

# Fordham Footsteps: Chris Bruno, FCRH '06, GSAS '07, Interview Transcript

Matt Burns:

Hey, listeners. Welcome to Fordham Footsteps, the podcast that features Fordham alumni and discusses their path from their time as a student to their current career. Some will have a direct correlation to their majors and others will describe why they took some unexpected turns.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

Either way, expect an insider's guide to certain industries and some great stories from our esteemed alumni. I'm Sara Hunt Munoz, senior director for strategic initiatives.

Matt Burns:

And I Matt Burns, associate director for young alumni and student engagement. And with us today is Chris Bruno.

Chris Bruno:

Hi guys.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

[crosstalk 00:00:39] Hi Chris.

Matt Burns:

Thanks so much for being here. Chris, you were a history and political science double major?

Chris Bruno:

So I was a history major with a minor in political science. That was from Fordham College at Rose Hill. And then I went to GSAS for my master's in election and campaign management, which was actually the first year of that program, I think.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

Oh, wow. So obviously you thought you were going to go in that direction. You wanted to get into politics.

Chris Bruno:

I did at the time, yeah. So the ECM program was really interesting because I think if I'm remembering correctly and it feels like a really long time ago right now, but I think I was able to take a class in advancement of that degree, my senior year of college. And so I kind of piece the two together and then decided that I really wanted to do the ECM program right after that, after graduation.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

And how was that going from one right into the other? Was it stressful? Was it the right thing to do?

Chris Bruno:

It was definitely the right thing to do. It was stressful and kind of exciting at the same time. It was the first year of this program and it was launching, it was kind of like we were building the plane while it was flying type thing. I was a student who wasn't actually doing any of the plane building, but it was like what's happening next? Let's kind of just jump into this and take a chance at what I thought at the time and still believe now is a really good opportunity.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

And what did you think you wanted to do right out of the gate? What was your career aspiration?

Chris Bruno:

Great question. And actually, as I was thinking about this conversation, it dawned on me that I've maybe had one sort of trajectory in mind and a career aspiration that took numerous unexpected turns. And so I think right after graduation from undergrad and going into the ECM program and I was thinking, "Oh, I really want to do something that's connected to both politics and law." I knew I wanted to work somewhere in that area. And I thought I would take a shot at the elections and campaign path, but always with going to law schools sort of in the back of my mind somewhere as well.

Matt Burns:

So you get that master's program, you're like, "Law school might be in the path for me" I know a lot of us say that too, and never actually get there. You actually got to law school. Did that happen right away or there a couple of steps in between?

Chris Bruno:

No, there were definitely a couple of steps in between. So, after graduation I was going to the ECM program. I actually thought I started to drift away from the desire of going to law school. I was having a lot of fun in the program. The program did a really great job at helping place us in internships throughout the city. I worked at a company called Mercury Public Affairs, which at the time, working on a couple of campaigns for some presidential candidates and also a number of issues for citywide, I think, agenda issues. I can't remember what they were specifically now, but it gave me some insight into New York City government, but also some national politics as well. And I was thinking, "This is great. This is really exciting." And then a second internship actually led me to work at a news broadcasting company. And I was like, "I really like this. I think I'm just going to go on this path and see where it takes me."

Chris Bruno:

And then I have the opportunity and I don't really remember how it bubbled up, but I had the opportunity to apply to the Manhattan district attorney's office. And again, this was sort of in that period where I wasn't really thinking about going to law school, but the subject matter of the bureau that I could apply to was really interesting to me. And it had a different name then, but now it's called the Major Economic Crimes Bureau. And I kind of was of this mindset like "This is a possibly a once in a lifetime opportunity. I know it's kind of different from what I've been doing, but you know what? Let's just take advantage of this opportunity and see what happens." And I ended up getting that job. And so I

guess I took a hard left turn or something from the campaign world to the legal world and ended up really liking that and stayed there for about a year and a half. And then ultimately from there decided to apply to and go to law school.

