 1,200 students
  - Most popular programs: Natural Resources Conservation and Urban Forestry
- Programs generally cater to specific career fields
  - E.g. arborists, foresters, biologists, urban planners, etc.
- 200 students each year participate in co-op program
  - Gain paid work experience as part of "work terms" that alternate with academic terms

UBC Faculty
of Forestry

Priorities for students as they prepare to enter the workforce:

- Awareness of job market
- Support in job search
- Career clarity, career exploration
- Create and expand network
- Developing confidence in navigating the workplace as a new professional

Navigating the workplace as a new professional

- Workplace hierarchies
- Learning essential skills
- Seeking guidance/mentorship
- Seeking recognition and validation
- Developing confidence
- Creating connections
- Navigating/determining norms (both in professional practice and workplace culture)

Coaching vs. Mentoring vs. Training
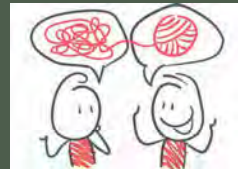
Coaching:

- Helping someone get better at a particular skill
- Performance-driven
- Coach drives the relationship
- Typically follows a standardized model/method

Mentoring:

- Helping to empower and educate others
- Development-driven
- Mentee drives the relationship
- Personalized to the needs of mentee

Training:

- Specific skill development and knowledge transfer
- Learning experience is one-sided
- Shorter time frame

How do we mentor?

Structured, formal program ⟷ Informal, unintentionally occurs

Why Mentoring at UBC?

- Context of our Faculty:
  - Multiple programs with different career paths
  - Time frame of academic year
- Relationship and development is driven by mentee (student)
  - Allows for better catering to varying goals, career ideas, experience levels
- Great avenue for career exploration for students
- Allows for flexibility in terms of structure, meetings, pace, etc.

How can we work towards being effective and impactful mentors?

Who Can Be a Mentor?

- First few years of your career:
  - Do you have enough knowledge or experience to act as a mentor?
  - Will you be seen as a mentor?

- Mentors with lots of experience in their field:
  - If they are less connected with new knowledge or practices, how can that impact their ability to successfully mentor?

- On-the-job mentoring:
  - Are we creating enough time and space to intentionally and effectively mentor?

  - What could be challenges of having your direct supervisor as a mentor?

Asset-based Approach


What we need

What we already have

Who Can Be a Mentor?

- What strengths and assets do you bring as a mentor?

- What strengths and assets did you bring as a new professional, or when starting a new role or career training/path?

Mentoring Strategies and Approaches

- Creating a Safe Space
- Building Trust
- Generational Asset-based Approach
- Reframing your role as a mentor
- Growth Mindset
- Practice Intentional Reflection
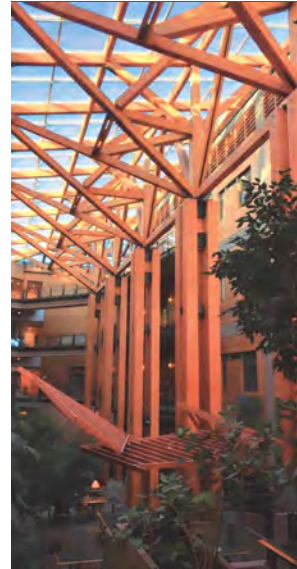
Creating a Safe Space

- What are your strengths to make someone feel comfortable?
  - Are you someone who is introspective?
  - Are you someone who is communicative?
  - Are you someone who is organized?

- Being intentional about our own expectations as well as the mentees'

- A few ideas for creating safe spaces:
  - Acknowledge and celebrate their courage
  - Spend some time exploring expectations of each other
  - Prepare a few questions to help the conversation

- When our brains are less stressed and overwhelmed, we can learn more effectively

Building Trust

- Lead with curiosity
  - Make an effort to learn about your mentee prior
  - Work towards an 80/20 conversation approach
  - Practice paraphrasing

- How do you currently lead with curiosity?

