



GYEL NEWSLETTER

Volume 7 May 2026

WELCOME TO OUR MAY 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 May, we are excited to be entering the final stretch of the Spring Term at GYEL. It has been a deeply rewarding and energising term, and it's inspiring to see how much our students have grown in their confidence, collaboration, and leadership.

At this stage, students are finalising their capstone projects, which is an especially exciting milestone. These projects represent the culmination of months of learning, giving students the opportunity to explore issues they care deeply about and translate their ideas into meaningful, tangible outcomes. The quality, creativity, and thoughtfulness already on display have been outstanding, and we look forward to celebrating their final work in the coming weeks.

On a personal note, I recently attended the 10-year Schwarzman Scholars reunion in Beijing, where over 1,000 young leaders from around the world came together. It was an incredibly inspiring experience and reinforced the importance of global collaboration, purpose-driven leadership, as well

as lifelong learning. These are the very values we strive to cultivate at GYEL, and it was a powerful reminder of the potential impact our students can have as they continue their journeys beyond the classroom.

The energy across our programs remains strong, with students continuing to engage in rich discussions, collaborative experiences, and reflective practice. One of the most encouraging aspects of the term has been the strong sense of community that has developed, with students actively supporting and learning from one another.

As we approach the conclusion of the Spring Term, I would like to also extend a sincere thanks to our dedicated instructors and the wider GYEL team for their continued passion and commitment. Their efforts are central to creating such a dynamic, supportive, and enriching learning environment. We look forward to an exciting and fulfilling end to the term, filled with creativity, accomplishment, and celebration.

Sincerely,
Ms. Hannah Kidner, Lead Instructor of Programs

SUMMER TERM 2026 UPDATES

- As of this newsletter, we are approaching the final weeks of our Spring Term 2026. Please remember to submit your final projects by May 8th and attend office hours if you need any support or guidance as you complete your work.
- Applications for Summer Term 2026 are due on May 31st. The term begins in June, and spots are filling quickly, so we encourage all interested students to submit their applications as soon as possible and secure their place before the deadline.
- We are also excited to announce the launch of a new course for Fall Term 2026: Planetary Health & Climate Program. This course is designed to cultivate leadership, critical thinking, and systems-level understanding to equip students to address one of the most urgent challenges of our time: the deepening crisis between human health and a destabilized planet.
- Finally, we extend warm greetings to all our families and community members as we celebrate Mother's Day, Memorial Day (U.S.), and Shavuot during this season.



My name is Megan, and I am originally from the U.S. I am passionate about empowering GYEL students to engage with sustainability and the SDGs as tools for real-world change. Before joining GYEL, I worked as a consultant in sustainable development across a wide range of sectors - from public health and climate finance to private sector development and conservation - with experience in Mexico, Senegal, Mozambique, Rwanda, and the U.S.

What's a fun fact or hobby you have outside of work?

I am an avid scuba diver! I have explored underwater ecosystems across Mexico and even earned my Advanced Open Water certification in South Africa.

Is there something surprising about your career journey that students might find interesting?

Despite always knowing I wanted to work in sustainable development, I actually began my career as an English teacher. My love of travel and studying abroad in Spain led me to spend two years teaching there, and I later taught in Taiwan and Australia as well.

What's one piece of advice you'd give students about learning, problem-solving, or leadership?

Cultivate resilience. Throughout your career, you will inevitably face setbacks, steep learning curves, and problems that don't have easy answers. What will set you apart is not whether you struggle, but how you respond when you do. Resilience is the foundation beneath every other skill - it's what allows you to keep leading, keep learning, and keep growing even when things get hard.



INSTRUCTOR INSIGHTS



[Learn more](#)

STUDY TIPS FOR STUDENTS

- Create a dedicated study zone where you regularly focus and avoid distractions.
- Build a realistic study schedule and stick to it consistently.
- Break study sessions into manageable chunks to avoid burnout.
- Try studying with friends or study groups to stay motivated and accountable.
- Experiment with different learning techniques such as flashcards and self-quizzing, teaching concepts out loud, creating diagrams and color-coded notes, recording and replaying notes, and using hands-on learning or experiments when possible.
- Ask teachers for subject-specific study strategies and advice.

Tips from The University of Queensland

GYEL SUMMER 2026

Enrollment Open for Summer until May 31
Summer Term set to begin on the week of June 22

[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.



FOR ELITE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS, FEWER ACTIVITIES MAY MEAN MORE

Based on a survey of students who applied to, and were admitted at, top-tier, highly exclusive colleges – think: the Ivy League, plus the likes of MIT, Stanford, Duke, and one or two more – fewer activities, fewer hours a week may be the best course to convince the admissions gatekeepers.

The results show that for elite universities, the sweet spot for quantity of extracurricular activities is just four. Acceptance and enrollment rates ramp upwards based on the number of activities from one (8% admission rate), two (15%), three (25%), to four, where 30% of students get in. After four, the rates drop. Students with five extracurriculars got good admissions news 25% of the time. At six activities, the admissions rate was seven percent, slightly worse than having just one extracurricular activity.

[Read More](#)

A photograph of Lindsay Na, a young woman with dark hair, wearing a blue t-shirt that says 'CLEAN IT & GREEN IT' and 'VOLUNTEER'. She is holding an orange water gun. The background is a stone building with large windows.

Student Spotlight

From Ideas to Impact – Lindsay Na's Journey

This month, we are proud to highlight Lindsay Na, a proud GYEL alumna whose passion for environmental action, innovation, and leadership reflects the GYEL mission in action.

LINDSAY'S SOCIAL IMPACT JOURNEY

- Developed GreenQuest as her GYEL project, an interactive app that helps users learn about global challenges, discover volunteer opportunities, and share their impact to raise awareness on climate change.
- Aims to make volunteering more accessible and engaging by helping users find opportunities easily and participate with friends through a virtual "Buddy" system that guides and supports them along the way.
- Currently developing her project by learning coding, exploring AI, and designing app prototypes to bring GreenQuest to life.
- Collaborated with her school community, including student organizations and leadership groups, to organize volunteer initiatives such as campus cleanups.
- Serves as Team Captain of an all-girls VEX Robotics team, leading with resilience and teamwork, earning both the Energy Award and Judges Award at competition, and advancing to the World Championship.



Through GYEL, Lindsay has strengthened her ability to turn ideas into action while building confidence in leadership, teamwork, and innovation. Her journey reflects the heart of GYEL: empowering young leaders to think globally, act purposefully, and create meaningful impact.



GREENQUEST

GreenQuest empowers individuals to take action on global challenges by combining education, volunteer opportunities, and social connection in one interactive platform, helping users create real impact, build meaningful partnerships, and contribute to a more sustainable and collaborative world.

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!

