

If I were to roll my most enduring 2016 WLI Prologis Scholarship and Fall Meeting takeaways into a concise catch phrase, it would most certainly be: “Keep Stretching!” My participation in the 2016 Fall Meeting undoubtedly served as validation of the idea that continually striving to place yourself among high achievers translates into exposure to the most innovative ideas and the networks of people that create them, two invaluable resources for personal and professional growth.

Perhaps the most tangible benefit of my participation in the Fall Meeting was the ability to partake in the Public Development and Infrastructure Product Council. Because of the content-oriented nature of ULI, the product council experience allowed me to engage in dynamic presentations and discussions of innovative funding mechanisms, technologies, and site-specific installations. In particular, a presentation of the implications of driverless cars completely transformed my understanding of urban land organizations and assigned values.

More enduring, however, are the lessons that the WLI program specifically provided to me as a female business leader. Granted, I speak from my own very limited perspective, but I continue to observe many remarkably successful women who are stringent self critics. Too frequently, we hear our peers dismiss often genuine compliments with “Oh, stop it!” or “You’re too kind.” Perhaps more damagingly, though, this dynamic translates professionally into an internal battery of “Am I worthy?” or “Did they make some mistake?” or “Thank you, but I’m not as talented / qualified / intelligent / capable as my new peers” as determined by a recently granted award, promotion, or other merit-based recognition.

Certainly many of my colleagues would be surprised to hear me admit to these insecurities; I have continued—perhaps partially out of spite for these doubts—to strive to outperform expectations and seek increasingly demanding responsibilities regardless of the details of the situation or my other commitments. While the battle has felt insurmountable at times, the WLI Prologis Scholarship Program provided an invigorating validation of the merits of hard work and determination. How refreshing to sit—multiple times within one week—in a room full of women who shared candidly and thoughtfully the challenges and concerns that so strikingly paralleled my own. As it so often turns out, my situation is not so unique after all!

The timeliness of the conference with regards to my current career track cannot be overemphasized. Approximately one month before attending the Fall Meeting, I resigned from the Department Head position at a large engineering firm to start my own company, quite from scratch. Understandably, the doubts continue to swirl; however, exposure to high level professionals, particularly female leaders in the field, willing to confidentially share their own experiences combined with an impressive array of substantive presentations and lectures created the perfect environment to help me make my first company pitches and begin to formulate the confidence required to build a successful practice. I expect to draw on both the knowledge and network developed during my experiences in Dallas for many years to come!