

My WFWPI internship was to do work at the United Nations

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The internship is an integral part of the Master of Arts program in Global Development and Peace at the University of Bridgeport. Working in an organization provides a unique opportunity to experience firsthand what becoming a professional in the field of global peace and development can entail. In this way, the internship is a chance to discover a new passion while being immersed in an organizational culture.

Interested as I am in global issues related to women and peace, I was looking for an opportunity to do work in this area at the United Nations when I came across Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI). WFWPI is an NGO that has been in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations since 1997, and holds UN relations offices in New York, Geneva and Vienna. From September 3 to December 14, 2018, I had the privilege of interning at the WFWPI UN Relations office in New York.

WFWPI has a unique approach to its internship program. As Alexa Ward, the director of the New York office, often states, WFWPI sees the program as a gateway for young adults to become involved in the UN, based on specific areas of interest. Therefore, from the very start I was asked what my areas of interest and goals were, which made me feel welcomed and empowered to make a meaningful contribution as a member of the organization. With WFWPI's support, I hit the ground running. Based on these goals, I attended planning meetings related to the 63rd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) sponsored by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/NY); additional meetings held by the NGO Committee on the Family, the Department of Public Information (DPI), and the occasional high-level forum and international conference; and supported WFWPI in planning its CSW63 parallel event and the Horizon Summit, an annual intergenerational gathering dedicated to fostering peace leadership.

While I attended many meetings, I felt personally connected to the theme at the UN High-Level Forum on The Culture of Peace and became inspired to make The Culture of Peace a focal point in my professional life. Through WFWPI, I had the opportunity to meet and conduct research for Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative to the UN, and founder of The Global Movement for The Culture of Peace. Working with Ambassador Chowdhury gave me a better understanding of The Culture of Peace and the importance of promoting it. After attending an international conference at Yale University, on the topic of "Early Childhood Development -- Advances the Culture of Peace," I became increasingly passionate about the theme. This led me to look into the importance of peace education and its crucial role in early childhood development. Alongside these opportunities, I became part of the organizing team for the 2019 Horizon Summit, on the theme of "Advancing The Culture of Peace," conducting research and assisting WFWPI with database management leading up to the event.

By attending several UN briefings, I was able to meet innovative people that encouraged and inspired me. Everyone I met helped me grow, both personally and professionally. The dedication of all the people involved with WFWPI is inspiring and something that I will take with me for the rest of my life. There are many reasons to consider interning at WFWPI, but perhaps none is more valuable than being part of something bigger than yourself and to be free to share without judgment your own experience. The significant work being done here -- helping women and families to create sustainable peace in the world - - inspired me and gave me the opportunity to improve my communication skills and develop into a leader.