

Metro's Andrina Dominguez delivers on WTS-LA's scholarship promise...



Andrina Dominguez (2013 WTS-LA Ava Doner Memorial Undergraduate Scholarship Recipient), Photo © John Livzey, 2019

Metro senior environmental specialist Andrina Dominguez knows well the value of a little encouragement, particularly when it's accompanied by a substantial financial reward. In 2013, she attended the WTS-LA Annual Scholarship and Awards dinner and won the \$6,000 WTS-LA Ava Doner Memorial Undergraduate Scholarship. Then, she was a senior at the USC Price School of Public Policy pursuing a bachelor's degree in policy, planning, and development with an emphasis in sustainable planning. Today, at Metro, she's celebrating the culmination of her studies and professional ambitions.

"I started as an intern during my senior year of college and worked my way up to my current position. Now, I work on anything and everything environmental and sustainability related. On any given day, I could be working on a CEQA [California Environmental Quality Act] document or out at a project construction site monitoring our regulatory requirements or meeting with Native American tribes in the field or working on planning a project kick-off."

"When I pursued my undergrad degree, I wanted to find a specific industry where sustainability and environmental stewardship were inherent to the organizational mission. I found that with Metro. Just showing up for work as a Metro employee, I'm already doing my part for the region's greenhouse gas emissions. Not only am I working for an agency whose inherent mission is to get people out of their cars and into more environmentally friendly transportation, I'm also helping to make the agency more sustainable and environmentally friendly. It's the perfect combination of what I care about personally and my professional ambition." This is especially true for the past two years, as Ms. Dominguez has been in charge of managing Metro's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan update.



"It's been challenging to chart Metro's path as a climate leader, as we look to reduce Metro's own impact and prepare the agency for climate hazards; but it has been invigorating, as this is what I am most passionate about. It has also allowed me the opportunity to work with a fantastic cross-section of people throughout and outside of the agency. Working at Metro for over 5 years has really broadened my horizons and understanding of the environmental field."

Ms. Dominguez credits WTS-LA for helping her gain access to an organization like Metro. And it all began with USC vice dean and professor and WTS-LA Director-at-Large Jim Moore, who continually raises awareness about WTS-LA and the scholarships it awards.

“The scholarship program was one of the most valuable professional development milestones in my undergraduate career. First, in winning a scholarship I got financial assistance, which is really hard to come by, particularly in the magnitude in which WTS-LA offers. It’s one of the most generous programs I’ve ever seen. But the program is also so deliberate in making sure that young professionals are introduced and integrated into the chapter and the industry. At the [Awards Dinner], I met all kinds of people that I still keep in touch with. It was almost like a transportation industry debutante ball. I was introduced to people, fields, and companies that I didn’t even know existed. After that, I started volunteering at events. I got involved with the Transportation Résumé Book Committee (now the WTS-LA College Outreach Committee) and the Volunteer Committee. I was able to learn more about the industry and its movers and shakers, while contributing to the chapter and getting my name out there. WTS-LA has been an anchoring organization in my career.”

Naturally, she recommends that everyone join WTS-LA. But she has particular advice for students and young professionals beyond scholarship funding.

“WTS-LA taught me how to network and understand that any event could be a forum for networking. I found that volunteering was the easiest way to observe and acquire those skills. You’re there and you’re already greeting everyone. Also, your tag says, ‘Student,’ so people know to be even friendlier to you. You really learn a lot. You also learn about what programs and projects are out there, who’s hiring, and what’s going on the industry. That’s something that’s really hard to find anywhere else. And the longer you do it, the more you learn. But you shouldn’t stop there. Get more deeply involved. Join a committee. Participate more meaningfully. At WTS-LA, you can go from working the door as a volunteer to speaking at events in a very short time. WTS-LA provides great training in a safe, supportive environment.”