



Construction Inclusion Week

2022

GSA strives to maintain a diverse and talented workplace culture, and partners with various Construction and Architectural professional organizations to improve diversity within the industry. Two of these organizations, ACE Mentor and NOMA, work with elementary, middle and high school students to provide exposure to construction professions and create a spark of interest in the field. During Construction Inclusion Week, GSA employees will be showcased as they share their experiences with ACE Mentoring and NOMA and how their involvement has contributed to GSA's workplace culture.

[ACE Mentor Program](#)

Founded in 1994, the Architecture, Construction, Engineering (ACE) Mentor Program of America is a free, award-winning, after school program designed to attract high school students into pursuing careers in the Architecture, Construction and Engineering industry, including skilled trades. Most ACE students (69%) are minority, over 40% are female and one-quarter of ACE seniors entering college are first generation students.

The ACE Mentor program has 75 affiliate chapters, operating in 38 states. Each affiliate has a board of directors, program leaders, and several student teams. Average teams are composed of 15-25 students and led by their volunteer mentors who are professionals in the Construction industry. Each team is set up to emulate an actual design team, with students guided through a mock design project by their architect, engineer, construction management, and tradesperson mentors.

GSA is proud to provide volunteer mentors to ACE Mentoring throughout the nation. GSA employees mentor students as they work towards their final project, introducing them to the careers, industry vocabulary and the various roles companies play in the construction industry.

[NOMA](#)

On February 15, 2022, GSA entered into a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (“MOU”) with the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), a non-for-profit corporation, whose mission is rooted in a rich legacy of activism, is to empower our local chapters and membership to foster justice and equity in communities of color through outreach, community advocacy, professional development, and design excellence. Together, GSA and NOMA aim to promote growth of representation of minority architects and minority-owned architecture firms in the commercial real estate industry; promote employment opportunities for minority architects in GSA; and promote business opportunities for minority-owned architecture firms with GSA.

Personal Stories



Giovanni Diaz

General Engineer

Design & Construction - Projects Program Division

U.S. General Services Administration

Great Lakes Region 5

The Architecture Construction Engineering (ACE) Mentor Program is an innovative way of attracting high school students into careers in the architecture, construction, and engineering industry. ACE’s mission is to inform and excite high school students about career opportunities and support the development of basic and technical skills through mentoring relationships. As a junior high school student at Lane Tech College Prep in Chicago, IL, I got involved with ACE through my drafting class for extra credit which then evolved into authentic interest.

During my two years as an ACE Student, I was awarded scholarships and an internship with General Services Administration (GSA) after graduation. After that summer, I was able to make an impression and was offered a CO-OP internship which allowed me to attend the Illinois Institute of Technology, while working part time with GSA. After graduating with my Architectural Engineering Degree, I was hired full time and have taken the opportunity to become an ACE mentor completing the cycle from mentee to mentor.

I am ACE's mission personified and love the program's approach and for that reason I plan to be part of ACE for the rest of my career. Ever since high school, I always saw myself working in Design & Construction, specifically with Building

Information Modeling which is fulfilling daily. Through ACE I was able to make an informed decision to pursue an Engineering vs. an Architect degree. Having this insight before deciding on a career has saved me a ton of time and money. For any high school Student that is interested in participating in ACE, I encourage you to attend, ask questions and make friends.

Our goal is always to grow and promote to particularly students of color, women, and low-income populations into careers in the architecture, construction, and engineering industry. During my time with ACE, I have met many industry friends and mentors, a few that come to mind are Julia De Rosi, Rachel Bichsel and Shanta Cardiel who were my mentors and introduced me to GSA. They have shown me how to be an exceptional professional and that hard work does pay off.

Counting my internship, my tenure at GSA spans 13 years. Currently, I am General Engineer for Design and Construction and appreciate the opportunities to have done details as an Asset Manager, Contracting Officer Representative and Architectural/BIM reviewer. My 5-year goal is to become a BIM Manager for Region 5 and improve and effectively utilize our Smart Building Information.

The ACE Program was my steppingstone to GSA and I am grateful for the partnership.



Nadiyah Scarlett, LEED ® AP

Director, Capital Projects Division
Office of Design and Construction
U.S. General Services Administration
National Capital Region

The Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE) Mentor Program for me has been a very rewarding experience. I truly enjoy making an impact in the community and in the design and construction industry.

After I completed college, I was hired by Turner Construction and started my career in the Washington DC area working with a Turner Subsidiary called Tompkins Builders. It was there where I was introduced to ACE. Mentoring has played a big role in my career path. Alongside my parents, I've had many mentors over the years that helped to shape me into the woman I am today. So, once I found out about ACE, I was very eager to get involved. I served as the Lead Mentor at Suitland High School in Suitland, MD for 7 years. I have valued the opportunity to share my knowledge and skills of the design and construction industry. I had the pleasure to work with co-mentors in leading activities, creating opportunities for tours and site visits, and helping the students prepare for the end of the year Capstone project. I also enjoyed sharing my career path with the students. I initially was drawn to architecture as a student because I loved technical drawing and creating spaces. While in college I interned at an Architectural Engineering firm in Virginia Beach called Pace Collaborative. It was there where I was introduced to engineering. I really enjoyed this work and decided to study Architectural Engineering. A later internship with Struever Bros., Eccles & Rouse on a historic tobacco campus in Durham, NC introduced me to construction, and it was there, I fell in love! With ACE, I was able to share this love for the built industry with my mentees.

