

**VSU Passport to Global Competence:  
An Integrated International (and Intercultural) Education Approach**

**Executive Summary**

“Internationalization is not the latest academic fad, nor a simple add-on to existing practice. It is the single most important leadership challenge of the new century.”(Call to Leadership, NASULGC viii-ix)

This QEP proposal builds on the VSU existing national and state leadership position in international education and student development. It is a vision for a five-year plan for qualitative changes and innovation along the university’s strategic goals in teaching, student learning, undergraduate research, faculty development, and community engagement. It is envisioned as a process that will further an institutional environment that promotes global competencies and skills, (*understood as developing students’ abilities to think, appreciate, understand, communicate and lead in an ever-changing world*), where international and intercultural are integrated and mutually dependent.

**Brief Description of Proposed Activities**

- a) strengthen and enrich cross-disciplinary initiatives that promote global competency, with special attention on engaging freshman and sophomore students in international and intercultural education and helping them with their choice of majors; offer **VSU Global/International Passport** as a 12 credit-hour option that will include courses with global content from the core and the majors, a foreign language component, and will require participation in at least one campus and/or community international/intercultural activity per semester;
- b) integrate and enrich on campus learning, undergraduate research, and service learning experiences, on-line courses and other IT opportunities for international exposure and contacts;
- c) work on better integration and alignment of VSU study abroad programs with the academic units, disciplines and majors;
- d) develop and implement an institutional system that will address faculty professional development and area expertise with emphasis on global understanding, knowledge, and skills; support unit and cross-disciplinary internationalization strategies; promote recognition of faculty internationalization efforts by including those as part of the VSU tenure and promotion system;
- e) introduce a cost-effective evaluation and assessment system that will allow for campus-wide communication of the QEP progress and will be able to reflect necessary formative adjustments;
- f) integrate existing and newly emerging campus programs, activities, and resources within a common learning, research and service environment the development of which will be organized by a QEP that will constitute a funded mandate for excellence in international education.

## **Integrated International and Intercultural Education and Awareness Initiative**

### **Introduction:**

This draft has been prepared as a result of analysis of similar documents, with special attention to significant intellectual influence by the QEP plan developed by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and two milestone reports, prepared by ACE and AACSCU. The intention of this draft is assist the University and the QEP Committee in the preparation to submit to SACS a focused course of action for an *International and Intercultural Education and Awareness Initiative* that will significantly improve the intercultural dialogue on campus and enhance student learning.

The focus on undergraduate education and the emphasis on the first steps of our students on their academic path have been planned with the intent of fostering not only improved knowledge and broadened perspectives throughout this targeted group, but also with the idea to assist the “intentional” learner to mature both intellectually and as a citizen. The idea for such plan emerged from the University's ongoing planning and evaluation process and is a product of multiple discussions as to the evaluation, analysis, and judgment of educational quality and effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals.

Valdosta State University is strongly devoted to diversity and cultural pluralism. Academic units and individual faculty have demonstrated through years of dedicated service their interest in encouraging more VSU students to study abroad and to recruit increasing numbers of minority and international faculty, international students, and historically under-represented students.

The primary goal of this proposed QEP is to improve institutional performance on behalf of internationalization and intercultural relations, and to ensure that all Valdosta State University undergraduates gain the knowledge, perspectives, and skills necessary to succeed in today's complex, pluralistic world.

According to Madeleine Green and Christa Olson, "Internationalization refers to the process of incorporating into the curriculum and co-curriculum a broad range of intellectual and experiential activities designed to help individuals acquire an understanding of the cultural, social, and political systems of other nations and the interactions between them, as well as with, and between, international structures"(Green and Olson 96).

Intercultural, according to these authors, "implies comparison, exchanges, cooperation, and confrontation between [different cultural] groups....From this perspective, intercultural education is more proactive and action oriented than multicultural education, and rather than focusing on specific problems such as learning style differences or language development, recognizes that a genuine understanding of cultural differences and similarities is necessary in order to build a foundation for working collaboratively with others" (Green and Olson 5).

As do many universities in the nation, VSU already has substantial international and intercultural programs in place. But, as reported in most national surveys, these programs and activities tend to be rather scattered and often uncoordinated. Scores of publications indicate that the efforts to educate globally competent, internationally and interculturally aware students are getting harder to achieve without deep changes both in secondary school education and in academia (see AASCU Report [\*Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College\*](#)). In other words, while celebrations of diversity globally and locally are accepted frameworks of intellectual understanding, there is a prominent lack of implementation mechanisms for appropriate learning environment. Again, research on similar plans at other universities indicates that this is a common weakness of such plans: The rhetoric is strong, but the theories are not so easily put into practice.

