

# AROUND THE WORLD

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

# THE WORLD



**TECHNOLOGY**  
THAT SERVES

FALL 2020

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**On the Cover:**

Behzad Fotovvati, PhD



# CONTENTS

AROUND THE WORLD  
MAGAZINE OF  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS**  
FALL 2020

## INSIDE

**2** Letter from the Director

**6** Abroad Experiences

**10** Parent Perspective

**12** Wide World of Tech

**16** Technology that Serves

**18** Community that Cares

**20** Q&A with John A. Dolan

**22** Intensive English

**24** A Research Journey in Sicily

**28** Alumni Spotlight

**32** Photos Abroad



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

am very excited about this issue introducing you to some of our outstanding international students at the University of Memphis who specialize in different areas related to technology. One timely example is Behzad Fotovvati, an Iranian graduate student who is a member of the University's research team that produced innovative face masks to protect medical personnel and other essential workers during the current pandemic. Despite the uncertainties and restrictions

of this ongoing crisis, the staff at the Center for International Education Services has worked tirelessly to assist and advocate for our students, and foster and deepen relationships with the international community in Memphis. When many of our international students were unable to return home due to travel restrictions, our local partners proposed and organized a series of successful food drives on campus. Beginning with 901 Malaysia, an organization of Malaysian-Americans in Memphis, these events provided essential items such as rice and vegetables to our diverse international student body. Subsequent food drives were generously supported by the Mid-South Sikh community, the Indian Community Fund of Greater Memphis, the Telegu Association of Memphis, Mid-South Tamil Sangam and Global Friends in conjunction with our faculty, staff, alumni and friends. This issue features beautiful images from these food drives. We are grateful for the kindness and support of our

local partners, and cherish such opportunities to strengthen our relationship with these communities in Memphis.

Of course, our partnerships extend far beyond Memphis and across the world, as exemplified by Dr. Katherine Lambert-Pennington's article on her research project with scholars and practitioners at the University of Catania in Italy. For the past decade, our students have been joining researchers in the Simeto Valley working on an urban development plan. But as Carmelo Caruso, a community member of the Simeto Valley project, recently stated on Facebook, "This year, the pandemic robbed us of this experience, but the bond with our friends overseas is now consolidated and we will recover next year." In this issue, we also interview John Dolan, a UofM alum and professor at our partner institution Chuo Gakuin University. Our collaboration with this Japanese university spans 44 years, during which we have hosted 357 students and 59 faculty and staff from Chuo Gakuin. Today, three UofM alumni work at Chuo Gakuin's International Exchange





Office. One personal example of these close links between our universities is the marriage between UofM alum Rachel (DeGross) Nukui and Chuo Gakuin alum Kazuo Nukui, who stop by the Center for International Education Services every summer to visit us. This year, of course, we missed their annual visit because of travel restrictions. The pandemic has presented unique challenges as well as opportunities to those of us working in international education. International students in the United States were caught far from home, uncertain about their ability to continue their studies, while American students had to abruptly return from their study abroad trips or defer their travel plans. Throughout these difficulties, the Center for International Education Services has worked closely

with students, faculty and staff at the UofM and our partner institutions abroad to assess and adjust policies, support and advise students and maintain and strengthen relations. While we patiently wait for a better future, let's take a moment to celebrate our interconnected world and the experience and perspectives of our students in the pages that follow. Stay healthy and safe!

**Go Tigers!**

Rebecca Laumann  
Executive Director

# MACHU PICCHU

Kyra Robinson,  
third from the left,  
at Machu Picchu





NIEN BLEU



# Abroad

## Experiences



**Current and past UofM students** share stories from their time spent studying abroad.



**Miko** at Crosby Beach, Liverpool, England.



**Miko McDowell**

Degree: Nursing ('22)  
Study abroad location:  
Liverpool, England

At the halfway point of my undergraduate college career, I can confidently say that studying abroad has been my favorite experience of college yet. For three months, I studied art and history at Liverpool Hope University in Liverpool, England. I lived in a flat with four other flatmates, one being another student at the University of Memphis. We had individual bedrooms and bathrooms, but a shared kitchen and communal area for hanging out.

Even though I only spent a quarter of 2019 in England, three months was plenty of time to form new habits, and truly, it is the simple, mundane moments that I miss the most. The cold, crisp feeling of walking out to the bus stop every morning is unmatched. The struggle of carrying groceries from Tesco's to my flat was incredibly rewarding once I made it back successfully. I especially miss the days I went to City Centre just to explore the beauty of Liverpool.

In the moment, I was just doing what I had to in order to earn credits for courses while trying to make the most of my semester abroad. Looking back now, I realize that I was learning how to live life in an entirely new way. I was growing, adapting and being challenged like never before.

Because flights among European countries are generally less expensive than domestic flights within the United States, I was able to go on many weekend trips to places like France, Spain and Germany! I could go on forever about how incredible these countries were. The architecture, people and natural beauty made each place unique and memorable.

I planned a trip to Stuttgart, Germany. There, I reunited with one of my very best friends, Theresa. Seeing where she grew up, meeting her friends and learning about what kind of school she goes to was extremely special. She even drove me to Austria, and we explored a few Christmas Markets.

After traveling to each new country, I was always thankful to go back to Liverpool, my home away from home. Overall, my study abroad experience in Liverpool is something I will always cherish.



**Immanuel Martinez**

Degree: Computer Engineering ('20)  
Study abroad location:  
Cahuita, Costa Rica

For my spring break, I studied abroad in Costa Rica for an honors course. I initially chose this trip mainly because the timing fit perfectly with my busy schedule. My main reason, however, became my desire to experience a new country and culture while enjoying myself in a foreign country.

I mainly stayed in a hotel in the town of Cahuita near a national park. I roomed with another student on the trip who I quickly became great friends with. The first couple of days staying there were strange as I wasn't accustomed

the most important activity was the work we did at the elementary school in Cahuita. For four days, we helped paint desks, walls and railings at the Comadre Elementary School as a service project. We also got to meet the schoolchildren and brighten their day by chatting, taking pictures, dancing and even playing soccer with them. They were so happy we visited that they performed a dance for us to watch and join in on. That was easily one of the highlights of the trip and a memory that will always stick with me.

