

# IGS NEWS LETTER

Spring 2022

## WHAT'S INSIDE?

Take a look at the accomplishments of Mercer's IGS Department, its new faculty, and the amazing achievements of IGS seniors .



# Editorial

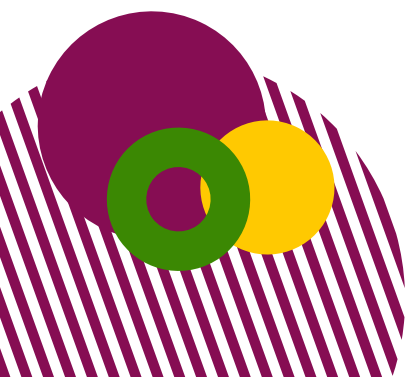
As the year comes to a close, I want to congratulate all of the faculty, staff, and students in the IGS department for getting through a tough semester.

Firstly, I'd like to congratulate Dr. Ryan Tokarz for a wonderful first year at Mercer! He's done a fabulous job, and I cannot wait to see how he helps the department grow even more.

In this edition of the newsletter, the GHIA board would like to celebrate all of our seniors' accomplishments. We all have worked so hard over the past four years at Mercer, and it is only right to recognize your work.

My hope is that we all have wonderful futures and take what we've learned here into your life. Let's go out and change the world.

*- Parneeta Mohapatra, Chief Editor*





## NEW FACULTY SPOTLIGHT Ryan Tokarz, PhD

Dr. Tokarz attended Florida State University as an undergrad and earned a degree in dietetics. While searching for graduate programs near his home, he took a few non-degree seeking classes at the University of South Florida and ended up completing a MPH with a focus on global health and communicable diseases along with a graduate certification in infection control. After taking some classes dealing with vector-borne diseases, his interest shifted from nutrition to vector-borne diseases.

After graduate school, Dr. Tokarz went with a professor to Uganda and Kenya to work on malaria control. He later earned his PhD in public health, focusing on communicable diseases and global health. Dr. Tokarz completed his dissertation on the use of satellite imagery to predict habitats of mosquitoes in Cambodia. The purpose was to build up a local mosquito control program.

Returning to the US, he worked at Iowa State on West Nile Virus and Lyme disease prevention programs, then applied for a CDC fellowship. Through the fellowship, Dr. Tokarz worked in Ethiopia on disease-modeling and a training program for in-country field epidemiologists (FETP). Once the COVID-19 Pandemic began, he worked as the point of contact for the CARES program, evaluating surveillance systems, and on zoonotic and emerging diseases for the country.

He decided to return to the US, because he wanted to work in academia, he wanted to teach. When he came across Mercer, he liked that it was a liberal arts college because he felt that the field of public health was too rigid, and he wanted more flexibility and to be able to teach the social and behavioral components and the application of knowledge.

In his free-time, Dr. Tokarz enjoys reading, playing video games, and doing outdoor activities. To students considering a career in global health, Dr. Tokarz advises to be comfortable with not knowing that will happen and be open to do things as they pop up. He also says it's important to make sure your personality and lifestyle fit into the field and be aware that you may have to make some personal sacrifices.

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# IGS FELLOWSHIPS

## FULBRIGHT U.S. STUDENT PROGRAM

**JENNA OLDJA - English Teaching Assistant, Germany**  
**ANNA GRACE O'NEAL - Alternate ETA, Colombia**

"The Fulbright Program aims to improve intercultural relations and cultural diplomacy between the people of the United States and other countries through the exchange of persons, knowledge, and skills. The program provides grants for individually designed study/research projects or for English Teaching Assistant Programs."

## CONGRESS-BUNDESTAG YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM

**ETHAN PETTEPHER**

"The Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals program offers two months of intensive German language training in Germany (no prior German language knowledge required), four months of classroom instruction at a German university or college of applied sciences, and a five-month internship in each participant's career field. CBYX is a crucial thread in the people-to-people ties between the United States and Germany."



