

## 2019–20 Ambassadors

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### Frank Vafier '74 Ambassador in Leadership

Nicole Callahan (2021), *The Interactive Shakespeare Experience*



Nicole will create a website focused on annotating a Shakespeare play with multimedia features including elaborative text, images, and audio recording. The aim is to create an engaging reading experience that takes advantage of the online platform while preserving the coherency of physical editions of Shakespeare. Nicole will conduct first-hand research via study at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., and consult with Professor Paul Schacht, assistant to the provost for digital learning and scholarship at SUNY Geneseo, in designing a website for use by area high school educators, among others.

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### Frank Vafier '74 Ambassador in Leadership

Jillian Todd (2021), *Bridging the U.S. Gender Gap: Lessons from Iceland Education*



Jillian's ambassadorship will begin in Iceland, the country that ranks first for gender equality worldwide. There she will conduct ethnographic research in elementary schools that follows the [Hjalli pedagogical model](#). This method seeks to liberate children from typical gender roles, giving students more equal opportunities in the short and long term. Upon returning to Geneseo in spring 2020, Jillian will work with Professor Leigh O'Brien from Geneseo's School of Education to translate her research findings into curricular elements O'Brien will teach to aspiring educators in her Early Childhood Education class and through them to elementary schoolchildren in the Genesee Valley.

## **Community Advocates Endowed Ambassadorship in Community Engagement**

Lauren Sternberg (2020), *Imagine Inclusion*



Lauren's ambassadorship aims to educate Geneseo students and community members about intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) through personal experience. She will attend conferences hosted by National Down Syndrome Congress and Best Buddies International to learn ways to become a better advocate for inclusion. A future physician, Lauren will also attend a "research rally" focused on advancements in medical care for people with IDDs. Upon returning from her experience, Lauren will implement some of the program ideas she learned during her travels. Lauren is planning to start an inclusive choir where Geneseo and LIVES students can sing together, as well as learn and build friendships. With her ambassadorship, Lauren hopes to help eliminate the stigma associated with IDDs and help her peers imagine a truly inclusive campus.

## **The John A. '87 and Mary Grace '84 Gleason Ambassadorship in Student Affairs**

Nawang Sherpa (2020), *The Sherpa-American Gap: Queens and Nepal*



Queens, New York, is home to many Sherpa families who are typically first-generation living in the U.S. Nawang's project focuses on mentoring and guiding them through cultural and professional development workshops, helping prepare first-generation Sherpa students to be college-ready. Nawang will venture to his motherland in Solukhumbu, Nepal—home to the Sherpa region—to explore Sherpa identity. Following his trip, Nawang will work alongside the United Sherpa Association (USA) to conduct workshops/panels to teach Sherpa-Americans about misinterpreted aspects of Sherpa culture alongside helping first-generation children prepare for college.

## The Gérard Gouvernet Ambassador in French Language and Cultures

Sophia Piazza (2021), *Communication Barriers Beyond Spoken Language: Senegalese Nonverbal Codes*



Sophia Piazza's research project will examine Senegalese nonverbal communication patterns—facial expressions, eye contact, touching, tone of voice, dress, posture, and spatial distance between people—in order to explore how language barriers can arise beyond differences in a verbal understanding. Sophia used her ambassadorship to conduct a series of interviews in Dakar, Senegal, this summer. She observed and will share differences in Senegalese and American nonverbal communication patterns in order to demonstrate how differences in socially constructed expectations of behavior can hinder effective communication between residents and travelers. Sophia will work with the West African Research Center (WARC), multiple host families, and SUNY Geneseo professor Kodjo Adabra

## The Eddie Lee '76 Ambassadorship for First Generation Students

Denis Mazariegos (2020), *Culture Shock: Visualizing Dissonance in South Korea*



This ambassadorship will explore culture shock: a state of cultural dissonance when in a foreign socio-cultural environment. While in South Korea, a country foreign to Denis' own identity, he will observe and document his experience via photography and videography. Denis will then display his work at the Kinetic Art Gallery on Geneseo's campus in an interactive event aimed at helping the Geneseo community empathize with cross-cultural difference. He will also collaborate with the Study Abroad Office to create a workshop on photography etiquette while traveling and host a panel featuring cultural club organizations, students, and faculty.

## The James Houston '80 Ambassadorship in Innovation

Shannon Curley (2021), *Physical Markers of Community: Twenty Years of Peace-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina*



Shannon's project will focus on how street signs, monuments, and other institutional markers in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be symbols of peace-building and community. Shannon will start her work in the city of Brčko, uniquely situated between Bosnia and Herzegovina's two entities. There, she will visit Svitac, an NGO focused on promoting multi-ethnic art and educational opportunities for the youth of the city. She will travel to four other Bosnian cities and work with tourism industry representatives, American Corner librarians, and local archivists. Shannon will use her site-based research to create a publicly accessible website that presents a dialogue of peace as a counter to the many narratives of the country that still center around division.

## The Edward Pettinella '73 Endowed Ambassadorship in Business

Lucas Sutton (2020), *Rural Economic Growth and Disease Intervention in Ghana*



The debilitating parasitic infection schistosomiasis is highly prevalent in many Ghanaian communities and can cause cognitive impairment in children. Lucas' project explores the possibility of using native prawns to consume the snails that host the schistosomiasis parasite. Alongside reducing the spread of disease, this process may help develop aquaculture as a revenue stream for local people in the Greater Accra region. Lucas' project, conducted in partnership with the Noguchi Institute at the University of Ghana, will measure the extent of schistosomiasis and survey income and consumption in the community in order to develop a mathematical model used in future health interventions.