

Windows to the World

Georgia Southwestern State University

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The Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) Windows to the World Program (W2W) takes a co-curricular approach to nurturing intercultural awareness in students that will prepare them to work more effectively in the global economy. Like a window, the program opens in two directions bringing the world to GSW and taking GSW to the world.

W2W brings the world to GSW through a variety of convocations and other cultural events. GSW's Director of International Programs works with GSW faculty, visiting scholars, local community assets like Habitat for Humanity, and invited presenters to plan two or more W2W events per academic term. For instance, during fall term 2014, anthropologist Dr. Phillip Stevens shared the results of his work in West Africa in a convocation and in individual classes. On the same day, a panel discussion featuring native Africans now resident in Americus was held to discuss conceptions and misconceptions about Africa. Beginning in fall term 2014, first-time full-time freshmen at GSW are required to attend six W2W events during their four years at GSW, and complete the requirement by writing a reflection on the cultural opportunities they took advantage of during that time.

As part of W2W, the Director of International Programs was hired not only to plan and implement W2W events, but also to expand the intercultural and education abroad program offerings available to GSW students. This challenge requires cultivating faculty and administrative expertise, support and participation through integration of international education across the institution. For instance, in their freshmen orientation course, freshmen visit Habitat for Humanity's Global Village and Discovery Center, where they explore the variety of culturally specific solutions Habitat has designed to solve the worldwide problem of adequate, affordable housing. The students then write a reflection on how concept of adequate housing varies from cultural to culture and continent to continent. GSW students who take advantage of the short-term and long-term intercultural opportunities offered by GSW, also bring the world back to GSW by sharing their experiences in special student planned and executed W2W events.

Through these co-curricular experiences, GSW's W2W hopes that students will acquire the following intercultural skills and attitudes:

- The ability to identify, describe and explain cultural differences.
- The ability to ask questions about other cultures and to find answers to those questions.
- The willingness to interact with people from other cultures.