My involvement with ACE afforded me a great opportunity to network with others in the design and construction industry. I met several GSA employees working through the ACE mentor Program. I learned a great deal about GSA through this network and in 2012, I decided to join GSA as a Project Manager in the Office of Design and Construction. Throughout my career at GSA, I have managed multiple projects (leased and owned), served as a Project Executive in the Capital Projects Division and Leasing Project Management Division and I currently serve as the Director for the Capital Projects Division. I can truly say that my network in the ACE mentor program impacted my decision to join such a great organization. GSA is well represented in the ACE Mentor Program. Since joining GSA I have served as a

mentor at Friendship Tech Prep. in Washington, DC and I participate as a judge annually at the end of the year capstone projects for DC, VA and MD. If I could offer a piece of advice to any students seeking participation in this program it would be to get involved. You will learn so much about one of the largest industries in the nation. There are many career roles within the industry and different avenues to achieve them. The most rewarding experience for me as a mentor has been to see many of my mentees working in the industry today. One significant change I'd like to see in the program and in the community is to bring more awareness to the construction trades, apprenticeships, and trade school. The trades provide an excellent opportunity to progress and develop your career. It's another option to have an impact in the industry for those who are unable to attend a 4 year university due to the increased costs. In the trades, there are opportunities to learn new skills, move on to more advanced skills and in time, have the chance to run construction trade firms.

I am grateful for the opportunities the ACE Mentor Program has provided me to give back and make a difference.



Tracie Cabler

Architect

Architecture & Engineering Division (A&E) Architecture Branch

U.S. General Services Administration

Sunbelt Region 4

The National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) has been a tremendous organization for my personal and professional development. Founded in 1971 by 12 Black American Architects in Detroit, NOMA was founded to promote and advocate for Black and Brown Architects through outreach, community activism, professional development, and design excellence.

As an undergraduate student at the University of Virginia, I joined their NOMA student chapter and served as Secretary. Though our committee was small, we worked together to learn about the history of NOMA, increase our membership, and educate our peers about important Black and Brown Architects in U.S. history - figures often missing from our course textbooks.

One of the most pivotal moments for me as an undergraduate, was when our chapter attended the annual NOMA Conference in Atlanta, GA ([2011](#)). There were several hundred Architects in attendance that year, and it was the first time I'd been surrounded by so many in our profession who looked just like me. I became exposed to Architects like Jack Travis and Phil Freelon (rest in peace), as well as the many Black owned Architecture firms based in Atlanta. The impact it had on my development cannot be overstated, as I moved to Atlanta two weeks after graduation (c/o 2013) and have called Atlanta home ever since.

I've been blessed to work in my field since 2013, and NOMA has continued to provide inspiration, education, and a way to give back. Seeing how much emphasis the organization placed in education and activism, may have been the initial fire that inspired me to volunteer. I've been an active volunteer with several organizations over the past ten years and have my peers and mentors in NOMA to thank. The organization continues to stand as a beacon of hope, excellence, and advocacy for its members, and I'm grateful for the opportunities they continue to provide and the newly formed connection to GSA.



Mark Banks, CCM

Project Executive

St, Elizabeth Campus Redevelopment Project

Office of Design and Construction

U.S. General Services Administration

National Capital Region

The Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE) Mentor Program has been an extremely rewarding experience for me. I genuinely enjoy making an impact in the community and in the design and construction industry.

After working in the industry for several years in the Washington DC area with many of the top construction management firms, I was introduced to ACE. Getting the word out regarding the opportunities that exist in the ACE industry has been a passion of mine for many years, especially with the youth in my community. I was very eager to get involved and served as mentor for eight years and served as the lead mentor at Calvin Coolidge High School in Washington D.C., MD for over five years. I valued the opportunity to share my knowledge and skills of the design and construction industry with some very talented youth. I had the pleasure to work with co-mentors to lead activities, create opportunities for tours, site visits, and help the students prepare for entry into college. I also led the students to present very impactful end of the year Capstone projects. Sharing my career path with the students helped shape their decisions about careers and college.

I initially was drawn to the industry as a child working with my father who was a masonry contractor. I learned how to draw floor plans and details and was fully immersed in the work, which led me to study Architectural Design. I continued the passion as an adult up to this day in various capacities in construction management and as an owner's representative.

My involvement with ACE afforded me a great opportunity to network with others in the design and construction industry. In the Federal sector, I have managed multiple projects (leased and owned), served as a Director of Project Management, Project Manager, Trial Expert, in the Capital Projects Division and Leasing Project Management Division and I currently serve as the Project Executive, St, Elizabeth Campus Redevelopment Project an over \$3 billion dollar campus redevelopment project. I can truly say that my network in the ACE mentor program impacted my career and allowed me to reach hundreds of young, aspiring

young persons, some who have gone on to become architects, engineers, and construction professionals.

If I can offer a piece of advice to any students seeking participation in this program, it would be to get involved. The exposure will impact them forever as they learn so much about one of the largest industries in the nation. There are many career roles within the industry and different avenues to achieve them. One meaningful change I would like to see in the program and in the community is to bring more awareness to the construction trades, apprenticeships, and trade school. The trades provide an excellent opportunity to progress and develop careers. It is another way to have an impact in the industry for those who are unable to attend a 4-year University for whatever reasons. In the trades, there are opportunities to gain experience, new skills, move on to more advanced skills and in time, possibly move on to own and operate construction trade firms.

I am grateful for the opportunities the ACE Mentor Program has provided me to give back and make a difference.