

Introducing a New Stacked Mentorship Model for Equity in Architectural Education

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Mentorship is crucial to the diversification, growth, and agency of the discipline and profession of architecture. If we compare yearly enrollment in architecture (about 8000) to that of other learned professions such as law or medicine (in the tens of thousands), the cumulative impact in each discipline is staggering: by 2020 there were ~120,000 registered architects in the United States; 1.33 million lawyers; 1 million physicians. Although a simplification, the implication is that our capacity to serve society through the built environment (architecture) is one-thirteenth our capacity through social justice (law), or one-tenth of our capacity to serve its physical health (medicine). This disparity suggests that architecture's contribution to a just and healthy world would greatly increase through the growth in the number and diversity of practicing architects.

Founded in 2018, the Equity in Architectural Education Consortium (EAEC) leverages various resources and forms of capital to collectively reduce inequities and disparities for current students of color and other underrepresented groups in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs of architecture. The EAEC consists of eight schools and programs of architecture at: Florida International University (FIU), Hampton University, Howard University, Morgan State University (MSU), Tuskegee University, University of Michigan (UM), University of Oklahoma (OU), and Florida A&M University (FAMU) with the shared goal to ultimately impact the fields and disciplines where our students will take up careers.

For the 2022 ACSA Empower Conference, these authors (Co-PIs and partners of the EAEC) will share the framework, development, and ongoing activities of the EAEC's Stacked Mentorship Program (SMP) by presenting five case study experiences of actual mentors and mentees who have participated in the program. SMP builds upon existing apprenticeship and

mentorship models in architectural education and practice to consolidate a new, *meta-mentorship community* supporting students of color and other underrepresented minorities in architecture. Unique to SMP is the creation of a series of mentorship "stacks" that operate *vertically* at all levels of architectural education and professional development (high school<>college<>graduate<>doctoral<>junior faculty<>senior faculty<>early professionals<>advanced professionals) and *horizontally* across institutions (HBCU<>HSI<>MSI<>PWI<>AIA<>NOMA<>NCARB).

In architecture, our current means to success and meanings of accomplishment are determined by centuries of inherited educational and professional models built upon a white-male-dominant worldview. When of all registered architects who have completed the path to licensure (NCARB certificate holders), more than three-quarters are male (78%), 22% female;^[1] 91% white and 2% Black (with a mere 0.4%, or 532 total individuals^[2], are Black women (NCARB 2019, 2021)), the path of architecture is far more difficult for students and professionals from non-traditional backgrounds who lack access to shared-identity role models and mentors. How do we support and empower students, faculty, and professionals from underrepresented backgrounds to rise in the ranks, when our socio-professional power structures and leadership cohorts continue to be pathologically lacking in diversity? How do we reduce the isolation and marginalization of our students and graduates as they grapple with experiences in the classroom or at firms that many times replicate the homogenous, privileged structures that we are working to dismantle?

The SMP includes five areas of action. Together, they offer a multiplicity of platforms and venues for faculty and students to situate and advance their disciplinary interests in collaboration with peers in other institutions. Beyond the classroom and institutional structures, connecting with alumni is also a critical element in this initiative: alumni know our institutions and bring

