

UB Law Forum

Volume 30
Number 1 *Fall 2015*

Article 15

10-1-2015

Crossing the Borders to Learning

UB Law Forum

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum

Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (2015) "Crossing the Borders to Learning," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 30 : No. 1 , Article 15.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol30/iss1/15

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Alumni Publications at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in UB Law Forum by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact lawscholar@buffalo.edu.

CROSSING THE BORDERS TO LEARNING

Five SUNY Buffalo Law students put their passports to work this summer, getting a taste of the lawyer's life in locations on four continents around the globe.

Two of the students traveled as fellows of the Buffalo Public Interest Law Program. The other three were sponsored by the International Section of the New York State Bar Association; this is the fourth year that SUNY Buffalo Law students have participated in the state bar's initiative.

Rebecca Alward '17, BPILP's Kaplan & Reynolds Fellow, worked in the legal department of a nonprofit in Cairo, St. Andrew's Refugee Services. "We assisted refugees with navigating the various processes of appealing or reopening their cases with the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] and work on assisting refugees with resettlement appeals as well. I learned their story and then figured out whether their claim would qualify as a refugee under the UNHCR 1951 Convention, and then why the UNHCR did not recognize them. After this, I appealed to the UNHCR, outlining in gory detail why my client had been persecuted and faced the same persecution should they return to their country of origin.

"Egypt," she says, "is magnificent chaos. It isn't for everyone, but I would come back to Cairo in a heartbeat."

Her classmate **Ashmita Roka '17**, a Buffalo Human Rights Center Fellow, was on the other side of the world, serving with the HUG Project in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The agency serves children who have survived abuse and

human trafficking.

"I researched Thai law, extraterritorial legislation law, and the criminal law of countries such as the United States, Australia and European countries on child sex tourism and child sexual abuse," Roka says. "I also participated in meetings with federal investigation teams from Britain, the United States and the Royal Thai Police, and accompanied victims and HUG staff members to police stations and trial proceedings in Chiang Mai Provincial Court.

"This experience has taught me that there are lots of gray areas when it comes to the issue of human trafficking. It exists everywhere, and we just need to be willing to see it, acknowledge it and, finally, do something about it."

Among the NYSBA interns, two were in Europe and one was in Mexico.

In Austria, **Victoria Hahn '16** worked at the Viennese law firm Graf & Pitkowitz Rechtsanwalte, where they appreciated her editing skills. "I tried to make sure various documents sounded as if they were written by a native English speaker," Hahn reports. "I edited and conducted research about Austrian capital markets (and the EU), but I also helped other attorneys in the firm with letters and other documents. The language barrier forced me to not only think differently about the way I approach cases and situations, but think more critically





At left, Ashmita Roka '17 helped fight human trafficking in Thailand.

Below left, Julia Purdy '16 worked in Stockholm, Sweden, for a corporate law firm.



about the documents I edited and worked on.”

And, she says, “Life in Vienna moves at a slower pace. People aren’t in as much of a rush, and they tend to take life more slowly to enjoy things along the way. There is such a deep appreciation for the arts as well.”

Julia Purdy '16 spent her 1L summer at a UN agency in Spain. This year she went north to Stockholm, where she worked on private mergers and acquisitions, as well as some capital markets work, with the Lindahl Law Office.

“Everything about my time with Lindahl was fantastic,” Purdy says. “It was invaluable to be involved in the work of such a professional company. I learned about corporate law and met truly wonderful people.”

Swedish is a notoriously difficult language, but Purdy says that wasn’t a

problem. “Fortunately, everyone in Stockholm spoke nearly perfect English, so there were no language issues,” she says. “The firm taught me a lot, including some Swedish. Nonetheless, I always carried an English-Swedish dictionary with me.”

“The culture definitely influences the work environment,” reports **Cara Cox '16**, whose summer placement was in Mexico City with the law firm Hogan Lovells. “The experience allowed me to understand how different firms operated depending on their location. I have worked in a Buffalo law firm and company, and things operate differently. No office is going to be the same, especially when you are in another country.”

At the law firm, Cox helped draft content for the publication *Latin Lawyer*, and worked with attorneys and other summer associates on drafting and translating a variety of contracts. “There were some language issues, especially because some legal concepts either do not exist in Mexican law or there is no perfect translation. Another issue was that I was assisting with contracts in areas of law that I have never studied, such as maritime law.”

And the traffic! “Even with the huge public transportation infrastructure, there was still an unbelievable amount of traffic,” she says. “One Friday, it took over two hours to drive home.”