Matt Burns:

Now, did anything transfer from your time in that master's program to that first job to that hard switch there to government?

Chris Bruno:

I actually think that a lot of my colleagues at the time were probably straight out of college, whereas I had had that additional year and then two sort of professional work experiences. And it was probably close to impossible for me to realize this at the time. But in retrospect, I think I may have been a little bit better prepared. Not that they weren't, they were some of the most brilliant people I've ever met actually. But in terms of managing workload, I think I was a little bit better prepared because I had done it sort of outside of the framework of just being a college student. So I think in that regard, it helped me a lot. And then I think it actually plays into more of what I'm doing now, 12 years after the fact. So there's some nice sort of symmetry there, but I think at the time it was really that I just was more comfortable in a professional setting where you had to manage a lot of moving pieces to something at once.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

Well, I remember you wanted to keep working and go to law school simultaneously and found that that was just going to be impossible. You want to talk a little bit about that?

Chris Bruno:

Yeah, so that was crazy. I wish I had known that then. What Sara's talking about is I actually did work at Fordham for about two years. I worked in the development office where you guys are, and I worked as a fundraiser for what I guess Gabelli's predecessor was, which was the graduate school of business administration. And at that time I really was using that to really just take some time to figure out what I wanted to do next. And Fordham was a great place to work and I felt comfortable with the people that were there. And I was doing some really exciting things that I didn't think any other 24 year old, 25 year old was doing at the time. And I was going on some really exciting trips for the school too, which was great. I also wanted to use it as a time to prepare for law school and eventually start law school.

Chris Bruno:

And so I started at New York Law School in the evening division so that I could continue working through the day. And I quickly realized after, it might've been like a semester and a half, how just crazy that was, I was working at Fordham from nine, maybe 9:30 to 5:30 or six. And then I'd run down to Tribeca for a class, which would go until about 10. And then I'd go into the library until about midnight, maybe a little bit after, and then I'd started all over again, assuming that trains were working on time and everything timed out perfectly, which it never does. So I very quickly realized that if I wanted to do well in law school, I would have to focus entirely on law school. And so I left Fordham, which was sad, but also kind of really cool because I could then be just part of the alumni events that were happening and not actually find myself working.

Matt Burns:

Can't imagine what that's like.

Chris Bruno:

Yeah, I'm sure. It was a really good experience, but one that also taught me that in order to give yourself 100% of something, you have to be able to give yourself a hundred percent to it. And so I had to do that to law school.

Matt Burns:

That's also a difficult decision because Fordham is a fairly stable place to work. At least in development it is roughly nine to five exception of events and other kinds of programs, benefits, et cetera. And you stepped away from that.

Chris Bruno:

I stepped away from it in the middle of the first financial crisis that I really remember of like 2009, right as everything was... Everything was great until it wasn't. And for people going to law school, it was like, "Well, what's the legal market going to look like when you graduate in three years?" And up until that point, everybody would say, "Oh, you'll be fine. You can use a law degree for everything." But then 2009 happened and people were like, "Will there be a legal market? I don't know." So it was a tricky decision. I had a lot of support from my family and friends to help me with that decision, which is always a sort of good backstop for that type of thing. I also had a lot of support from my employers at Fordham as well. We were recently talking about the person who oversaw the development for the business school. And he was very supportive and talking me through the conversation for the weeks and months, leading up to my making the decision to leave, to focus on law school.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

And then while you're in law school, did you have a certain direction or a niche area that you leaned into?

Chris Bruno:

Yeah. So as I'm sitting here talking to you now, I'm realizing that my career path just keeps changing direction. So certainly for the law school you start off with you take all of the base level contracts, torts, property, that type of stuff. It's really in your maybe later half of your first year or your second year that you can start looking at electives or areas that you actually want to go into. And what I started looking at, at the time was intellectual property and European union law. And those are two things that people are like, "Wow, that sounds really great, but what are you actually going to do with it?" So I started actually finding jobs in advertising related law or licensing law for the intellectual property part.

