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Students travel abroad for summer legal internships

The flight is long, the food is unfamiliar, the language can be tricky. But for four SUNY Buffalo Law students who spent the summer working abroad, the experience of an international legal internship will stay with them forever. Conversations with them show how their legal training served them well, even halfway around the world.

Amanda Howell '15
in Prague, Czech
Republic



Third-year student **Amanda Howell** was one of two who was in Europe through a program of the New York State Bar Association's International Law Section. She worked with a private law firm, Kocian Solc Balaščík, in the Czech Republic capital of Prague. It was her third time in the historic city, Howell says, following a study-abroad undergraduate experience and another visit as a tourist.

At the firm, she worked on cases involving international contract work, international sale of goods, arbitration agreements and corporate compliance with international treaties. It helped, she says, that some contracts, even when both parties were from the Czech Republic, were drafted entirely in English. New York State law and the Uniform Commercial Code were a large part of the governing body of laws, as well as international treaties.

"I did a lot of research," she says, "and I learned a lot, especially about contract law."

Her classmate **Rachael Pelletter** worked with a law firm in downtown Vienna, Gras Pitkowitz, also through the NYSBA program.

The internship involved several projects, including writing an internal memo on a new European Union banking initiative and how it might affect banking regulations in Austria; editing a chapter on securities transactions that will become part of a textbook published this year; and working on a paper about how firms can create secured interests in companies in Austria. That paper will be presented at a NYSBA conference to take place in October in Vienna.

"It was absolutely worth it," she says of the experience. "It was nice to be able to see how international laws work and how the relationship between Austrian law and the EU is similar to the relationship between federal and state governments in the United States. I got a lot of experience, and it gives you a completely different view."

Third-year student **Jillian Nowak** was on the other side of the world this summer, wading through the humidity in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, as a Buffalo Human Rights Center fellow working for the Documentation Center of Cambodia and its Genocide Education Program.

As a legal associate there, Nowak was part of the effort to roll out a new secondary-school curriculum that incorporates the Khmer Rouge genocide of the 1970s. "It's making up for a huge loss in time, a huge generational gap in people who have never known this history," she says. She researched and helped lay the foundational groundwork for the bylaws for the new Sleuk Rith Institute, which comprises a permanent documentation center, a school and a museum. She also did independent research on the reparations scheme at the Extraordinary Chamber in the Courts of Cambodia, an international tribunal that tries Khmer Rouge

war criminals.

"I put in several 16-hour days," she says. "If I've learned anything about NGOs, it's how hard everyone works." She has now been retained as the international legal adviser to the Sleuk Rith Institute's School of Genocide, Conflict and Human Rights, which plans to open its doors in May 2015.

Second-year student **Julia Purdy** spent the summer in Zaragoza, a mid-size city in northeast Spain, working with the United Nations' Water Decade Program on Advocacy and Communication.

"I was practicing the communication part of our title," she says, "as well as learning about UN advocacy." Largely she worked on preparations for an exhibit to be staged at UN Headquarters in New York City on March 22, World Water Day—"reading a lot of cases they have prepared, reaching out to different organizations and different leaders in the water movement world and getting people to contribute to this exhibit."

The exhibit necessarily includes the theme of legal framework, which she focused on. In extension, she wrote an article for the exhibit pertaining to transboundary agreements to advance water cooperation, a field she hopes to focus on in her career.

"Not everyone is a traditional lawyer," Purdy says. "I wanted to leave law school with as many experiences as possible, to see where I fit best and where I am most effective. I do know that I really want to practice internationally."



Julia Purdy '16
in Zaragoza,
Spain