

Global Connections

Goshen College International Education

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Why we still believe in SST

BY JAN BENDER SHETLER

THIS YEAR HAS been a tough one for study abroad and for my first year as director. We had to evacuate our SST students and faculty from Tanzania and Ecuador three weeks before the end of the term, just as they were settling into their service experiences.

It was touch and go as we faced travel restrictions, flight cancellations and quarantines. Our administration, parents and board members appealed to political representatives, Menno Travel rescheduled flights repeatedly and the heroic work of our faculty leaders supported students' morale. By March 25, everyone was home safely. We are grateful for God's grace in all of this.

We have now had to cancel four May Term courses and five SST units spanning three semesters. Students have needed to juggle their schedules repeatedly. We hope for a vaccine and wonder when we can go back to travel abroad. But with these challenges come new opportunities and a reaffirmation of our conviction that global education is necessary for every GC student to navigate today's diverse and interconnected world.

Recent events have clarified what is worth our commitment. The pandemic has precipitated fear of foreigners, with hostility toward Asians in particular. The protests surrounding George Floyd's death at the hand of a policeman draw attention to systemic racism. To address these issues, we need global education more than ever.

The pandemic itself demonstrates that we cannot solve problems without analysis from



Andrew Hartzler, SST leader for Ecuador and professor of accounting, pauses to document students' safe arrival at the Quito airport in late March 2020. The group returned home several weeks early due to COVID-19.

a global perspective. We best understand how to do that by looking at a critical issue from the perspective of another culture, place or position. It is in moving from local to global analysis and back again that we begin to see systems at work in the world that advantage some and disadvantage others.

Although we can work at developing empathy with people who are different in a classroom setting, it sinks most deeply into

our consciousness when we do the hard work of living in a different culture with host families and working with colleagues through their everyday experiences. By putting our own ways of doing things in this context, we gain a sense of humility and learn to know ourselves better. If our nation's leaders all had these SST experiences in Ecuador or Senegal, China or Tanzania, Indonesia or Chicago, the world might be different now. 🌍



Dr. Jan Bender Shetler became Goshen College's director of international education in July 2019. Previously, she taught world history at Goshen College.

She has led SST units in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Senegal and conducted extensive oral history research in the Mara region of Tanzania. She is the author of *Imagining Serengeti: A History of Landscape Memory in Tanzania from Earliest Times to the Present*.

Making SST an option for everyone

BY JAN BENDER SHETLER

MANY GOSHEN COLLEGE students face barriers that prevent them from choosing an SST experience. In some cases, the demands of athletics or a particular major make it difficult. Commuters may find the room and board charges that are part of a semester abroad daunting. A first-generation college student may have no family support for going abroad. Racism in an unfamiliar context is a concern for some of our students, and LGBTQ students may also feel unsure of a warm welcome—or safety—in another culture.



Goshen College's celebration of the 50th Anniversary of SST in 2018-19 came with a serious evaluation of the program and our recommitment to making SST accessible to all students. In the current national context, we are further convicted of the importance of addressing diversity, equity and inclusion in our SST program. Here are three ways we are working to make SST an option for everyone:

PROVIDING NEW FORMS OF SST CLOSER TO HOME

This year, we began revising our curriculum in ways that strengthen our traditional SST program abroad but also make new forms of SST available through a series of off-campus experiences of shorter duration. In the 20-21 school year, we are piloting

new experiential courses that provide intercultural perspectives and engagement with the community. For example:

- In the fall, we will partner with the Goshen Historical Society to offer a course entitled, Latino Community Histories. Students will collect oral histories and design a museum exhibit.
- During May Term, a class will work with Mennonite Disaster Service to help a community rebuild after a natural disaster. Students will learn how to respond in ways that are ethical, sustainable and respectful.
- Plans are underway for a Global Public Health Virtual Practicum in partnership with Mennonite Central Committee.

All of these options address the needs of students who have found it difficult to do a semester abroad—whether because of family, work, finances, majors, co-curriculars, health or fear. But in a time of pandemic, they also provide a safer way to fulfill our goals for cross-cultural learning in an immersive context.

