

Beyond Boundaries

Overseers' \$20M Scholarship Gift Is Boon to Aspiring Diplomats

Serving with the United Nations peacekeeping mission that oversaw Haiti's presidential election in 2006, Iris Abraham, F09, was inspired by the scenes that greeted her on polling day. "Thousands were standing in the burning heat in the middle of the day to vote," says Abraham, a self-described "great advocate of self-determination" who is among this year's inaugural class of Board of Overseers Scholars at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

An aspiring international negotiator who was born in the former East Germany, spent part of her childhood in Algeria, and plans to add an eighth language—Arabic—to the seven she already speaks, Abraham hopes for a diplomatic career dedicated to resolving conflict and building consensus. Thanks to a Board of Overseers Scholarship, she will pursue that calling unhampered by burdensome school-loan debt.

Twenty million dollars in gifts from members of the Fletcher School's Board of Overseers created the scholarships awarded for the first time this year to outstanding members of the incoming Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy (MALD) class. Thirty-three inaugural Board of Overseers Scholars representing eleven countries were honored at a reception in December hosted by Fletcher Dean Stephen W. Bosworth.

"Our board of overseers has demonstrated that philanthropy at Fletcher is both transformative and real," Bosworth offers. "These gifts have allowed Fletcher to recruit more of the most talented minds from around the world. After meeting each of these Board Scholars, I can think of no better investment." Abraham says the scholarship covers roughly half her tuition for the two-year MALD program. "Without the scholarship, I would have faced a debt of about \$40,000," she says. Now she expects her debt on graduation to be less than a quarter of that. A fellow Board Scholar, Regina Wilson, F09, who worked in London for the anti-corruption group Transparency International, described her joy at receiving the award that made it possible for her to attend the Fletcher School.

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"I was working for a nonprofit, and it's called 'nonprofit' for a reason," Wilson notes with a smile. "I realized I needed to go back to school to learn more about the issues I cared about and to make a difference in the world. But there was no way I could go to grad school on a nonprofit salary without some sort of financial aid."

Fletcher had been her top choice due to the diversity of its student body, the practical experience of its faculty, and its interdisciplinary focus, the Philadelphia native said. "When I opened the package and learned of the scholarship, I was so thrilled," she recalls. "I said, 'Oh my gosh, I can't believe it! I'll be able to go to Fletcher!'"



Iris Abraham, F09



Regina Wilson, F09