

## Message to the Members of the Women's Dermatologic Society

To Our Valued Members,

Many of you are aware of the controversy ignited by an article published in *Nature Communications* by authors at New York University Abu Dhabi on the influence of gender in mentoring relationships in scientific fields. The methods and interpretation of the data are being scrutinized, but led the authors to conclude that informal mentorship by women is detrimental to the careers of mentors and mentees. The Women's Dermatologic Society (WDS) wants you, our valued members, to know that mentorship including mentorship by women is critically important to the advancement of women and is core to our mission, vision, experience and strategic planning.

The WDS mission is to cultivate the personal and professional development of women dermatologists dedicated to excellence in patient care, mentorship, volunteerism, and leadership. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to support women has become even more important as women in general have been disproportionately impacted and are leaving the workforce in much higher numbers than men.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, to meet the increased demands on our members, the WDS began converting our member benefits, programs and events to virtual formats. Our long-standing Mentorship Award Program was adapted and this year's awardees will learn and be mentored remotely. In addition, the WDS has held our Networking Panels virtually concurrent with other professional society meetings to support continued professional development. We have heard your positive feedback on this work and are planning for virtual formats to continue as long as they are of value to our members.

In addition, the WDS developed new virtual programs including our Resident Education Series. These lectures are available on the WDS website for members to access 24/7 (<https://www.womensderm.org/residents>). The broad ranging content in these lectures was first intended to supplement dermatology resident education given the severe disruption to resident training in the early days of the pandemic. The program has been so well received that it is being continued at least through Summer 2021. To continue to advance our commitment to diversity and inclusion, the WDS held two highly attended Diversity and Inclusion Panel Discussions and plan for more of these events in support of our members.

Mentorship within the WDS occurs in both formal and informal ways. While it is difficult to fully capture the number of informal mentoring relationships we have supported since the inception of WDS in 1973, we know that more than 1200 women have received formal mentorship through the WDS mentor program and other WDS programs. At first glance, it would seem that the mentees would benefit the most in these alliances through broadening their clinical acumen, leadership development, sponsorship opportunities, and garnering personal pearls of wisdom from mentors. However, mentors report just as much satisfaction and joy in their opportunity to teach, watch their mentees grow, "pay it forward," and oftentimes learn just as much from their mentee in the process.

Members can continue to find mentorship opportunities within the WDS through a variety of channels. A list of available mentors and their areas of expertise can be found at the WDS website <https://www.womensderm.org/>. In addition, the WDS Mentorship Award Program is available annually and provides funding to support projects and long-term mentoring relationships.

Mentorship is also fostered at the annual WDS Forum where attendees have numerous opportunities for leadership training, networking, and personal and professional development. We hope you will join us at the upcoming WDS Forum at The Scott Resort in Scottsdale AZ on October 8-10, 2021. On a personal note, I want to thank you for your support during WDS's 2020 Giving Tuesday. The funds raised will be used to sponsor resident members to attend the 2021 WDS Forum.

The Networking Reception, Diversity Inclusion Networking Breakfast, Annual Meeting and Luncheon, and Legacy Celebration usually held during the American Academy of Dermatology Annual Meeting ~~and~~ are all wonderful ways to network, develop mentorship relationships, and support the WDS. Though we will miss the in-person aspects of these events this winter and spring, we are converting most to virtual formats. The 2021 WDS Legacy Celebration will be held virtually on April 29<sup>th</sup> and we hope you will join us to financially support the WDS and its mission of mentorship.

This year has posed many challenges for our members. We are so grateful that you choose to be members of the WDS and join us in our commitment to support and advance issues relevant to women and their families. We are humbled to serve the strong and talented group of professionals that comprise our membership and commit to continuing to advance our mission and develop creative solutions to meet your needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly Hinshaw". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Molly Hinshaw MD  
President, Women's Dermatologic Society