

WLI Essay – Kristine Smale

I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend the ULI Fall Meeting in San Francisco this year. As a Consultant with a primary focus in Florida, I always welcome the chance to learn what is happening in other markets across the country. The ULI Fall Meeting was a great opportunity to do so, as well as network with individuals who work in those locations. As chair of the Women's Leadership Initiative in Southwest Florida, I was very excited to attend the National WLI Steering Committee meeting to gain insight into what other WLI chapters are doing throughout the country. The meeting did not disappoint and I was able to speak with several different women to learn about what programs they offer and how they run their chapters. I hope to bring some of these ideas to fruition in the Southwest Florida ULI chapter.

My highlight of the Fall Meeting was the presentation of the "Women in Real Estate and the Land Use Industry" report. The main focus of the report was how companies can implement a culture that leads to more women holding senior positions within their organizations. Since women make up nearly half of the workforce these days, it is paramount that companies examine how they can best utilize female talent and understand what women need in a workplace to be successful. Challenging work assignments and flexibility are vital to success, thus allowing women the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths within a work environment that is sensitive to many of their other obligations, such as raising a family and elder care. I am happy that my company, John Burns Real Estate Consulting, already implements many of the suggestions found in this report. I also enjoyed the "View from the Top" panel where these results were discussed in further detail, then commented on by leaders within the industry. The best advice I heard was "master the culture within your company".

Finally, the ULI Fall Meeting was a chance to attend the Commercial and Retail Blue Flight National Product Council session. The opportunity to be behind closed doors with senior executives while they spoke candidly about their industry was an experience that will be hard to replicate. Even though the majority of the Product Council members were male, everyone was given an opportunity to speak and each individual's opinion mattered. I was grateful to have Merrie Frankel as my mentor, who is extremely well-respected within the industry and who had some wonderful insight to share with the Product Council.

Attending the ULI Fall Meeting as a WLI Scholarship Recipient was an honor and I look forward to implementing some new ideas within my local ULI chapter. The ULI Fall Meeting was full of pertinent information and emerging trends. I hope to further my involvement within the organization and become a Full Member and hopefully gain a position on a National Product Council in the near future.