

## 2020 Sculling Mentor Feedback

2020 Sculling Mentors offered the following responses on how to improve the sculling Mentoring process as obtained through the 2020 Sculling Mentor survey.

### Suggestions to Improve Mentoring Process

#### Establish Mentoring Guidelines/Best Practices:

- Develop some best practices/lore on sculling for reference on the WRRA site or other location for all scullers.
- Require newly certified scullers to have a certain number of times/months of experience before they can become mentors.
- Good to have an idea of what level each sculler is at
- Mentors should be given a bit more guidance/overview on how to deal with situations such as freighter passings, what to do if someone you are mentoring flips, and other situations that might arise. Obviously people should know these things from being certified scullers, but it would be good to have a basic cheat sheet guide of sorts so that mentors are all on the same page as to what is expected of them.

#### Understanding New Sculler Abilities:

- It would be great to know what a person needs to work on -- this could be done with a checklist or short message from the coach.
- Develop checklist for skills to make sure that mentor and sculler know what needs to be learned and best practices. This avoids the assumption that a person who is a fast sculler also knows how to manage the river competently. These are two separate skill sets.
- By the end of the season we had a sheet with info on each sculler and their level. That being updated constantly is very helpful. Also when making sure new scullers know the needs of sculling in the morning and where to get appropriate lights.

#### Match Mentor and Mentee Abilities/Coaching

- Matching folks based on ability seems important. Keeping scullers with coaches until they are safe to be with other mentors and communicating that also seems important.
- Matching mentors and mentees carefully including keeping some mentees with coaches until they are ready to move on.
- Better pairing of new scullers with skills or strength capabilities
- Limit it to no more than a 1:2 ratio, and that for only the most experienced mentors

#### Give Mentors Perks:

- Give mentors who are general scullers priority for equipment reservation.

#### Equipment Issues:

- Best would be a virtual blackboard with the available boats and times taken. Finding open boats was a challenge

#### Misc.

- Access to launches for those of us that are also coaches. Much easier to mentor small boats from a launch than from a 1x.
- Making a stronger effort to get experienced scullers to volunteer for mentoring
- Make it clear to scullers needing mentoring that mentors are not coaches.

## **Suggestions to Encourage/Incentivize more people to become Mentors**

### **Offer WRRA Perks:**

- Offer volunteer hours:  
*(Mentoring does count toward WRRA volunteer hours—but not all are aware of this)*
  - Offer it as one way to accumulate volunteer hours.
  - I think the volunteer hours are helpful
  - Not sure if it counts toward volunteer hours but that would be great.
  - Allow the hours to count towards the WRRA volunteer hours requirement (which did happen in 2020.. but that was the first year that mentor hours counted towards WRRA volunteer hours).
  - Continue giving mentors volunteer hours for the time they spend mentoring.
  - Continue to offer volunteer hours for mentors.
- Priority use of WRRA equipment:
  - "Give the mentors who are general scullers priority for equipment reservation at peak times.
  - If possible, give mentors priority for club boats if they are mentoring someone.
- Other:
  - Continue to recognize mentors in club communications.
  - Discount on their membership fee or all volunteers hours earned.

### **Approach experienced scullers to mentor specific new scullers:**

- Asking scullers individually to mentor one specific person with whom they would be well matched or well qualified to accompany.
- One-to-one matching and asking scullers individually to mentor specific scullers

### **Sculler Workouts/Benefits:**

- I think a barrier to mentoring is that experienced scullers want to do their own workouts. I have found that it is very possible to do your own challenging workout, even while mentoring slower and novice scullers. You just have to think about it a bit differently, perhaps turn around more often so as not to get too far away from your mentee
- Stress the technical benefits to becoming a Mentor. Rowing slower gives the Mentor the opportunity to work on technique and do drills while rowing with newer rowers.

### **Specific Days/Times:**

- Also, have mentors provide specific days and timeframes they are available, even if it's just once or twice, and assign the new scullers to them. That may encourage people who only wanted to mentor once or twice if they didn't have to deal with all the calls and emails from new scullers.

### **Mentor/New Sculler Meet & Greet:**

- Also - (once we get out of the pandemic), host gatherings so that interested scullers can meet potential mentors/coaches.
- Consider, when it is safe, to have a sculling get together that includes a short discussion where mentors and mentees talk about their experiences with mentoring. Take questions and promote discussion.

