

For a Given, WTS-LA Proves to Be an Investment with Unlimited Returns

PRESIDENTS 30TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES



Sheila Wray Given (Stantec Principal Sheila), Photos © John Livzey, 2015

For Stantec Principal Sheila Wray Given, serving as WTS Los Angeles president from 1998-1999 was a privilege that provided greater benefit than she could have ever imagined.

“WTS sets itself apart from other organizations because it provides leadership and growth opportunities that are often not found in many companies and agencies. If I had to narrow it down to a list of top four benefits as an active member and/or board member of WTS, it would be access to transportation leaders, leadership and growth opportunities, networking with teaming partners (competitors and clients alike), and visibility as a professional and for my firm. The greatest lasting benefit of being WTS-LA president was the long lasting and wonderful personal and professional relationships I developed over the years that have meant so much to me.”



At Stantec, Given serves as the California Transportation Business Development Leader, where she advances Stantec’s already considerable transportation presence in the region. With 14 offices in Southern California alone, Stantec clients include Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Southern California Regional Rail Authority, California Department of Transportation, Orange County Transportation Authority, and Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority. Given credits her time as WTS-LA president with helping her learn to foster collaborative relationships and partnerships, and develop additional leadership skills she considers crucial to growing Stantec’s transportation practice.

“As WTS-LA President, I had the honor of working with many of the top, talented people in Southern California. But I was also fortunate to practice new skills like creating a business plan with simple and achievable goals, rallying a board around a business plan, holding stakeholders accountable, recognizing and celebrating achievements—the list goes on. Also, if you can learn to encourage and motivate an all-volunteer board, that is fantastic preparation for learning to work with and motivate people in virtually any environment.”

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The lessons didn't stop there. Given also gained great experience in implementing innovative programs during her presidency. And this served her well in several ways.

“One of the things I am most proud of was our board's *Shaping Our Success* campaign. It was developed to increase membership, attendance at programs, access to leaders, and involvement in the scholarship program. The program used tools such as positioning, recruitment of senior-level women and men for the board, media placements, new collateral material, expanded corporate sponsorship, enhanced communication with our members, and top speakers and programs. And it worked. We achieved all of those goals and many of our marketing pieces were endorsed and later used by WTS International. So not only did it help the chapter, but it also gave me fantastic experience in designing and executing a program.”

In addition to being WTS-LA president, Given also served two terms as a WTS International board member. She continues to serve as a senior advisor to the LA board. Though she cherishes her leadership roles within WTS, it is the essence of the organization that strikes the deepest chord within her.

“Over the years, I have been involved in the WTS-LA high school outreach and scholarship programs. I have spoken at high schools and enlisted others to do the same. I have taken part in a host of other activities from recruiting firms to sponsor WTS strategic initiatives to leading the WTS International Task Force Committee to look at various aspects including diversification. I could only do all of that because I believe so sincerely in WTS and its mission.

“The one organization I have remained committed to during my career has been WTS. It's been an overall commitment to WTS goals and objectives—particularly the advancement of women in transportation. When I joined WTS-LA, I thought it would help my career and I could give back at the same time. But I had no true idea of how much I would gain from it, how much it would give back. And no matter how much time and energy and effort I put into the chapter and the organization, it always returned so much more.”