

St. Edward's University

Developing Global Understanding in Undergraduate Students

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the current environment, it is especially critical for St. Edward's University to expand its attention to how students grow in global understanding. Our age is characterized by the interconnection of peoples, cultures, technologies, markets, problems, and politics on a world scale. This interconnectedness is creating a worldwide market for an exchange of higher education and a worldwide network of knowledge production and dissemination that increasingly requires engagement by institutions that want to remain at the forefront of the academic enterprise. Thus it is imperative that an education at St. Edward's prepares students with the knowledge, skills, and orientations that they will need to successfully understand and navigate the global society in which they are ever more deeply embedded. St. Edward's University proclaims in its mission statement that it educates its students in an environment that includes the broader community. More specifically, the mission dedicates us to helping students recognize their responsibility as members of the world community and apply their knowledge of the liberal arts and their specific disciplines, and their skills in moral reasoning and critical thinking, to the solution of social problems and the promotion of peace and social justice. The established educational tools for such preparation and engagement language studies, study abroad, international and area studies, collaborative research, and faculty exchange-are already in place, but they must receive greater emphasis and effort if the achievement of academic excellence in global understanding is to pervade the experience of a St. Edward's University student.

A commitment to increased global understanding will require a long-term institutional commitment that is both deep and broad. The proposed Quality Enhancement Plan envisions three student-centered approaches to global understanding that combine elements of academic and co-curricular activities. The first initiative involves all traditional undergraduate students at St. Edward's University. As part of the St. Edward's QEP we will redesign our general education requirements such that we can make the following commitment: ***All traditional graduates of St. Edward's University will have significantly increased their understanding of global issues.*** The second initiative is to develop the **Global Understanding Program** in order to provide students recognition for their outstanding achievements in all components of global understanding-knowledge, communication skills, and experiential learning. This plan requires the most extensive student commitment, and its satisfaction is worthy of special recognition for the student. The third initiative is a broader, theme-based university program that ensures that all of our students--traditional, adult, and graduate-have the opportunity to be involved in the global understanding initiative. This initiative will draw on the efforts of faculty, administrative support and student support areas to enhance the learning environment for global understanding at St. Edward's University. The entire plan is available at <http://www.stedwards.edu/QEP.pdf>.

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