

**The Interaction of Environment and Culture in Malawi: An Interdisciplinary Area Studies
Short-Term Seminar Project.**

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ABSTRACT: Fulbright-Hays Group Study Abroad Program, United States Department of Education. Proposed by Mercer University: Dr. Zipangani Vokhiwa, Project Director.

Under the GPA Short-Term Seminar Projects, Competitive Preference Priority II, this project will enable two Mercer University faculty and twelve K-12 educators comprised of ten practicing teachers enrolled in teacher education programs at Mercer University and two school administrators from the metro-Atlanta school districts, to travel to Malawi, Africa on a four-week field trip. The goals of this field trip are to enable the selected participants: (1) to collect data for use in integrating environmental awareness and cultural competency into their Area Studies curricula in their classrooms, and (2) to establish an ongoing collaborative online exchange program with their counterpart Malawian educators. The specific objectives of the project are: (1) to study the impact of ecology and environment on the culture and history of Malawi; (2) to work individually and in teams to develop lesson plans, instructional strategies and curriculum resources to integrate international Area Studies into the K-12 curricula; (3) to collect pertinent environmental and cultural artifacts with the help of Malawian environmental specialists and students, educators, artists, the clergy, businesspeople, and government officials; (4) to train the team members to be mentors and information sources to disseminate the results of the project to other US K-12 school systems; and (5) to create an on-going, online resource for collaborative opportunities for American and Malawian educators to engage in cross-cultural understandings. These project objectives support Mercer University's strategic plan that emphasizes promoting global and interdisciplinary studies to enhance student perspective and potential contributions to society. The project will also complement Mercer University's on-going study abroad initiatives which include, among others, Mercer on Mission (MoM) overseas and Tift College of Education's collaboration with the Ricks Institute in Liberia, Africa.

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Introduction

Globalization and the rapid development of the internet as a tool for connecting people and sharing information all over the world are changing the way we live. This change, however, is happening at different paces throughout the world depending not only on local technological capacity, resources, and economic development, but more importantly on the will of the people to maximize these tools for their knowledge acquisition and advancement. In both developed and developing countries, educational leaders at all levels, from K-12 to higher education, are re-conceptualizing their goals and their curricula to enable teachers and administrators to internationalize their education programs in order to prepare the students to become active and productive citizens of a global society.

Demographic changes, especially in large urban and suburban areas, have also influenced the need for global studies. For example, schools in Metro-Atlanta area have witnessed in the past twenty years a rapid increase in the number of multi-cultural student populations from Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Educators are responding to the needs of these students by revising their curricular and their professional development agenda to equip teachers and administrators with better skills to cater for these students.

Mercer University has also increasingly focused on the need to improve Access and Diversity in International Education by involving faculty and students in global travel and education as well as in integrating technology into the liberal arts and professional classrooms. The University promotes study abroad programs that connect faculty and students in service-learning activities with their counter-parts and communities in other parts of the world. The University also promotes the use of web-based educational tools that connect faculty and staff with the outside world. The three major themes of our project; education, culture, and ecology and environment, are aimed at enabling the participants to improve their pedagogical skills by

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interacting with their counterparts in Africa and using lessons learned to develop and incorporate Interdisciplinary Area Studies into their K – 12 lessons and curricula.

1. PLAN OF OPERATION

(a) Project Design

This Interdisciplinary graded Area Studies Short-Term Seminar Project for K-12 educators will immerse ten practicing teachers enrolled in teacher education programs and other related majors at Mercer University and two school administrators from the Metro-Atlanta school systems in the cultural, socio-economic, and environmental dynamics of Malawi. The project will be led by a Director and a Curriculum Designer.

Malawi is a nation of diversity often referred to as “The Warm Heart of Africa” which contains many unique species and cultures. The overarching goal of this project is to help make the participants more effective teachers and administrators in this increasingly global society. Meeting with Malawian educators, government officials, artists, and religious leaders during the four-week field trip will enhance the participants’ knowledge in environmental, cultural studies, and their pedagogical skills which they will incorporate into their Integrated Area Studies curricula upon return from Malawi. In order to accomplish this goal, the participants will be intimately exposed to specific environmental, educational, and cultural aspects of the country. These three themes are integral to understanding any culture, any community, any school, and ultimately any student. In addition to exposing the participants to the universal nature of these themes, this project will enable them to more critically think about the interplay of environment, culture and education in the lives of both the Malawian students and their own students in the US. This approach is especially crucial to success, since formally-organized programs like ours that emphasize substantive academic content coupled with cultural immersion, are still relatively

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rare.

The need for American educators to explore these three themes in Africa is because: (1) American schools have not served all students well, especially in learning about the African culture and environment; (2) there are misconceptions found among many American educators that Africa is one country with a homogeneous African culture. These participants will learn first hand that Africa is composed of many countries with many cultures and deferent socio-economic underpinnings, even within a single country. These three broad themes will assist with the integration of Area Studies into the general curricula and teacher education at Mercer University as well as the general curricula of the participating K-12 school systems in the Metro-Atlanta school districts. In addition, this integrated “across the curriculum” approach to Area Studies is consistent with empirical research and cognitive approaches in education.