Another highlight would have to be the food we ate. It was extremely delicious and nutritious, and I had plenty of it. Most meals consisted of rice and beans with a choice of meat and salad and/or fruit. Even the drinks were healthy, consisting of many blended fruits.



to the tropical weather, but I got used to it with time.

Our class had various activities planned for each day, including a tour of the Cahuita National Park, a cooking class, surfing lessons and an indigenous community tour. Above all else, I would say

**Immanuel** at Playa Negra, a Costa Rican beach.

What I learned from traveling to this beautiful country is that you must live your best life while you still can or, as they say in Costa Rica, "pura vida" (pure life).



Tierney at the Trevi Fountain in Rome.



### Tierney Wilks

Degree:  
Management ('20)  
Study abroad  
location: Volterra, Italy

During my senior year of high school, when all my teachers gathered us to give their final pieces of advice before we graduated, they all gave one common piece of wisdom: study abroad. In 2015, I didn't fully grasp why this was so important, but I decided to go to the Study Abroad Fair each semester anyway. That's where I discovered studying international business in Italy seemed like the perfect opportunity, and it was. From the moment my feet graced the cobblestone streets of Rome, I knew I made the right decision.

My group, the Italy 13, stayed in a dorm-like facility with great hosts. It had a pool, tennis court, soccer field and a view of the Tuscan hills that is indescribable. They also fed us Italian cuisine for breakfast and dinner.

Initially, we were all strangers and completely out of our comfort zones. Now, we are like one big family. We went to many businesses throughout the country such as wineries, agroturismos, banks and even a high-end chocolate factory. When we weren't learning first-hand from Italian business executives, we were exploring the country and gaining a true appreciation for the Italian culture.

My favorite thing was visiting the different cities. Although they

differed in history and architecture, they all shared a similar culture of passion and joy. You could see it in the way they hosted meetings, their conversations and so much more. In America, we have a tendency to rush through things, a concept that we took from the Industrial Revolution. Italy taught me that it is possible to produce amazing things, but also take a minute to slow down and enjoy the beauty around you.

Tierney at the Leaning Tower of Pisa.





**Kyra** at Escalera de Piano in Valparaíso, Chile.



**Kyra Robinson**

Degree: Marketing Management ('21)  
Study abroad  
location: Santiago, Chile

When I chose to study at the University of Chile in Santiago, I was looking to travel to a country where I would be challenged both culturally and intellectually. I was excited to learn more about Latin American culture while at the same time studying at one of South America's top business schools. During my semester in Chile, I learned so much more than I expected. I studied with students from all around the world, and I was able to learn about their cultures in addition to the cultures of my friends in Santiago.

My friends and I went to class together, explored the city together and traveled around South America. We rafted through Rio Maipo, we hiked

mountains, we swam in hot springs heated by a volcano and traveled to Peru to visit Machu Pichu — a Wonder of the World that I never thought that I would get the chance to see in person. Through all of this, I learned so much about myself and the world while making connections with people from across the globe.

In addition to this experience, I also received an education that was extremely unique and valuable. In my international business classes, I learned about business from the perspectives of professors and students from around the world. I was taught by prestigious professors who came from all across South America and I worked in groups with students whose perspectives and insights were far different from my own. I was challenged to expand my way of thinking both intellectually and in the way that I worked with people from different cultures.

Although all of my experiences during my time abroad were valuable to me, the event that touched me the deepest was

the historical national movement that began during my time there. In October of 2019, thousands of people took to the streets of Santiago to protest the Chilean government. It was extremely impactful to see my Chilean friends and neighbors demonstrating for a better life. Being able to see millions of people throughout all of Chile come together to stand for something they believed in was an experience that I will be forever grateful for.

I learned more during my five months in Santiago than I have during any other time in life. I was challenged to step out of my comfort zone and to explore different ways of viewing the world. I am so grateful for the friends I made, the places I saw and the lessons I learned. Studying abroad taught me that beautiful things happen when people of different cultures and backgrounds come together.



# PARENT PERSPECTIVE

## **Jeanice Spencer on the experience of her daughter, Katherine, while studying abroad:**

My daughter elected to study in Barcelona, Spain, for a full semester where she lived in an apartment with five other students. The apartment was located in an extremely safe neighborhood in downtown Barcelona, conveniently located near the university where she was studying, many restaurants, a library, museums, a medical clinic, public transportation and everything else downtown Barcelona has to offer.

Our daughter gave high marks to her professors and the curriculum. She was also impressed with the support system within the local university and through the UofM's program. If she ever needed guidance or had specific questions, there was always a quick and thorough response.

In addition to being pleased with the educational side of the program, my daughter received additional benefits from expanding socially and culturally. The program had regularly scheduled trips for the students to local museums, churches, businesses and other interesting places. With regional travel being so affordable, my daughter was also able to visit multiple cities on her very modest budget. She spent a few days in Munich, Berlin, Madrid, Rome, Lucca and Ibiza. These trips expanded her appreciation for other cultures to a level that is not possible by studying solely in the United States. Overall, the UofM's study abroad program was an excellent experience and an inexpensive way for my daughter to experience different cultures while staying on track with her academic goals.



Katherine Spencer with her family in Vatican City.



Mina Rad with husband and daughters, Rasa and Rana



### **Mina Rad on the experience of her daughters, Rasa and Rana, while studying abroad:**

Safety was our top concern during our daughters' trip to France, and we were very pleased by all the precautions that were taken. My daughters thoroughly enjoyed their experience in Paris and got to experience the city and culture very well in a very safe environment. Study abroad is an amazing experience overall. I know my daughters would agree and recommend it to everybody who gets the chance. They told us so many stories about the friends they made and all the fun things they got to experience. They traveled to Paris with Academic Programs International (API), a third-party organization that works with the UofM on study abroad placements. I got the chance to visit the API office, and all of the employees were so nice and welcoming. Overall, my husband and I were very happy with the study abroad program the University of Memphis offered. We really enjoyed visiting them in Paris and seeing how much they learned about the culture and language while there. It was definitely an experience we will never forget.



# WIDE WORLD OF TECH

As an international student searching for education in the U.S., comfort was the top priority for University of Memphis student **THOMAS NKASHAMA KALONJI**.

“For students like myself, being comfortable calms our minds and allows us to focus on our objectives,” Kalonji said. “That’s the main aspect of what brought me to Memphis — the hospitality. The City of Memphis is known all over the world for its Southern hospitality.”

Coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kalonji’s interest in Memphis intensified after he researched the opportunities available within the UofM’s Herff College of Engineering. He is now a senior mechanical engineering major with a minor in mathematics and a bright future ahead.

“The University of Memphis has helped me master engineering problem-solving by providing great departmental staffs and professors,” Kalonji said. “The University also arranges professional events for students. The career fair helped me interact with professionals from FedEx, Smith & Nephew, Thomas & Betts, Cummins and other companies relevant to my field. I personally do not know how I would have had that opportunity if not for the UofM.”

Kalonji’s younger sister, Tatiana Nzeba, joined him at



**Thomas Nkashama Kalonji**  
**Democratic Republic of Congo**  
**Mechanical Engineering**

the UofM two years ago with a non-English speaking background. In less than a year, the Intensive English for Internationals program elevated her knowledge of the language to a level in which she confidently began her pursuit of a degree in civil engineering. “I could see her speaking, writing and listening was improving daily, and that was very impressive to me,” Thomas said. “I would tell all prospective students the UofM is a very good place to continue their education. We lift each other up here. No matter what challenges you might face, the vibe around the campus will help them get through it.”

**SURABHI NAIK** was drawn to the UofM at the suggestion of some friends. A native of India, she was applying for opportunities to pursue a master's degree in bioinformatics when she was told of the UofM's well-structured program with many research opportunities in the Memphis area. Even as she arrived with high expectations of what the UofM had to offer, the University has lived up to what Naik envisioned. She is on track to complete her bioinformatics graduate degree in the 2020 fall semester. Naik is hoping to begin gaining experience in a community leadership role following the completion of her degree. She is drawn to the idea of using her bioinformatics background to answer complex biological questions in a young and rapidly evolving line of work. "The coursework here along with the hands-on training analyzing complex data and troubleshooting problems arising from it has prepared me to handle real-world data," Naik said. "During my time at the UofM, I also

had various opportunities to participate in seminars, workshops and conferences that helped me get involved with the current scientific community." Through her time at the UofM, she has now become an advocate for the University in the same way her friends were for her.

"I would highly recommend the UofM to prospective students for multiple reasons," Naik said. "The campus is very safe and student-friendly. The FedEx Institute of Technology hosts various events, workshops and conferences in cutting-edge technology. At the Crews Center for Entrepreneurship, I had a great time learning entrepreneurial skills.

"I also had an amazing relationship with the international student services staff. They were very friendly and welcoming. They give assistance with getting involved in the campus community, immigration, I-20s, visas, travel and so many things. It was all very professional and prompt."



**Surabhi Naik**  
India  
Bioinformatics

Affordability brought **RASIK POKHAREL** to the University of Memphis. From the cost of attendance to the cost of living, the UofM and the City of Memphis had exactly what he was looking for after first coming to the U.S. to pursue an information technology degree at Northeastern University in Boston.

“I initially found Memphis was a perfect choice for me because the tuition was low compared to that of other

universities I had looked into,” Pokharel said. “Then, I found out about the cost of living as well. I read that Memphis was one of the most affordable cities in the U.S., and I was sold. That wasn’t the case with my situation in Boston. I have found the UofM to be a very affordable, desirable place for any international student.”

A native of Nepal, Pokharel recently completed his Bachelor of Business Administration degree with a concentration

in Business Information Technology/ Management Information Systems. During his time at the UofM, the Center for International Education Services assisted him with everything from the immigration process to filing his taxes. He also took advantage of the Fogelman College’s internship network, got involved in student organizations and used the Professional Development Center to improve his interview skills and resume.

“The UofM has provided me so many resources,” said Pokharel. “Everything I needed and more was here for me.”

Pokharel moved with his family to Belgium in 2012 before coming to the U.S. four years later. He has visited 19 different countries and interacted with people from many different cultures. What he sees at the UofM is a welcoming community for all.

“I know international students might have a hard time fitting in and adapting to American society at the start,” Pokharel said. “At the UofM, you quickly realize it doesn’t just feel like school, it feels like home. It’s a place you can change, grow and become a better person.”



**Rasik Pokharel**  
Nepal  
Business Administration



**Paulina Reyes-García**  
Mexico  
Civil Engineering

The Center for International Education Services at the UofM has served as a guiding influence for graduate student **PAULINA REYES-GARCÍA**.

Her first experience with the Center came while she was still living and working in her hometown of Guadalajara, Mexico. The resources provided made her transition from Mexico to Memphis much easier, from assistance with the early paperwork to the procedures she had to follow upon arrival.

As Reyes-García has pursued her master's degree in civil engineering (water resources concentration), the Center has remained a reliable source of assistance. The regular updates providing important information for international students have been much appreciated during her time at the University. More recently, she has been extremely thankful for the help received from the UofM and its community partners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"During this time, the Center has been very supportive, always attentive to any struggles we might be having and they have even helped us with food and groceries," Reyes-García said. "The Center has made me feel accompanied while being away from my country, especially during difficult times. They are always open to assist with any doubts or difficulties I encounter."

Reyes-García has seen the benefits of attending the UofM stretch far beyond just the Center, though. She's learned new skills that have enhanced her preparation in water resources engineering through what she describes as high-level courses at the University. "I'm learning how to manage autonomous work on my research project and to develop an effective schedule balancing time, resources and tasks," she said. "I feel more confident about my communication and analytical skills, which are essential to be either a professional or a researcher."

In the future, Reyes-García would like to apply the knowledge she has gained at the UofM to grow into a professional ready to face the challenges presented by climate changes, pollution of groundwater resources and water supply.

"The UofM is a great opportunity to pursue your professional career thanks to its wide range of competitive programs," Reyes-García said. "It offers the occasion to meet students from all over the world and be a part of a lively and interesting international community, learn alongside people of different cultures and develop bonds that overcome geographical boundaries."

# TECHNOLOGY THAT SERVES

By Trent Shadid

**A**s a child growing up in Iran, Behzad Fotovvati developed a curiosity for how things work. That inquisitiveness grew into a fascination for scientific understanding as he got older and eventually led him to jump at the opportunity to study mechanical engineering. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in the area of study while still in Iran.

