

Newsletter



WELCOME BACK to the Global Health in Action Newsletter! If you are a new reader, welcome on board! We are proud to represent Mercer's Global Health Studies (GHS) Program and the International and Global Studies (IGS) Department.

In our inaugural edition, we brought you stories, statistics, and news about food insecurity at the local, national, and international levels. Access to affordable, healthy, and nutritious food is a global concern that has a strong impact on the health and wellbeing of entire populations. Right here in Macon, food deserts are a major concern. In this edition, we will bring you a few more pieces addressing food insecurity. One piece explains the problems Macon faces in providing healthy and affordable food to all its residents (see *Hunger, Poverty, and Sex in Middle Georgia*), while the other provides an example of how food insecurity is being combated at the local level (see *The Mulberry Market*).

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As GHS majors, we often get asked, "so, what can you do with a degree in Global Health?" The field can appear broad and somewhat daunting to the outside observer, and for good reason. GHS encompasses a vast amount of information and covers a wide range of topics, from epidemiology to health policy. As this is our second and last edition of this school year, we would like to begin answering that question for you, our readers. In showcasing the accomplishments of our small but mighty GHS Program and IGS Department, we will shed light on how those trained in Global Health apply their learnings outside of the classroom.

In addition to bringing you an inside look at the lives of our GHS professors, we give a warm send off to the 25 seniors graduating from the International and Global Studies department this semester. They are all preparing to do impressive things in their adult lives! We've also tracked down some alums of the GHS Program to see what they've accomplished since leaving Mercer. By providing a glimpse into the academic and working lives of our GHS family, we hope to illuminate the vast possibilities available to those who study and work in Global Health.

The possibilities to bring good into the world are endless.

Lastly, we will end this edition with a love story. This story follows the lives of two young philanthropists from Vermont who joined the Peace Corps in the 1980s. Read on for more details!

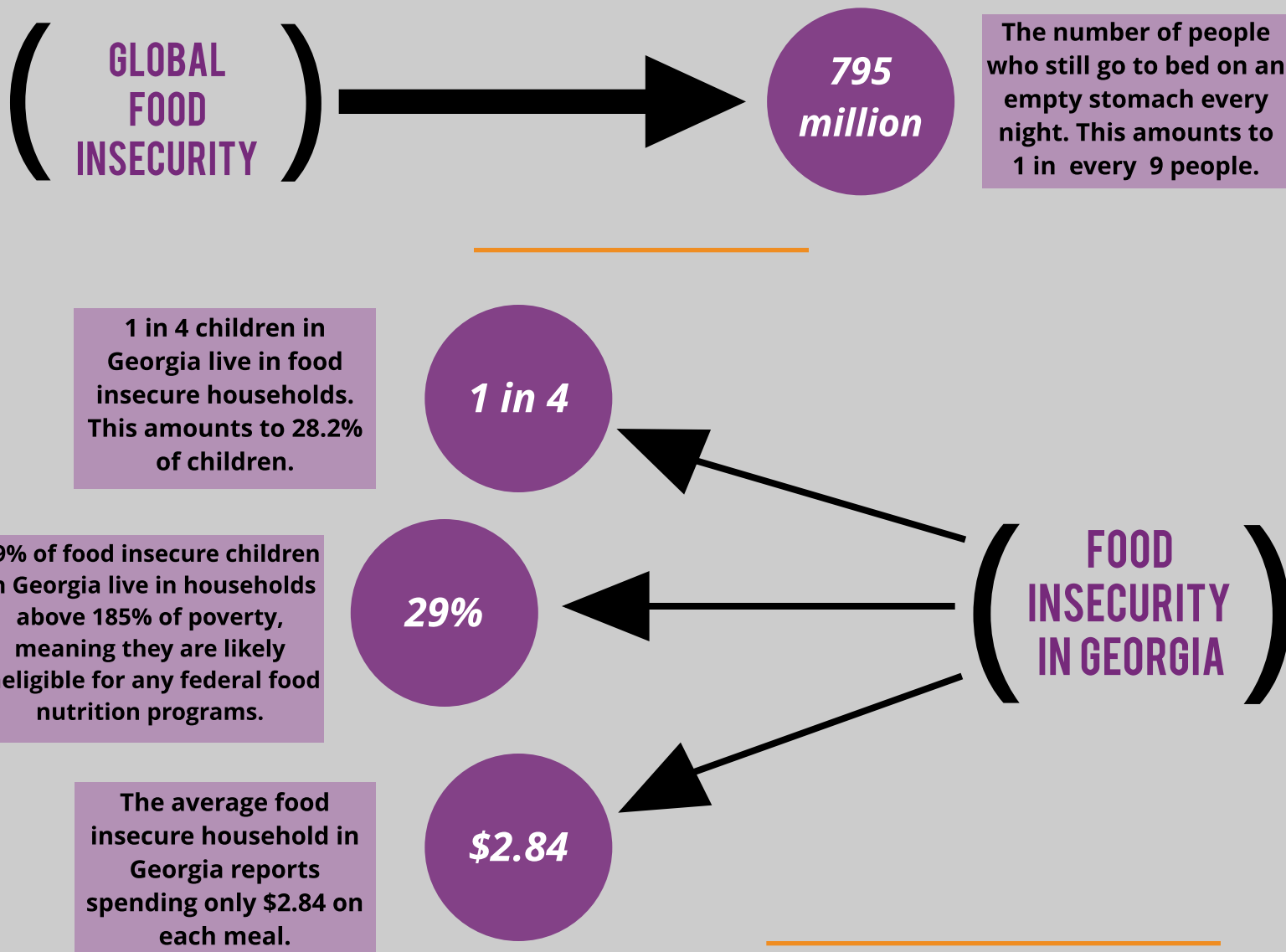
We hope you enjoy this edition, and as always, please contact us with any questions or feedback.

-Emma Peel, Editor-in-Chief



How did the Peace Corps help foster this young couple's love?

Food Insecurity: a Persistent Global Health Challenge



BIBB COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS

35,510
individuals
are food
insecure

\$16,830,000
annual food
budget
shortfall

22.8%
food
insecurity
rate

2 ZERO HUNGER



Sustainable Development Goal Two- Zero Hunger- pledges to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. It is one of the top priorities of the World Food Program.

Hunger, Poverty, & Sex in Middle Georgia

The Hunger Panel Report

The locally-sponsored Hunger Panel that took place on Thursday, February 23 in honor of Hunger Week effectively brought to light the multitude of ways in which hunger is both pervasive and seemingly inescapable not only in international communities, but in the very ones which we call home.

Five panelists were featured at this event, each with his or her own insights, reflections, and research to share in order to shed some light on the issue.

The experiences of Dr. Chinekwu Obidoa, Ms. Debbie Townsend, Mary Martinez, Kaitlyn Koontz, and Brent Lunsford were integral to shaping the panel discussion and emphasizing the significance that hunger plays in the lives of so many.

Hunger is an important issue to consider and tackle because of its prevalence, but also because of its preventability. Right here in Middle Georgia, hunger is a ruthless reality, with 22.8% of Bibb County's inhabitants falling into the "food insecure" category, according to Dr. Obidoa. But it manifests itself in quite different ways compared to the hunger with which so many are familiar in developing countries.

Here in Macon, food insecurity is correlated with poverty, limited access to full-sized grocery stores, and a lack of adequate public transportation. While there is certainly a greater access to food, overall, there is also a pronounced lack of access to food and its distribution. Furthermore, hunger here isn't as "newsworthy" as it is in impoverished countries.

Ultimately, however, what the US lacks in equitable and accessible food distribution, it makes up for with the government support that it provides in the form of food stamps and welfare. In many countries, meanwhile, no such means of government support exist to help impoverished citizens get easier access to food.

Ironically, however, out of all citizens living in poverty and food insecurity, many do not qualify for food stamps, which is another avenue by which the disparity in food accessibility only widens.