Many issues of great importance in Area Studies (i.e. economics, culture, migration and trade) are impacted by both ecological and environmental issues such as “climate change”, biodiversity conservation, rapid population growth, deforestation and water pollution, habitat degradation, amongst others. It is impossible to understand the culture, language or religious practices of a region without understanding the environment in which they evolved. The issues mentioned above are fundamental to the understanding of education and the classroom environment.

Overall, the project will promote cross-cultural understandings through shared experiences that enhance new international perspectives which will, in turn, impact Area Studies curriculum development and influence teaching about diversity for both American and Malawian educators. To achieve the stated objectives, this project is built upon well-designed site visits to various institutions in the country in both urban and rural areas, college campuses, primary and

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secondary schools, government and non-governmental institutions. The Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) at Domasi will host and facilitate this project in full collaboration with Mercer University.

The itinerary also focuses attention on informed interaction between the American seminar project team at Mercer University, the Malawi Institute of Education and its affiliates in the country to establish an ongoing collaborative Internet-based exchange program that will allow the participants and faculty from both nations to collaborate on curriculum development and cultural exchanges.

Objectives.

The specific objectives for this Area Studies Short-Term Seminar Project are: (1) to study the impact of the ecology and environment on cultures and history of Malawi; (2) to work individually and in teams to develop lesson plans, instructional strategies and curriculum resources to integrate international Area Studies into the K-12 curricula; (3) to collect pertinent environmental and cultural artifacts with the help of Malawian environmental specialists and students, educators, artists, the clergy, businesspeople, and government officials; (4) to train the project team members to be mentors and information sources to disseminate the results of the project to American K-12 school systems; and (5) to create an ongoing, online resource for collaborative opportunities for Americans and Malawians educators to engage in cross-cultural understandings. These five objectives are compatible with the International Education Programs' Goal # 5 – to enhance the quality and access to postsecondary and adult education by improving and internationalizing teacher education at Mercer University. This project also fulfills the Competitive Preference Priority II - Inclusion of K-12 educators for FY 2012, Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i) – CFDA 84.021A - Short-term projects abroad that develop and improve

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foreign language and/or area studies at elementary and secondary school levels. Our Area Studies Seminar Project will, therefore, enable the selected American educators to integrate what they will have learnt from Malawi into their own curricula when they return to their school districts in the Metro-Atlanta area as well as disseminate their experiences to a wider audience through meetings, seminars, presentations, publications and internet exchanges.

Rationale for the project and identification of local needs

Malawi has several ecological, environmental and educational issues that will be of particular importance to the selected US K-12 educators. The country is one of Africa's most densely populated countries; as a result, most of the arable land has been taken up by commercial plantations growing cash crops such as tobacco, tea and sugar while the communal land requires chemical fertilizers to support improved productivity. Land usage customs and cultural attitudes regarding the environment cause problems across Malawi. Deforestation and rapid population growth is also stripping much of the soil. Fish stocks are shrinking due to unsustainable fishing practices and non-compliance with fishing regulations. As a result, the country is suffering from ecological and environmental degradation which is affecting the socio-economic status of most Malawians' access to education. This makes Malawi an excellent location for a GPA Program focusing on cultural, ecological and educational issues as they relate to the environment. The problem of access notwithstanding, education is perhaps the most effective means of counteracting Malawi's environmental challenges. Environmental and cultural studies have therefore become a priority for inclusion in Malawi's school curriculum under the auspices of two autonomous institutions that greatly influence educational policy and practice in the country: The Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB), which oversees examinations, and the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), which plays a leading role in curriculum and professional

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development and in-service teacher education. Other institutions include the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT), a unit attached to the University of Malawi, which was established to undertake educational research studies; the Malawi National Commission for United Nations Education and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which links government ministries in the fields of education, science, culture, and communication; and the Malawi National Library Service, which is responsible for promoting, establishing, equipping, and managing national libraries. Two other institutions that are also involved in education on a smaller scale are: (1) the Ministry of Gender and Community Services, which is responsible for early childhood education and adult literacy, and (2) the Ministry of Labor which is responsible for technical education and vocational education and training.

Few American educators have undertaken significant study of Africa, yet Africa is a continent of major importance to the K-12 curriculum because of its historic and cultural links to the United States of America. Africa is a continent of vast unexploited resources that saw the genesis of humanity and cradle of the first human cultures. It is important to understand how Malawians survive and to know the state of the natural resources, the environment, and their influence on culture and education. In order to gain this understanding, it is imperative to carry out field studies and observations which will explore the cultural, ecological, and environmental factors that affect education along with the associated legislative initiatives that the country has put in place to manage cultural and educational issues as well as the environmental and natural resource base to attain sustainability. As a result of their participation in this project, the educators will enhance their pedagogical skills and impact generations of students in the US by broadening the students' cross-cultural, international, and global perspectives in the K-12 Interdisciplinary Area Studies curricula and in teacher education (See Form III, for Letters of

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Support). Although Malawi has been chosen as the specific location for this undertaking, it is recognized that the project themes are universal challenges that educators face anywhere in the world. By taking these participants outside of their normal environment, it is expected that they will begin to reflect more critically on these themes as they pertain to their profession. America, especially the Metro-Atlanta area, is credibly diverse and cultural influences from around the world are currently being felt in the highly diverse school system where the participants serve. Cultural, educational and environmental issues also continue to affect the communities we all live in. Therefore, a nuanced understanding of the interrelatedness of these three major themes will create more effective educators for the American K-12 school systems.

