



A Warm Welcome

We were thrilled to welcome the Fall 2019 cohort of 38 new GPED students hailing from the following countries: Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, China, Dominican Republic, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, South Korea, and the United States. They join the ranks of the returning 28 second-year students representing Honduras, India, Indonesia, Kosovo, Nepal, and Palestine. The GPED family continues to grow!



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR, DR. KATHRYN ANDERSON

Hello GPED Alumni and Friends!

We have entered a new decade and are optimistic about the future of our program and Vanderbilt University. Vanderbilt welcomes a new chancellor this summer – Daniel Diermeier, Provost at the University of Chicago. One of his primary interests is improvement of graduate education at Vanderbilt; we look forward to working with him to make the GPED an even better experience for our students.



Our staff continues to change. We were lucky to have Kelly Limina on our staff for a year, but she was offered and accepted a great position in the Special Education department at Vanderbilt in December. She will always be a part of the GPED, but now as a friend, not an employee. But there is a silver lining: we hired Brooke Talley this month, and she is going to be an enthusiastic member of our team. You will be hearing more from Brooke over the years.

We welcomed a very large class this year – 38 students! They are so smart and eager to learn. This semester, 12 of them are taking math analysis as preparation for PhD study. We hope to place many of them in good PhD programs next year.

Three of our alumni joined us in the fall for the GPED Forum. Hanchen Jiang gave his job market paper and talked to students about PhD study. Collette Wheeler from the World Bank spent two days with our students and offered to help some of them find jobs at the Bank. Lorez Qehaja visited from Kosovo and gave an interesting presentation about the impact of four employment promotion programs on employment outcomes. It was fun to visit with her again and to meet her boyfriend. This spring, we will have our final forum presentation from Professor Charles Becker at Duke University. For many years, he managed their Master's program in economics. He is also doing fascinating research on marriage arrangements in Central Asia.

Nashville continues to grow, music is everywhere, and the summers seem to get hotter. Our professional football team – the Tennessee Titans – is also getting hotter; they have been lighting up the football playoffs this year. The city is really excited about this team. Go Titans! Vanderbilt football – well, that is another story.

We hope that you and your family are happy, healthy, and enjoying work and play. If you are ever in the Nashville area, please stop by and see us, or give a Forum presentation. We like to showcase our alumni because we are proud of your accomplishments. You are an inspiration to our young scholars.

Happy 2020!
Kathryn

Staff Update:

Farewell to Kelly Limina & Welcome to Brooke Talley



In mid-October, Kelly Limina, who served as the GPED's Administrative Coordinator, accepted a new position on campus at Peabody College. The GPED is extremely grateful for having had the chance to work alongside Kelly during her time with us. We will never forget her contributions to the GPED family and wish her all the best in this new chapter of her career. We prefer to think of this as "see you later" instead of "goodbye." Thank you for everything, Kelly!

The GPED was pleased to welcome Brooke Talley, who started in early January as the new Administrative Coordinator. She comes by way of Kentucky (home state and undergraduate studies), Wisconsin (graduate studies), and France (multiple work experiences) - and is super excited to be both a part of the GPED and in Nashville. We are delighted that Brooke has joined us!



Summer Internship Recap

Several of our rising second-year students participated in prestigious, challenging, and impactful summer internships across the globe. Here is an in-depth look at their experiences.

Aanchal Bagga

Aanchal served as an intern at the United Nations office for South and South West Asia (UNESCAP) in New Delhi. Her internship was focused on conducting research for "Gender Inequality and Women Empowerment" in India, which is also the core focus area of UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5. Apart from this, she was also responsible for the ESCAP newsletter, which highlights the key issues the Commission works on and how the organization works to support member states in reaching the objectives of the SDGs. Aanchal says this internship was an incredible experience that provided her with knowledge that will stay with her forever.



Caleb Espinoza

Caleb worked as an intern at The World Bank Group on the Doing Business 2020 report, a World Bank Group flagship publication that measures business regulations and the protection of property rights using quantitative indicators which can be compared across 190 economies and over time. For his work on the resolving insolvency indicator, he collected, analyzed, and assessed survey responses with primary data sources and publicly available information on a country-by-country basis. Additionally, he assisted in the preparation of travel memos and country briefings. He says that this incredible experience allowed him to meet people from all over the world in such a unique city as DC. Also, being a part of the 17th publication of this renowned report and representing Vanderbilt as well as Honduras was a huge honor and milestone for his professional and personal life.