Despite its preventability and the existing government support programs, hunger still appears to be as rampant as ever. There are many socio-structural factors at play when it comes down to how hunger manifests itself and how it is handled in different communities. In Macon-Bibb, several factors play a key role in determining how hunger propagates itself, as well as how the community is impacted by it and, in turn, how it chooses to tackle this complex issue.

Determinants of Hunger

Because food is a basic need for human survival, continuous food insecurity caused by a persistent lack of this basic resource often leads people to engage in behaviors they would have otherwise never chosen to turn to. A vicious cycle of discrimination, poverty, price injustice, inadequate education opportunities, high incarceration rates, and lack of resources to turn one's life around makes it remarkably challenging for people who are already struggling to be able to rise above and beyond the circumstances keeping them disadvantaged and food insecure.

This is where, according to research conducted by Mary Martinez, such behaviors as transactional sex come into play. In this case, sex is basically given as a service in exchange for what is needed most by those who are unable to obtain it any other way—either food or money, or both. It might appear as a somewhat foreign concept, as well as something that could only take place within some distant, remote villages of developing countries, but in fact, it is the shocking reality that plagues the very heart of Georgia. When all else fails, those who are disadvantaged are driven to take desperate measures, and this is an issue that all

panelists highlighted in some way.

Fighting Hunger

Ultimately, while progress is being made, Middle Georgia—and the US—has quite a ways to go until it will be able to provide equitable food distribution and security to each and every one of its residents in order to alleviate the hunger crisis. The first step is to understand the problem, and then to try to understand why it happens and what makes it manifest itself in the ways that it does, according to Dr. Obidoa. Then, it's necessary to try to figure out the most feasible solutions to address it.

"FOOD INSECURITY ISN'T ALWAYS SO APPARENT. ONE CAN BE OVERWEIGHT & EVEN APPEAR OBESE, BUT CAN STILL BE SEVERELY MALNOURISHED."
-KAITLYN KOONTZ

Regardless, as Brent Lunsford pointed out, it is important to realize that help is available, and those who live in poverty should not be "so prideful to the point that they refuse to accept it" when they need it. Indeed, that is often the first step that's necessary to begin making a change in one's life for the better.

Alina Yemelyanov



Mapping Food Insecurity in Macon

Research conducted by Kaitlyn Koontz

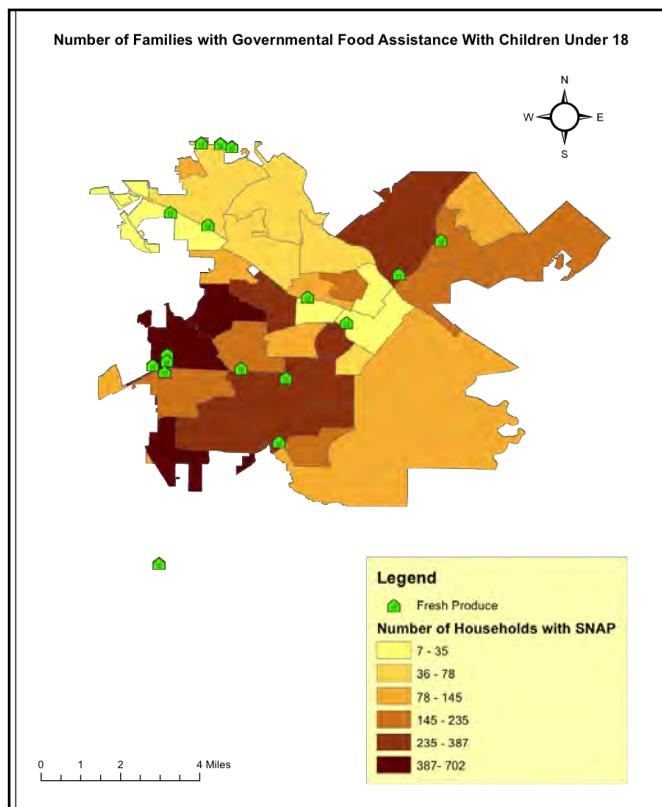
After deciding to focus on food insecurity in Macon, the first question I asked myself was: where do I start? Macon is huge! The most current census data shows Macon's population to be around 89,981. Additionally, I wanted to understand how food insecurity impacts Macon's elementary schools. I needed to narrow down my search in order to identify a target population. I decided to map the prevalence of food deserts in Macon using two factors— families on food assistance programs, and families in poverty.

I chose to pick families that had children under the age of 18 in order to ensure that my data specifically identifies children in Macon. Furthermore, I began to select grocery stores, however; I needed to select grocery stores that sold adequate fresh produce. Additionally, I needed to pick grocery stores that are likely to accept SNAP and other food assistance programs. Because of these two factors I exclusively chose chain grocery stores like Kroger, Walmart, and Publix.

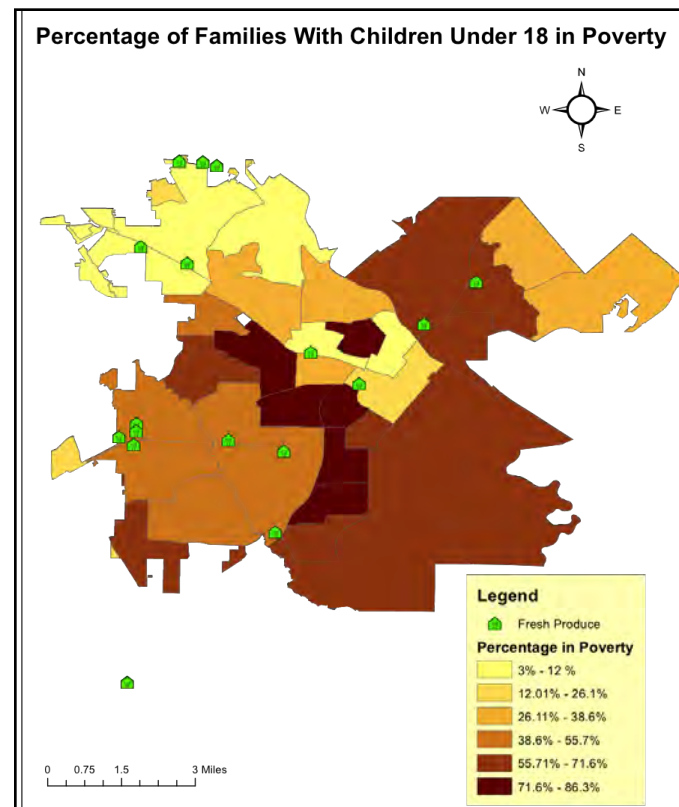
Using the USDA definition of a food desert, "the percentage of the total population in the census that lives more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store", I began to

gather information. I used census data in order to look at sections of the population, which you can see divided up each map. The green symbols represent grocery stores, and show the relationship between families on food assistance or in poverty, and the location of adequate fresh produce.

If you look at the map titled "Number of Families with Governmental Food Assistance With Children Under 18," you will notice that west Macon not only has a high number of families on food assistance, but also is far from many grocery stores. Additionally, if you look at the at the map titled "Percentage of Families with Children Under 18 in Poverty," you can see this same pattern in central Macon, and a spot in northern central Macon, which is representative of downtown. These maps have helped identify specific populations and areas where a food security intervention should be prioritized. The next step in my research is to conduct a community needs and asset assessment in order to further understand what type intervention would be the most beneficial.



Food insecure neighborhoods lack access to fresh produce





the mulberry market

Healthy, fresh, and easily accessible foods makes for a viable remedy to the food insecurity experienced in Macon, Georgia. According to the local farmers, producers, and bakers of the Mulberry Market at Tatnall Square Park, the market is definitely a channel for food insecurity alleviation. The Mulberry Market is open each Wednesday afternoon from 3:30-6:00 PM. Its location in Tatnall Square Park allows both Macon residents and Mercer students to shop at this vibrant local gem.

