

Thomas University, Thomasville, Georgia
Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary

QEP Title: ***Culture and Community: The World We Share***

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Thomas University was founded in 1950 as Birdwood Junior College by the Primitive Baptist Church at the winter home of the Honorable W. Cameron Forbes, former Governor General of the Philippines, Ambassador to Japan, and grandson of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Forbes' commitment to public service are reflected in the University's core values of community engagement, diversity, and the belief that, "the world is a better place when respect for the individual is central to our relationship with others." Congruent with this guiding philosophy, Thomas University seeks to develop students who, "think critically, communicate effectively, discover information, and foster community." *Culture and Community: The World We Share* embraces this philosophy by providing opportunities for faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community members to: strengthen understanding and acceptance of cultural similarities and differences; develop the ability to interact with others from differing cultures; discover the common ground that cultural communities share; recognize that "my community" overlaps and includes diverse people and cultures; and take responsibility for each other across cultures because our world is shared.

Culture and Community: The World We Share expands existing initiatives and creates new programming through which students are exposed to diverse cultures and ideas. Thomas University's on-campus undergraduate student population is comprised of approximately 7% international students, and the QEP supports faculty and staff development to increase the campus community's ability to facilitate intercultural learning between and among its students, particularly as it relates to their capacity to see themselves as connected to diverse people and cultures both within their own community and the broader global society. It supports the expansion of intercultural elements in existing courses and the development of a new Intercultural Communication course in the General Education curriculum. In addition, the QEP provides for the development of cultural immersion experiences through an expanded study-abroad program with specific opportunities to study State Department-identified high needs languages in their countries of origin.

The QEP topic and goals were developed as the result of an intensive needs-assessment that included students, faculty, staff, and trustees. Initial feedback from these constituents revealed a perception that TU's curriculum provided opportunity for intercultural learning but that the community would benefit from a wider variety of cultural immersion experiences, and initial course survey data appears to support this perception. Through *Culture and Community: The World We Share* Thomas University is creating a campus culture that encourages all members to engage in meaningful exploration of diverse cultures and perspectives in order to develop graduates who can productively and respectfully engage our global community.