Chris Bruno:

And then for the European union thing, I actually took a program over a summer based in London that essentially boiled down to London's relationship with the European union. So good thing. I didn't focus my career on that or maybe not, I don't know, but that was a really fun summer and year and a half long project that I worked on. But in a weird way, I guess I'm glad I turned another corner and didn't go into that because I feel like given the current state of Brexit and what's happening everywhere that maybe that probably was dodging a bullet without even knowing it.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

Yeah, it looks like you have quite a number of extracurriculars on your resume from law school, that you were the Student Bar Association, the Evening Division Senator. How important is that when you're going into the legal field, do they look at that kind of stuff on your resume?

Chris Bruno:

At the time, I was using it as an opportunity to network and meet as many people as possible. The career services teams always tell you to do as much as possible. And I always thought that that was good for finding a job and it is, there's no doubt about it, do as much as possible, but now that I'm in the position of hiring legal interns and having a staff of my own, I actually do look at extracurricular activities to make sure the person is a well-rounded individual, I guess. And I personally am very concerned with that because I want to make sure that my employees are going to be happy, but also engaging and be more of like a full person, not necessarily just like a robot.

Chris Bruno:

And I want to make sure that they have these life experiences that they can bring with them to their positions, because I think that will help them excel in certainly what I have them doing right now, which in economic development is so much more than probably just their academic training. In retrospect, I think it was something that was extremely valuable and I kind of wish I had known why I was being told to pack my resume with these things at the time, right? I knew it was good, but rather than just stressing out about filling my resume and having all of these appointments and meeting all these people, it would have been helpful to see sort of what the end goal was or what the reason was for going through all these steps.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

Now you can share that with all of our current students and young alums who are embarking on a similar journey.

Chris Bruno:

There's a reason to everything, but it's not just to keep yourself busy, right? It's a means to an end kind of thing.

Matt Burns:

So bring us up to speed of what you do now. Tell us about this current role of yours and some of the stops along the way that got you there.

Chris Bruno:

I'm currently the director of economic development for the city of Fairfax, Virginia, which is just outside of Washington DC. And in my current role, I oversee all of the department staff, the department budget, and I work very closely with our mayor and city council to develop and implement our economic development policies in the city. For a city like Fairfax and in a region like the DC region, that's both exciting and extremely challenging right now because it is a region that has so many issues that it needs to address and to grow into. So there's always something like affordable housing, but there's also, and this is not unique to Fairfax or even to the DC area and New York experiences it too. Affordable housing, but also balancing the demand to bring in new and engaging businesses into a city. What we're dealing with here in Northern Virginia is probably most directly related to Amazon selecting it as the second headquarters.

Chris Bruno:

I think this region handled that very well because of some strategic partnerships. And I like to think that one of the priorities for the economic development offices and teams everywhere is to really develop those strategic priorities because without them, you can do very little, but with them, you can do huge things. So, my responsibility here is overseeing economic development and some strategic priorities that go along with it. The path to getting here was kind of continuing that theme of changing directions a little bit was kind of unusual. Going back to law school I actually graduated law school, took the bar exam in New York, and New Jersey and actually got a job at the New York City Department of Small Business Services, which at the time was operating under mayor Bloomberg's administration. And I started there about a week before hurricane Sandy hit and then hurricane Sandy hit and completely changed everything in the entire city.

Chris Bruno:

And I remember our commissioner at the time, essentially, repositioned the entire agency to go from service delivery to recovery. And the person who was overseeing the program that I was working on at the time was sort of bumped up to be the recovery czar. And at the time then the commissioner who's another Fordham grad by the way, had asked me to help out and oversee what we called at the time, the avenue NYC program, which was essentially commercial revitalization for commercial districts and business improvement districts in New York City. And I was literally eight days into this job. So I couldn't say no.

Matt Burns:

Right place, right time.