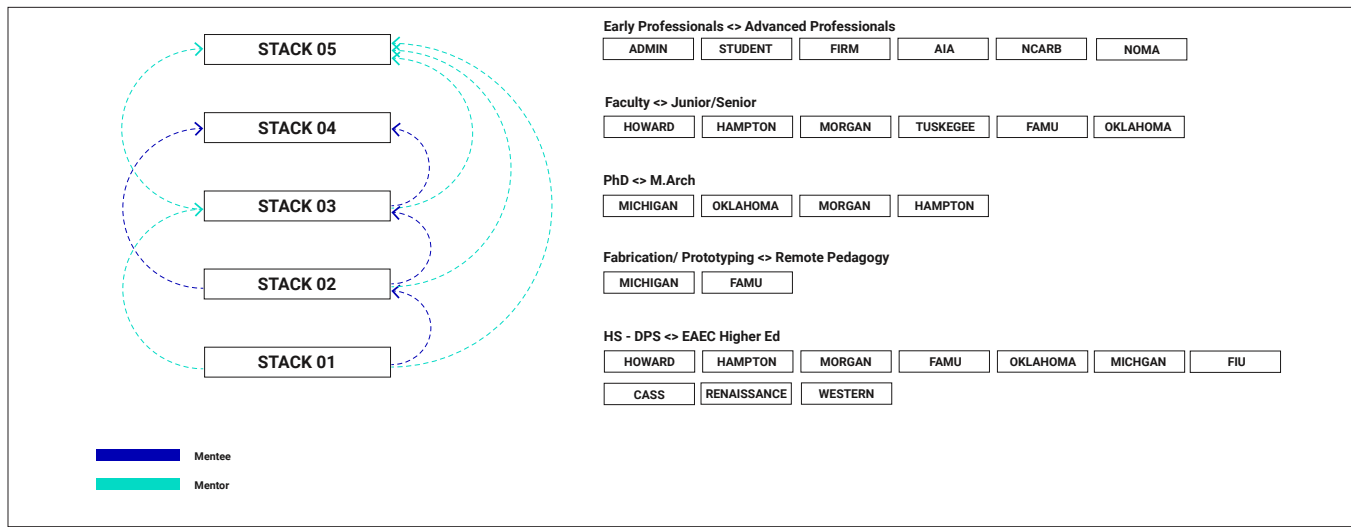


Figure 1. Diagram of the Stacked Mentorship Model; In this model, mentors and mentees move vertically through the stacks, and institutions collaborate horizontally. Partner Institutions that form part of the EAEC are listed to the right of the stack; Image provided by the EAEC.

a unique understanding of the challenges our students will face in their journeys through professional practice. Their voices, experiences, and expertise empower our students to imagine themselves being part of many possible futures.

Here next is a brief introduction to the SMP “Stacks” and a preview of each *Stack Case Study*, which will be expanded upon at EMPOWER:

Stack 01: Detroit Public Schools (DPS) and EAEC Mentors

Advanced degree-students from EAEC schools serve as mentors to DPS high school juniors enrolled in our College’s ArcPrep Program, a semester-long, immersive course in architecture serving students from three minority-majority high schools in Detroit. **Stack-01 Case Study** traces the path of an EAEC mentor who began as a mentor in Stack01, and now is a mentee in Stack03. *Topics covered: Near-peer mentoring, combining formal and informal mentoring, early mentorship training, shared-identity mentoring*

Stack 02: Remote Methods for Teaching and Learning

Master of Science Digital and Material Technologies (MS-DMT) partnership with faculty and students at FAMU (PWI \leftrightarrow HBCU) to advance new virtual remote methods for teaching and learning fabrication and prototyping concepts; **Stack-02 Case Study** outlines the use of online gaming environments to develop new interactive pedagogies to create a shared teaching and learning workshop. *Topics covered: Sharing resources between institutions; rethinking capital as more than funding dollars; post-pandemic instruction*

Stack 03: Doctoral and M.Arch Mentoring

Doctoral students from OU and UM serve as mentors for three M.Arch thesis cohorts at Morgan State and Hampton University,

in the completion of their first literature review and thesis draft; (HBCU\leftrightarrowPWI\leftrightarrowMSI). Cohorts from four different schools participate. **Stack-03 Case Study** details the process of recruiting mentors, coordinating between two unique M.Arch curriculum/cohorts, and presents post-mentoring assessments from faculty, mentors, and mentees. *Topics covered: Ph.D. faculty training, scholarly exchange between mentors/mentees, redistribution of resources*