# HONORS AND AWARDS

## College Scholars

**Tift College** - Abby Smith and Anna Grace O'Neal  
**Lettie Pate Whitehead Scholar** - Hannah Williams and Kalli Jones  
**Stamps Scholar** - Parneeta Mohapatra

## Awards

**Global Health Outstanding Senior Award** - Anna Grace O'Neal and Jenna Oldja  
**Global Health Outstanding Junior Award** - Rosemary Maino  
**Global Development Studies Outstanding Senior Award** - Marissa Muriel  
**Bear Awards** - Anna Grace O'Neal and Samantha Johnson  
**Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Award** - Mary-Maria Mbanaso  
**Cervantes Award for Outstanding Achievement in Spanish** - Parneeta Mohapatra  
**J.L. Dagg Writing in Religion Award** - Jenna Oldja

## Scholarships

**Merit Scholarship to William and Mary** - Anna Grace O'Neal  
**Media Change Maker Scholarship** - Hannah Williams  
**Gilman-McCain Scholarship** - Marissa Murriel  
**Global Leader Scholarship** - Amy Pham  
**Durwood Macalister Scholarship** - Hannah Williams

## Departmental Honors

Anna Grace O'Neal, Ethan Pettepher, Lauren Black, Abigail Smith

## University Honors

**Service Scholars** - Mira Patel  
**CLAS University Honors Program** - Sonny Patel, Parneeta Mohapatra, Jasmine Mujawar

## Honor Societies

**Phi Beta Kappa** - Anna Grace O'Neal, Sydney Stallings, Jenna Oldja, Parneeta Mohapatra, Katelyn Clamp  
**Phi Eta Sigma** - Anna Grace O'Neal, Chrisalyn Ridgeway, Parneeta Mohapatra, Sonny Patel  
**Omicron Delta Kappa** - Anna Grace O'Neal  
**Tri Beta** - Chrisalyn Ridgeway, Parneeta Mohapatra, Sonny Patel  
**Alpha Epsilon Delta** - Parneeta Mohapatra, Sonny Patel

## Peace Corp Prep Certification

Kalli Jones, Parneeta Mohapatra, Mira Patel, Noah De Mers, Ignatius Flemister, Katie Johnson, Jasmine Mujawar, Marissa Muriel, Jenna Oldja, Anna Grace O'Neal, Ethan Pettepher, Amy Pham, Abby Smith, Hannah Williams, Jabari Wooten

# HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISRAEL

*Study Abroad Spring 2022*



Students attended a Public Health Q&A Session during their time at the University of Haifa in Israel.



Students visited the Dome of the Rock in the Muslim Quarter of Israel.



Students visited the Shalva Center, part of the Israel Association for the Care and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities on March 8, 2022.

This semester, I had the opportunity to participate in the Health and Human Rights in Israel study abroad program during spring break. The program was led by Dr. Chinekwu Obidoa and Professor Rebekah Anaya. While in Israel, we gained more knowledge on Israel's universal healthcare system, lingering health disparities, and what the Israeli society is doing to address these discrepancies in healthcare. We also had the chance to engage with local Israelis and Palestinians about their opinions of the healthcare system, their experience with the COVID-19 pandemics, and their views on the Israeli-Arab conflict. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn more about the region's healthcare systems, cultures, civil societies, and political climate. - **Alec Campbell**



Students visited the Negev Desert in Jerico, Israel to ride camels on March 10, 2022.



# SPOTLIGHTS



# CLASS OF 2022

OUR SENIOR CLASS' NEXT STEPS



# SPOTLIGHT



**The International and Global Studies Department (IGS) department congratulates the following students for their noteworthy accomplishments! We wish you all the best in your respective programs and future endeavours.**

*Congratulations*

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## KALLI JONES

Major: Global Health Studies  
Minor: Chemistry

Kallie will be pursuing a Master's in Social Work at Georgia State's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies! With this degree, she hopes to dedicate her career to formerly and currently incarcerated people with the aim of reducing recidivism in Georgia and limiting the long-term impacts incarceration has on communities.

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*"Always make time to self-reflect and take note of your emotions and your responses to situations. Prioritize personal growth to make sure you leave Mercer as the person you've always wanted to grow into."*



# SPOTLIGHT



## NOAH DE MERS

Major: Chemical Commerce  
Minor: Global Health Studies and Biology

Noah will be pursuing a career in pharmaceuticals!

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*"Don't feel the need to overwork yourself and spread yourself too thin."*

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## ETHAN PETTEPHER

Major: Neuroscience and Global Health Studies  
Minor: Chemistry

Ethan will be participating in the Germany Fellowship with the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program for Young Professionals!