Chris Bruno:

Yeah, I had, I had to do it. And honestly, I was terrified I didn't have any economic development training, but I was able to rely on my legal training to really identify what had to happen and then to figure out how to implement it. So I did that for about two years and then mayor Bloomberg's term ended and mayor de Blasio became the new mayor. I switched back into a very purely legal role, which allowed me to see the inner workings of the agency from a very high level. And to realize that there was more than just neighborhood development, there was also workforce development issues and business development issues, helping small businesses open across the city. And then also, and importantly under this current mayor, but also under mayor Bloomberg was the expansion of the Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise Program, which really drives up an important area that I think all cities really need to be focusing on right now, because when there's diversification in the small business economy, it actually functions much better just across the board.

Chris Bruno:

It's also a question of equity and it's something that I think most elected political leaders are rightfully now prioritizing in their strategies. And it's actually something that we've been focused on heavily here in Fairfax. So the experience in New York allowed me to leverage my academic training, but also some opportunities that presented themselves and ultimately led me to take this position in Fairfax, which was to build an economic development office, which I've modeled shamelessly off of the department of small business services in New York. It's significantly smaller.

Matt Burns:

Wow. So walk us through day to day. You talk about economic development, in an econ class, you hear that word a lot and it can mean so many things, but what is it you do every day?

Chris Bruno:

Yeah, there's absolutely no answer for what I do in a day. Honestly, that changes. I would say, importantly, I don't have an economics background. I'm actually probably the furthest person from that. What I do have experience in, which I credit my time at Fordham and in law school is sort of identifying problems and trying to solve those problems, which I think through my lack of any kind of mathematical skill whatsoever has translated into government efficiency. And so that's been my approach to running an economic development agency. In terms of a day to day I think I was being sort of sarcastic, but one of the things I really like about this job is that there is no typical day to day and an economic development agency, regardless of its size, has the opportunity to be very entrepreneurial and innovative and really nimble and kind of works unlike most other city agencies that are focused on service delivery, you have trash pickup, pothole paving, parking tickets, things like that.

Chris Bruno:

That's a service, right? We actually get to develop programs and then oversee program implementation. So some of the things we have going on right now in Fairfax are we have a challenge for facade grant improvement program, where we'll actually credit property owners for making capital investment in their storefronts if they have them. We do collaborate with another university on the operation of a small business incubator and accelerator, which is great because that allows me then to leverage that as an asset to bring businesses into our city. I am really prioritizing small business development right now, especially in the wake of the Amazon decision. I believe that Fairfax and some of these smaller sort of satellite cities that are just removed from the urban core, have the opportunity to be essentially incubators in their own, right? And it's more affordable to open a small business there.

Chris Bruno:

And it's a good place to take a chance at opening a business or developing a business concept and growing it and scaling it and then moving it to another location if that's something that you're interested in. I literally just run around from meeting to meeting and I make sure that I have the right people in the right place at the right time. And so while I actually love getting involved in all of this stuff, we have a really good team that oversees our restaurant week programs, our grant administration programs, we've got this one person on our team who's, I need to come up with a better title for him. I've just called him the operations director or associate. He really is like a catch all for everything actually, prior to coming onto this podcast, I had a meeting with him where we were talking about some smart city challenges that he's overseeing right now, where we've invited student teams to come in and to figure out how to solve some problems that our city is facing.

Chris Bruno:

How do we get members of our elderly community out and interacting with one another in the age of COVID and then also something called engaged art, where we have a lot of businesses that are closed or are struggling right now. And how do we get them to engage with city visitors right now in a time when it's hard to welcome hundreds of people back into your business. So he does that, but then he also does things like, "Hey, do we have yard signs that we need to buy?" So he's literally doing a little bit of everything, but we have a really good team in place. So a lot of my job is working with the team and making sure they have the resources they need to keep doing what they're doing.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

Have you been bitten with the entrepreneurial bug at all? Do you see yourself starting a small business ever?