The same holds true for internationalization. The Executive Summary of the American Council on Education publication [\*Internationalizing the Campus: A User's Guide\*](#) discusses the gap "between the value of internationalization asserted in many institutional mission statements and the reality of actual institutional practices and priorities as revealed by strategic plans, policies and resource allocations" (Green and Olson vii). And "without a clear set of goals and a strategy to connect the disparate activities and create synergy among them, internationalization will likely be confined to a marginal set of activities affecting a self-selected group of students and faculty. Internationalizing an institution requires widely understood goals and objectives, an assessment of existing efforts and capacity, recognition of the leverage points for creating change on campus, plans for measuring progress, and the capacity to make continuous adjustments along the way" (vii).

Through this proposed QEP, Valdosta State University would seek to infuse international and intercultural learning throughout its curriculum, co-curriculum, and campus life. The University must act now to strengthen its core liberal education by developing specific skills and attitudes in its undergraduates, including deeper knowledge of world geography, second language competency, enhanced ability to tolerate ambiguity and difference, and an appreciation of multiple perspectives. As [\*Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College\*](#) argues, we must offer "a twenty-first century liberal education--liberal not in any political sense, but in terms of liberating and opening the mind, and of preparing students for responsible action" (xii). Undergraduates who are knowledgeable about diverse domestic and international perspectives will be better equipped to succeed in the global marketplace. In addition, undergraduates who are knowledgeable about other peoples will be better able to create goodwill and support for the United States in other nations. These undergraduates will understand that a pluralistic society is a critical democratic value; they will be better citizens at home and in the world.

The Georgia Board of Regents' new strategic plan puts global knowledge, skills, and attitudes as core expectations of undergraduate student learning. Initial steps towards an innovative education model that will reflect these needs are being made by all USG

institutions. The focus is on developing a new environment for teaching, learning, community engagement, critical thinking, and student research that promotes experiences and offers measurable globally oriented competencies.

A review of showcased best campus practices around the nation indicates that these global competencies are understood as developing students' abilities to:

- think critically in a global context, developing readiness for life-long learning;
- appreciate, understand, and communicate effectively across cultures;
- possess a high degree of civic responsibility; and
- actively participate, share, and lead in solving problems in an ever-changing world, where the international and the intercultural are integrated and mutually dependent.

Internationalization is no longer viewed as the proverbial “icing on the cake.” It has moved to the category of “transformative” change platforms that integrate most critical aspects pertaining to content and structural innovation. These changes have been reflected in multiple discussions, documents, and action plans of national and international organizations in higher education such as the International Association of Universities (IAU), the American Council on Education (ACE), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA), etc.

“International (and by extension intercultural awareness and competence) does not involve tweaking the academy around the edges. It will require substantive, transformative change at all levels... Internationalization is not the latest academic fad, nor a simple add-on to existing practice. It is the single most important leadership challenge of the new century.” (*Call to Leadership*, NASULGC viii-ix)

A brief review of related best practices during the period 2004 – 2006 indicates that integrated QEP plans with international/ global components have been introduced nationally at quite a number of peer institutions, including the University of Tampa (*Building International Competence: An Integrated Approach to International Education*), the University of Tennessee-Knoxville (*The International and Intercultural Initiative*), and Western Kentucky University (*Engaging Students for Success in a Global Society*).

**VSU Integrated Internationalization and Intercultural Education and Awareness Initiative: Focus on Early Undergraduate Experiences**

Considering the realities of VSU and the commitments that follow from the university's strategic development plan, it is probably not a bad idea to think how we can save time and resources by working together on a QEP project that will integrate most of the changes mandated by the Board of Regents and accrediting bodies. One such approach is offered by a plan focused on international and intercultural education.

This proposal for a QEP has been developed as an integrative framework for the next five years, in which international and intercultural education, with equal attention to both, act as a medium between many great departmental ideas, as a glue fostering the growth and development of students, faculty, and community as people competent to deal with and lead in an ambiguous and changing world.

The actions proposed here will require collective efforts across campus, including:

- developing a specific five-year plan that will include evaluation of the current status of international and intercultural education across campus - content, student interests, and teaching and learning activities and, consequently, preparing a plan for their better integration into the curriculum, co-curricular activities, and community engagement activities;
- developing a plan for enhanced global competency of faculty and staff through discussing, developing, and implementing interdisciplinary themes, innovative teaching, and service learning projects, and offering financial assistance for faculty professional development activities with a global focus;
- enhancing the study abroad program, working to align it with requirements for departmental majors and to make it accessible and practical for a larger portion of our students and community by proposing a variety of flexible and affordable means of exposure to cultures;
- integrating international and intercultural students more fully into the community, building bridges between cultures and opening communication channels;
- linking our diverse and innovative campus life with the larger community through a variety of activities.