After a brief stint working in his home country, Fotovvati's curiosity expanded once more. This time, he wondered how he could better connect with and serve people around the world.

Fotovvati began researching PhD opportunities in the United States. He made a connection with Dr. Ebrahim Asadi, director of the Metal Additive Manufacturing Lab and assistant professor of Mechanical Engineering at the UofM. That's when Fotovvati started to see additive manufacturing — commonly known as 3D printing — as a potentially perfect fit encompassing all of his interests. He followed his instincts, moving across the world in 2016 to take his education one step further at the UofM.

Four years later, Fotovvati earned his PhD in Mechanical Engineering. He defended his dissertation two months

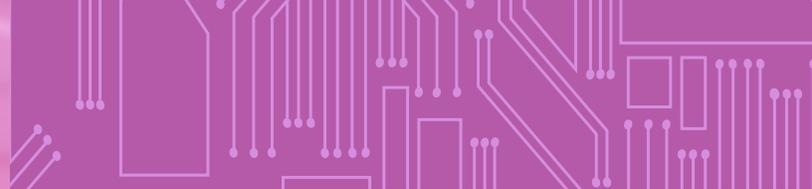
after the COVID-19 pandemic forced the UofM to shift instruction fully online.

It was during that time Fotovvati was able to fulfill his desire to help others. Under the direction of Asadi, he and his colleagues kept the state-of-the-art Metal Additive Manufacturing Lab running around the clock, printing face shield frames to help protect workers in clinics and hospitals across the State of Tennessee.

“The COVID-19 pandemic changed the everyday lives of many people, including myself, all over the world,” Fotovvati said. “In those circumstances, being able to help produce face shield frames for those who are putting their lives at risk to care for others felt like an effective way to make a positive difference. That sort of thing is exactly what I set out to do as I furthered my academic career here.”

At the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States, the lab delivered the personal protective equipment (PPE) to Le Bonheur Children's Hospital and the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency. The lab later partnered with two local companies — MCR Safety and Precision Plastics — to enhance its capability to quickly produce face shields for first responders, health care facilities and medical professionals.





For Fotovvati, helping provide for others came at the conclusion of an educational experience he describes as supportive and productive while also enhancing his knowledge immensely.

“The opportunities provided to me during these four years at the University of Memphis have been amazing,” Fotovvati said. “The Herff College, the Department of Mechanical Engineering and working under Dr. Asadi in the Metal Additive Manufacturing Lab all helped lead my research in the perfect direction.”

Even before beginning production of PPE for COVID-19 workers, Fotovvati’s experiences at the UofM taught him many ways in which he could make a positive impact. He was able to observe the benefits additive manufacturing can have in everyday life across various fields — including the automotive, aerospace and health care industries.

“During the past four years, my interest in additive manufacturing increased significantly,” Fotovvati said. “I was able to closely examine how this emerging technology can have a positive effect on everyone. One example is how 3D printing has vastly improved medical implants.

“In the future, I would like to further my research in this area to help fulfill my desire of having an impact on people across the world. That may even include the pursuit of a career in academia to educate and train students and researchers willing to serve humanity.”





# COMMUNITY THAT CARES

BY TRENT SHADID

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted international students at the UofM in a multitude of ways. The ability to secure on-campus jobs or external internships was drastically limited, presenting a challenge in affording essential needs. Travel bans and stay-at-home orders also prevented an estimated 350 UofM international students from returning home during the summer.

As a result of these challenges, the UofM's Center for International Education Services and its community partners sprang into action helping provide for those who remained in Memphis.

The local Malaysian American community donated food that was distributed to 125 international students in early May, just a few days before final exams began. The students received bags of fruits, vegetables, rice, flour and more stocked by roughly 30 volunteers from within the UofM and local communities.

“Our WhatsApp group, 901 Malaysia, had been wanting to do something for those affected by COVID-19 and a food drive for these students became a great option,” said Cameila Johns, who helped organize the drive. “In just six days, it went from a concept to providing groceries and a gift card to the students.”

Approximately 50 members of the Malaysian American community and its friends donated time, money and groceries to make the food drive possible.

“It was amazing how people readily responded to these students and their needs,” said Johns. “There are quite a few in our community who have ties to the UofM as alumni and those who are currently working or have worked at the University. We also had a lot of people who could relate to the students’ hardship of being in a foreign country. It was just a way to give back.”

A week after the American Malaysian community food drive, the Mid-South Sikh community prepared and packaged 170 meals



for international students. The group also contributed 100 pizzas each Thursday and 300 individual meals each Saturday over the final four weeks of May. The food for Saturdays was prepared and packaged at the Sikh temple in Cordova. Little Caesars Pizza served as a partner helping provide the pizza.

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mid-South Sikh community provided meals to healthcare workers at many local hospitals with an emphasis on giving to night shift employees and those without a strong support system.

“This is something we have done for 500 years,” said Mid-South Sikh community member Dr. Gurpal Bindra. “At our place of worship, there’s always free food for anyone, Sikh or non-Sikh. Food is something we recognize as a very basic necessity of being human. If we can satisfy that need, everything else becomes easier for a person.”

By late May, the financial strain on international students unable to find employment or return home had become increasingly difficult to manage. The creation of the International Student COVID-19 Emergency Fund provided needed relief. Contributions were quickly made by the Midsouth Punjabi Heritage Foundation (\$1,000), Telugu Association of Memphis (\$1,000), India Association of Memphis (\$1,000), Indian Community Fund for Greater Memphis (\$5,000) and The Community Foundation for Greater Memphis (\$5,500).

“I was talking with students who had worked with us at our local India Fest in the past, and they were telling me how they didn’t have any jobs or sources of income and they cannot even go anywhere,” said Manjit Kaur, chairman of the India Association of Memphis and a member of the Mid-South Sikh Community.