Chris Bruno:

Oh man. So, yes, I have been bitten by that bug. I have this constant fear of needing to do like a profit and loss statement, which may hold me back from that at times. But I'm very proud of the fact that our agency operates very much like a small business itself. And we pilot things constantly. We're constantly testing new ideas. And I think one of the best things that we do that is probably most closely related to doing something the way a small business would do it is rather than failing at something and just kind of giving up and forgetting about it. We're actually going back and looking at it and saying, "What can we do to make this work in a second iteration?" And I just mentioned the restaurant week and we pulled that together a couple of years ago and didn't think that we would be able to pull that off.

Chris Bruno:

And we had some serious failures with that, but we also realized that it was something that we should keep moving forward. And we're actually one of the fastest growing restaurant week programs in the mid Atlantic region right now. And we are constantly seeing requests for a second iteration of restaurant week throughout the year. And we're constantly seeing more signups. And now it's so successful that we are actually able to measure through tax returns and sales receipts, the economic impact of what we're doing. So this is the type of thing where we can say like, "City council and mayor give us more money, because the more you invest in this, the more we're able to turn it around and generate more of a profit for the city."

Sara Hunt Munoz:

But what a great piece of advice, too, is to not give up on the original idea, pursue those concepts, but go back and tweak it until it ultimately is successful.

Chris Bruno:

Oh, my gosh, I would say that probably 30 to 40% of what we do in our department right now started out as something. And it has evolved into something else, but only because we were able to learn measure and then tweak. And honestly, I don't know if that's how other cities do it. I know that that was a pattern that I saw in New York, at the Department of Small Business Services, where if something didn't work, we would tweak it and fix it. But I think you can only do that when you really have the support of your agency commissioners, your department heads, maybe even your elected officials as well. Right now in Fairfax, we have a lot of support from our political and city leadership, which they realized that we had a vision in mind. We wanted to realize some levels of success. We probably didn't realize it all. They gave us the backing to go ahead and give it another shot, and each year we've incrementally gotten closer.

Matt Burns:

That's almost a little surprising elected leaders can sort of live and die by the last idea that failed the fact that they're giving you the space to do what you need to do in entrepreneurship, and that is fail a million times until you figure how to do it right, or make tweets and adjust as you go and be okay when things don't go necessarily as planned. It's fascinating to see that you're given that kind of space to do that and learn and grow in that way.



Chris Bruno:

Sorry, I think one of the reasons that we are given that space is absolutely because we have extremely supportive leaders, but also because we were strategic in communicating the vision upfront so that if we fell short of that vision, our stakeholders knew the direction that we were aiming to go in. So it was worth giving us a second shot. And I think that comes from a hyper focus on the quality of communications. And not to tie this back to college and law school, but I think I placed a lot of value in those skills based on classes at Fordham or in law school, you have to speak with a lot of precision. And certainly actually in my elections and campaign management program where a lot of that was communicating on behalf of someone or communicating some platform on behalf of someone or something. And I think I got a lot of experience there that I have translated directly into communicating these projects and programs and policies to my stakeholders so that they at least know that they can trust me to take a shot or two or three with us.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

Speaking of political leaders, it looks like you dipped back into politics for a little bit last year. I want to talk about that?

Chris Bruno:

Yeah, I did. So it was, I think, December of 2019, and I was sitting in my office kind of thinking like, "Oh, this is a nice, quiet life trajectory that I'm on right now." And all of a sudden the opportunity to run the operations campaign for Mike Bloomberg for president in the state of Virginia came up. And honestly I've always been a personal fan of Mike Bloomberg and the work that he was able to do in New York and the way that he ran his city government and the commissioners that I worked for that reported directly to him. So I was like, "This would be fun to do, and it's not anything I've ever done before. Let's give it a shot." And I had no idea just how crazy the next three months of my life would be. So from January 1st until the day that his campaign ended, which I think was like March 3rd or fourth or something, I may have slept three hours a night.

