

Global Connections

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Richer and Yoder to Direct Global Education Office

BY JENNIFER SCHROCK

Dr. Kendra Yoder and Dr. Jerrell Richer will serve as the new co-directors of the Global Engagement Office and the SST program, beginning July 1, 2024. Both are current Goshen College faculty who plan to divide the responsibilities while continuing to teach a few courses.

The partnership came about when Richer and Yoder spoke and realized they were both interested in the job. Both were also reluctant to leave teaching in their fields and to manage the range of administrative responsibilities involved. After further

discussion, it became clear that Richer’s and Yoder’s gifts were complementary, and a co-directorship would be possible. Both new leaders have long experience leading SST semesters—Yoder in Senegal and Richer in Peru. Both have also developed and led courses under the new SST sequential model that Shetler pioneered. They share a passion for crossing cultures and connecting people to different faiths, ethnicities and languages. Creative, big picture thinking and collaborative leadership are challenges they enjoy.

“This is a key academic leadership role on our campus. Both Kendra and Jerrell... understand how important it is for our students to learn about different cultures in



Kendra Yoder and Jerrell Richer

order to meet our mission and prepare to serve in a multicultural world,” Academic Dean Ann Vendrely said.

“I am thrilled that this dream team with different skill sets is available. It opens up all kinds of possibilities. And the fact that they are keeping some of their teaching load, makes them more connected to students,” observed outgoing Director of Global Engagement Jan Shetler who retires June 28.

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Left to right: Jan Shetler, Kendra Yoder and Jerrell Richer at Jan’s retirement celebration.

Shetler Retires

GC employees, family and friends gathered April 19 to celebrate with Dr. Jan Shetler as she looks forward to retirement after 19 years in the history department and five as director of global engagement. It took six people over an hour to describe Shetler’ contributions—with little overlap in content.

“Jan has championed this new ‘SST for all’ program by remembering what we do best while putting at the center those students who have been most marginalized by this very program that we champion,” Kendra Yoder, incoming director of global engagement said. She also praised Shetler’s ability to see creative possibilities in unpromising situations and to move an idealized concept to an action plan.

Former Tanzania SSter Billy Easton II described the rigorous support he received from Shetler as he pursued a Gilman

Scholarship for study abroad. Andrew Hartzler, who was leading an SST unit in Ecuador when COVID hit, expressed gratitude for the ways in which Shetler’s calm, gentle spirit saw him through the resulting chaos.

Shetler says that making connections with local partners at SST locations and hearing students’ stories when they came back were highlights of the global engagement role for her.

“It was also satisfying to revamp the program in ways that meet our current students’ needs,” she added.

Jan will continue her work with the Mara Cultural Heritage Digital Library, a project funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The library makes interviews she gathered in Tanzania accessible to local people.

Kendra Yoder

Professor of Sociology Kendra Yoder has been part of the Global Engagement Office as a quarter time assistant director for two years. She will work primarily with curriculum and course planning, as well as with preparing students and faculty for off campus community engaged learning. Yoder will continue to teach the SST orientation class and with Ross Richer, will teach the Capstone course students take when they return. Preparing faculty leaders is also critical to the success of the program. Yoder will oversee the orientation of faculty leaders and coordinate the SST Leadership Institute they participate in before leaving.

As a sociologist, Yoder brings ethnographic and qualitative research skills to the program—skills in interviewing and attention to the customs of other cultures that are part of the SST curriculum for immersion experiences. As a former licensed clinical social worker, Yoder also brings skills in crisis intervention and conflict management. Her two years as Title IX Deputy Coordinator at GC and 15+ years working in domestic and sexual violence prevention in higher education will continue to serve her well as she oversees student and community safety and health concerns.

“I look forward to continuing to champion and innovate our new GLST curriculum and programs to meet the needs of students and faculty in this new era of global education at Goshen College,” Yoder said.

Jerrell Richer

Professor of Economics Jerrell Ross Richer will oversee operations, including finances, institutional compliance and travel logistics. He brings skills in budgeting, modeling and managing external funding to the role. Richer has a decade of experience developing and managing budgets for cost-share projects and research contracts with the U.S. Forest Service and California State University. He will also work with scholarships and grant funding.

As an economist, Richer has developed courses in environmental, ecological, international and development economics, including the triple-bottom line model of sustainability: Planet, People and Profit. He is proficient in Spanish and has lived abroad for extended periods of time. For the past nine years, Richer and his wife, Jane Ross Richer, were part of a Two Way Mission,

living half of each year in Indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Rainforest with Mennonite Mission Network. He looks forward to working with SST partners and visiting SST programs around the world while overseeing partnership agreements and communication.

