



Administration & Staff

CEO

Pier Alberto Merli, Ph.D

Pier Alberto received his degree in Philosophy from Florence University and his Ph.D. in Economics and Social Sciences at the European Florence University. He is the Resident Director for Hobart and William Smith Colleges and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Rome. He is the Director of Leonardo da Vinci School (School of Italian Language and Culture) Rome. He is a member of Forum of Education and NAFSA. He is a wine expert and sommelier.

Director of Expansion and Development and Critical Studies on Food Systems and Sustainability in Japan Summer Program Faculty

Steve Nussbaum, Ph.D

Steve Nussbaum, GLI Director of Expansion and Development, has had extensive experience in international education. He received his undergraduate degree at Notre Dame University (USA), an MA from Sophia University (Japan) and his Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from Cornell University (USA). In addition to faculty appointments, he has held senior appointments in managing and developing International programs at the University of Illinois, the University of New Mexico, Waseda University and Earlham College. At Waseda, he guided the university in the creation of the School for International Liberal Studies. He is now assisting the senior management Gustolab International Food Systems and Sustainability expand their operations in the United States, and to develop field-sites in East Asia and other suitable locations across the globe.

Senior Advisor for Development

Carmelita Nussbaum



Carmelita Nussbaum, GLI Senior Advisor for Development, has an extensive background in international education in the United States and Japan. She received her undergraduate degree from Webster University (St. Louis) and MA in education from Miami University (Ohio). She has managed university consortia programs in Japan and at Earlham College and has directed educational programs at multiple locations in the United States and Japan. She is a specialist in learning strategies and challenges.

Director

Thomas Rankin

American architect Tom Rankin received his Master's in Architecture at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, a BA in Architecture at Princeton, and a "Laurea" in Architecture at "Sapienza" University of Rome. He has lived in Rome since 1991, engaged in design research, practice and teaching focused on the historic and emerging city and landscape as framework for sustainable urbanism and architecture. He teaches at the Università di Roma "La Sapienza" (School of Engineering), the California Polytechnic Rome Program in Architecture and the Iowa State Rome Program. He is a founding member of ISAR, a non-profit organization dedicated to Architecture, Art and Archaeology in Rome. and former Director of the association Tevereterno Onlus. Tom is the author of Rome Works: An Architect Explores the World's Most Sustainable City and has written numerous articles on sustainable urbanism and presented frequently at conferences.

Student Services Coordinator

Erica Cacopardo

Erica has a bachelor's degree in Sociology and a Master's degree in Development Sciences and International Cooperation in Italy and Mexico and has been working cooperation in Italy, Peru and Brazil. She has also recently attended a specialization and professional course in European mediator for Interculture. In her free time, Erica loves to travel, read and go to the cinema and museums.



Special Projects Advisor

Laura Offeddu

Laura received her Law degree from La Sapienza in Rome. Her Master in International Environmental Law, from the Italian Society for International Organization (SIOI) and Italian National Centre of Research-International Legal Studies' Institute (CNR-ISGI) in Rome. In the last ten years, she managed the Rome Sustainable Food Project at the American Academy in Rome, inspired and created by Alice Waters. Before joining the American Academy in Rome, she worked as an international lawyer, analyzing and applying corporate, commercial, contract, and insurance law in global contexts: this formed the basis of her budget monitoring, reporting, assessment skills, and European and Italian law governing study-abroad education.

Executive Assistant to CEO and East Asia Advisor

Lu Yuan

Lu Yuan has a Master's degree in fashion design and marketing in Italy and China and has been working as a fashion designer for more than 15 years in Italy and China. She is also a teacher of art anatomy, an illustrator and a photographer. And, of course, a food lover.

Program Assistant

Lindsay Maldari

Coordinator for Development and Italian Language Programming

Courtney Quaintance



Program Advisor for GLi

Fabio Parasecoli, Ph.D

Fabio Parasecoli is Associate Professor and Coordinator of Food Studies Initiatives at the New School in New York. Deeply involved in the international food studies movement, he helped establish the Study Abroad Spring program in Rome for the University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign; in addition, he is on the advisory board for the MA program in Food Systems at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya in Barcelona, and teaches courses on food and media at the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo, Italy. He worked for many years as the U.S. correspondent for Gambero Rosso, Italy's authoritative food and wine magazine.

Critical Studies on Food Systems and Sustainability in Vietnam Summer Program Faculty

Professor Le Hung Anh

Le Hung Anh is Associate Professor and Director of the Institute for Environmental Science, Engineering and Management at the Industrial University of Ho-Chi-Minh City in Vietnam. He holds a PhD from Humbolt University in Germany and has done extensive research in Vietnam, Germany, Belgium, Cambodia and Laos. He is a specialist in the cultivation of organic rice, biofertilizers, and biogas, among other topics, and has run training programs for the Vietnam Farmers Union on climate change, global warming and environmental policy. He enjoys working with international students and frequently supervises internship placements for US students. [Resume >](#)

Critical Studies on Food Systems and Sustainability in Japan Summer Program Faculty

Aiko Tanaka, Visiting Professor, Gustolab International

Aiko Tanaka is a well-known food educator, essayist, and commentator based in Osaka, Japan. Born in Osaka she studied with Chef Akiko Yoshioka. She appears frequently in Japanese and international



food media, including Today's Cooking (kyo-no-ryori) on NHK, Japan's national broadcasting corporation. She has published multiple cookbooks and her essays appear frequently in both local and national magazines. Her current projects include the design and development of "Halal Washoku" - Muslim-friendly Japanese cuisine, in collaboration with Chef Daisuke Murota, the chairman of the Japanese Cooking Skills Associations of Osaka. She has offered Japanese culinary lessons at multiple locations across the world including New York and Tasmania. In 1999 she opened Lista Culinary School. She founded the Edible Herb Garden Association to build a network for food education at schools in Osaka and served as a consultant to Shoin High School to establish nation's first high school food studies curriculum. She is currently Professor of Food Studies at Osaka Shoin Women's University.

Interns

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