

The Women in Thoracic Surgery/Brigid Scanlan Traveling Mentorship Award allowed me the opportunity to visit Dr. AJ Carpenter at University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio (UTHSCSA), spending one month exploring both cardiac and thoracic surgery while getting to know Dr. Carpenter and three women in cardiothoracic surgery (CTS). During this month I witnessed and received the distinct gift of having a female mentor who has paved the way and continues to do so for women in CTS. Our day would typically begin with ICU rounds, followed by faculty teaching, leading us to mornings and afternoons in the operating room. I was able to observe and participate in a wide variety of cases, from CABG to complex aortic repair. The most significant moment in the operating room for me occurred during my final week, in an emergent aortic dissection. In this case, four women stood around the operating table: Dr. Carpenter, one early career cardiothoracic surgeon, one female CTS resident, and myself. Watching this case unfold is an image that I will always remember. Dr. Carpenter expertly taught and discussed her decision-making in each complex maneuver with a comfort and wisdom that reflected the depth of her understanding, and perceptive sense of what each participant may have been anticipating and questioning. Dr. Carpenter's commitment to mentorship is as natural as it is academic, informed by her devoted years of experience, woven with reflection on the encounters she continues to gather.

On many afternoons, I spent time rounding in the ICU with Dr. Carpenter and the female CTS resident. While we discussed the choices made in the operating room and throughout ICU care, Dr. Carpenter took great lengths to explain physiology and treatments, walking step by step through the elements of our management. Her love for CTS is evident and inspiring. My time at UTHSCSA enabled me to speak with women at various points in their training and to gather a more complete understanding of the give and take between pursuit of an academic career alongside life as a friend, mother, wife, and daughter. I am heartened to have come to know women approaching these personal and professional goals, each with their own take and aspirations. I know that these relationships will guide and inform my own decision making as I progress. I am extremely grateful to begin seeking training in time such as this, when women mentors with years of experience are available and eager to share the lessons they have learned. Dr. Carpenter and the women in CTS at UTHSCSA have given me the gift of personal mentorship and experiences that I will never forget. These women continue to pave a way for women in CTS, and I am delighted to be mentored by them. I am sincerely thankful to Scanlan International, Inc. and Women in Thoracic Surgery for making this scholarship possible. Your gift has truly influenced my aspirations in cardiothoracic surgery.