

# Bridging the Gaps

Developing the first psychedelic career development program for young people



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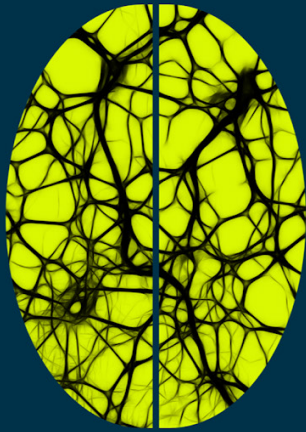
**To those who regularly read** the *MAPS Bulletin*, it will come as no surprise that psychedelics offer significant promise for our healing professions, for our communities, and, hopefully, for some semblance of collective growth. But what of psychedelics as a viable career path? Those of us in the space carry with us our memories of a disjointed pathway, scary decisions, potentially career-ending risks, beautiful synchronicities, and sheer gut instincts that eventually got us here. Those of us who identify as BIPOC and who are part of marginalized communities most negatively impacted by the War on Drugs carry the additional weight of the reality that we also had to navigate around racial trauma, closed doors, and inaccessible dream opportunities afforded to our more privileged peers. Fortunately, for the next generation of us, the pathway need not be so rocky, complicated, scary, or inaccessible. Thanks to those who have paved the way, the road to a successful and fulfilling psychedelic-related career is becoming more clear each day. As readers will see in this *Bulletin*, the increase of psychedelic-related training programs focused on a variety of professions, progressive drug policy reform, and access to telephone support, and new technologies is directly related to the expanding landscape of psychedelics, opening doors of opportunities that were not previously available.

Students for Sensible Drug Policy has partnered with key stakeholders to develop the Psychedelic Pipeline career development program as a global network to connect SSDP members and alumni who are interested in working with psychedelic medicines to quality training, scholarship funds, and career development opportunities, with a deliberate focus on providing access to people of color.

SSDP's Psychedelic Career Development Pipeline, officially launched in 2019, is the first formal pathway for young people interested in working in the psychedelic field. The pipeline provides resources for members interested in all aspects of the field, to include professional skill sets beyond therapy and research that are necessary for the field to develop and thrive.

## Intersectionality and Inclusion

One area of pressing concern in psychedelic science is that of intersectionality. As the field now stands, people of color and those most negatively impacted by the War on Drugs are not adequately represented in training, conferences, and studies (Herzberg



# PSYCHEDELIC PIPELINE

By SSDP

et al., 2019; Michaels, Purdon, Collins & Williams, 2018). We are concerned that there won't be enough therapists of color who can work to heal the trauma of racism that people of color face on a daily basis, much of which is interconnected with the War on Drugs. The pipeline provides a strong opportunity to shift this narrative, and SSDP strongly encourages people of color and all individuals of marginalized communities to participate in building a diverse future of equal access and opportunity.

The Psychedelic Pipeline consists of three primary components: Mentorship, Scholarship, and Training.

## Mentorship

Psychedelic-assisted therapy and psychedelic research are the two most established career paths related to psychedelic science; however, they are far from the only relevant skill sets. If MDMA and psilocybin become legal for therapeutic purposes as many are forecasting, and if interest in psychedelic-related work continues to grow, professionals from diverse disciplines will be needed to support the expanding infrastructure.

Categories of mentorship outside of research and therapy include policy, communications, harm reduction, technical systems, program development, event planning, and more. This list is not exhaustive, and SSDP encourages anyone who has a skill set—or intends to develop a skill set—they see as beneficial to furthering psychedelic medicine to get involved.

SSDP's Psychedelic Pipeline mentorship program consists of pairing mentees with mentors in the field who have similar interests and experiences, or interests and experience that will aid mentees in their career development. Mentors and mentees are expected to communicate at least once per month, focusing on discussion and guidance on career development.

Communication can occur via Zoom, phone, or any other method deemed best, opening the possibility of remote connection. Each mentorship pairing continues for ten months from the start of the program.

Mentors benefit from the program by getting connected to hard-working, passionate, and intelligent young people who are eager to learn from them. Research shows that mentoring is positively associated with job satisfaction, job performance and career success for mentors (Ghosh & Reio Jr., 2013). A mentee could become someone who collaborates with a mentor on a research project, helps a mentor with their website, or can serve as an intern, research assistant, or employee in the future. SSDP Psychedelic Pipeline mentors help pave the way for the future of this growing field.

*"It's an incredible opportunity to help shape the future leaders in the field of psychedelic therapy and research. As the field of psychedelics continues to grow, there will be more opportunities and needs for passionate individuals from a variety of backgrounds and I'm honored to play my part in helping to connect these individuals with their calling through the Psychedelic Pipeline Career Mentorship Program."*

– Wes Hale \*20, MAPS PBC

Mentees benefit from the program by getting connected to professionals in the field who are doing research, preparing to become psychedelic-assisted therapists, running integration groups, doing advocacy and policy work, and much more. Additionally, becoming a mentee may lead to collaboration on research projects, internships, and future employment.

*“Before the mentorship, I felt very isolated in my pursuit of knowledge around psychedelics and becoming a practitioner of psychedelic assisted therapy. Few clinical supervisors or mentors knew much about these topics and/or were not always comfortable speaking with me regarding them. This mentorship has opened a gateway to learning as I have been able to explore psychedelics in a more supported and intentional way.”*

– Nick Chmura ‘19, SSDP Cleveland Ambassador

## Scholarship

If fully funded, the pipeline will also include a scholarship program that will provide opportunities for SSDP members and alumni to obtain funding that can be used to assist with costs of training, attending conferences, and other related career development expenses our members may face as they complete their training to enter the field. Additionally, the scholarship program would allow SSDP to provide compensation or other resources to mentors and other community partners for their time and labor in supporting our members. This scholarship component of the pipeline will focus primarily on providing access to people of color, people from marginalized communities, and people directly impacted or harmed by the War on Drugs.

## Training

The final phase and long-term goal of the pipeline will be to work with existing clinics, research teams, and training programs to develop a formal training consortium consisting of comprehensive hands-on training opportunities which meet training requirements such as clinical hours, practicum, fellowship, or internships for the completion of a degree, license, certification, or academic programs.

The SSDP Psychedelic Pipeline career development program is currently limited to SSDP members and alumni. If you wish to become an SSDP member, ambassador, or to start a local chapter, please complete this form. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, community partner, or otherwise supporting this program, please reach out to Vilmarie Narloch at vilmarie@ssdp.org.

## References

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*The development of the SSDP Psychedelic Pipeline would not be possible without the wisdom, patience, passion, dedication, time, and effort of Wesley Hale, Brandy Irby, Sean Lawlor, Oriana Mayorga, the SSDPers and young people who inspire us, and our own mentors and elders who guided us here.*

## Vilmarie Fraguada Narloch, PsyD.

is a licensed clinical psychologist focusing on integrated treatment of co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. She is an activist working to end the War on Drugs and advocates for science and reality based drug education and harm reduction approaches for all through her role as Director of Drug Education for Students for Sensible Drug Policy. She approaches her work from a harm reductionist and humanistic lens, focusing on the individual needs of the person, group, or community. She received a certificate in psychedelic therapies and research from the California Institute of Integral Studies in 2018, and is co-founder of Sana Healing Collective, which is a 501c3 non-profit harm reduction-based psychedelic-assisted therapy clinic committed to individualized, client-led approaches promoting the well-being of the whole person and community.