Bibb County's food insecurity rate has climbed to 23.8% as of 2014, 8.4% above that of the national average.¹ To further understand food insecurity in Macon, the local farmers of Middle Georgia provided insight on how their work at the Mulberry Market could be part of the solution. Drew, of Milledgeville Georgia, spoke of how his permaculture farm "Salamander Springs" brings regular customers seeking nutritious and fresh produce every week. He notes the accessibility of the park, "in walking distance," allowing Maconites "who otherwise would have no way of getting [to the park]" to come and partake in the local Middle Georgia economy.

Similarly, Jessie, a baker and caterer who owns "Sweet Vegan Treats" attests to the benefits of choosing a healthier lifestyle through diet. She shared her experience of gradually removing animal products from her diet, leading her to lose weight and feel much more energetic when she and her husband decided to adopt the vegan diet. Her baked goods including pies, cupcakes, and soft pretzels, are all vegan and, to some people's amazement, taste just like the "real" thing.

She seems to be familiar with all her customers; in fact she states that most of her customers are regulars. When asked if the Mulberry Market could alleviate food insecurity in Macon, she answered that the market caters to "all financial brackets" and that "providing healthy foods to the

community means allowing all forms of money to be used for payment." Indeed, the Mulberry Market accepts all forms of payment and doubles Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) points, encouraging its recipients to buy locally and regularly from the market.

Ethan and Michael of "Rag & Frass Farm" emphasize the importance of knowing where produce is grown. "Unlike public companies such as Whole Foods, we are actually selling what's local and fresh," Ethan of Rag & Frass shares, pointing to how the colorful array of fresh flowers at his booth had been picked just hours before setting up their tent that afternoon.

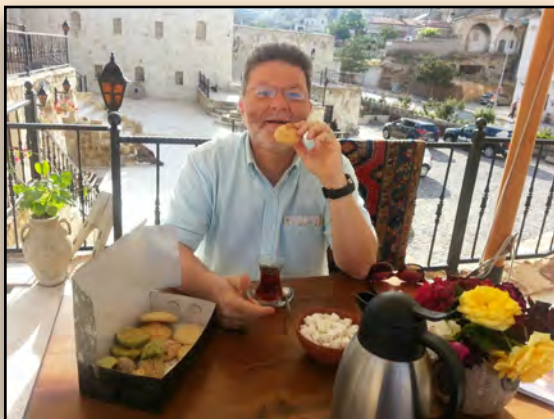
Ethan highlights that it's not only knowing where the produce is from, but also having the ability to know the person who produced it. If his customers should have questions, he would be the primary source for answers. There are a "multitude of reasons" to buy at the Mulberry Market, Ethan notes, adding that consumer's purchases contribute "directly to the local economy...offering fair wages and fair prices" to both sides of the exchange. He goes on to say that there "is virtually no competition" among the farmers at the various booths because they are all working together to support Middle Georgia's economy. As for the Market serving as a solution to food insecurity, Ethan notes that its ability to maintain regular customers is one of its strongholds against the tide of food insecurity.

The friendliness and openness of the local farmers at the Market left the final impression that the solution to food insecurity lies not only in the provision of nutritionally adequate foods, but also in the commitment of community members to work towards its eradication. ■ Mary Martinez

"Bibb County's food insecurity rate has climbed to 23.8%- 8.4% above the national average."



Dr. Eimad Houry



2016-17 marks the 26th year of my tenure at Mercer University. On the whole, my experiences have been great, largely because of the opportunity to work with and get to know wonderful students and colleagues. Equally important is that my responsibilities have afforded me the opportunity to continue to grow professionally and to learn. Although my early scholarship focused on the political economy of the Middle East and North Africa, my range of interests and curiosities have definitely expanded over the years. After co-leading five Mercer on Mission programs to Cape Town South Africa, I have developed a deep interest in the intersection of religion and race. Having explored the question in some depth, I have come to the conclusion that the role that religion played in ending the oppressive apartheid regime and in healing the deep wounds of racism in South Africa is under represented in the existing literature. The influence of religious teachings and thought on Middle Eastern countries have also peaked my interest. I am especially interested in Islamic teachings as they pertain to international relations, international law and governance. Because of my administrative responsibilities, I have not taken a sabbatical in a long time, but when I do I will be working on these themes and hope to produce a helpful text on these questions.

As for personal hobbies, I would mention three: soccer, travel, trying new cuisines. Soccer is a lifelong passion of mine and because I played for my high school in England I became even more invested in the game. Although I don't get to play much any more, I do follow many of the world's top leagues such as the Premier League, La Liga, the Bundesliga, Champions League and, of course, the World Cup. I also enjoy discovering and exploring new destinations around the globe. I left home to study abroad at the young age of 15. I spent two years at a boarding school in England, and ever since my travel instinct just got stronger and stronger. I was born in Kuwait, of Lebanese parents, raised in Dubai and England, married to an Aruban who is also a Dutch national, and have a daughter who speaks Arabic and Romanian and is in the Peace Corps serving in Moldova. So, in short, travel is like a second nature to me and I hope to use this background to inspire more IGS students to travel more frequently to appreciate the great diversity of people around the world. Finally, trying new foods is the highlight of my travels, and an interest I pursue any

time I can. Because I have traveled widely, I have sampled many types of foods and I continue to be amazed by the variety of ways different cultures combine similar ingredients. Truly a joy, especially when a delicious meal is accompanied by excellent bread :)

Dr. Lisa Vu

As a Visiting Assistant Professor, my role is to develop and teach courses for the new Global Development Studies program. Last semester I taught Introduction to Development Theory and Practice and Poverty Alleviation Models. In addition to offering the intro course again this semester, I am also teaching two new ones: NGOs, Aid and Advocacy in Action and Migration and Health in Asia. My research interests are in the areas of migration and alternative actors in development, and I have incorporated these elements into my courses. For instance, in the introductory course we look at ways that average people who do not have formal training in development work may yet affect development through actions like volunteering or using their consumer power to buy products that are eco-friendly or ethically made. I strive to emphasize that development, or working to improve the wellbeing of people and societies, is not a task reserved only for experts but one that we all can do. The first step is to become mindful of the local and global consequences of our decisions and then to tweak our actions to align with our vision of a better world.

Keeping with my interest in understanding non-traditional development actors, I will be conducting a study on second-generation diaspora members' contributions to development. While much has already been written about how immigrants affect development in their countries of origin, my study will look at how the children of those who migrated engage with their parents' countries of origin. When not teaching and researching, I like to travel, try new restaurants, and read fiction. I can eat platanos maduros, or fried sweet plantains, all day and would never get tired of seeing the sun set along a tropical beach.

CAN YOU GUESS WHICH OF THESE TWO IGS PROFESSORS LEFT HOME TO STUDY ABROAD AT AGE 15?



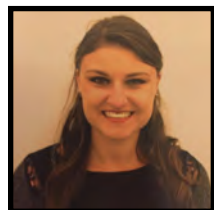
CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!



EMILY ANSPACH

International Affairs, Political Science

Following graduation, Emily plans to work for a couple of years in a college admissions office before going to law school for International Law with a specialization in Human Rights.



ANNA CIZEK

International Affairs, Global Health, and French

Anna has applied for the Boren Fellowship to study Arabic abroad, and hopes to join the U.S. Foreign Service.



ALLIE COLLINS

Global Health Studies, minors in Chemistry and Biology

After graduation, Allie will attend medical school.



NORA DARLING

Global Health Studies, Anthropology

Following graduation, Nora hopes to work in reproductive health and justice in Atlanta for a few years before returning to graduate school.



JANAY FULLER

Global Health Studies

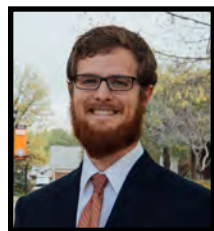
Following graduation, Janay will be attending Mercer to obtain a Masters in Nutrition and Pre-clinical Sciences.