Chris Bruno:

I'm not really sure. I was going to every corner of this state. We quickly hired about 150 people to work in Virginia. It was a ride, it was a lot of fun. It was really exhausting. And when that ended, it was kind of like everything just stopped. And I didn't realize how tired I was until that campaign ended, but it was a lot of fun and I'm really glad I did it. And I'm really glad I did it because of the candidate and the ideas that he had proposed, which I think are starting to show up elsewhere, which is a good thing. But I also did it because it was an opportunity that I never ever thought I would get. And I want to take advantage of the opportunity that presented itself.

Matt Burns:

It sounds a bit like Chris, when you were working that job at Fordham as a fundraiser, and then also going to law school, it's almost like you have that double job lifestyle again, how'd you possibly manage it?

Chris Bruno:

Not really well. So, I actually ended up taking a leave of absence from my current job to do the campaign job. That was, I mean, I'm not exaggerating to say that it was literally like a 22 hour a day kind of thing. It is all on. And I have an incredible amount of respect for the people that work on these campaigns as

their full-time career, because I couldn't, but I think really what jumps out to me was that I saw the opportunity and I really wanted to take it and not pass it up.

Matt Burns:

What a good example to show. You speak to a lot of students, right? They need to get involved in a campaign right away out of college and think "That's it, or I'm never getting involved in politics." You're able to take a point not too far along in your career, step back, and still jump in and have that experience still at a later point.

Chris Bruno:

If there's one common thread, is that a lot of people told me what my career path would have to be in order to do something. People told me to do things and I'd have to do it. And it was the only way of doing it. Literally everything I've done has been the opposite of that. And it has still led to some really great experiences and a lot of wonderful opportunities. One of the most common trajectories is graduate and then go work on a field organizing campaign and hopefully your candidate wins. And then you somehow get this amazing spot in whatever administration they are. And that is probably the more common way of doing it and definitely the clearer path, but it's not the only path. You can do something apparently for 13 years and then jump into it. And who knows what other opportunities will come from that. I have to say, actually working on a campaign.

Chris Bruno:

I don't know that I have the sort of physical or mental stamina to do that again, right now, at my current age. But I would say the contacts that you get out of that working in a campaign world have been in contacts that I've maintained since then. It's now been a year since then. And they're actually contacts that have helped me back in my current position. And as a side note, I ended up hiring half the people in my current job that I worked with on the campaign. That's actually probably the most valuable advice that I could give to anyone is regardless of what career you go into, just to make sure you work your butt off and establish those real important relationships, because you'll never know where those people will drag you, right? I've got three of my employees from the campaign work for me right now in Fairfax. One is our grant manager. One is this operations guy who kind of does everything. And then the other person oversees our outdoor dining programs.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

And you talked a little bit about hiring before as well. What are a couple of the things that you look for in the ideal candidate?

Chris Bruno:

I do look to make sure the candidate is a well-rounded individual. I have hired people before, and I know people who have been like the ideal person on paper, and they're probably brilliant and excellent at their job, but they also have to fit within the culture of the office and the ecosystem that presents itself within the office. You could be the best lawyer or best economist ever, but if you can't communicate with your colleagues and if you're not a good fit with the rest of the office staff, it doesn't matter how good you are. You still have to be able to work within a team setting. So I'm really actually prioritizing that over anything else.

Chris Bruno:

I do think a lot of what comes with some of the jobs, at least that I've had in certainly the jobs that I oversee is that you have to have a familiarity and a background and a comfort level with a lot of the subject matter, but a lot of it you're going to learn through the course of actually working with your colleagues. I do look for a well-rounded individual. I also look for people that are interesting and can bring some different perspectives into a position. I'm thinking now back to when I was in New York. I mean, I hired people who were working on master's programs with things that I've never even heard of and weren't necessarily perfect fits on paper, but I knew that they would bring a different perspective to at least the work that we were trying to do. And hopefully think about things that I wouldn't naturally think about myself.

Matt Burns:

So, thinking about the different paths, twists turns that your career has taken, have you looked to anyone to help you make those sorts of career decisions, whether it was a Fordham professor or other role, other mentors in your life? Anyone like that?