Stack04: Faculty and Junior Faculty Development and Exchange

Junior and senior faculty professional development opportunities that include serving as guest reviewers, piloting shared classroom exchanges, and shared research/scholarship; (HBCU \leftrightarrow MSI \leftrightarrow PWI) Faculty from eight different schools have participated. **Stack-04 Case Study** describes the partnership between María Arquero de Alarcón and Carmina Sánchez-del-Valle (PWI \leftrightarrow HBCU) to exchange teaching and learning methods, and research design strategies addressing water urbanisms. *Topics covered: organizational culture of architecture and higher education; faculty development; shared scholarship*

Stack 05: In the Profession and Practice

Upcoming and seasoned professionals come together to build new connections that support BIPOC students’ career paths in architecture and its related fields. **Stack-05 Case Study** shares the structure and operation of mentoring sessions and shared discussion panels between alumni from all EAEC partner schools. *Topics covered: Navigating the structure/politics of the discipline and profession; combating professional isolation and othering; attrition*

ENDNOTES

1. NCARB. “2020GenderCareerStages.” Tableau Public. June 01 2020
2. “The Directory of African American Architects.” October 19 2021

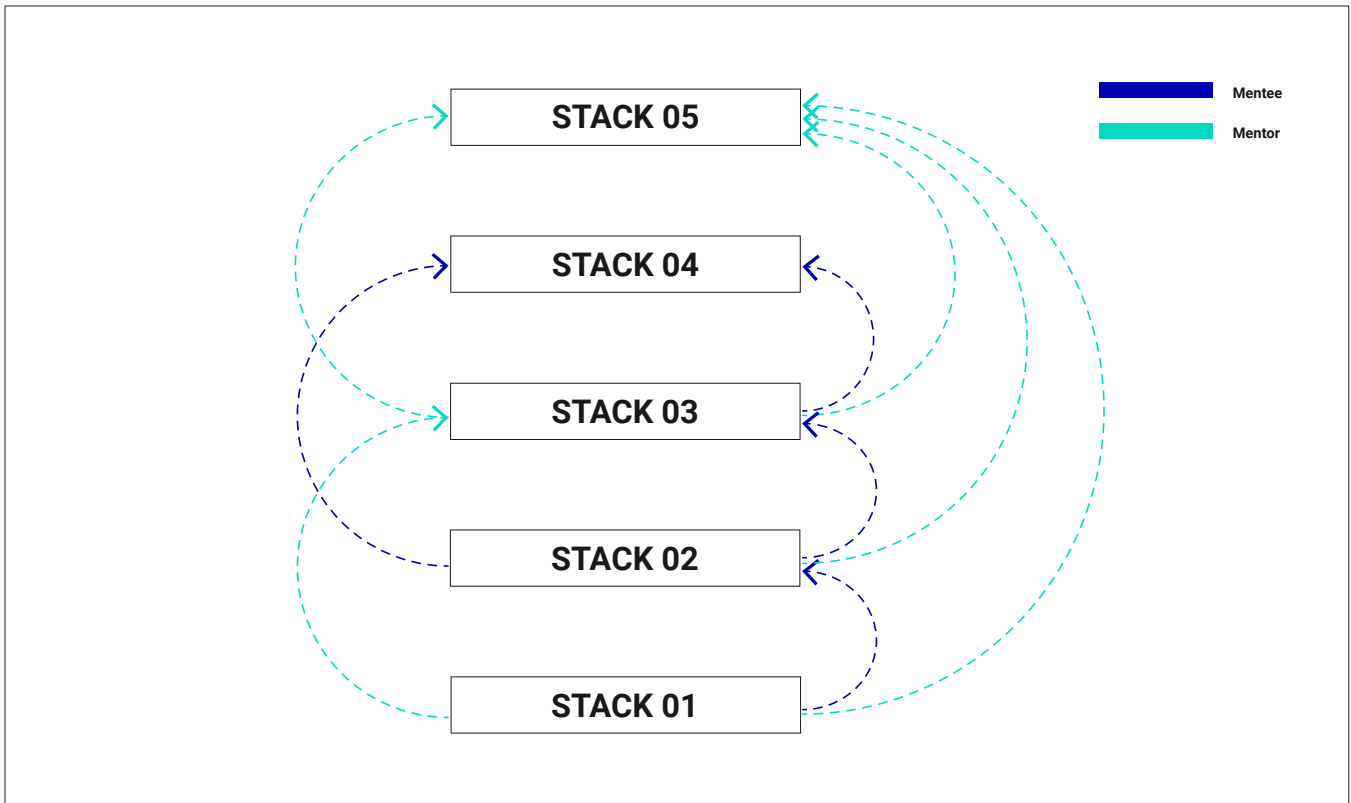


Figure 2. Closeup of stack diagram; Image provided by the EAEC.

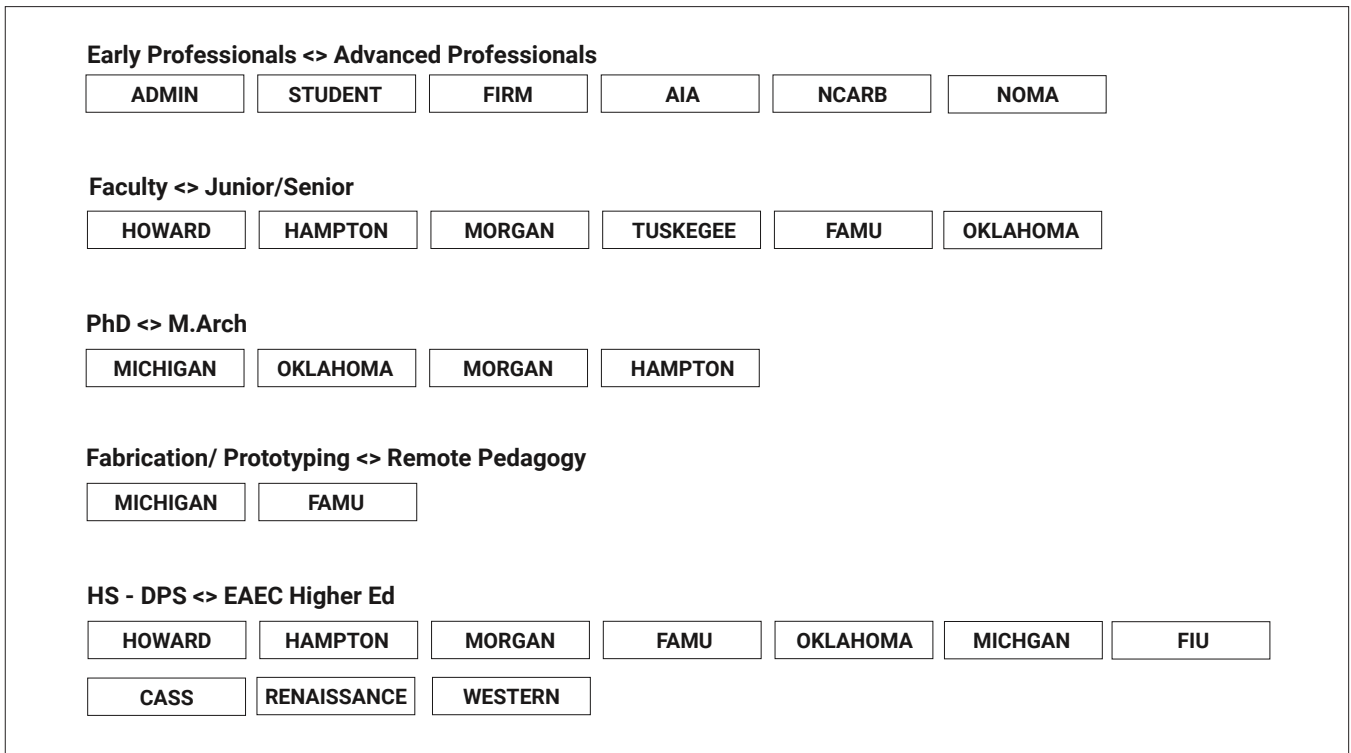


Figure 3. Closeup of EAEC partnerships, moving from Stack 01 through Stack 05 going upwards; Image provided by the EAEC.