WILLIAM GARRISON

Global Health Studies, Psychology

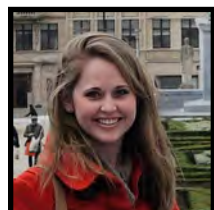
After graduation, William plans on attending graduate school in the upcoming year to obtain his MPH, partake in mission work in Ecuador, and apply for internships with the CDC.



ANDREW HEARN

Global Health Studies, minors in Biology and Chemistry

Following graduation, Andrew plans to attend Medical School.



ABIGAIL HUNDLEY

International Affairs and Political Science, minors in French and Political Science

Abigail will be attending Graduate School following graduation.

WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

This Spring, the International and Global Studies department will be saying goodbye to twenty-five wonderful seniors. Here's a glimpse of what they majored in at Mercer, as well as what's in store for them professionally in the years to come!

JUSTIN JOHNSON

Global Health Studies

Justin plans to attend Graduate school to obtain a Masters in Public Health.

JOSEPH KOLLIE

Environmental Studies, Policy and Information Science & Technology

After graduation, Joseph plans to return to Liberia and Teach at Ricks Institute, his high school alma mater.

TAYLOR MILLER

Global Health Studies

Taylor is preparing to attend Emory University to complete an Accelerated BSN+MSN program. She plans to finish with a Masters in Family Nurse Practitioner with a joint specialty in acute care.

ISATTA MUSAHSON

Global Health Studies, minor in Women and Gender Studies

Upon graduation, Isatta is looking forward to going back to Liberia to serve as a teacher at the Ricks Institute for two years. She hopes to attend graduate school afterwards.

CHRISTINE OKARO

Global Health Studies, minors in Biology and Chemistry

After graduation, Christine will pursue a Master of Science Degree in Biomedical Sciences with subsequent plans to become a physician-scientist by attaining a joint MD-PhD in a public health field.

ADAEZE ONYEAMA

Global Health Studies, minors in Chemistry and Biology

After graduating, Adaeze will go through a 1-Year Masters Program in Medical Sciences, then attend medical school, and then work for Doctors Without Borders.

LYDIA PARK

Global Health Studies, minor in Military Studies

Following graduation, Lydia will commission into the U.S. Army National Guard and attend Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC).

EMMA PEEL

Global Health Studies, Spanish; minor in Anthropology

After graduation, Emma will spend her summer traveling in Europe and getting her Yoga Teacher Certification in Oregon. She will then enter the Peace Corps in a Spanish-speaking country.



JAMILAH TEJAN

Global Health Studies; minor in Spanish

Jamilah will be attending graduate school for a MPH in Epidemiology.



BLOSSOM THAO

Sociology, Environmental Studies; minors in Criminal Justice, Global Health Studies

Blossom plans to either pursue studies in ethnobotany to learn about cultural uses of plants at the University of Miami-Ohio for their geography program to do research in ethnobotany, or to earn a master's in higher education or student affairs through a graduate assistantship in residence life.



ISABEL WARD

Global Health Studies

Following graduation, Isabel will be attending Nursing School.



ALAYNA WILLIAMS

International Affairs, Spanish, Women and Gender Studies

Alayna is currently pursuing fellowship opportunities following graduation. She has been accepted to Teach for America and Fulbright.



CORINNE WOOTEN

Global Health Studies; minor in Criminal Justice

After graduating, Corinne will attend Nursing School.



ALINA YEMELYANOV

Global Health Studies; minors in Women and Gender Studies, Art

Alina will be attending graduate school right after graduation, and will also try to find time for work and travel.

Phi Beta Kappa is the nation's most prestigious and selective honors society. This year, seven IGS juniors and seniors were honored with this award. The IGS department had the highest number of inductees of any department at Mercer. Congratulations to:

*Emily Anspach
Anna Cizek*

*Nora Darling
Andrew Hearn
Abby Hundley*

*Emma Peel
Jamilah Tejan*



Kolo Gana, Class of 2016

Major: Biology **Minor:** Global Health & Chemistry

Through Mercer's liberal arts approach, I was able to learn a lot about a variety of subjects in a variety of fields. Global health peaked my interest in public health issues and allowed me to pursue a career in it. What I liked most about GHS was the relationship between the professors and students. Right now, I'm attending the University of Georgia to get my Masters in Public Health.



Gary Wall, Class of 2010

Major: Global Health

Over the last two years, I was awarded the Orthotics and Prosthetic Educational Research Student Fellowship for a prosthetic cooling design of mine, traveled to India and won third place in the first ever International Red Cross' Enabled Makeathon for a low cost prosthetic foot design, and have started a line of proprietary prosthetic liner research that I'm bringing over into my residency research project.



Tori Conrad, Class of 2014

Major: Global Health & Spanish

Mercer completely shaped everything I'm doing now and everything I will do in the future. I currently work for West Virginia University Medicine as a public health research assistant in their Eastern Division. I work with healthcare professionals to develop and implement research studies—I write countless IRB applications! This year has been really eye-opening, and I have been able to see what it's really like to work in public health,



Kelsey Cameron, Class of 2014

Major: Global Health

Mercer really encourages students to become involved on campus. Whether it's through student government, Greek life, or student organizations, there are multiple opportunities to make a difference. This sense of activism stays with you and eventually becomes part of your graduate school life and, later, your job life. As of now, I will be graduating from Mercer's Physician Assistant Program in May 2017.



Kaytlin Eldred, Class of 2015

Major: Global Health **Minor:** Social Entrepreneurship

I recently completed a Research Assistantship with Harvard Medical School's Program in Global Surgery and Social change, with the Lancet Commission on Global Surgery and the Zambian Ministry of Health, I completed my Masters in Public Health, with a concentration in Global Health in January 2017, and then accepted a position as Professor of Global Health at Boston University.



Lena Hamvas, Class of 2014

Major: Global Health

I had the chance to study health with a holistic perspective through the Global Health Studies program. After graduation, I taught English in Thailand through Service First. I am now a Fulbright Scholar in Jordan which could not have been possible without my recommendation from Mercer professors. I am learning Arabic in Jordan and teaching English there. I am planning to return to the USA this summer to study medicine.





Lindsey Parker, Class of 2016

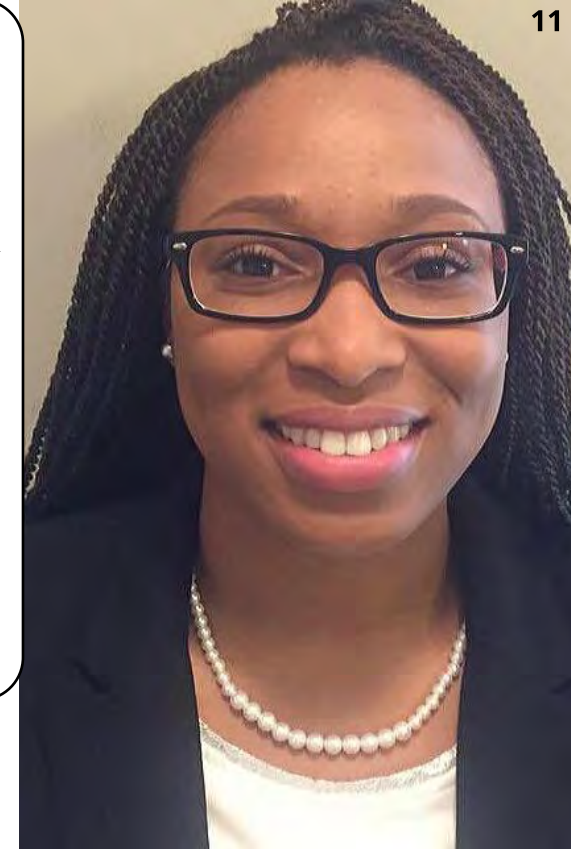
Major: Global Health **Minor:** Anthropology

I'm currently at the University of Georgia. I will graduate in the spring of 2018 with a Master of Public Health. Mercer really inspired me to keep learning. I went into undergrad thinking that I'd spend four years in school and get a job. Because of my time at Mercer, I decided to pursue a graduate degree. I felt like I had much more that I wanted to learn about public health! Mercer gave me a taste very early on that I don't have to stick to just one area of study.