- What could you do differently moving forward?

Building Trust

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- How do you currently lead with curiosity?

- What could you do differently moving forward?

- Normalize big feelings - you've been in their position before
  - However, avoid too much comparison

- Selectively share stories of struggle or challenge
  - Important to share these pieces of your story

Taking a generational asset - based approach

- There are currently 5 generations in the workplace:
  - Traditionalists (Silent Generation) - born between 1928-1945
  - Baby Boomers - born between 1946-1964
  - Generation X - born between 1965-1980
  - Millennials (Gen Y) - born between 1981-1996
  - Generation Z - born between 1997-2012

- Asset-based approach
  - What is my mentee bringing to the table?
  - Celebrates a person's strengths and experiences
  - Spotlights the progress they've already made and their unique situation

Understanding mentorship with Gen Z

- Grown up in a digital and social media world
- Experienced a global pandemic during a crucial developmental period

  - How can you apply an asset-based approach to these two insights?

Understanding mentorship with Gen Z

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- Focus on assets such as:
  - a desire to network or build community
  - an understanding of values and the importance of articulating them
  - an approach to finding a work-life balance

- However - don't assume we already know what they need or want

Reframing your role as a mentor - strong vs weak ties

Mentoring won't always look and feel the same with different mentees - helpful to reframe

Strong Ties
- People in your network we consider close friends
  - Deep time commitment, emotional investment and a sharing of many common interests
- Weak Ties
  - People in our network we consider acquaintances
  - Rarely meet, a few common interests, could be co-workers
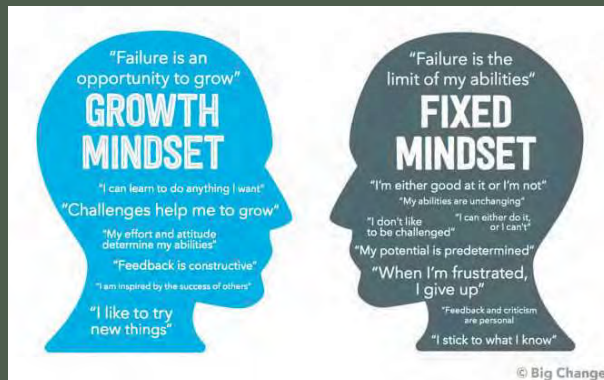 - How we get new ideas, new connections, hear about new opportunities

A study done by MIT in 2022 showed that weak ties are better for job mobility

Reframing your role as a mentor - strong vs weak ties

Reframe:

- Weak ties gives you the permission to release the pressure of being more than what is actually most helpful/needed

- Recognize the spectrum of mentorship - there is value at each point of that spectrum

- Weak ties can be as valuable as strong ties, if not more

Growth Mindset

"Failure is an opportunity to grow"
GROWTH MINDSET
"I can learn to do anything I want"
"Challenges help me to grow"
"My effort and attitude determine my abilities"
"Feedback is constructive"
"I am inspired by the success of others"
"I like to try new things"

"Failure is the limit of my abilities"
FIXED MINDSET
"I'm either good at it or I'm not"
"My abilities are unchanging"
"I don't like to be challenged" "I can either do it, or I can't"
"My potential is predetermined"
"When I'm frustrated, I give up"
"Feedback and criticism are personal"
"I stick to what I know"
© Big Change

Applying Growth Mindset: Focus on Effort and Actions

- Take the time to acknowledge someone when they do something well

- Growth mindset shows that providing feedback focusing on effort and action (verbs) rather than outcomes (like your identity) makes a big difference

- What does this sound like?
  - Instead of "you are good at networking" try "you took the time to do some research before we met"
  - Share your nice thoughts and observations out loud with your mentee
 - Applaud your mentees' process: "you have already improved from last time"

Practice Intentional Reflection

- Means not being prescriptive

- Giving advice and specific examples to allow mentees to draw their own conclusions

- Give opportunity for them to intentionally reflect

Practice Intentional Reflection

- A powerful question you can try:
  - "What is your takeaway?"