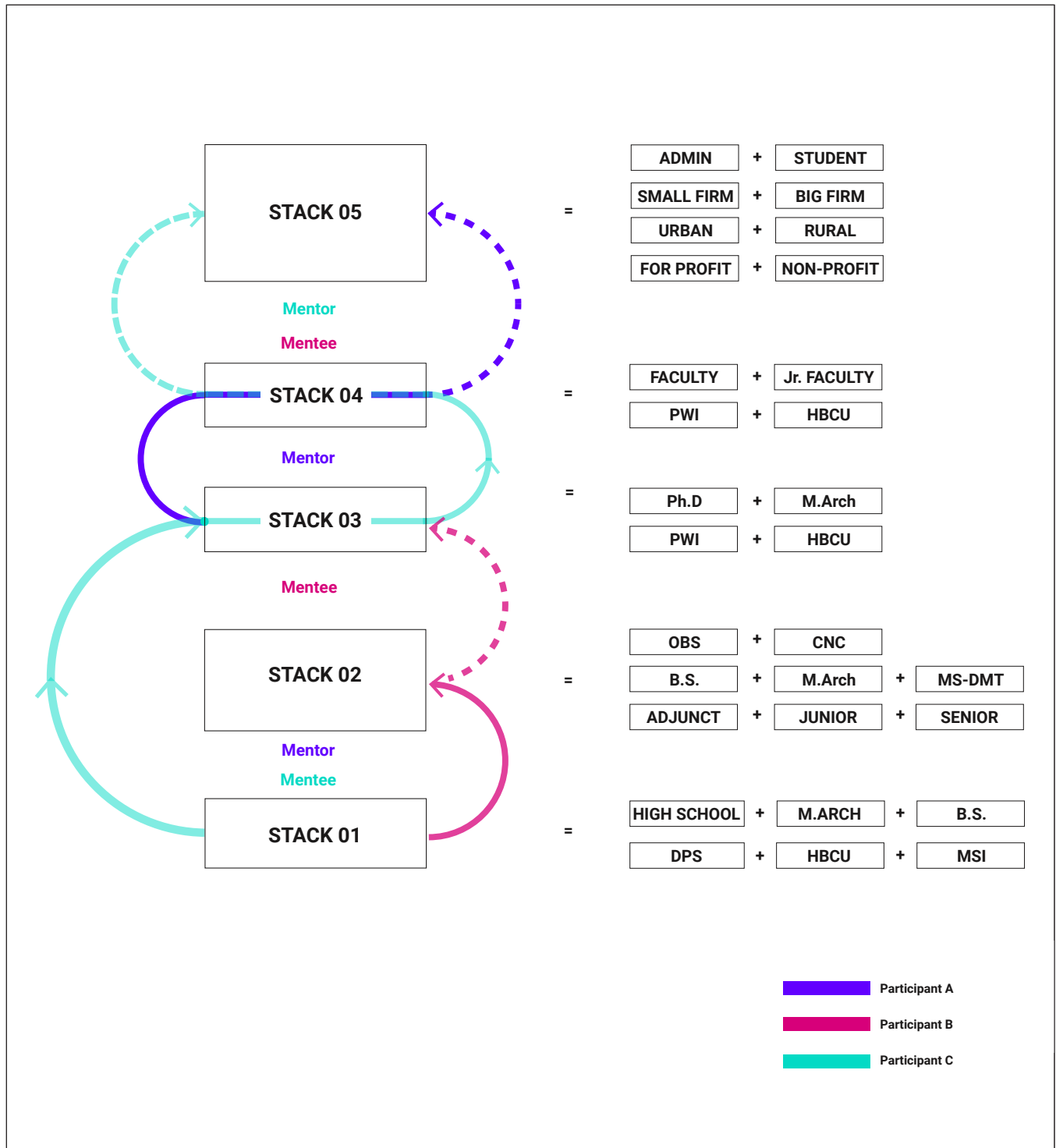


Figure 4. Case study diagram displaying ways that participants move through the stack; To the right is an expanded view of the actual composition of various degree programs + curriculum + expertise that have been involved in each stack to date; Image provided by the EAEC.

