

In Transportation, WTS-UCLA's Camille Stewart Is in a Class by Herself



Camille Stewart (UCLA master's degree candidate), Photos © John Livzey, 2016

For UCLA master's degree candidate Camille Stewart, transit and transportation is anything but academic.

"I'm studying transportation policy and planning, with a focus on public transit. I love transit and the access and equity it provides. I want to make it efficient and cost effective. Right now I'm doing my senior project, a capstone project, where I'm examining 20 new rail stations that are about to open in Los Angeles County and trying to see if they'll cause displacement and how to deal with that. The stations are along the Crenshaw/LAX Line, the Gold Line, and the Phase 2 extension of the Expo Line."

Transit and transportation was not Stewart's first passion. But her love of transit and equity was born out of necessity and experience.

"I was really into water resource management and sustainability. Then I moved to Los Angeles after school, but it was very hard. I didn't have a car and it was hard to find work because I didn't drive. And I worked for the forest service! But I wasn't alone. I met a lot of wonderful people that also didn't have a car or drive. They couldn't access work because they didn't have a car. At that time, people found it extremely difficult to take transit. A lot has changed since then and you can see the positive effects advanced transit is having on many segments of Los Angeles today. But back then it was different."



Stewart will graduate in June with a degree in urban and regional planning. So, what does she want to do after that?

"I want to do research. I want to get into policy, but I'm open to any role that is central to transportation and equity. Ultimately, I want to be the voice in the room that can help make a difference for the people who don't have the access or awareness to fight for themselves. I know that probably sounds idealistic, but I'm very much a pragmatist."

Stewart is grounded in the hard work and grit necessary to advance "lofty" change. And she credits her experience in WTS for helping to keep her that way. She's a founding member and treasurer of the WTS-UCLA student chapter.



“I first heard about WTS and WTS-LA last year when I was sponsored to attend an event. I thought it was great, but it was hard to get to downtown from UCLA. I did it a couple times during my first year in grad school, but I couldn’t get more involved although I wanted to. Our program at school is about 65% female, but in transit there were only about 10 women. So four of us at UCLA got together and pushed to start a chapter. And it worked and it’s really going well.

“In the couple of months after being recognized, we planned project site visits,

tours of the Expo Rail Yard. We also hosted a career panel where four trailblazing women in transportation spoke about their careers. We have accomplished quite a bit in a very short amount of time. We just voted in a new board, as all of us are about to graduate. But that is exactly what WTS is all about, creating a lasting vehicle to help other women who follow you.”

Stewart’s contribution to launching the chapter is substantial. Founding WTS-UCLA chapter president and fellow UCLA master’s degree candidate in urban and regional planning Jewel DeGuzman explains:

“Camille is a great listener. She makes people laugh and feel comfortable and she’s a great writer. Naturally, she has been great at promoting the chapter and events to our classmates. She often stepped in to attend meetings on behalf of the board when other board members and I weren’t on campus. She also helped secure funding for events, which was critical to our success. As one of four founding board members, Camille is leaving a great legacy with WTS-UCLA.”