The National Council for the Social Studies: Interdisciplinary Social Studies Themes Standards Matrix Items under *Culture and Cultural Diversity; People, Places, and Environment, and Global Connections* will specifically be addressed by this project as will the Georgia Council for the Social Studies (GCSS) and the Georgia Leadership Association for the Social Studies (GLASS) standards (see Form IV – Evaluation - Themes 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9, pp 6 - 7). Georgia State educational standards require course content regarding Africa and African History at the Middle Grades and Secondary School levels. The participants will undertake the study of these concepts in an interdisciplinary (combining science, history art, religion etc), inquiry-oriented fashion in a contextualized environment. These in-country experiences will sensitize the participants regarding cultural, ecological and environmental influences on Area Studies curriculum and provide them an opportunity and incentive to develop their own classroom portfolios for teaching.

New Georgia curricula include international studies and inquiry learning at the elementary through high school levels. Therefore, the participants selected for this project will be

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able to see similarities and differences between fast growing urban areas in Malawi and the Metro-Atlanta area regarding issues of culture, urban poverty, pollution, environmental management, ecological degradation, and infrastructure and how these issues impact education.

(b) Plan of Management

This endeavor is feasible because of the professional experience and expertise of the Project Director, Curriculum Designer, and several key personnel from Mercer University and the Malawi Institute of Education. The Project Director, Dr. Zipangani Vokhiwa has successfully developed and managed international and academic exchange programs as well as national and regional projects. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Science at Mercer, teaching biology, life sciences, environmental studies and sustainability courses to non-science majors enrolled in education, business, counseling, criminal justice, human resources, and organizational leadership. In addition, Dr. Vokhiwa has a collegial relationship with the key faculty, cultural and environmental experts, and administrators in Malawi. The project facilitator in Malawi, Dr. William Susuwele Banda, is a US-trained Malawian, who is the current Executive Director of the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE). Dr Banda is a teacher educator, researcher and curriculum developer, a trained school inspector and book evaluator who has an extensive experience of hosting various national and international workshops, exchange programs and seminars at the Institute. Particularly, he has worked and hosted various groups, faculty and students from Virginia Tech, University of Texas at San Antonio, University of Texas at Austin, North Carolina State University, University of London (Institute of Education), and other Universities, Colleges and Curriculum Development Centers within Africa. The Curriculum Designer: Dr. Ismail Gyagenda is an Associate Professor of Education with the Tift College of Education at Mercer University, where he has been teaching Cultural Responsive Pedagogy and

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Educational Research for the past eleven years. A third Mercer faculty member who will be involved in the project during the pre-departure and orientation phase is Professor Chester Fontenot from the College of Liberal Arts. He is the current Head of the Africana Studies Department at Mercer University. Professor Fontenot will be responsible for teaching introduction to African cultural studies to the participants. A fourth Mercer University faculty, Dr Jabari Cain, is an Assistant Professor who teaches educational technology and professional development courses in the Tift College of Education. He will be responsible for managing the Mercer Professional Educators Network (MercerPEN) - an online social networking platform for students, faculty members and alumni of Mercer University. Members of MercerPEN are able to upload educational videos, create discussions, post photos, reply to blogs and much more while on the network. Thus far there have been a number of participants from all over the world who have partaken in the online dialogue via MercerPEN. Some other highlights include interactive classroom discussions, student showcases and weekly blogs by faculty members. Ms Kelly Jones, an instructor of instructional design and technology in the College of Professional and Continuing Studies (CCPS) will work in collaboration with Dr. Cain in managing our online platform for the social networks website that will be used by the American and Malawian educators for their collaboration. These key individuals will serve as institutional affiliates for the Area Studies Short-Term Seminar Project. (Please see page 22, Qualification of Key Personnel).

Seminar Schedule:

This project consists of three distinct phases: (1) Five Days Pre-Departure Preparation and Orientation consisting of a face-to-face seminar conducted by the project director, curriculum designer, and Mercer specialists and consultants, and a follow-up online conferencing

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with reading kits and annotated bibliographies supplied by the Area Studies: art, social studies, and science faculties at Mercer University campuses. Chichewa, Malawi's local national language will be introduced to the participants during this component; (2) Four Weeks Study - Travel in Malawi for field studies, data and material collection, and exposure to Chichewa language facilitated by Mercer University and the Malawi Institute of Education; and (3) Post-Trip integration of Interdisciplinary Area Studies Into the General Curriculum segment at Mercer University facilitated by the director, curriculum designer, and key faculty from Colleges of Education, Continuing and Professional Studies, and the Department of Africana Studies in the College of Liberal Arts will also include the online collaboration between the American and Malawian educators using MercerPEN and Ning.