Arika Kayastha

Arika chose to work in her home country of Nepal during the summer. She worked on the Daayitwa Nepal Public Service Fellow program at the Ministry of Social Development, similar to the White House Fellow program in the US. She was tasked with researching ways to boost youth employment through enterprise building. Arika said that her experience has been extremely fruitful in learning about the existing situation in distant parts of her country, while doing independent research, networking, and building transformational relationships with the government and private sector.





Megha Patel

Megha (far left) worked for Just Capital as a Graduate Research Intern. Just Capital is start-up nonprofit focused on representing the consumer's opinion on governance, treatment of workers, product sustainability, and other aspects of American corporations. During the internship, Megha assisted their analysts with data collection projects and modified existing methodologies to fine-tune their model. She also had the opportunity to present original research to the staff through a "Women in the Workplace - Corporate Policies, Pay Gaps, and Jobs" presentation, which was a great way for her to hone her presentation technique and utilize some of the skills learned during her studies here at Vanderbilt. She said that it was a great environment for gaining deeper expertise in the field of Development Economics.

Maria Silat

Maria served as a Humanitarian Research Intern for the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. Her research was focused on assessing Social Impact Investment opportunities for humanitarian organizations and identifying how technology is driving social impact, particularly in humanitarian crisis/disaster situations. She said that it was a very exciting project, contributing to new thinking in the UN regarding how Impact Investment can support humanitarian efforts in addition to ongoing development efforts. Apart from this interesting work, she said that it was great to be in NYC and moreover working in Manhattan - the very heart of it!



Christian Suarez

Christian worked as an economic affairs intern with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in Geneva, Switzerland. At the European headquarters for the United Nations, he worked within the Urban Development, Housing and Land Management Unit within the UNECE, which focuses on helping member states achieve Sustainable Development Goal 11, which aims to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable." During his internship, he was able to help draft publications that will go directly towards a data-driven public policy that improves a country's well-being. He said that the experience and knowledge he gained from his time in Geneva was something that will stay with him for the rest of his career.



Fall 2019 Events

New Student Ice Cream Social

The day before the start of math camp, all incoming GPED students were invited to an ice cream social as a fun, informal way to get to know their new peers and cool off, before the week-long math camp. The ice cream social was hosted in Alumni Hall and featured a variety of ice cream flavors, toppings and popsicles for students to enjoy as they relaxed and escaped the high temperatures outdoors.



Math Camp

Each year, the GPED hosts a complimentary math workshop to assist new students as they brush up on their math skills before the start of the semester. The math camp takes place in early August over the course of a week. Attendance is optional, though many students who participate in the camp highly recommend it to their peers. This year's teacher was second-year GPED student Fangyu (Brian) Zhong. Lunch is provided if another workshop is scheduled later in the day.



Orientation

The GPED orientation is a one-day event for first-year students that explores program requirements, Vanderbilt policies, and curriculum details. This event is a great way for students to get to know each other and the GPED team members. The program continued the tradition of organizing a campus team scavenger hunt and also had the students decorate their own coffee mugs to keep in the GPED lounge.



Orientation (Continued)



New International Graduate Student Mixer

Once again, the GPED partnered with the Graduate School and the International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) office to put on the new graduate student mixer. This year, the mixer took place in Alumni Hall, where attendees enjoyed delicious Italian food, beverages, and a live band! The event was a fun-filled success!



Welcome Party

In mid-September, Professor Anderson hosted the annual GPED welcome party at her house. The event featured several classic Nashville dishes such as fried chicken, mac and cheese, and banana pudding. It was a great time for our faculty, students, and staff to mix and mingle with our new student cohort and their families. We're excited for the upcoming academic year! Thank you to Professor Anderson for being such a gracious host!



