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# New York state of mind: A United Nations internship expands a young man's world view

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## New York state of mind

## A United Nations internship expands a young man's world view

*The United Nations Internship Endowed Fund was established in 1999 by Frances Cox Jones '45 of Spartanburg, S.C., after her granddaughter, Christine Lawson '99, enjoyed an outstanding experience at the UN as a Furman student. Brett Jones '02, author of this article, was the first student to benefit from the fund.*

*The UN program is part of a cooperative arrangement with Occidental College of Los Angeles.*

**H**ow does one describe the best four months of his life? My time at the United Nations can be characterized as nothing less than spectacular.

In the fall of 2000, I was the first student from Furman to study with the Occidental College Semester of Study at the United Nations. The program itself was rather intense and consisted of two classes on human rights and security, an independent research paper and an internship.

Academically, we were exposed to some incredible things. Each day, we welcomed lecturers from the UN Secretariat who spoke on any number of issues. Speakers ranged from the UN press secretary to the former head of the Mozambiquan Air Force, who had by then taken a position as a disarmament expert.

Our internships placed us throughout the United Nations. Mine was at the United Nations Association, the nation's largest grassroots organization supporting the UN. From time to time I attended events sponsored by the UN or by affiliated organizations, such as fund-raisers and seminars on various issues facing the world.

While I spent much of my time studying, my learning experience in New York was not limited to the classroom or to my internship. Every moment of every day was an opportunity to learn. My group of friends was extremely varied. Not only were they ethnically diverse, but they practiced different faiths and held different political opinions.

Amazingly, though, all were motivated by a desire to learn and a commitment to serving their fellow human beings. Even though we did not always agree on the ways to solve the problems of the world, we shared a mutual understanding and a commitment to making the world a better place.

It was this common bond that made the experience so exceptional. While the classroom lectures and the events within the UN were enlightening, I will never forget the conversations I had over dinner at Mee's Noodle Shop with Rali Badissy and Aaron Resnick, two friends who were Muslim and Jewish, respectively. Although our backgrounds were vastly different, we were able to agree much more than we disagreed. Nor will I forget the nights that we went out as a group to the Russian Samovar Room or to Greenwich Village to listen to live music. The friends I made during my time in New York were the best part of the experience, and I still keep in touch with them today.

New York was the perfect place for a diverse group of students to come together and learn about the world. The city itself is so much more than we see on television or in the news. It is the most dynamic and amazing place in the world, with its own pulse and its own energy. You cannot truly experience New York until you have walked down Second Avenue on a blustery evening or eaten a Hebrew National hot dog on the way to Central Park. It's the special nature of New York that makes it the greatest city on Earth. I hope one day to return and settle in the New York area.

Looking back, the most remarkable aspect about my UN experience was not that I had some great epiphany or some incredible revelation about life. It was that I became more firmly attached to my own beliefs. By experiencing new things, new people and new ideas, I was able to examine myself and my own convictions



See Brett Jones' UN diary at [furman.edu/engaged/BrettattheUN.html](http://furman.edu/engaged/BrettattheUN.html).

more critically. In the end I realized that I was very happy being Brett Jones, and I realized that my faith and spiritual life are what make me the person I am.

Now, more than two years later, I am able to look back and see that my time at Furman leading up to my trip to New York had prepared me well for my semester of study, and that it was an incredible honor to represent the university as its first student in the Oxy-at-the-UN program.

— Brett Jones '02

*A political science major at Furman, the author is a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force and is completing the Officer Intelligence Course at Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo, Texas.*