Chris Bruno:

I would say I have these people that float in and out of my life that I bounce ideas off of. And I almost treat them as like an informal board of directors where I take a decision to them and I run and I've worked through some pros and cons with them. It's not always the same people and they don't even know that I'm using them for that reason, but it is just the exercise of talking through something and really thinking about what this could mean in the future and what experiences it could provide, is definitely something I've done. Thinking about Fordham, specifically, I certainly had professors my senior year and probably a year or two after that, that I kept in touch with that I bounced ideas off of. I can think of one right now.

Chris Bruno:

And I know for a fact that I spoke to him about the opportunity to go work at the district attorney's office. So that guy may have started my whole career and he didn't even know that. So that was really helpful. But then certainly in law school, or I would imagine in any kind of professional school where you are then interacting with people who are actually working in the fields that you're trying to get into, it's certainly helpful to whether they know it or not turn these people into a mentor, mentee kind of thing.

Matt Burns:

You remember the professor's name?

Chris Bruno:

Cimbala? Is he still there?

Sara Hunt Munoz:

Paul Cimbala?

Chris Bruno:

Yes.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

From the history department? Yes, he is. He's still there.

Chris Bruno:

He is fantastic.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

What advice do you have for current students who may be on a similar path? Is the history background important is the overall liberal arts education, what you should focus on? What advice would you give to students?

Chris Bruno:

If you're looking to go into economic development or government work in general, one of the things that was great about Fordham was that it was broad enough to the point where I felt like I got a good sampling of a lot of different things, but the history courses were particularly helpful to me because I was able to see the impacts that governments have had and could have on people's lives. And I actually just found history, really interesting. I took classes at both of the campuses and I took a history of New York class. And I think that's really actually where I started thinking seriously about New York City government as like an organization. And then when I went to law school, I actually remember thinking about that history of New York class when I started looking around for jobs within the city government structure. I also think Fordham was great for me and truthfully, I wish I had taken more advantage of this, but Fordham is a great university, but it's also a great university in New York.

Chris Bruno:

And I think, had I known what I know now, I would have encouraged for my younger self to take more advantage of Fordham's location within the city, as an academic experience in and of itself. I volunteered a lot in the Bronx and that was great, but I kind of wish I had actually figured out how to leverage more service opportunities into being something that helped me select my career path, because I think there are tons of opportunities and there are definitely tons of service opportunities through Fordham, but there are tons of opportunities throughout the city that you can take advantage of by being a Fordham student that can help you make some career decisions later on in life.

Matt Burns:

You said it yourself, Fairfax and universities can certainly drive the economy, the neighborhood, or the city they're in, certainly take advantage of that as a college student.

Chris Bruno:

I literally say every time I have a meeting with our mayor and city council, I started off with our local university is our strongest, greatest and single most important partner. And if we start making decisions that do not promote that partnership, I think that's when both the university and the city start losing.

Matt Burns:

So what do you think is next for you?

Chris Bruno:

I don't know what's next for me. I love what I'm doing right now. And I think that my being here right now is particularly good for me and for the city, because I gained some very valuable experience working with disaster relief funds in New York, following hurricane Sandy. At some point, my agency in Fairfax has to shift back to economic development and I am hitting that five year mark. For me, that seems to be the point in time where I start thinking about what comes next. So it is definitely something for me to start thinking about, but I've been really fortunate to have this experience here. I've been placed relatively quickly onto the senior leadership team of this city. And we've got to do a lot of really innovative things that I think most governments are probably not able to do. So I don't know what's next, but it's been a really good ride.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

Well, thanks Chris. It was great talking to you.

Chris Bruno:

It was great talking to you guys.

Matt Burns:

Yeah. Chris, thanks so much for being here.

Chris Bruno:

Thank you.

Matt Burns:

That's another addition to Fordham Footsteps.

Sara Hunt Munoz:

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