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*"Things are not going to always go as planned. Don't let this be discouraging; rather, challenge yourself to strive for success. With that being said, take nights to binge-watch Netflix with your friends, take last minute road trips, and enjoy college/ Keep in mind that you are here to get not only a degree, but the skills to make an impact on your community, no matter how large or small that is."*

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## ANNA GRACE O'NEAL

Majors: Global Health Studies

Anna Grace will be attending law school at the College of William and Mary!

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*"Embrace all of the opportunities that Mercer has to offer during undergrad! They will make your time here so much more special and set you up for success in the long run."*



# SPOTLIGHT



## JORDAN MECREDY

Major: Global Health Studies  
Minor: Pre-Nursing

Jordan will be attending Mercer Nursing School in Atlanta!

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*"To do your best and be happy doing it."*



## MARISSA MURRIEL

Major: Global Development Studies  
Minor: Global Health Studies and Spanish

Marissa will be pursuing her MPH in Health Policy at George Washington University's Milken Institute of Public Health!

---

*"Take advantage of your resources while at Mercer and make sure to not overwork yourself and enjoy your four years of undergrad because they go by fast!"*



## SYDNEY STALLINGS

Majors: Global Health Studies and Biology  
Minor: Chemistry

Sydney will be attending Mercer University School of Medicine!

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*"Take advantage of the time you have in college to explore a variety of different courses, and don't be afraid to ask questions! The IGS faculty is incredible, and you will learn so much from them."*



# SPOTLIGHT



## IGNATIUS FLEMISTER

Major: Global Development Studies  
Minor: French

Ignatius is seeking internships!

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*"Be determine, focus, and do not allow the distractions to swirl you away from becoming the man/woman that you aspired to be. YESHUA, is my only supporter!"*

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## MCKENZIE TANKERSLEY

Major: International Affairs and Global Development  
Minor: Spanish

McKenzie will be working with AmeriCorps and Columbia County UGA extension 4-H office with program development! After that, she strives to develop a career at USAID.

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*"Don't be afraid to explore other departments and careers. I started off pre-med and now I'm in humanities! Don't be afraid to change your path!"*

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## CHRISALYN RIDGEWAY

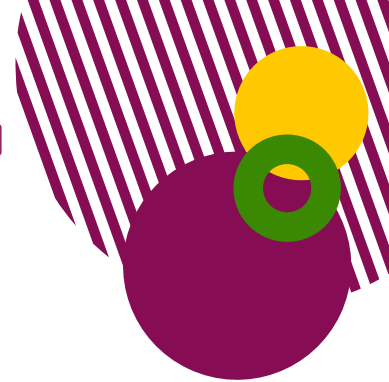
Majors: Global Health Studies

Chrisalyn will be pursuing her Master of Physician Assistant Program at Augusta University!

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*"Please take one day at a time and enjoy it. I know everyone says undergrad goes by fast, but it is so true! Once you graduate, you don't want to look back and feel as if you spent all of your time stressing about the next assignment due. Take your time and enjoy each day!"*

# SPOTLIGHT



## FAITH VELEZ-ANDERSON

Major: Global Health Studies  
Minor: Spanish

Faith will be taking a gap year and working as a PT technician before applying to PT schools!

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*"Work hard, but make time to experience life."*

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## AMY PHAM

Major: Global Development  
Minor: Psychology

Amy hopes to pursue a program that will take her abroad, such as Peace Corps or TAPIF, with hopes of completing a Master's or PhD upon return. Using these experiences, she also plans to focus on improving education and equity for women and children around the world.

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*"Take the chance to study abroad! Even if you think you can't fit it in, there's no better way to immerse yourself in another culture on a budget than at Mercer. It's always worth it, especially if you want to learn a new language, travel abroad for your career, or even just expand your worldview!"*

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## JENNA OLDJA

Major: Global Health Studies and Religion  
Minor: German

Jenna will be pursuing a Fulbright ETA in Germany starting in September!

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*"Take things slow and trust the process. The things that sparked inspiration in me academically were in the most unexpected places or classes; enjoy all of your experiences in IGS and trust the process! You'll be surprised by what inspires you!"*



# SPOTLIGHT



## MATTHEW MARTIN

Majors: Global Health Studies  
Minors: History and Military Science

Matthew will be joining the military!

