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WLI Prologis Scholarship Essay  
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When I first began my career in commercial real estate (CRE) about 14 years ago, in my final interview before being offered the position, I remember the male hiring manager telling me “as a woman in CRE, you will be unique, and there are a lot of opportunities to be successful and become a leader in the field.” At the time, I had very little perspective on how male-dominated the field was, but I soon learned there was only one female CRE lender in our region and there were no female clients. In those early days, while finding many male allies and mentors, female mentors were hard to come by. I also struggled at times with business development and garnering authority on issues.

As I’ve grown in my career, I’ve often thought about what that hiring manager shared. While being a female in CRE has not been easy, I do think it has been an important part of my success. I also agree that women make great leaders. But when you’re in the minority, those opportunities are not as easy to come by. This is where ULI’s Women’s Leadership Initiative (WLI) steps in and provides a critical element in advocating for opportunities, connecting women leaders, and as the group’s strategic plan outlines: *raise the visibility and number of women leaders in ULI and the real estate industry*. This is also why I am personally drawn to WLI mission - I want to bring more women into the field, help other women leap past the struggles that I faced, and achieve success in the field.

I connected with WLI a little over a year ago, when I found myself in a new market, in a new role, with few contacts. I had previously been involved with ULI in Raleigh and Chicago, and one of the first ULI Indiana events I attended was hosted by our WLI group. I immediately realized the group was comprised of smart, successful women who shared my vision for the future of women in the real estate industry. These were the role models and mentors I sought - and that were so hard to come by in my early career.

When I applied for the WLI Prologis Scholarship, my goals for attending the 2018 Fall Meeting were to gain a broader lens through which I could understand the ULI mission, expand my network, and learn from engaged ULI members. The format of the scholarship program easily provided the structure, contacts, and networking to meet these general objectives.

Reflecting on my experience, I think the scholarship provided several personal and professional growth benefits that I didn’t contemplate when applying. First, it provided a deeper connection to WLI’s mission, to WLI Leadership, and to the WLI network. It also provided connections to my scholarship class – an amazing group of women leaders with whom I am honored to be included among. It surprisingly provided a re-connection to Erica Henning, a former colleague who is leading great things in her role on the WLI Executive Committee. And on top of all of this, it provided a connection to a one-of-a kind mentor in Connie Moore – the world could use more leaders like her. I didn’t contemplate the guidance I would receive from these connections on my own professional growth. Finally, the scholarship provided the opportunity to guest on the MF Silver Product Council, which was a welcoming, engaging, and extremely valuable educational experience. It was a great experience that gave me a lot to consider in terms of the next stage in my own career and I will carry that guidance with me for a long time.

That hiring manager 14 years ago was right - “as a woman in CRE, you will be unique, and there are a lot of opportunities to be successful and become a leader in the field.” I look forward to telling more women this narrative and advancing the WLI objectives on both a local and national level.