

Laura Trujillo was the 2013 medical student recipient of the Scanlan/WTS Traveling Mentorship Award. Laura spent two weeks in Boston with Dr. Yolonda Colson in February/March 2013. Here is how Laura summarized her experience:

I spent two weeks with Dr. Yolonda Colson, a general thoracic surgeon-scientist at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. As an M.D., Ph.D., Dr. Colson splits her time between seeing patients and doing research on topics in lung cancer. While her clinical practice focuses primarily on lung cancers in women, her lab is currently researching nanoparticles as a method of targeted chemotherapy delivery to lymph nodes for potential application in the treatment of metastatic cancers and collaborates closely with another lab at Boston University. Dr. Colson generally spent Mondays and Fridays in clinic, Tuesdays operating, and Wednesdays meeting with her lab and working on grants, etc.; however, there was a significant amount of variability in her day-to-day schedule, and there were always rounds to go on, new consults to see, or other meetings or conferences to attend. She invited me to many of these lab meetings, surgical conferences, and multidisciplinary meetings with her. Not only did I learn a lot about surgical decision making and management of patients, but I also saw how a career in surgery involves so much more than just operating on and seeing patients in the hospital – something that I had not had the opportunity to observe prior to this trip.

Moreover, despite the busy days, there was plenty of time to talk with Dr. Colson about everything from her own medical training and path to thoracic surgery to broader topics like medical education and how changes in healthcare funding have affected surgical research and practice. She even invited me out to her house for dinner one evening to meet her family!

After participating in the WTS Traveling Mentorship Program, I feel like I have a better understanding of what a career as a cardiothoracic surgeon could look like. I saw what it takes to be a successful surgeon in addition to expanding my understanding of the world of surgery that I strive to join. As a female medical student, Dr. Colson inspired me to be persistent and realistic in the goals that I set and reassured me that a successful career in surgery balanced with a fulfilling life outside of medicine is entirely possible. This mentorship experience has also highlighted the necessity for mentors in medical education and has underscored the importance, for me, of being a part of medical education in the future. This program was truly amazing! I am so thankful to have been able to participate this year.



Dr. Yolonda Colson and 2013 Scanlan/WTS Medical Student
Traveling Mentorship Award Recipient, Laura Trujillo
Boston, March 2013