

# Global Connections

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## Nurturing Reciprocity in SST Relationships

BY JENNIFER SCHROCK

**FOR MORE THAN** five decades, Goshen College students and faculty have traveled around the globe to experience international education and connect with people from other cultures. They have been welcomed by thousands of people—families, coordinators, organizations and community leaders.

As recipients of this overwhelming hospitality, we at GC long to be able to offer equitable benefits in return. When they began their roles as co-directors of the Global Engagement Office, Jerrell Ross Richer and Kendra Yoder named reciprocity as one of their priorities. Two highlights from the 2024-25 school year include hosting SST partners from Ecuador and investing in renewable energy projects with Ecuadorian partners.

### Pathways to Partnership

SST hosts in other countries often ask when they can come and visit our campus, our community, and our families. Visa requirements, economic disparities, and travel logistics make this challenging. But when these barriers can be removed, even for a short time, we are delighted to welcome our hosts and partners as they have welcomed us.

In November 2024, Goshen College hosted a delegation of professors, administrators and students from Rumiñahui Technological University, an SST partner organization in Quito, Ecuador.

Building on relationships that Ross Richer, Ecuador Country Coordinator Kléver Guevara, and indigenous Cofán students developed, the university received



Faculty, administrators and students from Rumiñahui Technical University visiting with Ecuador SST leaders, President Rebecca Stoltzfus and members of her Cabinet.

our summer 2024 SST unit with lavish hospitality. SST leaders Cristóbal Garza González and Tillie Yoder, were treated to cultural performances, regional cuisine and language practice with Ecuadorian students. Later, two students spent six weeks of service at the university, assisting in English language classes. This led to conversation about sending a delegation from Rumiñahui to Goshen.

Eight guests spent a week at Goshen College learning about our programs. They stayed with families from Waterford Mennonite Church and Goshen College and navigated language barriers just as our students do. The week included visits to Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary; opportunities to interact with students in economics and Spanish classes, lunch with members of

the President's Cabinet, and dinner with community leaders. Planning for and caring for the needs of guests was a humbling reminder of how much behind-the-scenes work SST host families and organizations do on GC students' behalf.

"Having guests from Rumiñahui allowed us to show reciprocity and solidarity to our Ecuadorian partners and to experience that the best assets of our institutions are the people who make them," Garza González commented.

We were especially glad that our Ecuador SST country coordinator could be part of the delegation. "It is such a gift to be able to host Kléver and return the hospitality he has shown us and our students over the past six years," Ross Richer said. Guevara found

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the visit important because it gave him an opportunity to see where our students come from, to experience campus life and to get to know the surrounding area with the help of former SST leaders and students that he worked with in Ecuador.

The Ecuadorian guests shared from their hearts at a farewell party at the College Cabin the day before their departure. Coming from an urban campus housed in a single building, the Goshen College campus with its large maple trees, sprawling lawns and prairie struck them as calm, safe and beautiful. They were impressed by Merry Lea's dedication to environmental sustainability and intrigued by the number of Spanish speakers on campus, including some from other countries. All appreciated the warm hospitality of the Indiana residents they met.

In addition to the fellowship with Ecuadorians, Richer enjoyed the local relationship-building that resulted. "Arranging this visit was rewarding and affirming," Richer said. "It was amazing how many local people, from President Becky Stoltzfus to Mayor Gina Leichthy, made time to be with our guests."

## Supporting SST partners through carbon onsets

A second form of reciprocity involves a visionary donor who has provided funding for climate onsets and climate education for each of the SST off-campus classes. Instead of buying offsets for SST travel on the carbon market, GEO has chosen a more personal, relationship-building approach: enable partner organizations to strengthen environmental work in their countries.

In the 2024-25 school year, the funds supported two solar projects in locations where our Ecuador SST students have service placements and fieldtrips. Both projects created much-needed light sources for evening activities and for use during blackouts in the electric grid. These are frequent due to climate-induced drought and Ecuador's reliance on hydroelectric power.

One grant provided solar lighting for a new children's park in Mindo, a small town located in the Ecuadorian cloud forest. GC students have volunteered in Mindo reforestation projects for the past six years. This was a meaningful gift for local residents

because Mindo is a town that typically caters to the needs of tourists; its whole economy is geared toward serving bird watchers and nature lovers who travel here from all over the world. But the public park was a project of the parochial government designed for local children. In Mindo during blackouts, the children's park shines on.