Areas of Interest

While candidating, Richer and Yoder described their vision for SST and named areas they would like to develop further. Care of the planet and promoting SST to guest students are two areas they emphasized (see pages 3 to 4.) Other directions they mentioned included:

Courses tailored to athletes: Ross Richer is interested in developing SST courses targeted toward GC teams. In 2022, Ross Richer co-led an SST course in Arizona for the cross-country and track team, along with their coach, Rustin Nyce. Not only was the SST course a success; the relationship-building that took place likely contributed to the team’s stellar performance the following year. Finding ways to bring SST experience to teams is a priority, since 46% of the 2024-25 incoming class are committed athletes.

Heritage experiences: Students who are able to visit a place that reflects their heritage often find SST particularly meaningful, and they enrich their SST groups with insights unique to their history. A Puerto Rico SST course, for example, filled up a year in advance because it appealed to Latinx students. Yoder and Ross Richer are interested in building on these successes.

Reciprocity: “I don’t want any drive-by service projects. I want to develop a program that is good for Diné College students,” Dr. Charles (Monty) Roessel, President of Diné College, told Richer during his time on the Navajo Nation in 2023. Genuine reciprocity may include finding ways students from Navajo, Indonesian or other SST contexts can spend a semester at Goshen College.

“SST offers our students unique opportunities to learn as we open ourselves to the world around us. I am excited to develop deeper relationships with international friends and colleagues. We are truly connected by the values we share,” Richer remarked. 🌍

UPCOMING SST UNITS & LEADERS

SST SEMESTERS, 2024-2025

Ecuador

with Heidi and Eric Dyck Hilty

Navajo Nation

with Anna Groff and Dinae Wirth

Tanzania

with Adam and Karen Graber Roth

SEQUENTIAL SST, LOCATIONS:

Detroit

with Jonathon Schramm

A disaster site in the U.S.

with Hillary Harder

India

with Jonathon Schramm

Puerto Rico

with Terry Martin

Chicago and Elkhart County

with Philipp Gollner

STUDY ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS

GILMAN SCHOLARSHIPS

Magaly Cazabal Gonzalez

London, Northern Ireland, May 2024

Alayna Brielle Kingsbury

Liam Morris

Northern Ireland, May 2024

CRITICAL LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIP

Billy Gene Easton II

Tanzania, Summer 2024

THE GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT OFFICE

Jerrell Richer

Co-director

Kendra Yoder

Co-director

Jennifer Schrock

Administrative Assistant for SST

THE SST ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Erica Albertin

Director of Athletics

Rocio Diaz

Director for Community Engagement and Adult Outreach

Scott Hochstetler

Professor of Music

Beth Miller

Associate Professor of Nursing

Kathy Meyer Reimer

Professor of Education

Ann Vendrely

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean

Kristin Waltner

Registrar

Composting and Renewal: A Day at the Rujotay Project in Guatemala

BY ELIZABETH MILLER

This SST field trip to Rujotay in Comalapa, Guatemala, was funded by the new carbon-onsetting initiative that integrates environmental education, local investment, and climate change mitigation into GC's global education program (see below). The nineteen students involved were taking a May Term course, Youth and Resilience in Guatemala, with Rob Brennehan and Elizabeth Miller, the author of the piece.

Benita Simón Mendoza, coordinator of the Rujotay Project, directed the bus to park next to Comalapa's town dump as she began to tell the members of the Goshen College Guatemala May Study-Service Term (SST) course about the path that led her to return to her hometown.

Benita had grown up in Comalapa, a majority Maya Kaqchikel town located in an agricultural region about two hours from the capital, but she later moved away for a college education and professional work elsewhere. On visits home, however, she was troubled by the practice of burning trash on the banks of a river ravine on the outskirts of town.

"I thought of Nehemiah and how God's children are charged with liberating all of creation," she said. Nehemiah was the Jewish prophet tasked with rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile. Seventy years before, the people wept as they watched Jerusalem burn, but in the time of Nehemiah, they were invited to join in the work of rebuilding their homeland.

Inspired by this vision, Benita moved back to Comalapa and began to gather around her other young people committed to ecological alternatives for their town. First, they learned to separate organic material from inorganic material. Then they started



Rujotay founder Benita Simón Mendoza explains the wonders of the worm to GC students Teresa Richer, Mariela Esparza, and Irish Cortez.

a small vermiculture bin. Benita claimed that the handful of worms they acquired for the vermiculture bin quickly made themselves "lovable," by virtue of their ability to efficiently turn fruit and vegetable scraps into rich organic fertilizer. The vermiculture project grew slowly, as new families joined and contributed compostable waste from their households.