Phase I: Pre-Departure Preparation and Orientation

Participation in the program will be highly selective (See p. 18 for Summary of Criteria for Participant Selection). The participants will be selected from a pool of applicants among practicing school administrators, as well as practicing teachers enrolled in teacher education programs at Mercer University. The administrators and teachers will be from the Metro-Atlanta area school districts. This process will provide the project a rich pool of prepared and motivated educators.

The selected participants will be given a thorough pre-departure orientation during a five-day seminar at Mercer University conducted by the project director, the curriculum designer, and other key faculty from the Colleges of Education and Liberal Arts. The participants will also receive and discuss required readings regarding Malawi history, ecology, education system, environment, and culture. They will also be introduced to Chichewa, the national language of Malawi, to provide them with basic language skills. The focus will be for them to learn how to

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discern useful curricular components while in country, how to integrate them in their Interdisciplinary Area Studies curriculum development, as well as how to use web-based communication tools, a value-added aspect of the proposal. The latter skills will be essential to the success of the project both before travel to and upon return from Malawi since they entail an essential theme of the project: “facilitating cooperation on an ongoing basis between the two nations and sets of schools”.

The participants will make contact with teachers who are pursuing continuing education at the Malawi Institute of Education. Readings, discussions, prospective contacts and personal goals will be conducted via the Internet using the MercerPEN and Ning - online platforms for the social networks. These systems will also be employed to connect the Malawian educators and specialists with the US participants before and after the field trip. The goal of this online community outreach is to enrich the American educators’ experience in curriculum development by connecting them with both aspiring and current teachers in the US and in Malawi. (See Form I for the Schedule of the Pre-Departure Orientation at Mercer University). The participants will be prepared to become members of an online community during the orientation, which will model their group participation after their return from Malawi.

Phase II: Four Weeks Study-Travel in Malawi

Upon arrival in Malawi, the group will visit the U.S. Counsel for a briefing and orientation; Dr. Vokhiwa will reiterate the expectations and goals for the trip. Each day thereafter, the project director and/or curriculum designer and the Malawi facilitator will provide a briefing on the plans for each particular day.

Each of the proposed field sites will offer the participants one or more of the following activities: (1) lectures or discussions on educational, ecological/environmental, historical, and

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cultural topics conducted by appropriate experts; (2) school or campus visits supervised by teachers or principals focused on science curriculum and pedagogy; (3) visitations with local, regional, or national officials, businesses, cooperatives and other groups focused on discussions of relevance to the project's concerns; (4) building cooperative educational relationships and investigations of infrastructure and the feasibility of Internet-based communication and; (5) the development of the database of contacts, resources, artifacts for cataloguing and retrieval. In all cases, local academic officials, business or government leaders, and artists will lead the above activities and guide discussions of various topics relevant to the project.

The goal is immersion in Malawi culture and practice, not the imposition of American premises and predispositions. Our participants will interact with each of the Malawi colleagues and experts with earnest interest, and informed dialogue, describing their own classrooms and teaching/research interests and sharing their questions freely.

At each site, participants will be allowed considerable time to pursue their own research/pedagogical interests using libraries, schools and resource persons located near each of the places we will be housed. On weekends, we will attempt to make available recreational activities that will provide further insight into the local culture and society, such as visits to museums, historical sites, national monuments, and natural wonders indigenous to Malawi's landscape. Due to the dangers of over-programming, these additional options will often be voluntary, so that the participants will have sufficient free time for critical thought, independent exploration, and quiet relaxation and completing their personal journals for their final report.

Schedule of Activities by Site

End of May 2013: Pre-departure workshop at Mercer University.

June 2013: Continuing Orientation via Web-based participation.

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July 2013: Four-week field research and materials acquisition in Malawi.

August-December 2013: Post-trip research/study dissemination in Georgia.

(See Form I for Tentative Daily Schedule for Four-weeks of Study-Travel in Malawi.)

Phase III: Post -Trip Integration of Area Studies Into the General Curriculum

This project will promote the integration of International Area Studies into the general curriculum of Mercer University and participating Metro-Atlanta K-12 school systems through an inquiry approach. The participants will draw upon the Malawi resources, such as the people, texts, artifacts, videos, and audio, to develop an accurate portrayal of the country. Upon their return, the participants will become resource people on Malawi and make presentations at local, state and regional education and environmental education conferences and the rest of the Education students/student body at Mercer using their experience chronicled in their personal journals and observations while in Malawi. After our return from Malawi, each participant will prepare his/her portfolio. In addition, they will meet individually with Professors Gyagenda, Fontenot and Vokhiwa to discuss completion of their course work and plans for additional study. Each participant will also develop a series of integrated lesson plans on Malawi that follows the Mercer Lesson Plan as well as the Metro-Atlanta school district formats, and prepare to teach the lessons in their classrooms. Further, each participant will design a presentation proposal based on the Area Studies Short-Term Seminar Project for presentation at the annual Georgia Educational Research Association (GERA) conference as a requirement for the course they are registered for during the project, or write an article based on their experience in Malawi to submit to journals for publication.