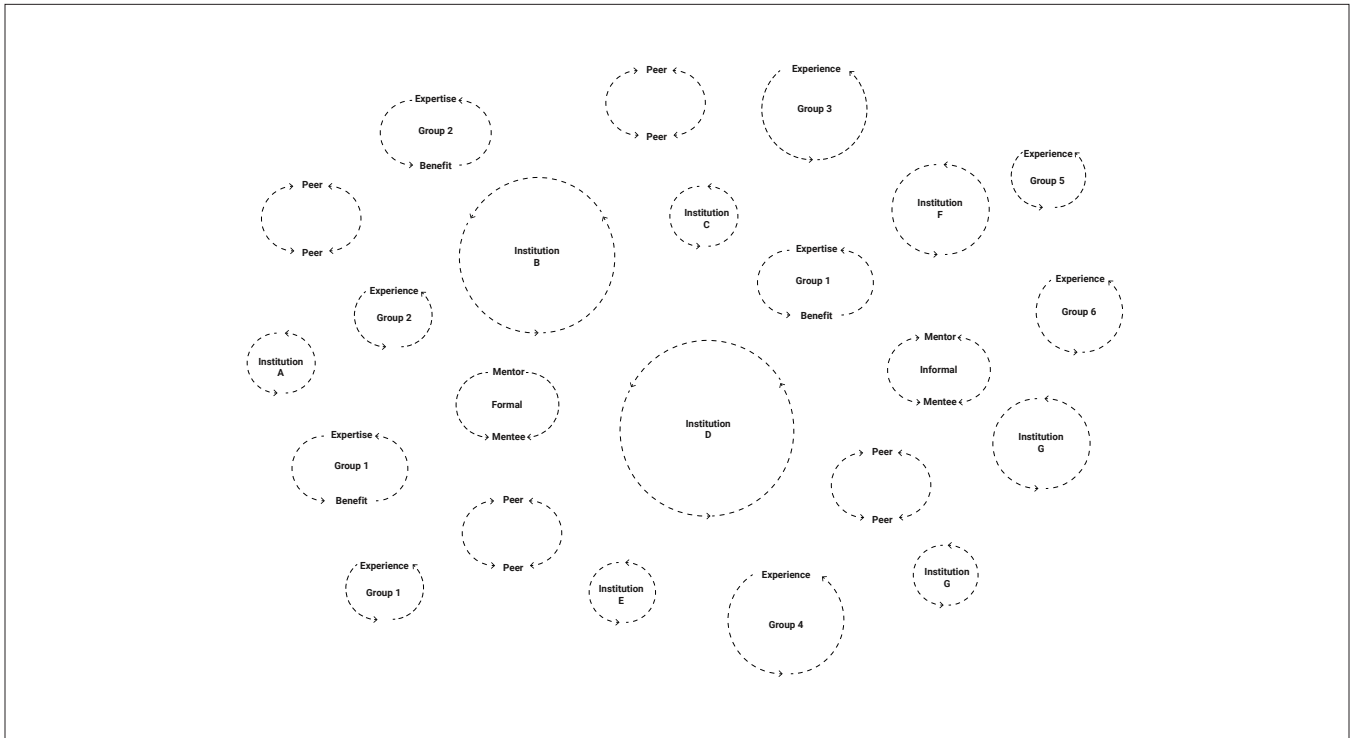


Figure 5. Traditional Mentorship Diagram: In the traditional model, mentorship occurs in many disparate locales and within distinct institutions and organizations. Relationships and knowledge remain separate; new mentoring relationships must be established with each change in organization or rise within an institution. Image provided by the EAEC.