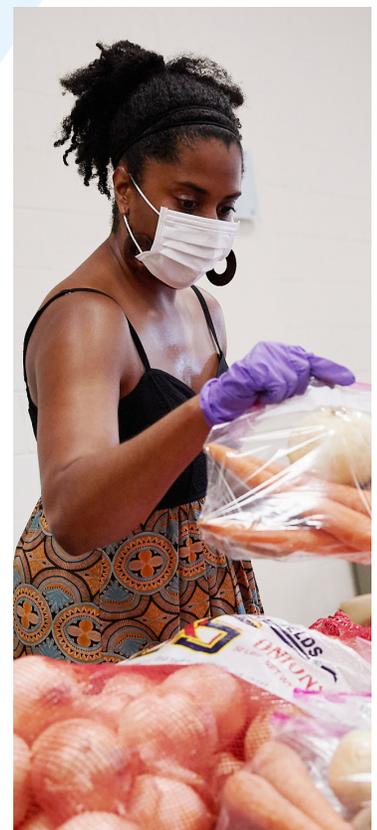


**“I FELT LIKE WE REALLY HAD TO DO SOMETHING MONETARILY TO GET THEM THROUGH THIS TIME. THE INDIA ASSOCIATION PLEDGED THE \$1,000 FOR THEM REALIZING THAT’S NOT A LOT OF MONEY OVERALL, BUT HOPING IT WOULD ALSO ENCOURAGE OTHER PEOPLE TO PITCH IN. EVERYTHING HELPS IN SUCH A DIFFICULT SITUATION.”**

A GoFundMe was set up for the emergency fund with a goal of raising \$10,000 over one month. The fundraiser surpassed \$8,000 within the first 10 days and reached its initial goal of \$10,000 two weeks ahead of the projected conclusion.

By July, the University had raised more than \$20,000 for its international students.

“During these uncertain times many of us have been affected by this pandemic,” said Dr. Balaji Krishnan, executive director of International Academic Relationships and Recruitment. “The international students have been affected far more than most. At times like this, it was important to find community partners to help them. It once more demonstrated that the hospitality and generosity of the people of Memphis is not a myth. Many organizations and people came forward to support these students. We thank each one of them on behalf of the students.”



Q.  
+  
A.

## AN EVOLVING EXCHANGE

The University of Memphis and Chuo Gakuin University in Abiko, Japan, have a relationship that dates back to the mid-1970s when the two institutions first formed a sister school partnership. Perhaps no one has more connection to both universities than John A. Dolan — a native Memphian, UofM alum (BA '81) and tenured faculty member at CGU. In his role as director of the International Exchange Center at CGU, Dolan is working to provide students from both universities the opportunity for a year-long study abroad program at the sister school.



Over the years, around 400 CGU students have come to the UofM in groups for a two-week intensive language program. The new study abroad program would open the door for more UofM students to study at CGU while also giving students from both schools the opportunity to experience a new culture for an extended period of time.

On a recent visit to the UofM, Dolan spoke about the exchange program, the longstanding relationship between the universities and more.

# 1. Q: How much of a UofM presence is at CGU?

**DOLAN:** We have myself and Akira Kawashima, who is the manager of the International Exchange Center and a graduate of both the UofM and CGU. More recently, we hired UofM graduate Neal Newbill to the faculty as a full-time lecturer. Any students coming from the UofM to CGU would certainly be provided a warm welcome.

# 2. Q: What would the new exchange program look like?

**DOLAN:** Well, we have a great starting point to build from with these two universities having so much history. So, the next thing we're trying to set up is a true exchange program that would allow both schools to send and receive students, likely two, for a full academic year. Of course, it helps a lot that there is now such a strong Japanese major at the UofM. It certainly sounds like that program is raising interest in the idea of studying in Japan.

# 3. Q: Can you talk through the evolution of the relationship between the two universities as you understand it?

**DOLAN:** It all started with that two-week intensive language program that included homestays and some cultural things, but that was always a one-way street from CGU to Memphis. There was no way to go from Memphis to CGU.

Several years back, we were really in need of English instruction at CGU. So, I suggested we set up an internship program where English as a Second Language (ESL) graduate students could come over and teach at CGU for a year with an apartment provided and a salary. We did that for about 10 years, which was certainly a benefit for UofM students. Since then, CGU has been sending a few students, and we have had faculty come over for sabbaticals for a year. Setting up the year-long exchange would be such a benefit to the students. At CGU, we don't currently have an exchange program with any North American university. We have had this connection for 46 years now, and it is as good a time as any to try and set it up. The interest from both sides seems to be coming to a peak.

# 4. Q: From your experience in both cultures, what would be the primary challenges faced by students from each university coming to the other?

**DOLAN:** I've heard anthropologists call Japan one of the world's most high-context cultures. Context is so important for the way you phrase things, talk, bow and so on. These are all unwritten rules and you can only learn them by being immersed in it, making mistakes and learning. The good thing about it is the Japanese are so helpful and courteous. There is a great amount of encouragement for learning there. When you can finally get to the point where you can communicate how much you are enjoying the

food, they will praise you for being such a good Japanese speaker. All that is good for your confidence as you try to adjust there.

I've also experienced some reverse culture shock. When I came back to Memphis about three years ago, I had some relatives tell me I was pronouncing my words awfully carefully. Some of that naturalness is missing. It's that and space, which is at such a premium in Japan. Living space, commuting space, walking space, eating space, all of it. Here, people have yards and yards of space. Another thing that's big in the States, comparatively, is the amount of food on the plate.

# 5. Q: What is the biggest difference you notice between the UofM now from when you were a student?

**DOLAN:** There are so many more amenities. It is gorgeous. There are so many spaces for the students and accommodations. There are so many different places to eat. It is almost like a hotel. The people in Memphis have always been, compared to other parts of the country, friendlier and the hospitality has always been good. But the work environment here now seems even brighter and more efficient all the way around.

# INTENSIVE ENGLISH

In order to gain full admission to the University of Memphis, international students must meet English language proficiency requirements. The Intensive English for Internationals (IEI) program puts students on the right track.

Though comprehensive and challenging, the IEI program provides international students everything they need to achieve English proficiency and pursue their academic goals. Students can apply for conditional admission to the University before or during their time in the program. The classes are small and structured to develop English communication and academic skills through speaking, listening, reading and writing.

IEI has three levels of instruction — basic, intermediate and advanced — and classes in reading and writing, grammar and communication skills. The eight-week IEI sessions begin in August, October, January, March and May. New students are tested at the beginning of each session and placed in one of the three levels accordingly. There are also opportunities for skills-based advancement within the program.

“When I came here, I didn’t know English at all,” said Laura Ximena Moreno Marin, an international student from Colombia.

