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Trip to NYC Prepares, Tests RWU Journalism Students

From workshops led by expert journalists to reporting on-assignment, students learn new skills in New York City



From left, Carli Buono '17, Harrison Connery '17, Brett Johnson '19, Professor Paola Prado, Holly Huntoon '18, Rachel Bimonte '18, Giovanni Pinto '17 (in back row), Sabrina Polin '17 and Rachel Lombardi '17 attended the Society of Professional Journalists conference in New York City.

April 17, 2017 | Sabrina Polin '17

NEW YORK CITY – A group of student journalists recently experienced first-hand how to navigate the industry from expert journalists, while learning how to report on timely news topics and expanding their reporter's toolkits. For two of the students, an opportunity launched them beyond a learning experience when they got the chance to field-test their skills for a deadline-driven assignment in New York City.

The Roger Williams University chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) traveled to New York City in April for SPJ's two-day Region 1 Conference. Eight student journalists, accompanied by Associate Professor of Journalism Paola Prado, attended workshops and lectures led by some of the most established names in journalism, from news outlets like AP, Reuters, *The New York Times*, Columbia Journalism Review, *The Daily News*, and *Boston Magazine*.

The conference's theme was "Practicing Journalism in Dangerous Times," and it exposed students and professionals alike to a wide array of topics, from getting a job, to reporting in war zones, using multimedia platforms, understanding libel laws and reporting on the Trump administration.

While all of the students were there to learn, senior journalism majors Giovanni Pinto and Rachel Lombardi, in particular, challenged themselves further during their time in the Big Apple. On deadline for their senior capstone project on the refugee crisis, the two planned to interview a source they had previously been communicating with prior to their travels. But the source refused to meet with them once they arrived at his office.

The students knew that a good journalist doesn't give up easily. Drawing upon their training in the [RWU Journalism program](#), Pinto and Lombardi employed other tactics. They ran all over Manhattan toting heavy camera gear and with little knowledge of the NYC area, tracking down another source. The pair may have gained bleeding, blistered feet in their pursuit, but they also got their story.

"It was really one of those drives to get the story that was pure adrenaline," Pinto said. "We were able to convince a global organization to meet with us when our other interview fell through. Despite missing SPJ sessions, running around the city for a news story was just as rewarding [of an educational experience] for me."

"We knew this story had to be told, so we put our training from classes and internships to use," said Lombardi. "I have the ability to research a topic, find sources, conduct an interview, and create a news package at a fast pace. It speaks to how much I have grown as a journalist over the past four years."

According to Lombardi, the SPJ conferences are particularly beneficial for student journalists for a number of reasons. It broadens and strengthens areas of expertise, sharpens reporting and storytelling skills, she says, while building the confidence necessary to make it in the industry. She says that experience makes for a more informed and connected journalist ready to enter the field.

RWU SPJ previously attended conferences in Louisiana, Florida, and Connecticut; they're heading to Anaheim, California, next fall for the [Excellence in Journalism 2017 National Conference](#).

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