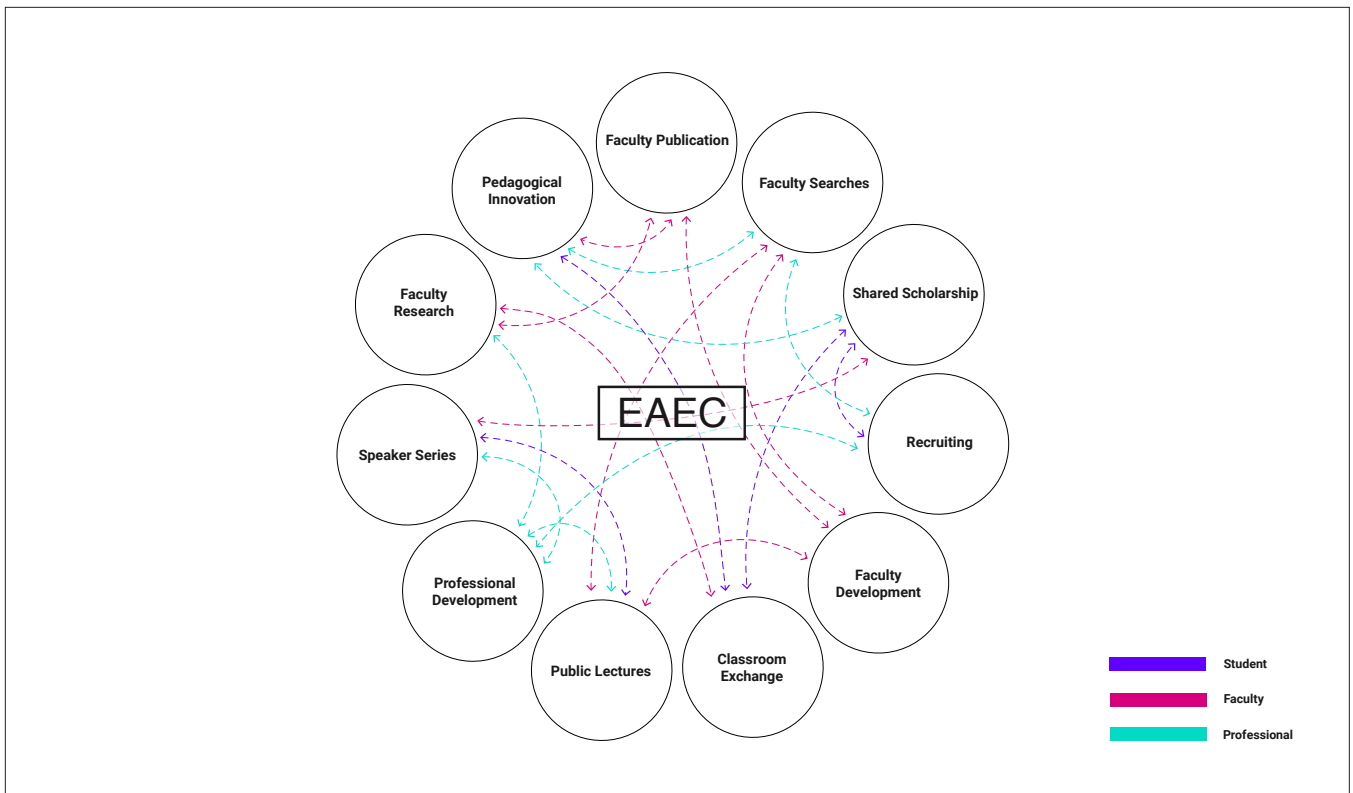


Figure 6. Through the SMP model, the EAEC serves as a hub, reallocating and redefining resources available to individual institutions. Image provided by the EAEC.