Bryana Ferris, Class of 2016

Major: Global Health **Minor:** Chemistry

I am thankful for the high level of education I received, the opportunities to network with health professionals, and the classes which broadened my interests beyond medicine at Mercer. I am currently a first-year student at Morehouse School of Medicine. Overall, the GHS curriculum explores and understands cultural differences and incorporates this knowledge into various aspects of healthcare, providing me with a more well-rounded undergraduate experience



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Zoë Oretaga-Becton, Class of 2016

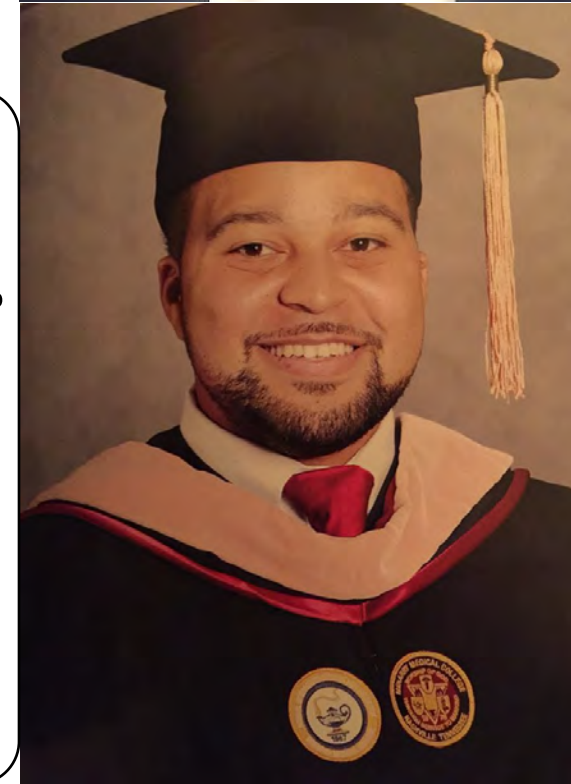
Major: Global Health

Mercer is the place where I learned the most about myself, propelling my love for working in developing countries. I had the pleasure of going to Uganda with Mercer on Mission, as well as Haiti through Service First. Both of these experiences taught me important life lessons and strengthened my passion for helping those in need. Right now I am back in Macon. I will be moving to Liberia in August, where I hope to find a job in the public health sector.

Aaron Childs, Class of 2014

Major: Global Health **Minor:** Chemistry

Mercer gave me the confidence, skills, and the knowledge I needed to continue in the field that I am passionate about. After receiving my bachelors from Mercer, I went on to continue my matriculation at Meharry Medical College, receiving my Masters of Science in Public Health. I believed that my background education formed the foundation for my doctorate degree. Presently, I am pursuing my Doctorate of Public Health at New York Medical College.



"There are people in the world with the same abilities who would do anything to be where you are. **Always choose to love.** It's up to us to make this world a better place."- **ZOË ORETEGA-BECTON**

"For the GHS majors who are required to do a MOM trip, don't be a tourist. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of the trip and forget that **the reason you're over there is to help.** Keep your eyes and ears open to all that's around you because I promise that you will be in a situation in your career where you will look back to a time where you were forced to make something out of little to nothing on your trip."-**GARY WALL**

"Always say yes to new opportunities! If you think you have even the slightest interest in an organization, project, or subject, get involved! **Grades matter, but experiences will paint your life in colors you were not aware existed.**" -**KAYTLIN ELDRED**

"I would advise current students to **appreciate the journey** and experience while you are there because as cliché as it is, your four years at Mercer will be over before you know it."-**KOLO GANA**

"I would advise Mercer students to **take advantage of every opportunity you're given at Mercer.** Get to know your classmates. Get to know your professors. Dr. N-B encouraged me to take a year between undergrad & grad school to work in public health, and I am so thankful I did."-**TORI CONRAD**



"Professors have a job that encourages them to learn new information everyday, so they tend to be very interesting, introspective people. Why not get the chance to know them? **I recommend students visit their professors, even if they just want to talk about life and current events.**"-**LENA HAMVAS**

"Do your reading! I know that it's easy to let it pile up or put it off for later, but it's important. There are so many times when I look back to pieces that I read in undergrad for one reason or another."-**LINDSEY PARKER**

"It's easy to drift from what is important and miss out on what's happening presently. Make an effort to be **fully prepared mentally, and physically,** in whatever you're doing, whether in classes, friendships, or studying. Approach everything with an open mind, and let your achievements, courage, and opportunity guide your way." -**AARON CHILDS**

"My advice would be to **take advantage of all the leadership opportunities that Mercer offers.** There is ample opportunity to make a difference both on campus and in the surrounding community. **These roles will teach you a lot about yourself** and will be beneficial for when you're in the "real world." -**KELSEY CAMERON**

"My advice for current Mercer students is to **venture outside of your required coursework for your career of interest!**"-**BRYANA FERRIS**

HOW TO GET INTO MEDICAL SCHOOL

BY ALLIE COLLINS

There is often a stigma within the pre-medical community associated with reaching out for help due to the competitive nature of the track. We constantly hear about the gruesomeness of the MCAT or the long nights spent studying for required science courses, yet little help is provided in terms of how to successfully navigate the pre-medical track or reach the end goal—becoming a physician. Although less often discussed, the medical school admissions process presents a number of challenges. These are a couple of things I wish I would have known throughout my undergraduate career and entering into the process of applying to medical school:

1. Be prepared. Be as early as possible. The med school application process requires just as much – if not more – effort than your classes. Being prepared to ask for letters of recommendation, to complete the Health Vocations Advisement Committee packet, and to answer a multitude of school specific prompts will make all the difference in the application cycle. Most medical schools are on a rolling admissions process—meaning those individuals submitting their applications first have a better chance of admission into their program. Do your research early on what schools you wish to apply to in order to have a better idea of the admissions requirements; complete the HVAC in time for the spring deadline and ask for your letters of recommendation at either the end of the school year or in early summer; begin MCAT preparation the semester before you plan on taking the exam and if possible schedule a lighter course load so that you are able to dedicate the necessary time to MCAT study. Although these deadlines can be challenging to meet, it can make all the difference in regards to which programs you get interviews from.

2. Highlight your differences. On multiple interviews, I was asked why I had taken a non-traditional route in undergrad. Through my answers, I was able to give each school a better picture of myself, illustrate my passions, and show that I could bring a diverse skill set to their program. While preparing for the admissions process, take the time to remember why you first chose to pursue Global Health Studies and how you feel it will make you a better physician. Include this both within your answers to application prompts and interview questions. Being able to demonstrate that you were passionate about your undergraduate learning experience shows admissions committees a more genuine side of you—helping to make you stand out in a pile of qualified applicants.

How to get into Medical School

1. Be prepared. Be as early as possible.

2. Highlight your differences.

3. Be more than a student.

4. Take advantage of your summers.

5. Your advisors and professors are your greatest resources.

6. Find someone who has navigated this process before you and do not be afraid to ask questions.

Allie Collins is a senior Global Health Studies major with minors in biology and chemistry. She is on the Research Track of Mercer's University Honors Program and is currently conducting research on abortion practices in India. She has been accepted into seven medical schools and is still considering her options before choosing a school she wants to attend for the next four years.

3. Be more than a student. A common pitfall that I have noticed in a number of my pre-medical peers is that they spent undergrad focused solely on their academic achievements. Although a high GPA and MCAT score are valuable assets in an application, medical schools are now looking for a more well-rounded applicant that is both involved on campus and in their local community. There are a multitude of activities to choose from, including research, community service, and intramural sports. The best advice given to me was to actively participate in three activities that I was truly passionate about. These activities will be different for everyone, but will help supplement your academic strengths and show your humanity.