A second grant funded a small solar system for a community center built by residents of Basquitay, a remote Kichwa village and the birth place of Julian Guamán, one of our lecturers and our Kichwa language instructor. The single panel, inverter and battery system provides local people with the electricity needed to hold meetings in the evenings as well as to charge their phones. The alternative—if affordable—would have been a noisy generator belching exhaust.

The carbon onset funding also enables SST leaders of each travel group to find a national level expert to speak to our students about the impacts of climate change and solutions appropriate to the cultural context. This, too, supports communities by uplifting voices of social change.



Kléver Guevara, Ecuador country coordinator, and Heidi Dyck Hilty, May-Summer SST faculty, receiving a gift at the children's park solar celebration.

The Global Engagement team is deeply grateful for the chance to honor our partners and strengthen our relationships through both hospitality and support for community-level projects. We look forward to additional climate projects in other locations, and reciprocal visits when they can occur. 🌱

## UPCOMING SST UNITS & LEADERS

### SST SEMESTERS, 2025-2026

#### Ecuador

##### Spring:

Duane and Karen Stoltzfus

##### May-Summer:

Hillary Harder and Micah Detweiler

#### Indonesia

Luke and Janie Beck Kreider, Spring

### SEQUENTIAL SST, LOCATIONS:

#### Chicago and Elkhart County

Philipp Gollner

#### Detroit

Jonathon Schramm

#### A disaster site in the U.S.

Mike McHugh

#### Guatemala

Elizabeth Miller

#### London

Roy Jackson and Richard Orr

#### Northern Ireland

Jessica Baldanzi and Kyle Schlabach

### NEW THIS YEAR

#### Freedom Summer: U.S. South

Roz Woll and Darryl Heller (IUSB)

#### Sports and Culture in Puerto Rico

Andrew Hartzler and Brad Stoltzfus

## STUDY ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS

### GILMAN SCHOLARSHIPS

#### Rebekah Youngberg

Tanzania, Spring 2025

#### Samuel Klopfenstein

Ecuador, May-Summer 2025

#### Fatima Rhana

U.K. London, May term 2025

## THE GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT OFFICE

#### Jerrell Richer

Co-director of Global Engagement

#### Kendra Yoder

Co-director of Global Engagement

#### Jennifer Schrock

Administrative Assistant for SST



# Sequential SST Broadens Student Choices

BY JENNIFER SCHROCK

**DR. JONATHAN SCHRAMM**, professor of sustainability and environmental education, teaches two SST cultural perspectives courses that offer very different opportunities. In one course, students spend three weeks in Northern India, trekking through mountain villages and studying ecology and sustainability. In another, entitled Renaissance and Resilience, students study ways that Midwestern rust belt cities are being revitalized. These students take a five-day trip to Detroit.

While the locations are very different, both are sequential SST courses, both are options in the Ecological Justice thread, and both are designed to fulfill the same learning goals that Schramm worked with when he led a semester of SST in Tanzania.

Schramm has become convinced that it is possible to do immersive learning in both shorter and longer time frames—if it's well-coordinated and puts students in touch with interesting people and significant endeavors.

"You're going to get powerful learning out of that. Even in five days in Michigan, I saw it happening," he said.

## Constraints—and resilience

Schramm's courses explore the ways in which communities are affected and often constrained by broader systems—economic, governmental, social, ecological. In Ecology and Sustainability in the Indian Himalaya, that means looking at the ways a steep mountain ecosystem shapes civilization. Students also learn about logging and reforestation decisions made under British colonialism nearly a century ago. These choices changed local soils, making today's restoration efforts more challenging.

In the Renaissance and Resilience course that visits Detroit, students examined the impact of the auto industry. Its large-scale economic decisions made market sense, but were not always in the interests of local communities. The class also looked at the long-term effects of racist policies that confined black residents to certain areas of the city.

But Schramm doesn't just focus on limits. "Communities have a lot of resources internally that they can activate to build coherence and strength," Schramm says.

In both locations, Schramm introduces his classes to people who love the places they live and are committed to making them better.

In Detroit, Schramm scheduled a tour of the McClure's Pickle Factor because it was an example of a family business whose owners wanted to contribute to the wellbeing of their hometown. The inspiring pickle tour proved to be a trip highlight that engaged the whole class.