These actions will help to build an undergraduate educational climate conducive to better knowledge and understanding of cultures and peoples; competence in cross-cultural communication; critical thinking about international and intercultural issues; and a readiness for life-long global learning.

**Brief Description of Proposed Activities (see attached Table)**

This QEP draft proposes that VSU focus its institutional efforts on:

- g) strengthening the existing learning and teaching environment through initiatives that will promote global/international competency, with special attention to engaging freshman and sophomore students in international and intercultural education and helping them with early transition towards majors.

**Action:** Offer, as a result of an integrated effort with all academic units, a **VSU International (Global Citizenship) Passport**. Tentatively, this project could be offered as a 12-credit-hour option that will include courses with global content from the core and the major, a foreign language component, and participation in at least one campus and/or community activity per semester with international focus (an updated list of choices would be offered each semester). The academic component of the Passport will be approved by the departmental student advisors, while the activity part will be offered through the Center for International Programs in conjunction with student life and other units.

- b) offering rich international and intercultural learning experiences that will integrate on-campus learning with service learning experiences in the community and abroad.

**Action:** Develop a plan of relevant departmental, college, and campus activities that will include service learning, on-line courses, and opportunities for international exposure and contacts.

- c) working with campus representatives to better integrate VSU study abroad programs with the disciplines of the student major.

**Action:** In conjunction with study abroad program directors, the International Advisory Council, and individual faculty members, the CIP will develop a protocol that will provide feedback from the departments on aligning content of on-campus and study abroad courses.

- d) stimulating faculty development projects emphasizing global knowledge, skills, and attitudes; supporting academic units' internationalization strategies; and promoting recognition of internationalization efforts by faculty as part of the tenure and promotion process on campus.

**Action:** Work with the Faculty Senate, the VPAA, and the Deans to address the above issues and provide necessary funding. Introduce an adequate faculty development program, including training sessions, curriculum enhancement mini-grants, study travel, on-campus conferences and other opportunities.

e) Introducing a measurable, benchmark-oriented institutional evaluation and assessment system that will allow for campus-wide communication of the QEP's progress and necessary formative adjustments.

**Action:** Considering the cost and the effectiveness of assessment instruments, focus on student electronic portfolios and integration of existing evaluation mechanisms into the broader institutional research and evaluation system.

f) Integrating existing and newly emerging programs, activities, and instruments with global focus, such as the European Certificate, the International Studies Minor, the Honors Internationalization program, Student Leadership and other related programs into a common learning and service environment.

**Action:** Make the VSU International Passport and the Certificate of International and Intercultural Education (an 18- to 20-hour elective option with the same requirements as the International Passport except for the study abroad requirement) fully compatible with existing departmental programs and campus opportunities.

## Background Notes

### **VSU International Passport**

The international passport is not a new tool. Many schools have been practicing this model as part of their campus internationalization strategy for freshman and sophomore students. What we are considering is a program that will integrate the campus efforts in the core curriculum area with internationalization and global competencies and skills requirements and benchmarks, including SACS-related QEP efforts. The international passport is proposed as a framework that will include an institutionally defined modicum of global/international and intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired through:

- a) exposure to relevant core curriculum and discipline (major) courses with internationally-oriented content;
- b) proficiency in modern and classical language and communication skills ;
- c) development of international, intercultural, and interdisciplinary understanding through student research, activities and practices; joint community activities; service-driven leadership; and connecting and collaborating with the community and the world.

Basically, our international/global passport will be an activity-based document that will reflect up to four semesters of exposure to core curriculum, minor, and major classes with international/global content, foreign language courses, participation in events related to our internationalization efforts during the semesters (attending the international film series, participating in international education week events, undertaking a class project

with international partner, working with migrants in the local community, etc.), thus combining learning with practical activities and community engagement.

### **The Next Step – Certificate of International and Intercultural Education**

The Certificate will build on the International Passport experiences and accumulated credits. (Usually, such certificates require accumulated 20-22 credit hours, including a possibility for study abroad credit.) Designed as the next step in students' acquisition of global knowledge, skills, and attitudes, the Certificate will require departmental (minor and major) courses with international content, additional language courses, a student portfolio, service learning and community engagement experiences, and other best practices, including study abroad. (Study abroad, however, will not be a requirement, as it is for the International Minor, just an option that could be applied towards earning the Certificate.)