The participants will also collaborate and exchange ideas about each of their proposed activities with their colleagues in both the US and Malawi. A system will be devised to ensure

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how they can best share completed projects as well as teaching and community service experiences. The Internet-based communication tools will be the most efficient and effective methods of collaboration and information sharing, not only among project participants, but also among the new colleagues and contacts in Malawi developed during our sojourn. Participants will post their projects on MercerPen and Ning. Using this on-line web-based service, the participants and other teachers and professors across the nation will be able to access web-based resources to further enhance their discussions and share information and up-dates for improvement of their classroom lessons and curricula. Such a network will also provide opportunities for dialogue and for connecting the users with Malawi subject matter experts and other Malawi students and teachers to encourage introspection and analysis.

The development of the Internet-based resources envisioned in this project requires experience and computer expertise that will be supplied by Mercer University IT professors and specialists from the Colleges of Education and Continuing and Professional Studies. These experts will supervise the development of online web-based programs and maintain the course management system that will comprise the medium for ongoing communication, storage of electronic materials gleaned during the in country portion of the trip, and accessing database for submission and retrieval of materials. Finally, an objective and thorough survey will be administered to all the participants to evaluate all aspects of the field experience, especially in terms of content, administration, quality of teaching and overall impact. The participants will be encouraged to suggest ways of improving the experience for future seminar and study abroad groups.

(c) How the Objectives of the Project Relate to the Purpose of the Program

Mercer University shares a commitment toward improving the quality of interdisciplinary

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global education. The purpose of our project is to develop, improve, and integrate Interdisciplinary Area Studies at elementary and secondary schools in the US by: (1) increasing the knowledge and sensitivity of participants in regard to Africa generally and to Malawi specifically; (2) developing interdisciplinary curriculum materials that will advance the study of culture and the environment of Malawi in the schools and school districts in which our participants will teach; (3) disseminating regionally as well as nationally the materials which the participants will develop and; (4) encouraging participants' involvement in workshops, professional meetings, and public programs which will increase knowledge about Malawi in communities throughout the south-eastern and other parts of United States.

The aforementioned purpose is directly related to the five project objectives:

(1) to study the impact of ecology and environment on cultures and history of Malawi; (2) to work individually and in teams to develop lesson plans, instructional strategies and curriculum resources to integrate international area studies into the K-12 curricula; (3) to collect pertinent environmental and cultural artifacts with the help of Malawian environmental specialists and students, educators, artists, the clergy, businesspeople, and government officials; (4) to train team members to be mentors and information sources to disseminate the results of the project to American K-12 school systems; and (5) to create an ongoing, online resource for collaborative opportunities for Americans and Malawians educators to engage in cross-cultural understandings.

(d) The Use of Resources and Personnel to Achieve the Program Objectives.

The seminar will develop, improve and integrated Interdisciplinary Area Studies at participating Metro-Atlanta K-12 schools and teacher education at Mercer University by utilizing their resources and personnel to achieve the five objectives listed above by:

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(1) Photographing Malawian architecture (i.e.Chewa and Ngoni village compounds in southern Malawi and the urban skylines of contemporary cities) for the compilation of power-point presentations and accompanying narratives which relate Malawian architecture to its history and its ethnic/cultural diversity; (2) Collecting examples of Malawian music, traditional and/or contemporary; (3) Interviewing Malawian teachers about environmental education; (4) Collecting examples of Malawi's multilingual society through local newspapers, magazines, and books; (5) Interviewing teachers, government officials, professors, and educational administrators to compare the educational systems of Malawi and the United States of America; (6) Collecting information on folk medicine from various Malawian ethnic groups and comparing those plant based remedies to traditional medicines used by various ethnic groups in America; (7) Comparing higher education in Malawi and the United States of America by visiting Malawian university campuses and collecting their brochures, informational packets, student publications, etc.; (8) Collecting examples of arts and crafts from various Malawian cultures, and learning about the meaning of these objects by interviewing people of those cultures; and (9) Visiting college campuses and schools, participating in lectures and discussions offered by Malawian educators, artists/artisans, NGO's, and government leaders.

All these materials will be organized in an online resource for access by educators throughout Georgia to facilitate collaborative opportunities for Malawian and American students and teachers.

These activities will necessitate the assistance of Dr. Susuwele Banda of the Malawi Institute of Education and various local consultants who will arrange interviews with appropriate experts and visits to relevant sites. The Project Director and the Curriculum Designer will insure

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that appropriate cultural artifacts and environmental specimens are collected or recorded for the participants' portfolios, with full consultation with all the key experts and personnel at Mercer University and in Malawi. Given the resourcefulness of our seminar participants, the resulting materials should succeed in reflecting Malawi's diverse and vibrant cultures, ecology, education and environment. Specific contexts for classroom application may include lessons on history, civics, government, geography, culture, art, literature, music, religion, and environmental policy.

(e) Summary

During this project, the participants will collaborate to study significant subject matter by visiting Malawi, a less studied but important part of the world. Experiencing and living in a different culture will help the participants to collect data and research materials that will enable them to conduct research and create projects. These experiences that will enhance their future teaching in developing their own materials for their own curriculum to use in their classes as they systematically learn the culture, education system, environment and language of Malawi. In so doing, the process will promote cultural understanding and appreciation of the differences amongst the Malawian and American educators.

