Global education has been a focal point at Mason and our efforts in this arena have been many and strong. By capitalizing on our diversity and global location, the university can become an international leader in global education through focused attention on student learning in the global arena. This proposal is not about adding another global project to Mason’s already long list of global efforts. Rather it is about taking stock of what we are currently doing, enhancing the effectiveness of current efforts with a focus on student learning, and creating new curricular and co-curricular opportunities that close the gaps.

As a university we are distinguished by the global experiences of our student body and the global dynamics that have shaped the institution’s growth. To succeed in the 21st century, students need to leave the university with a solid understanding of global processes and an empathetic perspective toward others, both local and global. This would encourage students to take responsibility for affecting positive changes in their communities and in the world as the ultimate goal of their education. This QEP initiative seeks to enhance the global competency of our students so that they gain insight and develop critical perspectives needed to face complex international challenges in productive and ethical ways.

This proposal affords us the opportunity to bring focus and structure to the global education opportunities we offer our students. By creating synergy among the initiatives already underway at Mason and discovering what works, we can make the whole greater than the sum of its parts and ensure “evidence based” student global learning. Moreover, given the global, national and local financial crisis, it is more important than ever to make sure that scarce resources are invested wisely and that we are achieving through these investments the benefits we desire.

Mason’s mission includes the following, “Educate the new generation of leaders for the 21st century – men and women capable of shaping a new economy in a global community with vision, justice, and clarity.” How can we more effectively achieve this mission and ensure that our programs and activities are preparing students to live in a global and multicultural world? Are we developing in our student body a solid understanding of global processes and an empathetic perspective toward others, both local and global? Are we developing students who take responsibility for affecting positive changes in their communities and in the world as the ultimate goal of their education? How do we enhance the global competency of our students so that they gain insight and develop critical perspectives needed to face complex international challenges in productive and ethical ways? And, how do we provide students with a core set of competencies for living and working in the global and multicultural world?

The first step in the proposed QEP process would be to find answers to these and other questions. With these answers, we can begin building a coherent, purposeful combination of courses, programs, activities, and events.

As a result of the activities proposed in this QEP, the following learning outcomes can be expected:

Understanding Global Processes and Trends
1. Students will be able to identify and understand contemporary and historic global processes, conflicts, and their ramifications (e.g., globalization, colonialism, and transnationalism).
2. Students will understand the major processes of globalization, the theories about its development, and the critique of those theories.

3. Students will be able to explain global trends affecting their major field of study and analyze how their major field of study reflects and contributes to processes of globalization.

Global Critical Thinking

1. Students will be able to compare and contrast alternative perspectives with critical rigor.
2. Students will demonstrate an enhanced critical awareness of ethical and social challenges facing 21st century leaders.

Engaging Others

1. Students will be able to substantively communicate and engage with others on topics related to global issues.
2. Students will be able to understand their own identity and culture in a global and comparative context – that is, they will recognize that their culture is one of many and that alternate perceptions and behaviors may be based in cultural differences.
3. Students will be able to adapt their core communication skills so that they can think, work, and move across boundaries, in diverse environments with a range of people.
4. Students will seek out international or cultural opportunities to advance their understanding of global processes and issues.
5. Students will be able to use foreign language skills and/or knowledge of other cultures to communicate and connect with people in other language communities and to extend their access to information, experiences and understanding.

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

- Form an interdisciplinary committee of faculty, students, and community and global education experts to coordinate and advise throughout the process.
- Develop a university-wide faculty development program for understanding the global competencies and exploring creative ways to teach to those competencies. Hold a series of faculty seminars throughout the QEP years to share learning strategies.
- Identify how each of our courses, programs, activities and initiatives with a global focus at Mason link to these university-wide global competencies.
- Analyze the results of this inventory and identify additional curricular and co-curricular opportunities to strengthen efforts and redress any areas needing further development.
- Develop a university-wide assessment tool to determine if students are gaining proficiency in the global competencies.
- Develop a module for student orientation that introduces the university-wide global competencies, why they are important, how they will be assessed and where in the university curriculum and campus activities (e.g., University Life and Housing & Residence Life) they will achieve the learning required to successfully attain these competencies.