Through the generous support of the DUCIGS Graduate Awards for Research and Training program, I recently spent a week in Gothenburg, Sweden, attending the World Congress of Environmental and Resource Economists (WCERE). The conference, which was held from August 25-29, 2018, brought together academics, professionals, government personnel, and graduate students from across the world for one event, with the purpose of sharing new research and ideas and generating relevant, usable knowledge. As this global conference is held only once every four years, having the opportunity to attend this conference was extremely helpful as I seek to establish myself as a young professional in the field of environmental economics.

Attending this conference was valuable for a number of reasons. First, I had a paper accepted for presentation at this conference titled “Joint Impacts of Indoor and Outdoor Air Pollution in Indonesia”. This is a paper I have been working on with my coauthors for some time, and WCERE provided an excellent opportunity to share this work outside of Duke and receive external feedback on our analysis. As my paper was placed on a panel with three other papers discussing similar topics, the feedback I received from the discussant, other panelists, and audience was very relevant and will be beneficial as we prepare our manuscript for publication. Additionally, as this was the first international conference at which I presented, I gained valuable experience in both preparing for and giving my presentation. Previously I had only presented this work in an hour-long, internal seminar forum, so distilling down the main points to communicate to a new audience in the fifteen minutes allotted for my WCERE presentation required me to think carefully about how to appropriately prioritize different aspects of our paper. This is an important skill that I will need as I progress as a graduate student, and my WCERE presentation offered me the opportunity to hone this skill.

Second, given the breadth of presentations at WCERE, I was able to attend many thematic, policy, and plenary sessions that were relevant to my research interests and provided insight into new...
ideas in the field. I attended sessions on environmental and development economics, behavioral economics, and other related fields. During these sessions, I learned about research on which others in my field have been working, allowing me to draw connections to my own work. Not only were the sessions useful to my own learning and growth as a PhD student, so too did the plenary sessions provide insight into the new research topics and directions deemed the most promising by those well established in the field. This is especially valuable for me as a researcher, as I continue to develop my research agenda.

Third, as this conference brought together so many environmental and resource economists from around the world, it offered an important networking opportunity. There were several social events I attended that helped to facilitate networking, and I met many students and professions with similar research interests and agendas to myself. Additionally, as I presented some of my work at this conference, I was able to interact with the other panelists at my session as well as the individuals who attended it. These interactions were quite positive, with discussions of potential work collaborations in the future stemming from these conversations. Thus, I feel that the networking opportunities afforded by WCERE helped me to begin to establish myself as a young environmental economist, which is essential for my professional growth and development.

Overall, attending WCERE 2018 in Gothenburg, Sweden was a very valuable experience for me professionally, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to attend this conference through the support of DUCIGS. I gained experience presenting at a large, international conference; I learned about the up-and-coming topics in the field; and I had positive networking experiences that may foster future collaborations. I look forward to the many ways these positive experiences will shape my research moving forward.