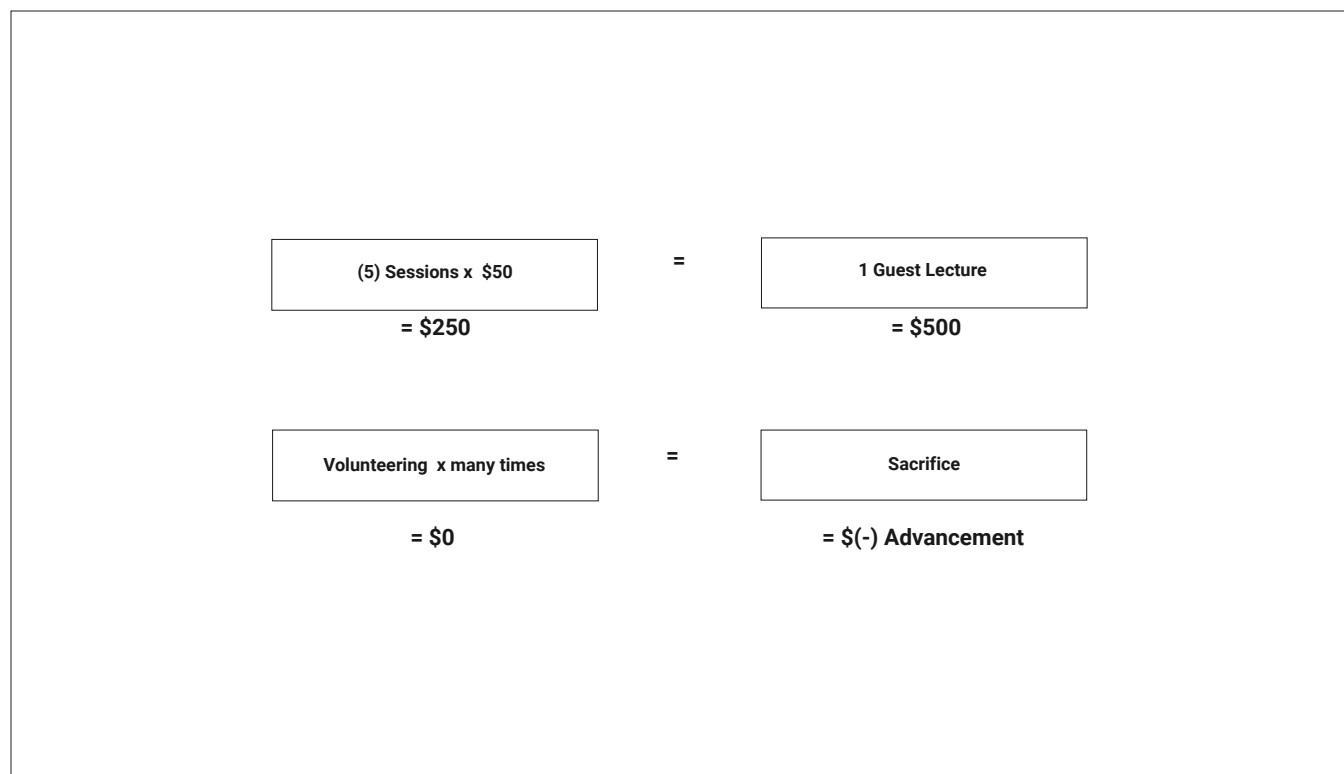


Figure 8. Valuation Diagram: A priority of the SMP is to pay mentors a rate of \$50/hr. To put this rate in context: We bundle total time commitments into 3, 5, and 10 hours for mentors, where participation is capped at \$150, \$250, and \$500. If we compare this to the honoraria and travel budgets allocated to other growth-directed events with guest speakers/experts/lectures, we consider this monetary value (apportioned directly to the future leaders of our discipline) to be a reasonable and invaluable investment. While many mentors would do it for free, is not a viable option for many individuals, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, who most acutely are disadvantaged through structural inequity, and find it impossible or detrimental to their own advancement to participate in this type of work, when unpaid. Image provided by the EAEC.