### **Misc:**

- This has always been a challenge. Wish I had suggestions
- Though it's worth recognizing that not all folks want to or feel comfortable with mentoring.
- For me my love of rowing and teaching others is enough but my time is limited.
- Guilt and shame—sculling is a religion and we should use what works for the other religions ;)

## **Suggestions on how to improve access to WRRA shells during peak times**

### *Encourage Atmosphere of Equipment Sharing*

- There was a culture of sharing among some scullers, and choosing not to scull each day to give others the chance to do so. Cultivating that actively seems key and encouraging conversation around that informal culture so that it spreads.
- Encourage a culture of sharing and thinking of others, which was present among some, but not all, new scullers.
- Rotate scullers through peak vs non peak times weekly.

### *Enforce Current Rules:*

- It is fair if it is enforced
- The rules currently limit reservations during peak times to 2x/wk.
- Not sure how the process works now, but I believe "first come, first serve" is best.
- Current reservation guidelines are that scullers can reserve boats 2x/wk during peak times-those times could be expanded to create more of a limitation.
- The problem is not the rules so much as enforcing them. There were several times that the time limits and/or advance sign up rules already in place were not followed and there was seemingly no effort to rectify it.

### *Impose Limitations:*

- Limit scullers during peak times
  - Limit people to having access only once or twice a week during peak times so the same people can't monopolize the equipment during those hours.
  - Limit how many times a week that one individual rows and/or limits on prime time to the same rower.
  - Put limits on how many times a general sculler can take out a shell at peak times on Saturday or Sunday each month. Seems like a nightmare to track and administer.
  - Based on number of rowers allow a fixed number of peak times and non peak times every week.
  - Not allow the same sculler to request the same boat more than two times in the same week at the same time of day.
- Sign out one week in advance:
  - Not allowing people to sign up more than one week in advance was also good.
  - Only allowed to sign up a week in advance and only after you come back in and signed back in.
- Perhaps expand the hours that designate peak times to include more sculler outings.
- Time limits were good (1.5 hrs/session).
- Don't schedule organized coached or mentored sculling during peak times.

### *Incentives:*

- "Give priority to mentors or other people who have a high number of equipment maintenance (or other volunteer) hours.
- Give discounts/incentives to general scullers who scull during non-peak times. "

*Boat Reservation System:*

- Stress importance of cancellations:
  - Probably—for the most part it worked and most didn't abuse, but given scarcity and when a boat was signed up for and not used...that was annoying since sat and Sunday there were many closed out
  - People who sign boats out should understand the importance of cancelling their reservation if unable to keep it. There might be a time limit after reservation time when a scull may be made generally available if the reserver has not shown up
- More transparent reservation system - better enforcement of reservation system - now there are no penalties for a violation
- The present sign out system worked fair...it lacked the ability to quickly identify when boats were open unless you went time to time. A visual blackboard/spreadsheet would be better but I don't know of a product to do so
- Make sure everyone who uses the boats signs up for them. Learn to scull & other clubs (Beaumont etc.)
- Some sort of visual control system so that everyone can see if shells are reserved... might help reduce reserved equipment being taken by another program (who then tells you that they didn't know the shell was already reserved)

*Rent/Borrow shells from others:*

- Some private scullers may be willing to make their shells available to selected individuals.
- Perhaps sculls could be rented from the schools who have them or from the Foundry
- Consider contacting boat owners who don't scull often about a program where their boats are made available to scullers who have, for example, at least 3 years of experience -- this might be structured creatively with rental agreements/signed waivers, etc. "
- Collaborate with schools that have equipment. Rent from boat manufacturers.

*Misc:*

- Look at shell usage over the past year and make realistic projections about usage and capacity. I know that the club wants to maintain a robust membership and program availability, but there has to be an awareness of what the limits are - and maintain the limits or acquire new equipment.
- Seemed to work fine

**Additional Comments from Mentors**

- Guidelines for new scullers to not mentor immediately may be helpful, although I did so following certification.
- Mentoring was fun and a good learning experience.
- Let's try to keep the good momentum going here
- Thanks for all you do for the sculling program. I think you all on the WRRA board have been very creative and responsive to the needs of the members -- the sculling program has really benefitted from your commitment and hard work.