Yet the young people, now organized under the name of Rujotay, longed for a larger scale impact, leading them to secure a small plot of land adjacent to the town dump. Here they collected organic waste from the town market, full of husks, hulls, and stems that were too tough for the worms to appreciate. By separating out all the plastic, seeding the piles with fungi spores, and cultivating a thermophilic aerobic process to jumpstart

composting, the group learned to produce a high-quality compost that can be used to benefit local agriculture and landscaping.

With more time, they were able to convince the municipality to collect and deliver the market waste directly to their composting site. Last year, Rujotay successfully diverted 12 tons of waste from the town dump and transformed it into compost.

The word, *rujotay*, refers to a new shoot, emerging out of the main trunk after a period of dormancy or following a pruning process. Instead of rebuilding a physical city, as was the case for Nehemiah, Benita and others in Rujotay seek to nurture the earth's own capacity for healing and new life. 🌱

Read the full story at goshen.edu/blogs/category/guatemala

GEO moves toward net zero carbon travel

The learning that occurs while immersed in another culture is invaluable, but the climate impact of travel is of increasing concern. The Global Engagement Office is grateful for a generous donor who has provided funding for climate offsets and climate education for each of our off-campus classes. These funds make it possible to add the following components to our SST programs:

- 1. A National Level Speaker:** Students meet an expert in the field of climate change and hear a presentation that addresses government policy and the impacts, contributions, challenges and solutions in the national context.
- 2. Immersive Experiences:** While on SST, students participate in an immersive learning activity with a local partner that relates to climate change, sustainability and resiliency in their particular context. Reforestation is one example.
- 3. Carbon Footprint Onset:** Last fall, students in the Economics of Sustainability course estimated the carbon footprint from SST travel. GEO can now donate funds to organizations involved in mitigating carbon dioxide emissions, through actions such as renewable energy generation or forestry projects. Funding the organization's activities will result in a net zero carbon footprint for each SST group or, even better, a "net positive" impact on the climate.

DONATE TO SST

SST Annual Fund: Assists with travel and administrative costs for off-campus immersive education.

Other Possibilities: Are you interested in supporting the SST Endowment Fund, scholarships for low-income SSTers or the environmental sustainability of the program?

To learn more: contact advancement@goshen.edu or call **574-535-7564**.

SST welcomes guest students

In the past two years, three students from other colleges or universities joined an SST unit for a semester, and several more plan to be part of next spring's Tanzania and Ecuador units. Guest students participate in orientation online and transfer their SST credits back to their home institution.

Students from any college are welcome, provided they can work out the academic and financial arrangements with their school. Those at GC's sister colleges—Eastern Mennonite University, Bluffton University, Bethel University or Hesston College—are able to remain students at their home schools, paying their regular tuition and drawing on their financial aid while on SST.

Evelyn Miller, a class of 2025 psychology major from St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn., joined the spring 2024 Ecuador SST unit.

"If you are an outside student considering SST, do not hesitate. You will receive a warm welcome and unwavering, patient support throughout the orientation process and abroad from compassionate SST admin staff, Goshen students and leaders," she said.

Rachel Wheeler, a class of 2025 nursing major at Eastern Mennonite University, was part of the spring 2023 Tanzania unit. It was the service aspect of SST that attracted Wheeler.

"I was placed on a maternity ward in a hospital in Mugumu, Tanzania, and as I move through the clinical level of the nursing program at EMU, I still reflect on what I learned there. I learned some invaluable intercultural understanding and I use that knowledge every day as I interact with my patients," Wheeler said.

Sharing this information with students you know who could benefit from an SST experience is another way to support Goshen College. 🌍

International Partners



Celia Vasquez

Peru SST Coordinator Dies at 66

Celia Vasquez, who helped to establish Goshen College's SST program in Peru and served for more than a decade as a country coordinator, died June 21. Vasquez has accompanied hundreds of students on their intercultural journey. Find the full story on the GC news feed.



Salmon Pandarangga

2024 Visiting Global Scholar

Salmon Pandarangga, who teaches language courses at the Universitas Kristen Wira Wacana, Sumba, Indonesia, served as a visiting global scholar with the Global Engagement Office fall of 2023. Pandarangga taught a language class for SSTers headed to Indonesia in the spring and introduced them to the distinctive culture of his island. Indonesians later commented on how well-prepared his SST students were.