EDUCATING STUDENTS ABOUT THE SST PROGRAM

To address the fact that not all students come from families that know the benefits of a global perspective for their lives and careers, we have started to hold information sessions called "Global Gatherings." In the 20-21 school year, we hope to begin a Global Citizens Ambassador program that will enable returned SSTers to speak about their experience to student groups on campus.

We also envision a website where students can access resources that speak to their particular concerns. We are addressing concerns such as discrimination abroad in our student and faculty orientations. A working group is coordinating this initiative that we hope will bring equal access and inclusion of all to SST.

HELPING STUDENTS FIND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SST

This year for the first time, we have advertised external scholarships and advised students to apply for them. We're proud of the success they've had in securing as much as \$10,000 this way (see pink box below).

We will continue to look for ways to help students with the costs of SST in their particular situations.

Our LGBTQ, African-American, Latinx, commuter, low income, first-generation college, disabled and international students all have particular needs and incredible gifts to bring to SST. We need to work toward a program in which everyone belongs and contributes. 🌍

THE SST OFFICE

Jan Bender Shetler
Director of International Education
Jennifer Schrock
Administrative Assistant

THE SST ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Erica Albertin, Associate Athletic Director
Rocio Diaz, Coordinator for Intercultural Community Engagement
Keith Graber Miller, Professor of Bible, Religion & Philosophy
Scott Hochstetler, Professor of Music
Jan Kauffman, Registrar
Kathy Meyer Reimer, Professor of Education
Beth Miller, Associate Professor of Nursing
Gilberto Perez, Vice President for Student Life
Ann Vendrely, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean

2020-21 SST LEADERS

ECUADOR, SUMMER 2021
Richard Aguirre, Community Impact Coordinator
Judy Weaver, Director of the Academic Success Center
SENEGAL, SUMMER 2021
David Lind, Professor of Sociology
Kendra Yoder, Associate Professor of Sociology

SST SCHOLARSHIPS

Seven students received scholarships for international education during the 2019-2020 school year.

CRITICAL LANGUAGES SCHOLARSHIPS

Nathan Berkey '21, Goshen, IN
Sophia Martin '20 (first alternate), Lititz, PA

GILMAN SCHOLARSHIPS

Joise Favila-Castillo '23, Elkhart, IN
Cynthia Herrera Fernandez '20, Goshen, IN
Yujin Kim '23, Chuncheon, Republic of Korea

ROTARY SCHOLARSHIPS

Cade Fisher '22, Goshen, IN
Keila Flores '20 (first alternate), Goshen, IN



Why do we go there?

TWENTY-FOUR COUNTRIES have hosted Goshen College's SST students over the program's 50-year history. Currently, we visit five countries on three continents: Ecuador, China, Indonesia, Senegal and Tanzania.

The decision to invest in one location over another is sometimes swayed by practical matters such as the ease of obtaining VISAs or partner organizations with whom we have historic or personal ties. However, there is an underlying logic to the menu of options SST provides. In one way or another, each of these countries counters negative stereotypes of the developing world common in the West. Whichever country they choose, Goshen students will encounter many examples of resourcefulness, leadership and peaceful cooperation on SST.

ECUADOR

Ecuador packs a great deal of ecological diversity into a nation the size of Colorado. Students are within just a few hours of many different ecosystems, from cloud forests to beaches, making it a good destination for students interested in environmental sustainability—one of Goshen College's strategic priorities.

Ecuador is also an ideal place to learn about Indigenous cultures because Indigenous Ecuadorians wield considerable political power despite historical discrimination. The Quechua-speaking people of the highlands, groups from the Amazonian rainforest and Afro-Ecuadorians of slave descent are all networked in ways that can and do address injustice. Our partner, the Cofan Survival Fund, is an indigenous organization

supporting rights of both the environment and Amazonian peoples.

CHINA

In 1980, Goshen College's SST became one of the first North American study abroad programs to visit post-revolutionary China. At that time, SST offered insights into life in a Communist country that few Westerners had experienced.