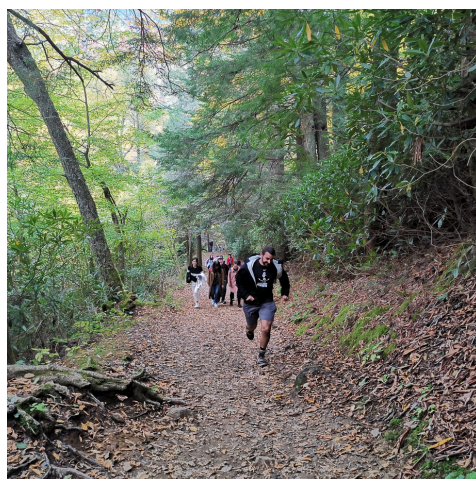
Fall Mixer

After fall break, GPED student representatives helped organize a social event at a popular venue near campus. This was an amazing opportunity to spend time and network with students from outside the program. The event was open not only to GPEDers but to students from Latin American Studies, International Education and Policy Management, Medicine Health and Society, and Masters of Public Health programs. GPEDers had so much fun talking to students from other programs and sharing their experiences.



Fall Break Retreat to the Smoky Mountains

The longstanding GPED tradition of the fall break retreat to Great Smoky Mountains National Park is not something to be missed! Every year, a large group of first- and second-year students travel to the renowned national park and enjoy a well-deserved break in the middle of the semester. The retreat is organized completely by students and is the most highly anticipated activity throughout the year. The trip includes activities like hiking, bonfires, and exploring nearby towns. This year, the trip also included a one-day adventure to the Dollywood theme park. Check out the pictures below!



Fall Birthday Pizza Party

This fun tradition commemorates those in the GPED community with birthdays between July and December.



Economics Department Holiday Party

The Economics Department holiday party was a deliciously fun success! Students, faculty and staff enjoyed a tasty catered lunch buffet and a wide assortment of desserts. GPED students participated in their annual secret Santa gift exchange.



2019-2020 Student Representatives



Each year, GPED students vote for two of their peers from both the first- and second-year cohorts to serve as class representatives. As part of their role, student representatives organize events, facilitate collaborative activities with other departments on campus, order class apparel, and help support their classmates with a variety of matters.



Fan Liu
Year 1 Representative

Hometown: Beijing, China

Undergraduate Institution: The Ohio State University

Undergraduate Degree: Economics

Favorite Food: Hotpot, milk tea, ramen, and coconut chicken.

Hobbies: Traveling, dancing (Jazz/ K-pop/ Latin dance), photography

Why Vanderbilt: Vandy is a well-known university with an excellent academic atmosphere. Also, it has an inclusive environment for different culture and a close connection between the students and faculty; Nashville is a lively city with the beautiful view and friendly people, which is an ideal place to live.



Aaron Ferguson
Year 2 Representative

Hometown: Hayesville, North Carolina, U.S.

Undergraduate Institution: University of North Carolina, Asheville

Undergraduate Degree: Economics

Favorite Food: A burrito from Asheville NC's Papa's and Beer restaurant

Fun Fact: Following in the footsteps of my grandpa and great-grandma, I have a comic book collection from childhood containing well over one thousand issues. In fact, I did undergraduate research exploring the effect the online piracy of comic books has on their physical sales.

Hobbies: Hiking, kayaking, reading, and going to the cinema at least once a week.

Why Vanderbilt: Because of the reputation of the program, the alumni network, alumni placement and accomplishments from the program, and because of the opportunity to take part in program evaluation and travel abroad as I did in Chile.

Alumni Spotlight

The fall semester brought back numerous GPED alumni, including the following individuals who dropped by our office or the ones our staff met on the other side of the world! If you are a GPED graduate and interested in stopping by, walk-ins are always welcome, but we encourage you to inform us in advance so we have one of our team members there to greet you!



Jakhongir Imamov

On September 10th, we received an unexpected visit from 1999 alumnus Jakhongir Imamov, of Uzbekistan, who was in Nashville for a conference. Jakhongir currently serves as the General Manager of Alummerce Inc. based out of Montreal, Canada, where he resides with his family. Thanks, Jakhongir, for stopping by the #VUGPED office to reminisce with Dr. Anderson!