"Although a high GPA and MCAT score are valuable assets in an application, medical schools are now looking for a more well-rounded applicant that is both involved on campus and in their local community."

4. Take advantage of your summers.

Summer is a great time to engage in activities that you may not be able to do throughout the year. As students within the IGS

department, we have the privilege of deciding between multiple summer opportunities. During your summers you can: study abroad or go on a Mercer on Mission, take classes to lighten the academic load throughout the year, shadow or volunteer at home, or even begin studying for the MCAT. There are also numerous programs that you can apply to over the summer that include research projects and shadowing within potential fields of interest. Make sure to plan ahead and look into these summer opportunities early—most application deadlines are in early spring.

5. Your advisors and professors are your greatest resources. These individuals will be your biggest advocates throughout the process by writing you letters of recommendation, informing you of on-campus activities to supplement your CV, and provide you with the knowledge to successfully navigate the medical field in a more holistic manner. Taking the time to foster these relationships will not only help you academically, but will allow the individuals speaking on your behalf to better know you. Strong letters of recommendation can only come from professors that know your academic work and your motivations outside of the classroom.

6. Find someone who has navigated this process before you and do not be afraid to ask questions.

There were so many times throughout the application process where I became overwhelmed by all that was required of me. I began to reach out to recent Mercer graduates that I knew had entered into medical school, asking them questions regarding where to apply, what to expect at an interview day, and even how to finance the process. Hearing from individuals that were recently in the same position as me allowed me to learn what they thought they did right and what they thought they did wrong. It allowed me to hear the advice they wished they had known when applying and interviewing. This is a difficult and demanding process for all that enter into it. From responding to numerous prompts to waiting to hear back from your various programs, it is a challenging process, but I hope that these tips and tricks can ease your burden.

If anyone ever needs help on how to schedule your classes, what programs to apply for in the summer, or just someone to talk to about the stresses of the pre-medical track, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Alexandra.Leigh.Collins@live.mercer.edu



Allie Collins, far left, with her research partners

CURRENT EVENTS IN GLOBAL HEALTH

BEAR DAY STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

During the 7th annual Bear Day, IGS students from the following programs: International Affairs, Global Health Studies, and Global Development Studies, will be well represented, presenting research that covers a variety of themes and topics. The table below contains a list of all IGS students and their respective research presentations.

Please support these students and all their hard work by coming out to hear more about their research and see them present!

	Presentation
Emily Anspach <i>Failure to Protect: The Applicability of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Laws to non-state Actors</i>	Oral
Alexandra Collins <i>A Review of Abortion Services in India</i>	Oral
Catherine Crowe <i>Refugee Evaluations of Existing Social Resettlement Programs and Finding Solutions that Work</i>	Oral
Andrew Hearn <i>Artisanal and Small Scale Gold Mining and Mercury Vapor Exposure: A Systemic Review</i>	Oral
Abigail Hundley <i>Democracy in the 21st Century Developing World: The Threat to Reversals in Democratic Consolidation</i>	Oral
Justin Johnson <i>A Quantitative Study of Environmental Justice in Bibb County</i>	Oral
Taylor Miller <i>Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Intercollegiate Athletes</i>	Oral
Isatta Musahson <i>Comprehensive Intervention for Reducing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) among Married Women in Post-War Liberia</i>	Oral
Christine Okaro <i>Robbing Health: Understanding Rape as an HIV/AIDS Risk Factor Among Emerging Adults in Middle Georgia</i>	Oral
Emma Peel <i>Body Image Perception Among Division I Female Athletes</i>	Poster
Jamilah Tejan <i>Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Usage Among Mercer Athletes</i>	Oral
Alayna Williams <i>Intergenerational Differences in the Perception of Race Relations in Cape Town, South Africa</i>	Oral
Kaitlin Koontz <i>Mapping Food Deserts and Food Insecurity in Macon</i>	Poster
Mary Martinez <i>The Correlates of Pre-marital Pregnancy Among Emerging Adults in Macon</i>	Poster

TO SEE THE SPECIFIC TIMES AND LOCATIONS VISIT <http://bearday.mercer.edu/>

Mercer on Missions

Summer 2017

Dominican Republic



The Dominican Republic program focuses on finding options to improve and maintain sustainable access to safe water for under-served communities in the Dominican Republic. It emphasizes community development, capacity building, and the use of appropriate technologies. This trip will be lead by Dr. McCarthy and Dr. Schweitzer, both of whom are professors with Mercer's School of Engineering. Students will work with local stakeholders (households, local technicians, government workers, etc.) to find ways to improve access to water in El Cercado area of the San Juan region. This goal will be set in motion by carrying out a WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) and indoor air quality assessment at a number of rural community households. The group will also have the chance to visit the capital city (Santo Domingo), a coastal beach, and experience trekking and wildlife viewing.

Georgia

The themes of this program are reconciliation and refuge. The service work focuses on creating Interfaith dialog between Christians and Muslims as well as working with the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia in their goal of meeting the needs of refugees and other marginalized groups. Mercerians will collaborate with local Muslims on service projects that include restoration of local Mosques, playing sports with local children, and holding English language workshops. The group will also be working with marginalized groups such as the LGBTQ community, Abkhazian refugees, and the elderly. The weekends will be filled with cultural visits to theaters and cultural sites in Tbilisi, the spectacular capital of Georgia, as well as a day-long hike in the Caucasus Mountains. This program will be lead by Dr. Houry and Dr. Grant, professors within Mercer's Political Science Department.



South Korea

This project is focused on teaching 1st through 12th grade students at Drim School, the first special education foundation for North Korean refugees and their children. As "outsiders" in the wider Korean culture, they have difficulty integrating into society. In order to integrate more fully into the South Korean culture, they need education in English, technology, and modern culture. Mercer students will seek to address these three problems by helping the refugee children learn rudimentary English and teaching them to work with LEGO Robotics. This trip will be lead by Dr. Kang of the English Language Institute, as well as Dr. Hyun of Mercer's Department of Biomedical Engineering.

Current Events in GHS

"Make it IGS" Night



Trivia, Free pizza, and T-shirts--what can be better than that?

The International and Global Studies department held an IGS night for students, which involved trivia, free pizza, and T-shirts for the participants. Students were divided into trivia teams and answered IGS-themed questions. The faculty from the IGS department created trivia questions from their specific major. Trivia genres included: anthropology, international health, geography, global development, and international relations. For one trivia topic, participants listened to songs, and students guessed the historical significance of each song. The trivia team with the most points at the end won a Jittery Joe's gift card. As an IGS student, I feel so lucky that my professors will take the time create meaningful and fun events for their students.

Identity in America Series



The IGS department and the QEP office are working in collaboration to produce the Identity in America Series. This series follows last year's Muslim in America series. There are four events in total, which began in January and will continue into April. Each event discusses a specific group of people in America, and outlines their challenges. So far topics have ranged from "We Come in Peace: Aliens in America" and "The Color Barrier: Opening the Conversation on Inequality in America," to the most recent topic, "The First Americans: Hope and Healing with a Native American Medicine Story." Each topic is designed to inform students about highly relevant issues, while providing a channel for dialogue. Furthermore, each topic places emphasis on community development on Mercer's campus, within Macon, and on a national scale. The events are open to the public, and take place in Willingham auditorium. The last event will be April 4th at 6pm and is entitled, "America, Land of the Free? Taking Action to Shape American Equality".

Model Arab League



This past February, seventeen Mercer students participated in the Model Arab League (MAL) regional conference at Florida Southern University. Mercer represented Oman and Djibouti, and received the Distinguished Delegation Award for the representation of Djibouti, as well as the Outstanding Delegation Award for the representation of Oman. Additionally, Alayna Williams and Daniel Crum won awards for their role as chair.