- Allows them to interpret the interactions and create their own learning and development from them

- Let their response 'breathe' and 'be'

- Helps the mentee be more aware of their process and how they are improving over time
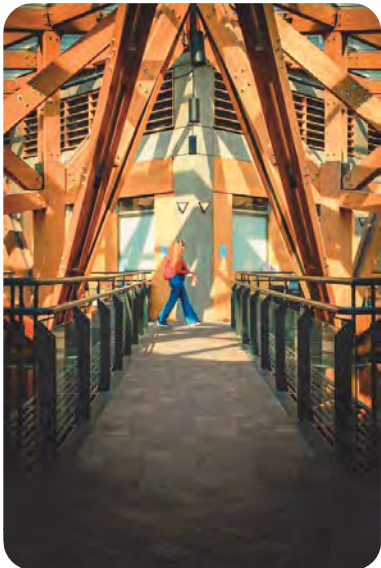
UBC Forestry Tri - Mentoring Program

A year-long, optional program for students in the Faculty of Forestry at UBC

Typical numbers:
- 40 mentors
- 80 mentees (students)

Tri- Mentoring Format

Junior Mentee 1st, 2nd year student

Mentor Alumni/Industry Professional

Senior Mentee 3rd, 4th year student

- 1st or 2nd year student +
- 3rd or 4th year student +
- Mentor - professional working in a career field of interest to students in the mentoring triad (e.g. Arborist, Landscape Architect, Urban Planner, etc.)

Mentors:
- Mostly (but not entirely) alumni
- Many "friends of the Faculty" like City of Surrey's Urban Forestry department

Program Timeline and Format

- Offer in both in-person and virtual participation options

- Programs runs from October-April (mentees apply and attend training workshops in September)

- 2 Events:
  - Kick-Off event in October
    - Emphasis on meeting with mentoring group for first time
  - Year-End event in March/April
    - Emphasis on networking with all mentors and mentees

- 2 activities for mentees to complete:
  - Setting Personal Objectives Activity
  - Reflection Activity

Program Activities for Mentees

Intended to provide intention and some structure to their participation in the program

- Setting Personal Objectives:
  - What are they hoping to learn and contribute through participating in the program?
  - What questions do they have that they want to explore in their mentoring group?
  - What resources (within and outside of their mentoring group) can they access to achieve these objectives?

- Reflection:
  - What? So what? Now what?
  - Identify a learning moment or key conversation that impacted them in some way during their mentoring meetings.
  - How does this insight connect to you and the direction you want to go in? How does it influence you as you move forward with your academic and career path?

Mentoring Group Activities

- Meet for coffee, go for a walk outdoors
- Mentees visit mentor's workplace
- Attend events, lectures, etc.
- Sitting in on research cluster or lab meetings
- Informational interviews with other contacts
- Practice job interviews
- Informal review of job application resources (resumes, cover letters, etc.)

Considerations

1. Differing goals and reasons for seeking mentorship
2. Availability of mentors and mentees
3. Access to mentors
4. Structure vs. Flexibility
5. Experience level of mentors

1. Differing Reasons and Goals for Applying

- Typically different based on the year of study, work experience, knowledge of industry, etc.

- How would mentoring conversations and meetings look different for these two goals:
  - Learning about the realities of different career paths vs.
  - Seeking support in the job application process

- How we navigate: gather this information from mentees in their application, in their "Setting Goals" activity, and remind mentoring groups that goals can evolve and change

- Share goals in their first meeting with mentor, make revisions to their document based on conversation

- Setting goals helps support growth mindset and reflection throughout the year

## 2. Availability of mentors and mentees &
3. Access to mentors

- Not based in the same workplace - less expectation (or often, less ability) to meet as frequently

- Making program open to mentors based outside of the Lower Mainland - greater access to individuals in a wide variety of career fields, positions, and experience
  - Online option - began offering in 2014, and expanded significantly in 2020