At the moment about 10 percent (roughly 1,000 - 1,200) of our undergraduate students have participated in study abroad programs, thus creating a significant pool of students on campus who could encourage international and intercultural education. One of the ideas in this direction could be creating a VSU **Student Ambassadors** club that will be the network for student engagement in this process.

VSU already has students in the Society of International Students. Honors Program students work on class assignments in partnership with international students. Participants in the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants program have added new languages (Arabic, Chinese, Turkish) to our programs at no cost, and the VPAA's office has provided financial support for instruction in Japanese and Russian. We have the foundations to move to more effective and permanent solutions, including adding a critical languages component to our campus offerings.

Action Steps that will need to be taken to make this proposal work include, but are not limited to:

- Developing student awareness through student orientation, advertising, and advising about global competencies and international and intercultural education opportunities on campus;
- Encouraging wide campus support based on funded mandates;
- Hiring personnel to develop community engagement opportunities;
- Revising institutional Faculty Development and Tenure and Promotion practices to reflect the institutional internationalization plan;

- Assisting the staff of the Study Abroad and English Language Institute units to address their increasing responsibilities; and
- Developing and implementing an institutional student assessment and evaluation system capable of tracking on-going progress

## **Partial List of Works Reviewed in Preparation of the Initiative**

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## Pressures on Higher Education

*To summarize the analysis in this report, and other pressures outside its scope, higher education for the twenty-first century faces:*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Changing demographics of college attendance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• higher proportion of high school graduates</li><li>• students lacking recommended college preparatory curricula</li><li>• greater percentage of non-traditional students</li><li>• more cultural diversity with higher minority participation</li></ul>   |
| New enrollment patterns                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• increased part-time enrollment</li><li>• multiple-institution attendance</li><li>• online and distance courses</li></ul>  |
| The information explosion                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• huge and rapidly increasing quantity of information widely available</li><li>• looser review and control of information quality</li><li>• shift from remembering facts to finding and evaluating information</li></ul>  |
| The technological revolution                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• new types of jobs for graduates</li><li>• changed nature of the classroom because of online learning</li></ul>  |
| A stricter regulatory environment           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• greater call for accountability</li><li>• more intrusive state regulation of the curriculum</li><li>• in many states, the potential to expand from K-12 to college the strict standards and mandates that stress factual recall in testing</li><li>• accreditation emphasis on effectiveness and assessment</li></ul> |
| New educational sites and formats           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• rapid growth in the for-profit higher education sector, with little regulation and accreditation</li><li>• rise of the corporate university</li><li>• more flexible learning formats</li></ul>  |
| The changing nature of the workplace        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• emphasis on creative problem solving, team work, and adaptability</li><li>• need for high-level intellectual skills</li><li>• demand for large numbers of technologically and</li></ul>   |

- quantitatively  
literate employees
  - interaction with greater diversity of people
- 

The global nature of major  
problems, requiring enhanced  
international cooperation

- porosity of national boundaries
  - worldwide environmental impacts
  - multinational corporations
  - post 9/11/01 awareness of global interdependency
- 

From AAC&U, [\*Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College\*](#), p. 17.

## Teaching to Create Intentional Learners—Selected Examples

### *The Empowered Learner*

| <i>Outcome</i>  | <i>Facilitating Strategies</i>  |
|---|---|
| communicate well in diverse settings and groups, using written and oral means   | writing assignments of multiple kinds (expository, creative, and personal writing) for many purposes; required and critiqued oral presentations |
| employ a variety of skills to solve problems                                    | problem-based learning; undergraduate research; inquiry-based science labs  |
| work well in teams, including those of diverse composition, and build consensus | planned and supervised experiences in teamwork, both in class and in off-campus settings  |

### *The Informed Learner*

| <i>Area of Knowledge</i>   | <i>Facilitating Strategies</i>   |
|--|--|
| the human imagination, expression, and the products of many cultures | interdisciplinary and integrated courses on creativity through the ages  |
| global and cross-cultural communities                                | drawing on students' diverse experiences to enrich classroom discussion; integrating study abroad into courses back on the home campus; teaching courses world-wide through video-conferencing |
| modeling the natural world   | student team-designed lab experiments to answer questions  |

### *The Responsible Learner*

| <i>Responsibility Expected</i>                           | <i>Facilitating Strategies</i>   |
|--|--|
| active participation as a citizen of a diverse democracy | service learning; debate on proposed solutions to current social problems  |
| understanding oneself and one's multiple identities      | personal writing that requires self-reflection upon a wide variety of subjects, and that situates the self in relation to others |

From AAC&U, [Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College](#), p. viii.