Mercer's head delegate, Alayna Williams, adds, "The Florida regional conference was the best performance from our delegation that I've seen. Each of our delegates worked diligently to ensure that they represented Djibouti and Oman accurately, and it showed when the awards were given out."

Mercer has participated in MAL for thirteen years, and has received awards every single year. Dr. Houry, Mercer's MAL faculty advisor, comments, "The MAL program is a simulation that allows students to understand the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region from the perspective of diplomats and policymakers. This educational conference is intentionally set up to cover a wide range of topics and issues, from the environment, to culture, to conflict resolution. Students learn to navigate these delicate matters and come to appreciate both the opportunities and limitations diplomacy entails. As an extracurricular program, the MAL program is also an opportunity for Mercer students from all backgrounds to learn about the MENA region by exploring areas of concern rarely mentioned in the mainstream press, and not offered through any of the courses in the university catalog. It is a challenging, yet enjoyable learning experience!"

STUDY ABROAD: BERMUDA

Seven Mercer Students spent one week of their Fall semester break on the Island Nation of Bermuda. Dr. Obidoa took students on this trip to explore noncommunicable diseases in the country. The trip provided impactful learning experiences.



"Traveling to Bermuda with Mercer is an experience that I am very glad that I was a part of. Even though the island is extremely small, it was jam-packed with its own unique culture. It was fascinating getting to see their healthcare system, how the health care officials plan on incorporating new practices from other health systems across the world, and how they implement it in the Bermudian health system. Overall, the Bermudian people were extremely friendly and I was able to get a better understanding on how the implementation of a new health system requires the collaboration of all parts of a government."

-Justin Johnson, Senior GHS Major

"Traveling to Bermuda was an enriching experience. I had the opportunity to meet many business and health professionals that not only positively shaped my experience in Bermuda, but also gave me greater insight into the life of many Bermudian physicians and locals. Overall, attending this trip confirmed that I would like to provide healthcare in an international setting, because the trip allowed me to utilize my global health background and provided me with the necessary framework to better understand the social determinants of health in a population and the healthcare infrastructure in a different country."

-Adaeeze Onyeama, Senior GHS Major

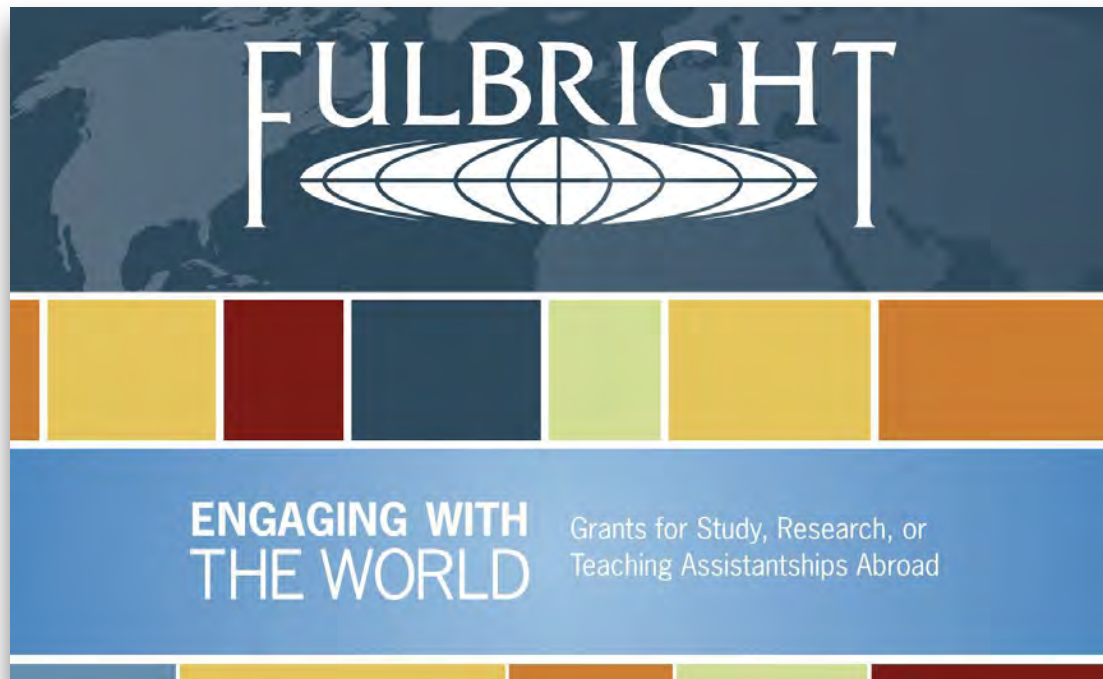


If you would like to take a trip to Bermuda, contact Dr. Obidoa.

obidoa_c@mercer.edu

"When I left campus after exams, I was so burnt out on school. I was just ready to graduate and move on to nursing school next fall. After being in Bermuda, I am really excited to get back to school and work hard to excel in my classes this semester. I know that all of this school will be worth it in the end. After this trip, I have never felt more confident in my decision to go to nursing school next fall. I hope that I will be able to make a difference in my future patients lives as well. If I ever think about giving up in nursing school, I will always have this trip to remember and help me push through. Most importantly, because of this trip, I will always remember to look at my patients as human beings, and never just as what they look like on paper."

-Isabel Ward, Senior GHS Major



The Fulbright U.S. Student Program is one of the most prestigious, selective, and well-recognized grants in the world. It is “the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries”¹. This academic year, all of the Mercer students selected as semifinalists and finalists are either current IGS students or graduates from the IGS department. The program offers research, study, and teaching opportunities in over 140 countries. After designing a proposal and developing contacts in the country in which they hope to work, applicants wait eight months before the final decision is made. Acceptance rates to the program vary by country and by the nature of the project, with some accepting only 6% of applicants. David Wildes, a Mercer alum who now works as an

English teacher, commented that “Even after two years of trying and waiting, the possibility of receiving a Fulbright Award was still enough to keep me sitting on the edge of my seat and checking the mail daily. Being granted a spot in Spain is the the most satisfying validation of the work and study I've done to prepare myself as an EFL [English as a Foreign Language] teacher. The program opens so many doors for the recipients, provides meaningful experience, allows for substantive research, and functions as an important national service by making each grantee a cultural ambassador, representing the United States' best and brightest worldwide. Mercer and its faculty have a history of preparing students well for this program, and I am humbled to have been selected for this opportunity.”

¹United States Department of State. (2017). The Fulbright Program. Retrieved from <https://eca.state.gov/fulbright>

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

David Wildes, International Affairs, was selected as an ETA finalist to Galicia, Spain.

Nora Darling, Global Health and Anthropology, was selected as a semifinalist for Botswana.

Alayna Williams, International Affairs, was selected as a finalist for South Africa.

Aaron Scherf, Global Development Studies minor, was selected as a finalist for Germany.



A Global Health Love Story





I spent the fall semester of my junior year at St. Lawrence University in Kenya on a semester abroad. It was my first time, other than a cruise to Bermuda, outside of the U.S. From the moment the plane crossed over the Mediterranean and I looked down at the Nile River running through the Sahara Desert, I was captivated. The first night we got off the plane in Nairobi and took a crazy, veering taxi to the New Stanley Hotel, where the smell of jacarandas and roasting corn was overwhelming. I was hooked. The next four months were the most exciting and adventuresome of my life. I remember seeing some Peace Corps volunteers in Nairobi and being jealous that they could stay for two years and I could only stay for four months. That was probably where I first decided to join the Peace Corps.

Meeting Dave: My final year of college, I was a teaching assistant for an undergraduate geology course in which he was a student. I was breaking up with a long-term serious relationship (someone I had met in Kenya and had lots of adventures with there). Dave was fun, energetic, smart and liked to laugh. We hit it off on a geology field trip: I recall one late night we pulled up all the tent stakes of our fellow geology students, and had to hide our mirth as the tents collapsed around us.