Jazmin Ibarra, a business major from Elkhart, remembers the discussion about how artificial intelligence might be integrated into the pickle manufacturing process in the future. She was intrigued by the effects that new technologies have on workers, and saw parallels between the recent introduction of AI and Detroit's history with assembly lines.

In India, meanwhile, Schramm introduces his students to professionals who left high-status careers to engage in creative work with conservation organizations because they care about biodiversity—or another aspect of their community. He especially enjoys illustrating the ways that environmental improvement and social improvement are seen as complementary in India instead of the zero sum game they are sometimes assumed to be in the U.S.

## Sequential Service Opportunities

For their second immersive SST course, some students in the ecological justice SST thread remain in India and complete a three-week service placement with a local organization. In June, for example, Simon Moshier, a rising junior interdisciplinary major from Goshen, IN, spent his time at a research farm founded by Vandana Shiva—a renowned scholar and food justice activist focused on seed saving, biodiversity and sustainable agriculture practices. Other students worked at a non-profit in Dehradun, doing environmental education with high school students and gathering data on urban heat islands.

The domestic alternative is Environmental Disaster and Response—a course partnering with Mennonite Disaster Service at disaster sites ranging from El Paso, Texas to Red Lake Nation, Minn. Last May, students helped repair homes at a tornado site in Selma, Alabama.



Aysia Adkins, a senior music major, receives encouragement from Barbara Barge of the Foot Soldiers Park in Selma who served as the SST group's tour guide in Selma, Alabama.

Hillary Harder, a music professor with GC's Community School of the Arts, co-lead the course this May. She describes the experience as an amazing mix of hard work, stepping back, and drawing big picture connections. The class reflected on both the Civil Rights history of the city and the contemporary justice issues related to who receives disaster services today.

Ibarra paired this course with Renaissance and Resilience, above, and was able to compare the effects of racial tension in Selma with those she'd learned about in Detroit.

"These courses brought me hope, because in both cases, we saw how bad it was, but we also saw how much progress has been made," she said.

## Which is better?

Sequential SST began as an attempt to solve an equity problem that kept a semester abroad out of reach for an increasing number of students. It has evolved into an engaging menu of SST experiences that broaden the opportunities for all students. Semester and sequential SST each have their advantages. A semester abroad provides the opportunity to learn another language and be fully immersed in another culture for an extended time. Sequential options enable students to compare how a theme plays out in two different locations or to align their SST experience more closely with their majors.

Which is better? Semester SST or sequential? We might say, "It depends on the student." Or we might say, "All of the above." 🌿



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## Directors' Corner



Kendra Yoder and Jerrell Richer

**IT HAS BEEN** a busy first year as co-directors of the Global Engagement Office. We experienced the steep learning curve of a new job in the midst of political and social change. The latter has heightened anxiety about creating safe and accessible culturally immersive experiences for all students at GC, and required care for our global partners who are impacted by domestic and global economic and social instability.

As we sense U.S. society turning inward on itself, we believe we need, more than ever, to engage our core value of global citizenship. Goshen College defines this as "an intercultural openness, with the ability to function effectively with people of other world views." Global Citizens must also cultivate "a responsible understanding of

stewardship for human systems and the environment in a multicultural world."

We continue to implement our new "SST for all" curriculum, which aligns our sequential SST curriculum with the student learning outcomes and assessments of our semester SST. This alignment allows students to fit SST requirements into their unique circumstances, relieving the financial and time constraints that often prohibited them from joining semester SST opportunities in the past.

"SST for all" offers domestic and international opportunities and allows students to either bundle their 12 global education credits into one semester or take a series of four courses over several years. Both formats include themes that link the curriculum together in a meaningful way and require stepping outside the classroom to learn about a different culture through community engaged learning.

This coming year will build upon our strong collaboration with Eastern Mennonite University, as we host thirteen of their students across our three semester

units, in Indonesia and Ecuador. We look forward to supporting our faculty as they develop new SST classes and to working on a revision of the Capstone class that will emphasize intercultural and sustainability leadership. 🌱

### SST themes

Each sequential and semester SST experience has a theme that is explored throughout a series of four courses:

- **Arts & Purpose**
- **Ecological Justice**
- **Global Health and Equity**
- **Global Heartland**
- **Hispanic Identities and Resilience**
- **Indigenous Communities & Globalization**
- **Interreligious Dialog**
- **Peace and Reconciliation**