This exposure will also allow the participating schools in the Metro-Atlanta area to integrate international perspectives within their curricula. Overall, participants will be encouraged to consider Africa, specifically Malawi, within the context of multiple disciplinary perspectives. They will examine, compare, and reconsider their own conceptions related to African peoples, societies and cultures, and natural systems and their interrelationships.

In addition to working with local educators in schools and colleges in Malawi, the participants will utilize the telecommunications infrastructure and use the Internet for communication and resource sharing. Seminars on local arts and crafts; visits to markets; visits

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to schools and study of environmental education and religious traditions and the peaceful relationship between those faiths will also be indispensable parts of the project. We will rely heavily on institutional linkages and personal contacts regarding this initiative. Fortunately, our group will benefit from our prior experiences to ensure an effective educational program.

All projects of this nature are subject to unforeseen contingencies. With the many sources of support locally, we will be prepared and able to make appropriate alterations in our plans should any activities need modification. Our participants will see close-up the intrinsic value of networking and personal friendships in negotiating the complex and fascinating aspects of Malawi's environment, life and culture. The Project Director, Dr. Vokhiwa has extensive experience in these kinds of projects in Malawi. He has led two Mercer on Mission (MoM) field trips to Malawi in the summers of 2010 and 2011 respectively. Dr. Vokhiwa also supervised other international students from University of Arizona who visited Malawi on an environmental monitoring project study tours under a USAID funded Malawi Environmental Monitoring Program (MEMP). While working at Kennesaw State University, Dr. Vokhiwa obtained a grant that facilitated him to lead two faculties on a scouting mission to Malawi in 2005 and 2006, respectively, to meet with various stakeholders and experts who would participate in the Study Abroad exchange program between Kennesaw State University and the University of Malawi. Our Malawi facilitator, Dr. Banda has hosted various international groups of faculty and students from Virginia Tech, University of Texas at San Antonio, University of Texas at Austin, North Carolina State University, University of London (Institute of Education). These international students and faculty were provided with amenities and infrastructure that facilitated their Area Studies in the country. Therefore, our Integrated Area Studies project will benefit from the Director's and the facilitator's experience and the already existing infrastructure in Malawi.

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(f) Selection of participants

A committee composed of the project director, the curriculum designer, and two additional Mercer University faculty members from Colleges of Education Continuing and Professional Studies will select the twelve participants from a pool of applicants for the five-week program. Applicants will be solicited from the Metro-Atlanta School Districts and from Mercer's Tift College of Education, and other related majors at Mercer University. We will aim for a mixture of participants from different disciplines in education with specialties in Math, Science, and Social Studies in order to enhance interdisciplinary learning opportunities. We will also seek diversity with regard to disability, ethnicity, and gender.

(g) Summary of Criteria for Participant Selection

The criteria for selecting participants will include: (1) a narrative of intent explaining how the Area Studies Project will influence changes in their professional practice; (2) three recommendation letters from a peer, their principal, and their professor or administrative superior; (3) a current resume/vitae. For the ten practicing teachers, the following additional criteria will apply: (1) a Clear Renewable Certificate and a contract to teach the next year; (2) at least three years of teaching in K-12 Math, Science, or Social studies; and (3) evidence of accomplishments in teaching. For the two administrators, they must have served in school administration for a minimum of three years and currently serving in Metro-Atlanta area, and must show evidence of collaborative initiatives and high leadership skills. (These selection criteria will be shared with the Malawi facilitator, Dr. Banda at the Malawi Institute of Education, to consider it or use some of the criteria, for the selection of Malawian educators who will be part of the collaboration with the American educators).

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The goal of this Interdisciplinary Area Studies project is to provide K-12 educators an opportunity to experience Malawian culture, education, ecology, and environment. Top priority will be given to persons with minimal prior experience abroad whose interests reflect a strong international commitment and whose participation will produce positive outcomes for their colleagues and students, local communities and their own professional development. Equal consideration will be given to applications from those with physical disabilities as dictated by fairness and equity as well as by institutional policy and federal law. Mercer University is committed to equal access as well as to diversity. As such, the university will provide equal access and treatment to all participants regardless of age, race, color, creed, gender, national origin, handicap or veteran's status. Specifically, the project will include a membership that is diverse in its composition as well as being sensitive to issues of accessibility. A \$1500 scholarship fund, provided by Mercer University, will be available for qualified needy applicants during the selection process. Mercer University is committed to providing faculty, staff, and students with an environment where they may pursue their careers or studies free from discrimination.

Regarding American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, it must be remembered that the project requires long flights, in excess of ten hours, on confined commercial aircraft and occasional five to seven hour journeys in cramped vehicles. In addition, appropriate public amenities for certain physical conditions will not be available in most of the places on our itinerary. Although provision can and will be made as feasible, persons with certain conditions may find it difficult to participate. In any case we will make every effort to make applicants aware of any problems or risks they may encounter and make all possible accommodations.

