

2018 \$7,500 Myra L. Frank Memorial Graduate Scholarship: Miriam Pinski



Miriam Pinski (2018 \$7,500 Myra L. Frank Memorial Graduate Scholarship Recipient)

Having entered UCLA's PhD program this fall, Miriam Pinski's interest in transportation policy and planning were shaped by her experience of living in car-centric Los Angeles. To her, it was not exactly paradise. "I continually notice the barriers to mobility that certain groups face as they go about the city: a mother pushing a stroller may be blocked by a telephone pole in the middle of a pedestrian path; an older adult who has difficulty walking may be unable to cross the street before the crosswalk timer ends; a woman returning home late at night may choose to avoid a more direct path that is poorly lit. These are but a few examples of how the built environment can impair people's mobility if the needs of vulnerable groups are not considered in the planning process. Injustice in transportation is not limited to physical obstacles; economic and environmental costs of transportation are other sources of inequity." And for her, that's just the tip of the inequity iceberg she looks to address through her academic work.

Ms. Pinski holds a master's degree (Urban Planning) and a bachelor's degree (Political Science with minors in Urban Planning and Public Policy) from UCLA, where she carried a 3.8 GPA for both. Though having just entered UCLA's PhD program, where she is also under the tutelage of UCLA Distinguished Professor Emeritus Martin Wachs, Ms. Pinski has already made quite an impression.

"I have known Miriam for two years. We worked closely together on a research project looking into travel patterns of inner-city minority and low-income elderly people. She had no prior experience doing analysis of travel behavior yet mastered in a few weeks the complex and poorly documented data sets that result from the California Household Travel Surveys. She had no prior survey research experience and competently co-authored with me a survey instrument, pilot tested it, trained interviewers, and analyzed the resulting data. Though self-confident when performing her assigned tasks, she is modest and self-effacing and always is looking for advice that leads to self-improvement. She writes well but happily sought my edits and never made the same mistake twice. She shocked me by producing individually crafted watercolor thank you notes to send to our pilot interview participants. It appeared that there was no limit to her talents.

"I am at the end of a long academic career and have been fortunate to have served as dissertation advisor to over fifty people, some of whom have become well-known academics and university administrators...when I work with Miriam I see in her the same qualities of commitment, intelligence, and competence that were noticeable on first meeting those who became my most accomplished doctoral graduates."

Though young in years, Ms. Pinski already demonstrates many of the qualities that distinguished Myra Frank. For these reasons and many more, WTS-LA is happy to name her as the winner of the 2018 \$7,500 Myra L. Frank Memorial Graduate Scholarship.