“Now, a year later, I am so impressed with myself. As an international student, I think IEI is a great option. They can help you a lot. I love the University of Memphis because there are always people trying to help you.”

The highly academic nature of the IEI curriculum prepares students for entry into many graduate and undergraduate settings. The advanced-level courses are specifically designed to strengthen academic English skills by providing integrated language instruction and practice in the context of academic content study. Students earn recommendation to undergraduate or graduate study as they demonstrate mastery of higher-level academic English language skills as described in the Pearson Global Scale of English.



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**“I grew up as a person in Memphis. I learned how to be an independent person. I learned how to drive here, how to handle living by myself, doing my laundry, cooking. Memphis has given me the opportunity to grow up professionally. That’s why I appreciate the city.”**

— Brandon Munoz,  
former IEI student from Honduras

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After becoming fully immersed in the UofM educational experience, students continually find help and guidance at the University and within the Memphis community.

“Our professors are really, really helpful,” said Bibata Abdoulaye Lawali, an international student from Niger.

“With English not being my first language, they are always here to help us understand. They have many alternative ways to help you understand the lectures. You don’t feel uncomfortable. Even though

your English is not perfect, you don’t feel ashamed to talk because people are very tolerant in Memphis.”

Beyond providing the basis for obtaining a degree in the U.S., IEI also gives international students an opportunity to make friends and grow socially. IEI students can participate in weekly activities that include live music, dinner parties, holiday celebrations and game nights. They have access to all activities available to students on campus.

The Conversation Partners Program pairs IEI and UofM students in order to build friendships and encourage English conversations in a social

setting outside the classroom. The Friendship Families Program gives IEI students an invitation to visit homes in the Memphis area, further allowing students to gain comfort and confidence in their English abilities.

IEI has been a UofM program since the early 1980s. Over the past 15 years, students from 119 countries have studied in the program. Students in IEI have gone on to careers in medicine, education, business, engineering, counseling, religious work, journalism and more.

To learn more about IEI, visit [memphis.edu/iei](http://memphis.edu/iei).

# A Research Journey in Sicily

**BY DR. KATHERINE LAMBERT-PENNINGTON**

Director | School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy



**W**

## **WHAT DO OLIVE OIL, PECORINO CHEESE AND PISTACHIOS HAVE IN COMMON WITH STUDY ABROAD?**

These products, and many more, are part of the rich agricultural tradition and cultural heritage of the Simeto River Valley, which has served as the site of the Environmental Planning and Design study abroad class since 2013. Enhancing these traditions, as well as the environment and livelihood of residents in this region of Southern Italy on the island of Sicily, is the goal of our on-going collaboration with the Participatory Presidium, a local grassroots coalition.

Each year, University of Memphis students and faculty from Anthropology, City and Regional Planning and several other disciplines travel to the Simeto River Valley, an area tucked in the shadow of the Mount Etna volcano, to undertake community-based research to advance key elements of the Simeto River Agreement — an internationally recognized community development plan designed to support the ecologically sensitive, sustainable development practices. The focus of the class varies year-to-year based on a specific theme identified by the Presidium, such as mobility, water, waste, agriculture or urban regeneration.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Katherine Lambert-Pennington is an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology and the director of the School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy. She is an engaged anthropologist whose research interests include citizen-led community development, food justice, neighborhood inequality, alternative development, place-based identity construction and participatory action research. She has done research in South Africa, Australia, Italy and the United States. Since 2016, she has co-led the CoPED program and is currently working with the Participatory Presidium of the Simeto River on a long-term ethnographic project that examines the politics of development in Italy's Simeto Valley.



## THE PARTICIPATORY LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Beginning in mid-spring, students meet for weekly lectures and discussions about the history and culture of the area, the ongoing work of the Participatory Presidium and the participatory research methods they will use while in the field. Using this knowledge, students identify examples of projects based on the chosen theme and research best practices they will share with the Simetine community.

In early June, we join forces with engineering and planning students from the University of Catania and University of Massachusetts Boston for an immersive 11-day hands-on learning experience in the Simeto Valley known as CoPED (Community Planning and Environmental Design). The combined group uses an action-learning methodology that is designed to maximize collaboration between students from different disciplines, and between students and the community.

The combined group uses an action-learning methodology that is designed to maximize collaboration between students from different disciplines, and between students and the community.

At a welcome dinner, members of the Presidium share what they hope to learn from the students' work, and students present their research on similar projects. During the intense 12-hour days that follow, students travel throughout the valley and interact directly with farmers, mayors and other community

leaders. Bilingual Italian students and faculty help overcome any language barriers, translating both words and cultural meanings.

Students meet with community members to hear about their experiences, tour organic farms and historical sites and attend cultural events to learn more about the people, culture and challenges in the region. Then, drawing on the methods learned in the classroom, students conduct surveys in the public square, perform interviews, map culturally important local sites and landscapes and pore over relevant statistical data related to the region, including employment, income, population and environmental change.

As students analyze the data, they hold brainstorming and whiteboard sessions to develop project ideas, and host community workshops to test their program recommendations. Gradually, students transform their new knowledge into points of an action plan for the project.





At a final community meeting, students present the project ideas they have developed to local mayors and citizens, allowing the community the opportunity to ask questions, debate the fine points and make suggestions. Students spend the last days of the class finalizing the project recommendations and writing a report that brings together the findings from the research, specifies a rationale for the project and describes key steps to help the community move from proposal to action.

In true Sicilian style, the class ends with a farewell celebration hosted by the Presidium. The annual ritual provides participants – students, faculty and community members – the opportunity to reflect on their work together, express their thanks and spend time with new friends and colleagues. For the Presidium, this marks the beginning of a new phase of work as they begin to use the data, refine the ideas and apply for grant funding that will allow them to implement the collaboratively developed projects.

## **LEARNING THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

Being part of this study abroad program is transformational for both University students and faculty, as well as for the community. Through our collaboration with the Presidium, students have conducted research that has enabled the community to reimagine an old train station as the hub of a rails-to-trails project featuring local agriculture and art. Their work has also assisted municipalities and community groups

in adopting zero-waste and waste prevention strategies, and co-created a cultural heritage project that connected the water, land and agricultural traditions of the region.

Being able to utilize the knowledge they acquired in the classroom and apply it to real-world situations has provided students a unique opportunity to improve and retain skills they use long after they return to Memphis.