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2. Quality of Key Personnel

(I) Project Director:

Dr. Zipangani Vokhiwa is qualified to be a project director because of his academic background, his experience in leading programs, and traveling/living abroad and his advocacy as a diversity/international facilitator. He is an Assistant Professor of Science at Mercer University, Georgia for the past five years. He served in the Malawi Government Civil Service for twenty four and half years. He worked as Deputy Director of Environmental Affairs in the Ministry of Research and Environmental Affairs, where he managed two major projects: (1) The Malawi National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) - a US\$ 389,000.00 United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) funded project and (2) Participatory Plant Breeding, Agro-biodiversity, Indigenous Knowledge and Gender Analysis - a CAN \$580.760 jointly funded by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). He also managed a number of projects including the establishment of Malawi Canada Dairy Development Farm funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In addition, Dr. Vokhiwa worked as Regional Director and Representative for Southern Africa for The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) International, Gland, Switzerland based in Harare, Zimbabwe. He was in-charge of over US \$1.5 million budget for regional conservation projects in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia. At Kennesaw State University, Georgia, he obtained a \$7,600 grant from the Georgia University System that facilitated him and two faculties to travel to Malawi in 2005 and 2006, respectively on a scouting mission to explore the establishment of the Study Abroad exchange program. At Mercer University, he has won two grants totaling \$140,000.00 to lead Mercer

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University undergraduate and graduate students on a Mercer on Mission (MoM) service learning project to Malawi in June 2010 and June 2011, respectively

(ii) Curriculum Designer:

Dr. Ismail Gyagenda is an Associate Professor of Education with the Tift College of Education at Mercer University, where he has taught for eleven years. He is in the Graduate teacher program at Mercer University where he teaches students pursuing certification in the MAT program, as well as practicing teachers seeking advanced M.Ed, Specialist (Ed.S), and Ph.D in Curriculum and Instruction degrees. He teaches Culturally and Educationally Responsive Pedagogy to all MAT and M. Ed students. In that class, Dr. Gyagenda uses authentic cultural immersion activities and lesson plan development to engage teachers and student teachers on becoming effective teachers for diverse students. He also teaches Research and Assessment courses as well as “the Global Age” course that orients teachers to think critically and prepare their K-12 students as global citizens. His research interests include measurement, assessment, and multi-cultural issues in education. In the fall of 2010, Professor Gyagenda spent his sabbatical in Uganda researching on elders’ perspectives on informal education in an African village. He will be responsible for guiding the participants in integrating what they have learnt from Malawi into their lessons when they return to their Metro-Atlanta classrooms and work places. Dr. Gyagenda will also be responsible for the pre, post – trip, and follow up attitude change surveys. These key individuals will serve as institutional affiliates for the Area Studies Short-term Project.

(iii) In-Country Coordinator:

Dr. William Susuwele-Banda, is the Executive Director of the Malawi Institute of Education, who has an extensive experience of hosting various international seminars at the

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Institute. Particularly, he has worked and hosted various groups, faculty and students from Virginia Tech, University of Texas at San Antonio, University of Texas at Austin, North Carolina State University, University of London (Institute of Education), and other Universities, Colleges and Curriculum Development Centers within Africa. His participation in this Area Studies Project and ability to host our participants at the Malawi Institute of Education will be a value-added opportunity for the project. In addition, he will be responsible for teaching curriculum development to the participants while at the Institute. The Malawi Institute of Education has adequate IT capacity with a modern computer laboratory and an audio visual centre with high-tech equipment capable of recording, editing both digital and analogue video recording. The audio visual center has highly motivated and experienced personnel capable of developing videos to suit specific needs and demands. The center is a winner of a highly competitive “2011 Japan Award”, which is open to all nations’ worldwide demonstrating creativity and innovative ways of supporting teachers and schools.

(iv) Technology Specialists:

Dr Jabari Cain an Assistant Professor of Educational Technology in the Tift College of Education and Ms Kelly Jones, an Instructor of Instructional Design and Technology in the College of Professional and Continuing Studies (CCPS) will be responsible for managing the MercerPEN and Ning - our online platform for the social networks website that will be used in the project to facilitate the on-going collaboration between the American and Malawian educators.

Another key faculty member who will be involved in the project is Professor Chester Fontenot from the College of Liberal Arts – Department of Africana Studies at Mercer University. Dr. Fontenot is distinguished professor in African American Studies who has

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managed international student exchange projects. He will be responsible for teaching introduction to African American Studies aspect of the project to the participants during their Pre-departure preparation and orientation as well as follow up surveys and evaluation upon their return (See Form II-Curriculum Vitae for Key Personnel).

Malawian consultants and presenters for this project will include: (1) Environmental Education Consultant: Mr. Daulos D. C. Mauambeta, Esq. who is a Barrister and former Executive Director of The Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM), Malawi's oldest environmental education organization. Mr. Mauambeta is also a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow. He will teach environmental education to the participants; (2) the Director of Museums and Culture will teach cultural and social aspects of the Malawian people; (3) Professor Sosten Chiotha, the Regional Director of Leaders in Environment and Development (LEAD), will teach the interconnection of environmental leadership and development; and (4) Professor James Seyani, General Manager for the Malawi National Herbarium and Botanical Gardens (NHBG), will teach biodiversity conservation and preservation. Other Malawian specialist presenters during the four-week field trip will be the Directors of Environmental Affairs; Education Planning; Land Resource Conservation; Women, Gender and Community Services; and a religious expert, the Very Rev. Silas Ncozana of Zomba Theological College in Malawi who will teach the participants the connection between religion and culture.

