

Minding the Gap

Jordan Mrvos '17 tackles poverty at a local nonprofit

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Jordan Mrvos wants to bridge gaps between people. It's something he's been interested in since he was 10, when, on a family vacation in Mexico, he saw street vendors selling bracelets and small statues. Buying the items involved haggling, Mrvos' parents told him. It was like a game. But all Mrvos could see were the gaps — the cultural differences between tourists and vendors, and the gap between the vendors and the resources they needed to survive.

“That memory stuck with me,” Mrvos said. And it influenced his career at UNH, leading to a dual major in communication with a focus on interpersonal relationships within cultural frameworks



JORDAN MRVOS '17 TURNED AN INTERNSHIP INTO A FULL-TIME JOB.

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and international affairs, along with a minor in French.

Mrvos found his academic passions and embraced a rigorous schedule early on at UNH. A communication class with professor Renee Heath marked “the first time I had cared enough about a class to have an argument with the professor about one of the theories she presented,” Mrvos says. And a lecture series hosted by the Center for International Education and Global Engagement cemented his interest in peacebuilding and working out conflicts.

He saw those sorts of complicated conflicts firsthand during a study abroad experience at the University of Burgundy in Dijon, France. “I walked to campus ... and there was a huge banner painted directly on one of the buildings that said, ‘We have started.’ ... A professor explained they were students protesting a new work law. My question was, these are students, and they don’t work because in France, education is subsidized, so why do they care?”

That formed the basis of Mrvos’ capstone project, which he presented at the Undergraduate Research Conference in April. “It’s clear that sitting in a room with people who are like-minded is not effective, so I examine a proposal about how a dialogue between opposing groups might work,” he said.

Mrvos is ready to put his interests and ideas in action. His internship with the Social Ventures Foundation, a Portsmouth-based nonprofit organization working to end poverty by investing in sustainable businesses, has led to a full-time job after graduation. “When people have basic necessities ... they’re much less prone to argument, or they’re at least willing to work out their differences,” he says.

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