In graduate school, I realized that I wanted to be back overseas exploring development work and learning languages, not studying rocks in the United States, and I applied to the Peace Corps. Dave had also decided to go into the Peace Corps after finishing his undergraduate degree, and was on his way to Guatemala before I finished. The Peace Corps asks for regional and country preferences, and I listed Guatemala as my first choice. I was honest and open about the fact that Dave was already a volunteer in Guatemala before me. The Peace Corps ignored their “no boyfriend-girlfriend policy”—I think because I had worked for an NGO that did development work overseas for a few years and “proved myself” as a solid employee. I also had a masters degree in science, as well as agricultural experience, having grown up on a farm. They finally decided to send me to Guatemala. Once there, the kind country director assigned me to the same village as Dave, with the rational that he didn’t want us traveling by bus between two distant sites for the next two years; we would get more work done living together! I was a bit worried that we were two young, single Americans living in sin together in a Catholic country, but to my surprise and relief, I realized that most of the couples in our isolated, poor village were also unmarried: they couldn’t afford the fees to pay a Catholic priest to marry them so they lived together as “unidos” or common law spouses.



Our village was small, isolated, no electricity or running water, no roads— only paths to access it from the next largest town. The people were obviously dirt-poor: kids partially clothed, usually without shoes, unbathed, huge bellies swollen from parasites and malnutrition. I did not find the transition hard, particularly. Once I started to be able to communicate better in Spanish, the relationships flowered and seemed pretty easy to initiate.

Dave had it harder. He arrived a year ahead of me and the “campesinos,” or villagers, were very suspicious. They would pull their children into their huts and close the doors when he walked by. They thought he would kidnap their children and melt them down into soap (a common rumor in rural Guatemala in the 1980s) and I recall they also thought looking into the eyes of a blue-eyed gringo would make them go blind. He started slowly, making friends with a few more “progressive” locals who were more curious than afraid, and gradually earned people's' trust. He was assigned to start 4-H gardening groups for children, teaching them how to raise vegetables other than their staple corn and beans.



I was officially a large animal husbandry volunteer (veterinary focus) as I had grown up on a beef cattle farm and worked with a large animal vet in college. Having a science degree in the Peace Corps really helps a lot, or at least it did back then. I was assigned to the government agricultural agency, whose office was in a larger town a few hours drive away. Unfortunately, the government agency had no working vehicles or money for gas so they were rarely able to come up and see me or assist me with projects. So I was on my own to come up with things to do, and Peace Corps was flexible about what those projects were. I did vaccination campaigns of chickens and cattle, castrated piglets (!) and wormed the few horses in town.

But my real interest was in human health. I felt the women were neglected and shut in with constant duties to collect firewood, keep the home fire burning, and the corn masa cooking, making endless tortillas and beans for their many children (one of our favorite families had 13 living children!). So I put up posters announcing women's health groups, which would meet weekly in several villages.



The turnout was impressive: all the women dressed in their cleanest Sunday dresses, polite and curious but obviously skeptical of what the "gringa" had to say. I introduced basic concepts of hygiene, importance of handwashing, germ theory (they tended to believe in "mal aire" or "bad air" or, alternatively, nasty spells cast by jealous neighbors as the genesis of illness). They were, for the most part, illiterate, so I resorted to cut-outs of giant flies that zoomed from hand-drawn piles of poop to tortillas to the sketch of a child's mouth. They screamed with delight and asked me to demonstrate this again and again! We did skits and talked about illness, and I'm not sure they believed any of it, but they sure liked the homemade brownies I baked each week! We all laughed a lot together and that was probably the best aspect of it. They got a break from the never-ending tasks of being a poor *campesina* in Guatemala.

No one up there brushed their teeth and they sucked on sugar cane a lot, so there were lots of cavities and rotten teeth (and no local dentist), so I organized a dental hygiene day. I got donations from a few supermarkets in Guatemala City of toothbrushes and toothpaste and dental floss and asked some Peace Corps nurse friends to come help me demonstrate and practice with the villagers who showed up. There were literally hundreds of them, as everyone wants free stuff! Unfortunately, they were not used to brushing and flossing, and soon many villagers had painful gums and were spitting blood: not a class I thought out very well, obviously!





Dave and I went around to various embassies in Guatemala City and asked for donations to build several local schools, as many of the villages had only a one room, crumbling adobe structure for school. Most girls were not allowed to go to school as they were needed at home to tend to the household chores and the younger siblings. Boys only went through 3rd or 4th grade and most were functionally illiterate. By the time we left, we had played a major role in organizing villagers to build four schools, each of them much more durable, made of concrete block with lamina roofs. That was probably our most enduring contribution.

When we came home a few years later, we established a small scholarship fund for a few bright young students who then went on to grade 6-12 in the nearest city. They had to leave home and board with local residents as it was too far to commute every day. One of them became a star pupil and is now the principal of a thriving K-12 school with several classrooms in our town. We are proud of that. In Peace Corps the successes are small and personal, for the most part.



The other major project we were involved with was building latrines. When we arrived, many of the villagers went to the bathroom in surrounding cornfields. Privacy and comfort were minimal, and during the rainy season the waste either washed into the river or was eaten by pigs that roamed around searching for food. Hands were not washed after toileting. This contributed to the epidemic of worms and amoebas, which in turn contribute to malnutrition.

We started small, securing a few funds from Peace Corps to buy material and “molds” for the latrine, basically a cement platform with a hole in it and a toilet structure to sit on. The villagers had to dig their own hole and build a wall/roof around the toilet itself. This was very enthusiastically received. More and more villagers wanted latrines (probably more for the comfort and privacy than for the perceived health benefits, but who cares?) By the time we left we had organized projects in seven villages to build over 700 latrines. We even got the much-reviled Guatemalan army to provide trucks to bring the cement up during the rainy season. When we visit now, more than 30 years later, we still see some of the latrines we built, as well as a whole new generation of composting toilets. It seems to be standard household equipment now. I'm not sure how much the rate of parasite infections has changed, but I imagine it's better.



Advantages to living with a boyfriend during Peace Corps: company! Peace Corps can be a very lonely venture if you are placed in a remote village alone. 30 years ago we had no PC's, no cell phones, no mail service. Our families sent us subscriptions to magazines, but those mostly got stolen at Customs. I remember once a local fellow rode up on his horse on Christmas Day and handed Dave a Sports Illustrated that was over a year old! We stayed in contact with our friends and families via aerogrammes, which were paper thin letters sent by air mail that arrived weeks later in the U.S. If we wanted to call we had to make a two hour bus journey to the next largest town and wait in line at a public phone service. I imagine it is quite different now!

Sharing such a formative experience with the person you love- an experience marked by both adversity and small triumphs- brings you closer to that person than you could ever imagine. Less than a year after returning from Guatemala, Dave and I were married at my parents' home in Vermont. We had learned to live simply in Guatemala, and we had a small wedding attended by only our closest friends and family. We have maintained connections with some of our favorite families in the village we served in, and every few years we pay them a visit. It's remarkable to see the amount of change that can happen over the span of 30 years. Most of our contributions are now invisible, but the relationships we gained will last us both a lifetime.



Emma Peel
GHS Senior

Mary Martinez
GHS Junior

Alina Yemelyanov
GHS Senior

Sa'Haara Bryant
GHS Sophomore

Kaitlyn Koontz
GHS Junior

Dr. Chinekwu Obidoa
Convener and Faculty Advisor

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the International and Global Studies Department for their enduring support and commitment to the furthering of our education at Mercer. Special thanks goes to:

Dr. Houry
*Chair of the Department of
International and Global Studies*

Dr. Nichols-Belo
Assistant Professor

Dr. Vu
Assistant Professor

Ms. Bobbie Shipley
*Sr. Admin. Assistant/
Programs Coordinator IGS*