- Expanding beyond just Lower Mainland helps even more with development of weak ties

4. Structure vs. Flexibility

- As a formal program, some structure provided

- Beyond suggested timeline and reflection activities for mentees, lots of flexibility

- Allows group to prioritize the unique and specific goals of the mentees and mentor, and to highlight the strengths and experiences of participants

- Creates less pressure on participants to hit certain metrics

- Creates less barriers for participation
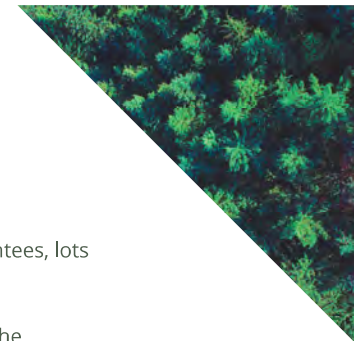
5. Experience level of mentors

- Mentors ranging in age from 23-90, at all stages of career

- Asset-based approach to welcoming mentors into the program

- Supporting individuals in their confidence as a mentor
  - "Junior" mentor
  - Access to professional development resources and events
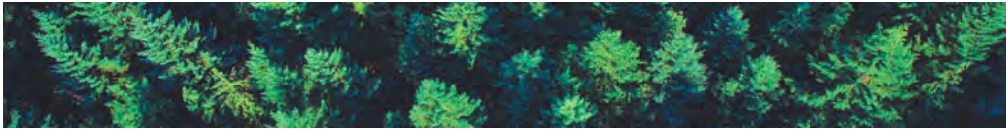
Setting Expectations & Framing

- Not presented or framed as a job shadowing, or a direct method for getting employment
- Focus on career exploration, career clarity, and building connections
- Reframing networking and building connections to not be viewed as a one-sided transaction by mentees
- Use this program as a safe place to practice networking and asking career questions from potential future employers/colleagues
- Recognizing learning and value that can be gained from others, regardless of their specific career path

The Mentee - Mentee Relationship

- Differences between starting degree and nearing graduation
  - "Junior" student typically more interested in learning about different career paths, effective job application tools (resumes, cover letters, interviews, etc.), navigating their degree
  - "Senior" student typically more interested in learning more about the realities of specific jobs, learning about trends in the industry, building their network

- Developing mentoring skills
  - Students act as peer mentors
    - Building confidence as a current (and future) mentor
  - Feedback from "junior" students - enjoyed being able to see/hear what the upper-year student asked and shared in mentoring meetings

- Fostering safe space - interacting with mentor alongside a peer
  - Removing as many intimidating components of the programs as possible

The Mentee - Mentee- Mentor Relationship

- Multi-directional learning, sharing, and expertise – Asset-Based
  - "Junior" and "Senior" designations for students are only meant to signify their year-level within their academic program
  - Lots of knowledge and advice exchanged between students in both directions
  - Consider different perspectives, reflect on their experience

- Learning for mentors
  - What students are learning in their classes, in their summer or co-op work terms
  - What do new professionals value in supervisors, workplaces, and careers
  - What are new innovations and applications that new professionals are being trained on

"I got fresh insights on what a career in the industry means to people and the new kinds of jobs people are seeing." - Mentor

Additional Benefits

Serves as low-stakes and personal introduction to specific organizations for potential future employees

"My mentor provided us with a virtual tour of the City of Surrey to showcase some of the things he works on in his career. He also shared with us his career journey and tips on how to get more involved. He did this on top of checking resumes and cover letters for us!" - Mentee

Fosters a supportive network within and across organizations once students gain employment for summer months or after graduation

"I gained a stronger sense of community and built valuable relationships in my faculty and within forestry." - Mentee

Mentoring can help reduce anxiety and trepidation around networking for young professionals

"I really enjoyed meeting with my mentor and getting to chat with him in person, it felt very personal and was not intimidating, which was refreshing." - Mentee

Feedback from Mentees

- "I started feeling a lot more confident. I just feel a lot more prepared for what's to come, which as first year student from somewhere else is a huge relief."

