

## Welcome Message from GASI President Bill Lalicker

Dear GASI Conference Attendees:

On behalf of our Board of Directors, our Executive Committee, and the Conference Planning Committee, I extend a most sincere welcome to you all. I especially appreciate the presence of so many of you who have traveled from many parts of the world to join in our interdisciplinary scholarly exchange in this exciting and unusual city of Las Vegas for the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference of the Global Awareness Society International (GASI).

We're here to participate in a very special conference. GASI is the only organization I know that simultaneously is:

- **International** for an intentional emphasis on creating new knowledge by bringing together, in mutual respect, perspectives from diverse cultures and nations across the world;
- **Interdisciplinary** for the explicit purpose of achieving the broadened intellectual understanding generated by listening to each other across scholarly divides;
- **Non-hierarchical** in its welcome to participants from every kind of postsecondary learning institution;
- **Student-welcoming** with a significant and longstanding commitment to providing financial support for attendance by undergraduate and graduate students of scholarly promise;
- **Research-sharing** with both a *Proceedings* publication of the best conference scholarship and the more formal *Journal of Global Awareness*.

Many organizations do some of these things. GASI does it all. As a participant in this year's conference, you are helping us to build this holistic and sustainable model for expansive scholarly engagement, so thank you! Please spread the word about GASI to your colleagues and students so that our good model continues to grow and thrive.

GASI typically convenes in the United States every two or three years, but this is our first conference in 25 years in the American West, and the first ever to meet in the vast desert and mountain interior of this nation. Las Vegas is a perfect location for us to consider our theme of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Las Vegas is home to working immigrants from many nations; a magnet for those wanting to make fortunes (if luck prevails) or find entertainment, ease, and recreation. Las Vegas is a place of maximum investment in light, energy, technology, and luxury—but where the changing climate means the rivers aren't filling the lakes that slake its thirst and drive its electric turbines. Where better to consider the challenges of sustainability? We are highly fortunate to have our distinguished keynote speaker, Dr. David Kreamer of the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, a specialist in sustainability and hydrology, to start our conversation here.

I want to thank some of my GASI colleagues: Mr. Hiram Martinez, past President and immediate past Executive Director of GASI, formerly of West Chester University and now seeking new places to champion student equity and achievement; Dr. James Pomfret, Professor Emeritus of Bloomsburg University, our acting Executive Director; Dr. Sarah Moore of the University of North Texas, Student Scholarship Committee Chair; Dr. Rejoice Addae of Arkansas State University, immediate past President; and Dr. Eunice Akoto of Henderson State University, Vice-President and Conference Program Co-Chair.

I also am thrilled that the conference is bringing together about 75 presenters (including six scholarship-supported students) from about 25 institutions in seven countries from around the world, all here to share our research on aspects of sustainability and make new knowledge that matters for the future of the world. And so I invite you to get to know not only new ideas in the plenary talks, the panels, and the concurrent sessions of the conference, but to get to know each other—the students, professors, and researchers with whom we will work together—to quote the GASI mission—to achieve “peace, harmony, and cooperation among the diverse people of our globe.”

Collegially yours,

William B. Lalicker, Ph.D., President of GASI, 2022-2024; Conference Program Co-Chair, 2023  
West Chester University



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