

Mahsa Pan Uses Her Mentorship Chair Position to Help Everyone Sit at the Table

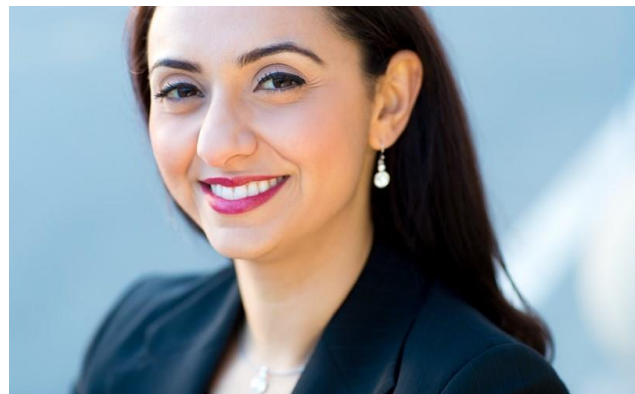


Mahsa Pan, PE, CCM, (WTS-LA Mentorship Chair), Photos by John Livzey, 2018

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.” For Port of Los Angeles (POLA) civil engineer and WTS-LA Mentorship chair Mahsa Hematabadi Pan, PE, that sentiment captures an integral part of the WTS-LA Mentorship Program. But that’s only part of the program’s virtues as she sees it.

“Last year’s program, the Mid-Career Leadership Program (MCLP), targeted mid-career professionals and partnered them with WTS-LA Directors at Large. And it was very successful. This year we want to expand on that and extend the reach. So, we’re focusing on entry-level professionals and pairing them with more seasoned industry leaders. Fortunately, the WTS-LA Mentorship Program provides exceptional benefits for both mentors and protégés. The learning and exposure definitely goes both ways.

“Obviously, the protégés benefit from receiving guidance and advice from professionals already well into their careers. They’ll get to ask questions and truly understand where they want to be in their future. They also get to see women in leadership positions acting as mentors, and mentors can become an inspiration to younger generations in pursuing their career goals. When I see a woman in a leadership position, I can better visualize myself in her shoes. Mentors also get the chance to meet newcomers in the field and establish a network with other mentors. Since we also accepting applications from students, some mentors might even find applicants for internships within their organizations.”



Ms. Pan knows well the benefits of the program. Four years ago she joined the WTS-LA Mentorship Program as a protégé. The following year, she served as a mentor. The year after that, she joined the MCLP, and was subsequently nominated to serve as Mentorship chair. So, her understanding of the program, its goals, and its inner workings is comprehensive.

“Mentoring is an essential part of the WTS mission, and I’m happy to give back through my various roles in WTS-LA’s mentorship programs. I had great mentors when I participated in the program and that was very important. It brought tremendous value for me. That value continues in serving as chair. For

example, I get to meet many WTS-LA members through the program. And I gained greater understanding of the chapter and how to get more involved. It's also helped me professionally. Now, I hope to do the same for others that are seeking advice and guidance. I want to help them grow in their careers by providing interesting and relevant events in this year's program. Being chair also gives me reach into both the mentors and protégés as well."

Ms. Pan also credits her experience in WTS-LA's mentorship programs as being helpful in her work. Managing large infrastructure construction projects for marine facilities, she carries a wide range of responsibilities at POLA including supervising all aspects of public works construction and representing POLA as a point of contact to various entities. In that role, she interacts with many different people at many different levels. She believes the WTS-LA mentorship programs helped her better engage in that role because of the exposure she received to professionals at all levels in the programs. And she also feels the programs offer more than just career guidance.

One of the most surprising aspects of the mentoring program is its social component. Yes, the focus mostly centers on business, guidance, and imparted wisdom. But Ms. Pan explains that there is more to the program than that.

"Not everyone realizes that it's not all business. Business is very social, by nature. And participating in the mentorship program gives you a social component as well. I'm still in touch with my mentor and protégé from my programs. My protégé is actually going to be on the committee this year. And we all consider ourselves friends. That's part of a building a network. So, while the focus is most definitely on business and career advancement, it's a really nice added benefit that you get to find people that become friends as well as business associates."

Ms. Pan has an extensive lineup of events planned for this year. She looks specifically to craft programs that will truly benefit both mentors and protégés including half-day and full-day professional development sessions as well as targeting companies and the Directors At Large to participate in events. For her, one benefit for every participant in the events and the program really stands out.

"The great thing about this program is that it takes everyone beyond the résumé. You send out a ton of résumés when you're job searching or you get a million résumés across your desk. But a résumé is just a piece of paper. When you participate in a program like this, it goes well beyond a résumé. You meet a person. And you get to know them really well. You get to know who they are, how they think, their strengths and weaknesses, and whether or not they might be a good fit for your organization and culture. And that's just invaluable for both sides of the table."

But Ms. Pan also offers a caution. Go to the WTS-LA website and fill out an application soon. Spaces for both mentors and protégés are filling up quickly.