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*"Go outside if your comfort zone."*



## HANNAH WILLIAMS

Majors: Global Health Studies

Hannah will be pursuing an M.S. in Environmental Science and Policy with a concentration in GI Science and Spatial Analysis at the University of South Florida (with a full scholarship!

---

*"If what you are pursuing does not fulfill you, don't stop until you find your thing. It's out there! Take the classes that interest you no matter if it is totally opposite of what you are currently pursuing or on scholarship for."*



## KATIE JOHNSON

Majors: Global Health Studies  
Minors: Statistics

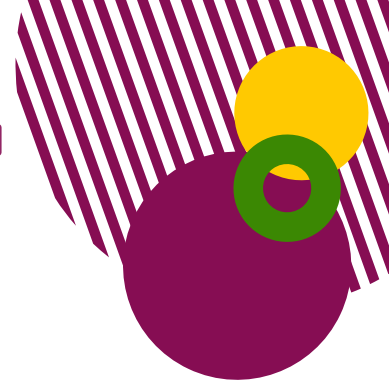
Katie will be working as a caregiver at a retirement home!

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*"Take the classes you're scared of or seem intimidating to you. Those are the ones you will learn the most in and challenge yourself, but also surprise yourself with how much you can accomplish!"*



# SPOTLIGHT



## MIRA PATEL

Major: Marketing  
Minor: Global Health Studies

Mira will be entering the workforce at a marketing firm!

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*"Keep an open mind and say yes to new opportunities, even if they aren't in your comfort zone!!! It will lead to growth and you'll learn a lot about yourself."*

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## SONNY PATEL

Major: Global Health Studies  
Minor: Chemistry and Biology

Sonny will be attending Mercer School of Medicine!

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*"Do not worry about what will happen in the future; just worry about the present! Have fun in your classes and enjoy your time here. These four years will shape you. Reach out to upperclassmen and teachers for advice to prevent making the same mistake they did."*

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## ABBY SMITH

Major: Global Health Studies  
Minor: Chemistry

Abby will be attending Emory University's Master of Public Health program with a concentration in Health Policy and Management!

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*"Take a variety of classes! Making sure you take diverse topics in your undergrad experience will not only benefit your education but can also help you solidify your future goals! Also make sure you are taking care of yourself. Your well-being is just as important as your academic career!"*



# SPECIAL THANKS



**Parneeta Mohapatra**

*Editor-in-Chief*

Majors: Global Health Studies and Spanish  
Minors: Chemistry

Parneeta will be working with Blue Ridge Health Services in Hendersonville as part of the MedServe Fellowship for two years before applying to medical schools!

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*"Your academic career is a small fraction of your whole life. Make sure you're making time to spend with your friends, your family, and yourself. Take care of you mental, spiritual, and emotional health. Sleep and drink water! These four years are for you to make amazing memories and learn amazing things :)"*

Parneeta is one of the most empathetic people I have ever met. She is a continual source of kindness and laughter. Thank you for teaching me what it means to be a strong woman. We will miss you and hope that your future is as amazing as you are!

**- Makenzie Hicks**

Parneeta has been a wonderful leader, mentor and friend over the course of my two years on the GHIA Newsletter staff. I'm so thankful for her kindness, patience, and encouragement as Editor-in-Chief. We love you, and will miss you and your unhinged Canva designs very much!

**- McKenna Kaufman**

For the past two years plus you have been a formidable force and have so aptly managed the affairs of the GHIA newsletter. I am impressed with your work. You helped take the newsletter to the next level. You mentored your peers with patience and understanding and took responsibility for all aspects of the newsletter. Your insights and leadership were timely and adequate. For all these, I am pleased and grateful. I wish you success in all your future endeavors!

**- Dr. Chinekwu Obidoa**

# CONGRATULATIONS



to our Class  
of 2022!



# EDITORIAL BOARD



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Chief Editor



**MCKENNA KAUFMAN**  
Editor



**MAKENZIE HICKS**  
Editor



**SHAAN PRASAD**  
Editor



**TORI JACKSON**  
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**SUHA MOHIUDDIN**  
Editor



**AALIYAH DEEN SESAY**  
Editor

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## **Special thanks to:**

Dr. Chinekwu Obidoa  
Convener & Faculty Adviser

Dr. Amy Nichols-Belo  
Associate Professor and Chair of Department of International and Global Studies

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

Dr. Ryan Tokarz  
Assistant Professor

Dr. Rachael Goodman  
Assistant Professor

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