

Congratulations to Roxan Rivas, 2020 WTS-LA Stantec Graduate Scholarship Winner



Roxan Rivas (2020 WTS-LA Stantec Graduate Scholarship Recipient), 2020

In many ways, mobility sits at the heart of equity. From jobs to income to health, access means equity and access means mobility. Though young, 2020 WTS-LA \$5,000 Stantec Community College Scholarship Winner Roxan Rivas knows this well.

“I aspire to work as a project manager in a non-profit advocating for mobility justice in disadvantaged communities. For too long, our government and other sectors have disinvested, underdeveloped, and abandoned crucial planning efforts necessary for keeping neighborhoods healthy and thriving. My goal is simple. I will work towards highlighting historical and current inequities in funding decisions so that disenfranchised communities can become advocates, and demand equitable transportation and mobility projects in the City of Los Angeles.”

Armed with an undergraduate degree in anthropology and social welfare from Berkeley, Roxan utilizes both historical and current political context to fashion and drive initiatives, and to take action.

“At Prevention Institute, I am part of three core areas of work: 1) The Healthy Equitable and Active Land Use (HEALU) Network, 2) Violence prevention efforts in Los Angeles County; and 3) the Mental Health and Well-Being Program...Through our HEALU Network, I have had opportunities to bring diverse groups of people together to learn about healthy and equitable planning approaches. Last year I organized an event called ‘Creating Safe, Healthy, and Vibrant Communities through Land Use Planning and Community Engagement, which brought together city and regional planners, public health professionals, and community organizers to discuss approaches to promoting safe and healthy communities in LA County. I also co-hosted a workshop with Yvette Lopez-Ledesma at the Uplifting Women and Girls of Color Conference in Los Angeles...I wanted to create a platform where we could inspire young women of color to become community leaders, particularly in the planning field.” And she has.

Roxan is pursuing her master’s degree in urban planning at CalState Northridge, where she maintains a perfect 4.0 grade point average. When she graduates in May 2021, she looks to combine her passion, education, and experience to improve neighborhood mobility, access, and economic conditions in low-income communities of color, like the one where she lives and was raised. That type of dedication, zeal, and commitment to action is rare. And it’s garnered her some notice.

“As the graduate program coordinator, I monitor the academic progress of all our graduate students. In consultation with other faculty members, I am confident in stating that she is considered to be one of the best graduate students among her 17 peers,” explains Zeynep Toker, PhD, CalState Northridge Urban Studies and Planning Professor and Graduate Program Advisor. But Roxan’s reputation goes well beyond academics.

Toker adds, “In the spring semester of 2020, I was fortunate to hire her as my research assistant for a research project on women’s roles in academia and in practice of urban planning. Her responsibilities include conducting archival research and expert interviews. Roxy has been performing all of her responsibilities diligently and with meticulous attention to detail and with commitment to the integrity of research. Her analytical skills are impressive...I was so impressed with her skills that I asked her to be my research assistant in the summer and fall semesters as well. I consider her more of a research partner than a research assistant...In addition to her outstanding academic qualities, she is a very pleasant and humble person. Roxy has impressed me especially with her steady character. It is clear to me that she has a very bright future. I believe that supporting such a smart and capable woman in the field of urban planning is a privilege.”

And we agree. For that reason and many more, WTS-LA proudly names Roxan Rivas as the 2020 WTS-LA \$5,000 Stantec Graduate Scholarship Award winner!