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Travel, education and multicultural perspectives

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THE LAST WORD



Anna Flournoy (far left) with some of her high school charges, and visiting St. Peter's Square in 2001. Photos courtesy Anna Flournoy and Christopher Blackwell.

Travel, education and multicultural perspectives

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes."

—MARCEL PROUST

THE MOST PROFOUND GIFT my Furman education gave me was replacing provincial eyes with global wonder.

With the help of many advocates, including professors Glen Halva-Neubauer and Judy Bainbridge and dean Charles Brock, my Furman trail meandered far from the oak-studded, idyllic campus in Greenville. My mentors facilitated a mishmash of internships and study away opportunities that allowed me to travel the world, from Norway to the Mediterranean, Canada and England. My parents often joked that my major was "study abroad."

The quality and breadth of my true major, political science, enhanced my understanding of the Parliamentary systems of Canada and England and piqued my interest in pursuing a degree in international relations at the London School of Economics. Before pursuing my

master's degree there, I decided to do something very British and take a gap year, deferring my acceptance.

But my best-laid plans took an even more circuitous route than I could have ever imagined. During my year "off," I received a better offer, and Jake and I were married the day I had anticipated arriving at Heathrow Airport to begin my graduate studies.

Starting a family made me re-evaluate my career choice, and I decided to pursue another passion: English. Having completed my master's degree and taught briefly on the college level, I now teach an Advanced Placement non-fiction course and direct the Writer's Center at Brookstone School in Columbus, Ga.

During spring break for the past two years, a colleague and I have taken a group of seniors to Oxford, England, for a mini-immersion experience in all things British. We plan to go again this spring.

While last year's highlights included having a student serenade Ramin Karimloo (Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables* on the London stage) and watching Furman soccer alum Clint Dempsey score for Fulham, the most rewarding

pedagogical moments were those of students' simple reflections and small revelations: "Look at how much smaller the cars are and how much more expensive gas is here!" "I can't wait to study abroad during college!" "Please let us stay just one more day. I'll tell my parents I lost my passport!"

Thanks to my strong academic foundation from Furman and my diverse education from travel, I am motivated to teach my eager students and my young sons, Jack and William, with an enriched, multicultural perspective. If I am able to give "new eyes" to one student who elects to study abroad in college, then I've done for my students what my mentors did for me.

While I may not have a degree from the London School of Economics, the intangibles are what I'm most proud of with my life choices, and that's what I imagine my Paladin professors and mentors would applaud. Almost 11 years after graduating from Furman in 2002, I'm forever grateful for my world-class education and indebted to those who inspired me.

— ANNA KING FLOURNOY