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International Liaison and Scholarships Sections
American College of Surgeons
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Chicago, IL 60611-3211

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Preliminary Report – 2018 ACS and EAST Scholarship for the “Executive Leadership Program in Health Policy and Management,” The Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University

Dear Ms. Early:

I was honored to be chosen as one of the eighteen 2018 Health Policy Scholars for the American College of Surgeons, particularly as I was chosen as the recipient in conjunction with the Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma (EAST), the organization that has contributed greatly to my academic success and the development of lasting relationships and friendships. Programs such as this are key to surgeons developing the skills necessary to bridge public health research with policy, advocacy, and management. Given my background as a trauma surgeon, and my training as a public health researcher and in health finance and management, this course served to further ignite my interest in not only identifying, but in solving the problems facing our healthcare system and healthcare delivery.

The environment could not have been better, from the physical setting, to the amenities and food, to the fantastic group of surgeons of every specialty gathered to learn from the program and from each other. Despite the enormous amount of material, it was delivered in manageable chunks, with practical simulations and group work that brought clarity to the process. Although I had some background in much of the material, I found that the way in which the material was presented expanded my knowledge on another level.

The instructors are all engaging and expert in their areas. The first dinner speaker, John Armstrong started the program with important questions for us regarding our level of involvement in policy. You will find no one who understands the complexities of our healthcare system more than Stuart Altman, or who can recite illuminating anecdotes with such clarity and humor. Robert Mechanic, Christopher Tomkins, Deborah Garnick, and Jody Gittell succinctly conveyed how our system operates in regard to performance measurements, quality, and the implications for CMS and physicians. Jon Chilingirian is a gem who truly cares that we become better people, citizens, and surgeons, and his lectures on leadership were thought-provoking and novel. No one will ever handle a room full of surgeons quite the way Brenda Anderson can, or deliver such a wealth of financial savvy in such a short period of time. The week was capped off with important lectures and exercises regarding conflict negotiation by Jeffrey Prottas and Joel Cutchner-Gershenfeld. Despite an overwhelming-appearing agenda, the week flew by quickly and painlessly!

By far the most important aspect of the program is the ability to connect with emerging leaders within the ACS, but including the vast array of surgical subspecialists. We come from different backgrounds, perspectives, and settings, and the ability to learn from each other and learn together is priceless. I have made important connections and friendships, and look forward to seeing so many new friends at our national conferences.

I would be remiss if I were not to acknowledge the most important person who makes this program go off without a hitch, Linda Purrini. While there are 18 Health Policy Scholars, there were actually a total of 34 students in the program. Her constant updates and ability to keep track of all of us is amazing.

I look forward to continuing my knowledge acquisition in this area, and serving as the Health Policy Scholar for the ACS/EAST, as well as participating in the Leadership and Advocacy Summit next May. I would encourage everyone to consider his or her role in advocacy and policy, and to pursue this or similar opportunities to fill the knowledge gap that many of us have in this area. A chance to cut is a chance to cure, but only when we optimize that chance. It is incumbent on us not only to fix the problem in front of us at any given moment, but to work to

fix the systemic problems that prevent us from optimizing our healthcare system. I am again honored to have been chosen, and will continue to serve in any capacity that I can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Velopulos", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Catherine Garrison Velopulos MD, MHS, FACS