



GYEL NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 February 2026

WELCOME TO OUR FEBRUARY 2026 GYEL NEWSLETTER!

Our goal is to keep you updated on our program sessions, guest speakers, and showcase our students' global impact projects related to the UN's SDGs. We will also share helpful tips and insights to make your college application stand out, as recommended by some of the industry's most trusted professionals.

[Read more about our program](#)

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MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD INSTRUCTOR OF PROGRAMS

As we move into February, we're excited to begin the Spring Term and welcome a wonderful new cohort of students to the GYEL community. The term is already off to a great start, and from the very first classes, it's clear this group brings strong energy, curiosity, and a genuine eagerness to learn and engage.

The Spring Term is a time for growth and momentum. Over the coming months, students will dive into engaging coursework, thoughtful discussions, and collaborative learning experiences that encourage them to think critically about global issues and their own leadership journeys. We're especially eager to see students build connections with one another, share ideas, and grow in confidence as they explore new perspectives and challenge themselves academically.

At GYEL, our mission continues to guide everything we do: to educate, encourage, and empower young leaders with the skills, confidence, and vision they need to navigate an ever-changing world.

Each new term brings renewed purpose to this work, and the enthusiasm of our students and instructors is a powerful reminder of why youth-centered leadership education matters so much.

We're deeply grateful to our instructors and staff, whose dedication and care create a supportive and engaging learning environment. Their commitment ensures that every term begins strong and continues with intention. Thank you also to our families for your trust and partnership, and to our students for the openness, effort, and energy you bring to the program.

We look forward to deepening relationships with both new and returning students and supporting them every step of the way as they grow and develop as leaders throughout the Spring Term.

Sincerely,
Ms. Hannah Kidner, Lead Instructor of Programs

SPRING TERM 2026 UPDATES

- Spring Term 2026 has officially begun! Our students kicked off classes last January 24–25, and we are thrilled to see them start this new term full of curiosity, energy, and the excitement of learning.
- Our Fall Term HSP2 graduates have joined the GYEL Alumni Group, creating a strong network of GYEL students. They are eager to stay connected and provide guidance, offering valuable support to our Spring Term Part 2 students as they work on their final projects.
- Get ready for some amazing guest speakers this term! Stay tuned for our announcements. You won't want to miss the inspiring ideas, real-world insights, and exciting learning opportunities they'll be sharing .
- We are excited to launch the inaugural Introduction to Global Leadership course this March or April 2026. This introductory course is perfect for students in grades 7–12 who are curious about exploring the GYEL High School Program and discovering whether it's the right fit for them. There's still time to apply, so don't miss this opportunity!
- Applications for Summer Term 2026 are now open! The term will begin in the 3rd week of June, and we encourage anyone interested to secure their spot soon. **Apply now!**
- Let's make Spring Term 2026 a season full of inspiration, meaningful growth, and opportunities to develop the skills and confidence to become the next generation of global leaders.



Find out more about our Intro
to Global Leadership course

My name is Gina Sosa, and I am a physician, educator, and global health professional with twenty years of experience in international cooperation, humanitarian action, and public health. I have worked with international organizations, including the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Health Organization (WHO), coordinating responses to large-scale emergencies such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic.



My work emphasizes strategic planning, operational coordination, and implementing health interventions in complex humanitarian settings, with a focus on protecting vulnerable populations.

INSTRUCTOR INSIGHTS

As a professor and Fulbright Scholar (LASPAU/Harvard), I have over a decade of academic teaching experience. My approach integrates real-world global health practice with critical analysis, ethical reasoning, and experiential learning.

In my role as a GYEL instructor, I am committed to supporting students in strengthening leadership skills, expanding global perspectives, and building the capacity to design and implement initiatives that promote positive, inclusive, and sustainable change within their communities and beyond.

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TIP



[Learn more](#)

Your essays help us get to know who you are, what's important to you, and how you might contribute to discussions not only in the classroom but also across the campus community. Be authentic in those essays. Take your time with them.

Karen Richardson
Dean of Admission & Financial Aid, Princeton University

Treat the application as your story. With each new piece that the admission committee engages with, we should learn something new from you.

Jay Jacobs
VP for Enrollment Management, The University of Vermont

GYEL SUMMER 2026

Enrollment Open for Summer until May 31

Generous Financial Assistance Available (see website for more info)

Summer Term set to begin the 3rd week of June

[Apply today](#)

[Hear from our students](#)

SMART READS FOR FUTURE LEADERS

Explore articles that empower students and families to make informed choices about their academic and leadership journey.



THE TOP 3 COLLEGE APPLICATION MISTAKES THAT COST STUDENTS IVY LEAGUE ACCEPTANCE

Students across the country are meticulously crafting their essays, assembling their activities lists, and requesting recommendation letters in the hopes of earning an acceptance letter from their dream school. Many have checked all the boxes: they have the grades, test scores, robust extracurricular profiles, and glowing recommendations. And yet, the majority of them will face rejection and be left wondering why they fell short even after doing everything “right.”

Every admissions cycle, tens of thousands of students apply to Ivy League and other top schools—valedictorians, entrepreneurs, national award winners, and class presidents. Given the competitiveness of these applicant pools, every single aspect of a student’s application matters. At the Ivy League level, the majority of rejected applicants haven’t done anything glaringly wrong, but seemingly insignificant mistakes can rule a student out of contention. Many students fail to realize that it’s not simply about what they do but how they tell their story that will set them apart from thousands of other applicants. Many mistakes students make in the application process result from failures in compelling storytelling rather than unimpressive resumes.

[Read More](#)



Student Spotlight

From Advocacy to Action – Sanjana Shresta's Journey

This month, we are honored to highlight Sanjana Shresta, a GYEL senior whose dedication to advancing gender equity, women’s health, and education exemplifies the GYEL mission in action.

SANJANA’S SOCIAL IMPACT JOURNEY

- Founded A Fresh Start for Girls, a nonprofit addressing period poverty and supporting the well-being of women and girls in underprivileged communities.
- Developed ElevateHER Digital Society as her GYEL final project, empowering women with digital literacy skills and access to technology to expand educational and professional opportunities.
- Advocates for gender equity and women’s empowerment, working to reduce barriers to education and essential resources for girls in underserved communities.
- Led initiatives like the 2025 Thanksgiving Donation Drive, distributing nearly \$2,000 worth of feminine hygiene products, and contributed to the organization’s total impact of over \$8,000 worth of products while raising awareness and reducing stigma around menstrual health in her school community.
- Serves as a bridge between education, advocacy, and tangible social impact, leveraging program frameworks to design solutions that combine women empowerment with community-driven service.



Through GYEL, Sanjana has strengthened her understanding of how advocacy, community engagement, and practical initiatives intersect. Her work reflects the heart of GYEL: cultivating young leaders who think globally, act compassionately, and lead with purpose.

Photo: A Fresh Start for Girls community donation drive (separate organization)



ELEVATEHER

ElevateHER Digital Society empowers marginalized women by providing digital skills, mentorship, and entrepreneurial training, helping them achieve economic independence and become changemakers in their communities.

WANT TO BE FEATURED IN OUR NEXT STUDENT SPOTLIGHT?

We love celebrating the incredible impact our GYEL students are making around the world. If you'd like to share your journey, achievements, or community project, send us your details at inquiry@un.gyel.org and you could be our next feature!

