

## Flowers Helps WTS-LA Mid-Career Professionals Bloom



*Mid-Career Leadership Program (MCLP), Photos © John Livzey, 2017*

Knowledge isn't wisdom. Though study can produce knowledge, only carefully cultivated experience provides wisdom. But both are necessary to advance meaningfully in today's business and transportation world. Fortunately, WTS-LA has found a unique way to impart both knowledge and wisdom to its members. On May 25, WTS-LA hosted its Mid-Career Leadership Program (MCLP) event with Carolyn Flowers. Pairing WTS-LA directors-at-large with mid-career professionals seeking advancement, the MCLP looks to nurture and train the senior leaders of tomorrow. Singular in its focus on mid-career women, the inaugural MCLP provides exceptional benefit for that largely ignored population, as well as those mentoring them.

"Women were getting to a certain point in their careers and getting stuck. They didn't know what to do to advance beyond that threshold. So, former Mentorship chair Veronica Siranosian created the MCLP to create a stepping stone for us," explains 2017 Mentorship chair and civil engineer at the Port of Los Angeles (POLA) Mahsa Hematabadi Pan, PE, also a MCLP protégé. "We have solicited and incorporated feedback from this inaugural group of MCLP graduates and are shaping the program to the specific needs of mid-career women. And combining them with our directors-at-large provides substantial benefit for both groups. Our mid-career women gain wisdom and our directors-at-large refresh their perspectives and have a reach down into the next generation of transportation leaders. It really is a win-win for both."



But Pan added a secret weapon to the proceedings. She brought in AECOM Americas Transit Practice Leader and former Acting Administrator of the Federal Transit Authority Carolyn Flowers to share her experiences in leadership and the transportation industry with participants of the program. A top transportation leader for more than 30 years, MCLP mentors and protégés benefited from Flowers' knowledge and wisdom on a firsthand basis. And that proved to be invaluable.

"I think the greatest value she provided was that she talked very practically on how to be strategic at that level in your career," adds Eric Shen, WTS-LA Director-at-large, MCLP mentor, and Director of Southern California Gateway Office Maritime Administration U.S. Department of Transportation. "For example, she

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explained to the group that they should strategically plan their career path by analyzing their positions every two years. Reflect on whether or not they were happy, growing, and gaining opportunities for advancement. And if not, she offered strategies for remedying that. She also recommended specific, active steps to reach career goals. And that kind of explicit information is priceless and very difficult to find at that level.”

In the facilitated discussion and a subsequent Q&A, Flowers and other WTS-LA directors-at-large covered a wide range of important topics including career trajectory, breaking the glass

ceiling, recognizing career dead-ends, and what advancement really means at the mid-career level.

“It really meant a lot that Ms. Flowers led the discussion,” adds Pan. “Her accomplishments are legendary. And the wisdom she offered, that was echoed and augmented by our directors-at-large, really fulfilled the promise of the premise of the MCLP. It helped further motivate our already highly motivated MCLP participants.”

Knowledge is not wisdom. But both are required for sustained advancement. Fortunately, through the WTS-LA Mid-Career Leadership Program and events like the one on May 25, WTS-LA has found a way to ensure that its members at the mid-career level get exactly what they need to advance.