Today, units explore the history of education in China, from the country's development of the first national education system in the world over 2,000 years ago through the Chinese Communist Revolution to the present. SSTers in China gain hands-on experience within the education system since their service assignments involve teaching English in Chinese middle and high schools. This gives them the chance to observe the ways that a Chinese education supports the communal values of this society.

INDONESIA

A common political slogan in Indonesia is "unity in diversity." With about 6,000 inhabited islands and 1,300 ethnic groups, it is one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world. Indonesia is religiously diverse as well. Most Indonesians are Muslim, but there are important Christian, Buddhist and Hindu minorities. Living in a Muslim culture that is working for peaceful relations is new for most students.

SSTers study in Yogyakarta on the island of Java where they are exposed to the rich artistic traditions within Javanese culture

such as its gamelan music. Goshen's primary partner there is the Duta Wacana Christian University, known for its work on Muslim-Christian relations.

SENEGAL

An SST experience in Senegal challenges the American perception that Islam is a violent religion. Like Indonesia, Senegal is a majority-Muslim country that offers opportunities to observe Muslim-Christian relations. Senegal takes pride in its religious tolerance and culture of peace. Here, students learn about peace-making from an Islamic perspective. This includes participating in an annual festival where Muslim and Christian neighbors visit each other offering food and asking for forgiveness for whatever may have transpired between them that year.

TANZANIA

Tanzania is another African country with little or no "tribal" conflict despite a great deal of ethnic diversity. Tanzanians have worked hard to keep it that way. The country discourages making ethnic identity political to such an extent that it is considered impolite to ask about someone's ethnicity. At one point, students in secondary school were required to attend boarding schools in a region other than their own as a form of intercultural education. A Christian president must be succeeded by a Muslim and vice versa.

SSTers in Tanzania study in Dar es Salaam, a largely Muslim coastal city of 6.7 million. For service, they transition to the Mara Region, a rural area on Lake Victoria which is largely Christian.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- **Share this newsletter with a prospective student.**
- **Buy a GC mailbox** as a memento. Funds raised support SST. See goshen.edu/mailboxes.
- **Take our survey.** We want to know how our SST alums navigated the barriers that could have kept them home. tinyurl.com/SST0720

FROM THE SST STORIES PROJECT:

Ripples in a pond

BY SUSAN (YODER) GRABER '71

THE SERVICE PORTION of SST can be difficult for students. Faculty leaders stress that they are there to build relationships and learn, not save the world, but it is still easy to feel that little is happening.

One such story comes from **Susan (Yoder) Graber '71**. Susan was part of the first SST unit to Nicaragua. Her service assignment was to help find volunteer labor for the building of a school in the rural village of Los Encuentros. For 50 years, Susan has remained in contact with her host family. She told us:

I returned home feeling like I had had virtually no impact. I struggled deeply with culture shock and faced more questions than answers about my home culture and faith. I also suffered an extended bout with internal parasites, and my strength was slow to return. I remember it as one of the lowest times in my life.

In 1998, I returned to Nicaragua to visit my host family. It was only then, some 25 years later, that I saw firsthand the “ripples in the pond” that my visit had helped precipitate.

My host family killed a cow to eat in honor of my return, with the hide stretched out to dry upon our arrival. I learned that one woman in the village had named her baby after me.

Not only had the town completed the school we had struggled to build, but more buildings had been added on. In the school, they were still singing the little songs I had taught the children, now passed on by the same man who had learned them from me as a child.

Julian, then a six-year-old in my host family, was now a grown man. I had encouraged him to learn English and he had done so. He'd also continued his education and gone on to work for a variety of international development organizations. The school that had enabled him to get an education had graduated many others who also went on to their respective professional pursuits.

I was welcomed home that year to Los Encuentros as a daughter and I returned to the U.S. feeling for the first time that I had made a small dent in changing the world.

Julian currently works for the U.S.-based NGO, Seeds of Learning. His organization builds schools in rural neighborhoods where

there is still desperate need, multiplying the impact of the school in Los Encuentros that changed his world.

Read the full account at sst-stories.goshen.edu.



Susan Graber '71 with her host father, Pedro Rojas, in Nicaragua.