“Before I went on the trip to Sicily, I took a class called Anthropological Methods, which taught me the necessary interview skills and how to properly learn from what the interviewee told me,” said Kevin Murphy (Anthropology, BA ’17). “Ultimately, this course introduced me to the field of city and regional planning, and it is one of the main reasons I decided to pursue a career in planning, which I am now studying in graduate school.”

Suzie Marshall, a graduate student studying both anthropology and city and regional planning, was skeptical of community-based development before her study abroad experience.

“I didn’t think that there could be true change to issues like environmental well-being from the bottom up,” she said. “However, in Sicily I got to see communities build up their own infrastructure that shifts toward a zero-waste system in a way I didn’t believe possible. It was extraordinary.”

Gretchen Pederson (Anthropology, BA ’20), said that the course provided her with a more meaningful understanding of anthropology, community and change.

“I have often viewed methodology as mundane and overwhelming, yet this experience helped me to develop a genuine appreciation for research design and its application in the field,” she said.

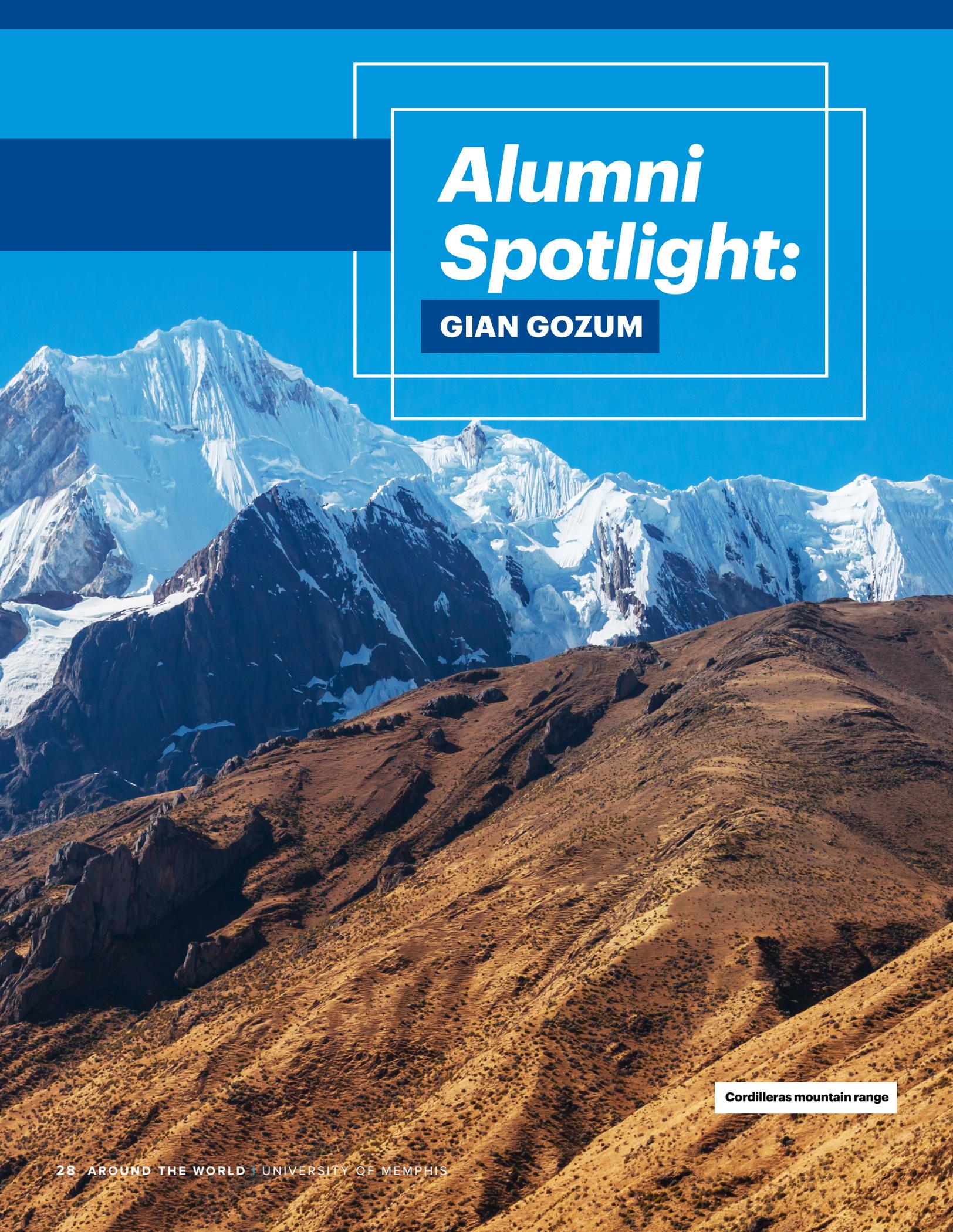
“My time in Sicily contributed significantly to my growth as a human being and anthropologist, teaching me the importance of community, solidarity and the impact of research advocacy.”

Alysia Shear (Earth Sciences and Anthropology, BA ’19) discovered that she was able to use these new skills in collaboration with others and put into practice ideas about research and theories.

“The Sicily trip was especially transformative for me as it led to many new self-discoveries,” Shear said. “It was academically influential, giving me the opportunity to serve as a team member on a community project and making me apply my academic learning in anthropology to the real world and see the reactions to it.”



Want to see the Environmental Planning and Design study abroad class in action? Check out the videos from CoPED at <https://youtu.be/qaeH0ItiaX4>



# *Alumni Spotlight:*

**GIAN GOZUM**

**Cordilleras mountain range**

Gian Gozum's (BA '12) experience at the University of Memphis set him on the path to his current job as a foreign service officer for the U.S. Department of State. As a student, he extensively used the resources provided through the UofM's Study Abroad Office to see the world and expand his knowledge of different cultures. He has gained educational and professional experiences in China, Indonesia, the Philippines and India, and is currently learning his fifth language.

Gozum grew up in Jackson, Tenn., after relocating with his family from the Philippines. In addition to English, he regularly spoke Tagalog — the language of the Philippines — as a child. He learned Mandarin Chinese as an undergraduate at the UofM while completing bachelor's degrees in Economics and Asian Studies and International Trade. Since leaving the UofM, Gozum has learned Indonesian and is currently studying Spanish as part of his role with the Department of State.