- "This was a great opportunity to meet more naturalists, knowledge holders, and industry professionals within the Greater Vancouver area!"

- "I enjoyed being paired with another UBC student to the same mentor so that I could form an interdepartmental connection as well"

- "It helped me be more open to different careers that might not necessarily align with my degree."

- "I developed tangible skills this year. My connection with my mentor gave me knowledge that was actually applicable in my classes, and enabled me to bring a unique perspective that also benefited my peers."

- "I liked the flexibility of what we can do with our mentors."

Feedback from Mentors

- "I love sharing my experiences with other people to help them with their journey. People often think to be a mentor, they have to be older and established in their careers. I think it's important to have a diversity of people that can be mentors. I'm also still trying to figure out my career path and I think that is refreshing for mentees to see their mentor also being in the same situation as them when it comes to careers."

- "The program helps me better understand what the students are learning, and the challenges they face."

- "This program is an amazing way to remember why we do what we do. The eagerness and enthusiasm of students is wonderfully refreshing. The greatest satisfaction comes when you witness students accomplishing their goals and know that you contributed to making that possible in some small way."

- "I learn from the students as much as they learn from me."

## Learning Outcomes & Impact – Sample of Assessment Data

As a result of participating in the program (2022):

- 91% of mentees have a clearer understanding of their career goals

- 97% of mentee survey respondents said that they had the opportunity to develop career resources and skills through the program, which included resumes and cover letters, interview strategies/interview practice, networking, and job application strategies

- 100% of mentees have more information about possible career opportunities
- 100% of mentees feel confident contacting people to help advance their career
- 100% of mentees feel that their career goals better reflect their personal interests and values
- 100% of mentees report they built connections with people who can help them develop their career
- 100% of mentees said they are more likely to contact people to help advance their career

- 95-100% of mentors return as mentors for the following year

Student Experience: Abby Herman

- 4th year student, completing a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources and Conservation, major in Sciences + Management

- Participant in Tri-Mentoring for 2 years

- Completed 3 co-op work terms as part of degree
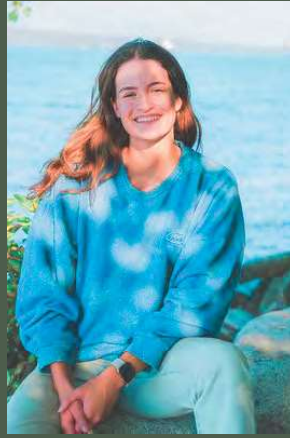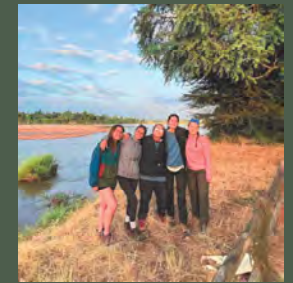
Mentorship Development

- Training vs. Mentorship in past work experiences
- Development of skills and confidence through Co-op and Tri-Mentoring
- Leadership training among these opportunities and relationships
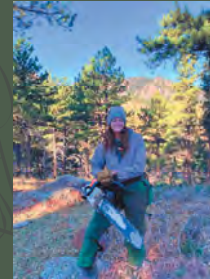
Fire Mitigation Crew Member with City of Boulder

Communications and Information Assistant with BC Wildfire Service

Mentorships among peers

Quick Recap:

- Asset-based approaches value both mentees and mentors' strengths and experiences & creates multi-directional learning

- Growth mindset approach and mentoring
  - Provide opportunities for intentional reflection to recognize development

- Valuable weak ties can be developed through mentorship

- Flexibility in mentoring can be highly effective

- Pairing two mentees with a mentor fosters a less intimidating dynamic → lower barrier for participation, and greater learning and relationship building

Questions?

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