Kaltrina Temaj, Lule Bahtiri, Qendresa Kukaj, and Lorëz Qehaja

On September 30th, GPED Program Coordinator Sharon Wallace was happy to connect with alumnae while she was in Pristina with American Councils for a scholarship interview round. Lule Bahtiri currently works as a statistician at Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo. Kaltrina Temaj and Lorëz Qehaja both work as research analysts in a consulting firm. Qendresa Kukaj is a lecturer and project specialist at Universum College.



Hanchen Jiang

On November 7th, we were pleased to welcome 2014 GPED alumnus Hanchen Jiang. Hanchen is a PhD candidate in Economics at Johns Hopkins University, and he gave an excellent presentation on his research in housing affordability titled "Ignorance is Bliss? Rent Regulation, Policy Awareness, and Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from New York City." Thank you, Hanchen, for also taking the time to discuss your PhD journey and research interests with several of our PhD-bound students!



Collette Wheeler

On November 22nd, we were excited to welcome our final Forum speaker for the fall semester, 2013 GPED alumna Collette Wheeler, who works as an economist in the World Bank's Equitable Growth, Finance & Institutions Prospects Group and as a contributor to the flagship Global Economic Prospects report. She graciously came by the office on her second day to meet with a large group of students interested in learning about opportunities at the World Bank.

Current Monthly Student Spotlights



Aaron Ferguson
September

Aaron, a native of Hayesville, North Carolina and a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Asheville, is starting his second year in the GPED program, but has already hit the ground running this summer as the new class representative. Over the summer Aaron was involved with welcoming new students by serving as a local guide and sharing helpful information about Nashville, Vanderbilt, and the GPED program to the new students. Aaron will be presenting at our first fall forum with a group of students that participated in Econ 7930's fieldwork course to Chile in the spring semester. He will also be involved with planning the annual fall trip to the Smoky Mountains, among other events on and off campus throughout the school year. Aaron also holds three on-campus jobs and is involved with the Graduate Certificate Program in Global Health. During his free time, he enjoys exploring the Nashville region with his wife, Lindsey, and their dog. After Aaron graduates in the spring of 2020, he plans to travel to Europe during the summer months then further his education by continuing on in a PhD in Economics program. Best of luck in your second year, Aaron!



Fan Liu
October

Fan is a first-year GPED student from Beijing, China, who was recently elected by her classmates to serve as her cohort's class representative for the 2019-2020 academic year. Congratulations, Fan! Before joining the GPED, Fan completed her bachelor's degree in economics from the Ohio State University. During her undergraduate studies, Fan actively participated in economic research studying the relationship between the logistic demand and GDP growth of China. Fan also accrued significant expertise in finance through her undergraduate internships with security companies and banks. Fan's rich financial industry exposure enabled her to acquire an in-depth comprehension of the functions and operations of the financial industry within the spectrum of economic development, especially in poverty-stricken regions of China. After graduating, Fan aspires to join an esteemed economics think tank in China as a research associate, formulating concrete policy solutions to help underdeveloped regions in China to achieve long-lasting development. What a wonderful career goal! Welcome, Fan; we are excited to have you join the GPED family.

Current Monthly Student Spotlights



Christian Suarez
November

Christian is a second-year student from Miami, Florida, who served as his cohort's class representative for the 2018-2019 academic year. Before joining the GPED, Christian studied at the University of Florida, where he double-majored in Economics and Sports Management. While at UF, he served as a Senior Video Assistant for the football team, and he continued this tradition at Vanderbilt working as Football Video Assistant. In addition, Christian has been active with the Turner Family Center for Social Ventures as part of the Vanderbilt Hult Prize Competition Committee. He worked last year as a Graduate Research Assistant at Vanderbilt's Peabody College, and he serves as the Strategic Planning Co-Chair for Vandy Votes (a student organization dedicated to increasing voter engagement). Over the summer, Christian was an economic affairs intern with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in Geneva, Switzerland. During Christian's free time, he enjoys exploring Nashville with his cohort friends from all over the world and watching football and soccer.