As an undergraduate, he was a recipient of the Emerging Leaders Scholarship Program and a member of the Helen Hardin Honors College. Gozum credits both programs for helping reinforce his commitment to public service and exposing him to different, often competing, ways of thought.

In November, he is scheduled for a move to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, to begin his first diplomatic tour in his new position.



State Department Lobby



Hiking through Cordilleras mountain range and rice terraces in Sagada, Philippines

### **Q: What do you do in your current job?**

Gozum: Foreign service officers have a variety of roles, but my career track is focused on improving the United States' economic relations with its foreign counterparts.

As an entry-level officer during my first tour of duty in Honduras, I'll spend the first year with the embassy's consular services and American Citizens Services (ACS) department. I will assist American citizens residing in Honduras and interview Hondurans who want to visit or immigrate to the U.S.

The State Department is often the first line of defense through the proper adjudication and conduction of these interviews, and I am excited to be a part of the team. Recently, ACS teams across the world have repatriated Americans back to the United States during the coronavirus pandemic.

During my second year, I will work with the embassy's economics teams to promote American business interests, prepare economic analyses and recommend strategies for the implementation of American policies. I will also help American companies conduct business in Honduras.

**Q: Why did you pursue this career path?**

Gozum: I always loved learning about other cultures and learning languages in the process. With the State Department, I have a unique opportunity to combine my love of travel and learning with the chance to make a difference as a public servant.

**Q: In what ways did the UofM help you launch your career?**

Gozum:

**“My whole career path goes back to the University of Memphis!”**

I was a high school senior in 2007 when I was accepted into the Governor’s School for International Studies (GSIS) at the UofM. I knew back then I was interested in foreign cultures and foreign languages, but I had no idea that there was a specific set of studies and even careers that would leverage such knowledge. At the GSIS summer program, I took college-level courses in economics, international relations and Mandarin Chinese. After that experience, I knew that I wanted to study these topics in college, which led me back to the UofM as an undergraduate.

Early in my time at the University, I joined the then-new Confucius Institute for a three-week immersion program in China. It was my first of many times working with the Study Abroad Office while at the UofM.

I later took part in a history course on genocide and the Holocaust with corresponding site visits in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic. Another history course on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and its impact on the culture of Brazil led me on a trip to Salvador, Brazil. Both of these study experiences — led by Dr. Dennis Laumann — were some of the most influential moments of my undergraduate career. Additionally, I took part in a two-month program of business coursework in Ingolstadt, Germany, and a four-month program in Shanghai, China.





State Department Ethos

The UofM provided me with so many opportunities that developed my leadership skills and expanded my worldview. My current career path would not be possible without the experiences and knowledge that I first gained at the University of Memphis.

**Q: What are your long-term career goals?**

Gozum: Becoming a foreign service officer has been my dream job. My previous jobs were in business intelligence and management consulting. While I learned much in these careers, I was always drawn to public service, and I am excited for the next chapter in Honduras! My previous studies were focused on Asia, and I hope to go back for my next tour.

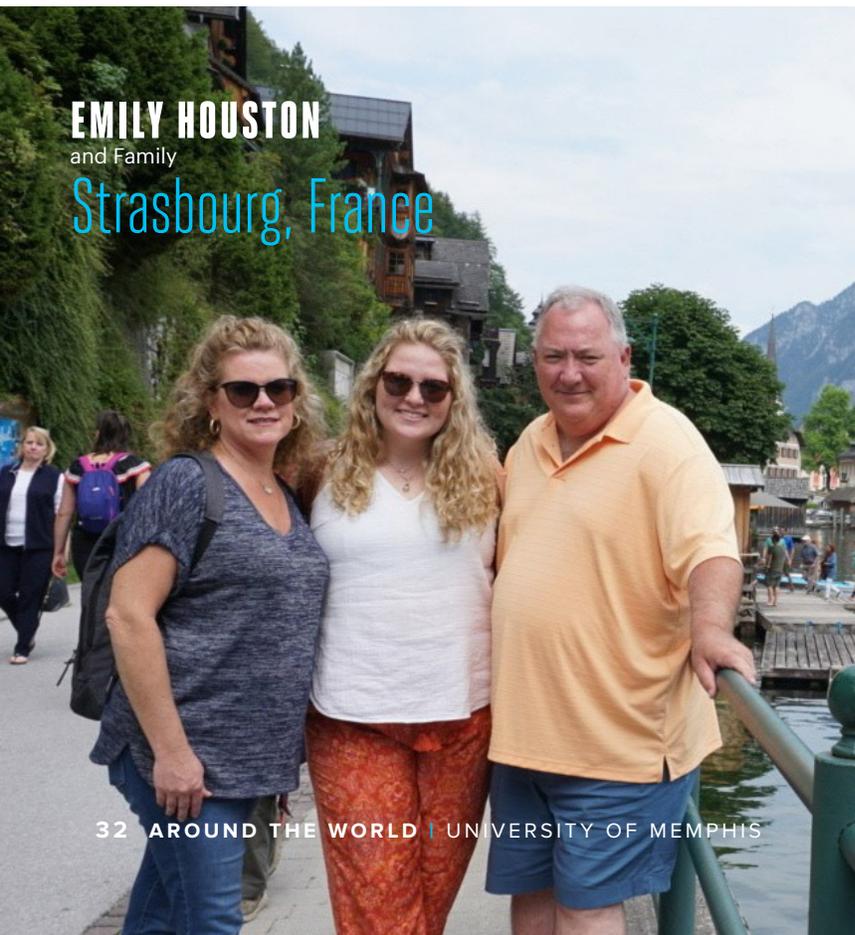
**“While I hope to serve in Asian and Western Hemisphere countries during my career, I am also ready to serve wherever the State Department needs me.”**



**MORGAN POSTELLE**  
and Family  
Seville, Spain



**BRIANNA HAMLIN**  
Costa Rica



**EMILY HOUSTON**  
and Family  
Strasbourg, France



**KARSYN LAUFENBERG**  
and Family  
Liverpool, England



MICK MCCARTY  
Costa Rica

## YOUR GIFT

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# Driven by Doing



Dr. Lambert-Pennington (middle)  
with students on Sicily program