Hana Bacaj
December

Hana is a second-year GPED student from Pristina, Kosovo. Before joining the GPED, Hana completed her BS in Economics and Statistics with highest honors from the Rochester Institute of Technology Kosovo. Since her arrival on campus, Hana has been active with the Turner Family Center for Social Ventures, serving as Board Chair for Case Competitions and the Hult Prize. As part of her Project Pyramid class last year, she traveled to Quito, Ecuador over spring break as part of a consultancy project for organic energy tea social enterprise Waykana Guayusa, helping to scale up their organization internationally to employ more impoverished indigenous farmers from Ecuador. For her extensive volunteer work in Kosovo, Hana was the recipient of the William Edward Ferguson, Jr. Award, which recognizes students in the GPED for service to humanity; she has volunteered in Nashville as well, with Habitat for Humanity. Hana is completing a graduate certificate in Women's and Gender Studies, and hopes after graduating in May 2020 to join an organization or NGO that helps empower women in Kosovo, because she believes that improvements in the empowerment of women are crucial for progress in Kosovo's developmental efforts.

Leadership on Campus

Second-year student Hana Bacaj headed up this year's Hult Prize at Vanderbilt competition, assisted on her committee by fellow GPEDers Caleb Espinoza (left) and Christian Suarez (right).



Yujia on left

There were also two first-year students who participated in Hult Prize competition this year, Yujia Ji from China and Areesha Najam from Pakistan. Areesha's team was one of the top three finalists, and has made it to the regionals rounds in Monterrey, Mexico in the spring semester. Reflecting on this year's competition, Hana shared:



Areesha on left

"This year's challenge for the Hult Prize was to create bold businesses for a better planet. Businesses that have a positive net impact on the environment with every sale completed, dollar earned, and decision made and reach no fewer than a million consumers within a decade. In light of so much recent action around climate change, including U.N.'s Climate Action Summit gathering in September, I was glad to be part of the Hult Prize at Vanderbilt because I was surrounded by individuals committed to finding sustainable solutions to end this environmental degradation.

Since I was little, I dreamt of becoming someone that would make a significant difference in my country one day. That, I would know or at least have an idea of how to solve some of the problems that are still ongoing in my country, Kosovo. However, I have always questioned myself if I will ever be able to do that. If I would be able to give back to the world. But, as Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Therefore, today, I am here at Vanderbilt University studying in the Graduate Program for Economic Development, where I am gaining high-quality academic training in the development field, learning about the economic tools used to overcome poverty and create sustainable communities. However, I wanted to learn more about other ways to tackle the issues that are tormenting the world, and that is when I found myself at the door of The Turner Family Center for Social Ventures (TFC). TFC has become, for me, the place where I learn and grow.

Being involved with TFC in Programming Board - Hult Prize, other Case Competitions, Treks, Lunch & Learns, sitting in an interdisciplinary classroom like Project Pyramid, and doing a consultancy project for a social enterprise in Ecuador; made me realize the impactful change that can be done through market-driven forces and enterprise. These experiences have helped me develop my leadership skills and to understand that I am making a significant difference in the world. So, thank you to all Hult Prize participants this year and the winning team for the incredible job and amazing ideas - and to all of our TFC network who make this work possible."

Fall Steine Lecture

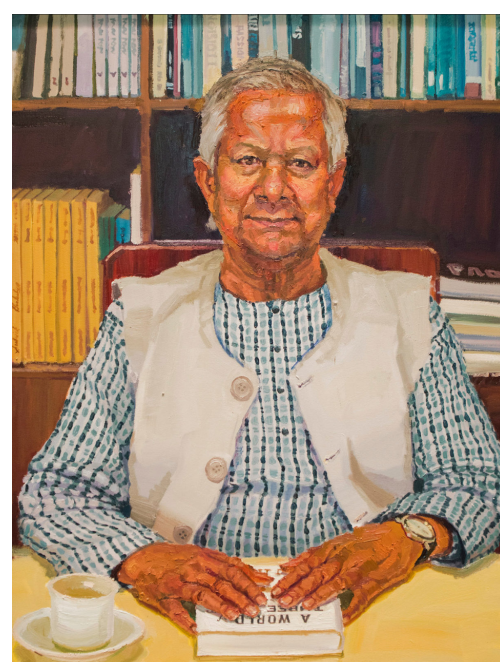
On November 14, VU Economics hosted Dr. Esther Duflo, one of the recipients (along with Abhijit Banerjee and Michael Kremer) of the 2019 Nobel Prize, for the Steine lecture series where she presented lessons from her brand-new book with Banerjee, *Good Economics for Hard Times*. GPED students were grateful to meet with Dr. Duflo, an economist they have cited in many of their papers, to address their questions regarding poverty alleviation and to express their gratitude to her for paving the way for them as future economists. It was such an inspiring day for GPED students, and gave them the right boost to get through the end of the semester! [To read more about this exciting event, click here.](#)



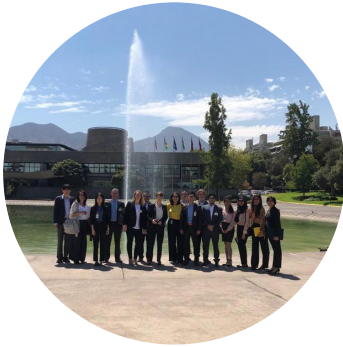
Vanderbilt Trailblazers

The Vanderbilt Trailblazers initiative was launched in 2018 by Chancellor Emeritus Nicholas S. Zeppos. The project was developed to elevate awareness of and give recognition to the many brave and selfless pioneers who dedicated themselves to advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, respect and dignity for all members of the Vanderbilt community.

We were thrilled to see that one of our notable GPED alumni, Muhammad Yunus, was honored with a portrait in Kirkland Hall as part of the Vanderbilt Trailblazers initiative.



Fall 2019 GPED Forum Speakers



Second-year GPED students: Caleb Espinoza, Aaron Ferguson, Arika Kayastha and Maria Silat
Thursday, September 19, 2019
Garland Hall 101, 4:00 - 5:20 pm
"Econ 7930 Fieldwork Course & Experiences in Chile"



Lorez Qehaja
Thursday, October 17, 2019
Buttrick Hall 102, 4:00 - 5:20 pm
Research Analyst at UBO Consulting
"Employment Programs and the Effect of Institutions: The Case of Kosovo"



Hanchen Jiang
Thursday, November 7, 2019
Buttrick Hall 102, 4:00 - 5:20 pm
PhD Candidate in the Department of Economics at Johns Hopkins University
"Ignorance is Bliss? Rent Regulation, Policy Awareness, and Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from New York City"



Collette Wheeler
Thursday, November 21, 2019
Buttrick Hall 102, 4:00 - 5:20 pm
Economist at the World Bank
"The Global Economy at a Crossroad: Policy Action and Challenges"

Lasting Impressions

Send us your news!

All of us at the GPED enjoy receiving updates from alumni about their professional or personal lives. We'd love to hear from you regarding your situation job-wise, if you've had a recent promotion or job change, moved to a new city or country, got married, had children, or retired, or update us on what you've been up to since your time in the GPED. In future newsletters, we hope to include a special section featuring alumni news.

We are also currently in the process of updating information in the GPED alumni roster. If you could send us your most current email address, home address, phone number, current position and employer, and any title (Dr., Dean, Professor, for example), we would really appreciate it. We have many gaps in the roster that we would love to fill! Additionally, if you are interested in receiving a copy of the roster, we are happy to email it upon request.

Make a Gift to the GPED

We are so grateful to alumni and friends who contribute to the mission of the GPED. If you would like to give to [the Worley or Siddiqi funds](#), which provide scholarship support to current GPED students, you may do so online if you click on the following links:

James S. and Rosemary Worley Fund:

vu.edu/worley

Mouzon and Sultan Siddiqi Citizenship Award

Fund: vu.edu/siddiqi



Connecting Future GPEDers

Do you know of any potential GPED students in your circles? If so, please connect them to us via gpед@vanderbilt.edu! We are happy to answer any questions via email or a Skype call, and we gladly help to arrange campus visits for prospective students as well.



Keep in touch!

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#VUGPED

Alumni Chatter

Hi Friends:

I wish you a Happy Christmas and the best for the Program and University during 2020, especially in view of the naming of a new Chancellor.

Regards from me and Bobbi Sue.

Javier Gisbert
La Paz - Bolivia

Class of 1966-1967