(c) Time Commitment of Key Personnel.

Because a project of this type requires extensive planning, both logistically and substantively, the director and curriculum designer are committed to a time consuming endeavor before, during and after the overseas portion of the project. Mercer University and The Malawi Institute of Education will provide a variety of supporting administrative services, facilities, and

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materials.

Dr. Vokhiwa is responsible for the overall management and success of this program and therefore has the largest time commitment. During the academic year, he will devote 10% of his time to this GPA project (in recruitment, presentations, selection, communication, and logistics for pre-departure, four-week field trip, and post-travel seminar/workshop) prior to May 2013 and after return from Malawi. From May to August 2013, Dr. Gyagenda and Dr. Vokhiwa will work on the project on an on-going basis. They will also devote a considerable amount of time to the follow-up activities in collaboration with Professor Fontenot at Mercer University. Dr. Cain and Ms Jones will continue working on the online website to further facilitate the two-nation collaboration between the American and Malawian educators. Faculty involved in the selection committee and pre-departure orientation will allot the time necessary to perform the duties described in the preceding paragraphs. Dr. Banda, the Malawian in-country coordinator and facilitator, and his staff will devote time to the project beforehand to complete the necessary logistical arrangements for accommodations, transportation, excursions and will be available full-time while we are in Malawi. These time allocations of the project's key personnel should be more than adequate to enable us to achieve the project's goals.

(d) Non-biased Employment Selection.

Mercer University is committed to equal access as well as to non-discrimination. As such, the institution provides equal access and treatment to all employees regardless of age, race, color, creed, sex, national origin, handicap or veteran's status. Every effort is being made to encourage the recruitment of historically under-represented groups, particularly women and members of racial minorities, in the positions associated with this project.

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3. Budget Narrative and Cost Effectiveness

(a) Adequacy of the Budget

The budget (see - Budget Narrative Form for Detailed Line-Item and Budget Narrative Justification) has been drafted in consultation with LetsUTravel, Inc. travel agent that serves Mercer University's international travel. The in-country coordinator and facilitator was consulted and provided first-hand advice and details useful to the cost-effectiveness of this proposal. To this end, four aspects were taken into consideration: the safety and security of the participant, the feasibility of the project, the affordability and competitiveness. When project figures for international travel and local expenses in Malawi are added to the project-related costs in the United States of America, a total budget of \$107,820.00 is projected. Of this projected total, \$86,320.00 is being requested from the United States Department of Education. Mercer is committed to providing a total of \$15, 000.00; \$8,000.00 in cash and \$7,000.00 in kind.

(b) Cost Effectiveness of the Budget:

The budget breakdown shows a healthy balance in cost sharing between Mercer University, the individual participants, and the United States Department of Education. As required in the Fulbright-Hays guidelines, all expenses in the United States of America in connection with recruitment, orientation, and pre and post-project evaluation and follow-up survey and activities are being borne by Mercer University or the Fulbright-Hays participants.

The project cost to participants will be approximately \$500 per person, including health insurance, malaria prophylactics, the expenses of their required participation in the pre-departure orientation, and their round-trip travel to the Mercer campus and to the Atlanta airport. The \$500 per person cost does not include personal expenses in Malawi, such as laundry. In determining the per-person contribution of Fulbright-Hays participants, the rationale is aimed at a fair amount that would not limit the pool of applicants to the financially well-off. Mercer University will

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provide a \$1,500 scholarship fund for qualified needy applicants. The entire budget is thus reasonable and cost-effective (see - Budget Narrative Form for Detailed Line-Item and Budget Narrative Justification).

4. Evaluation Plan

1. Plan:

An evaluation conducted in three phases will be an integral part of the experience for both the participants and the project director. This will occur continuously throughout the program. Formative and summative assessments will be used to provide feedback to insure that the activities in each phase maximize the impact of the project for the participants as well the key personnel. Qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis will be used (see Form IV, Table 1- Objectives and Criteria).

Phase I: During the pre-departure seminar, the selected participants will be engaged in a study of Malawian local language (Chichewa), culture and environment. Georgia curriculum standards related to global studies will be reviewed and distributed for use during and after the field project. A series of surveys and questionnaires will be used to evaluate the participants during the pre-departure phase. Qualitative and quantitative data from these will be used to evaluate participant growth in content understanding. Additionally, participants will be given curriculum materials relevant to Georgia K – 12 standards, to set expectations for the entire learning experience. Awareness of their current knowledge and expectations will assist the project director, the curriculum designer and the Mercer University faculty in fine-tuning planned activities to better meet the needs of all the participants.

During the pre-departure orientation workshop, participants will complete a written pre- and post-test evaluation/survey form that will solicit feedback about the effectiveness of the pre-

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travel activities. In addition, the participants' personal and professional beliefs about diversity will be assessed pre-departure and upon completion of the project (See Form IV, pp. 17-18). Participation in this project should result in greater cultural competency or sensitivity that will benefit the participants with their work in the diverse Metro-Atlanta communities where they serve. Participants will also complete a pre- and post-test Survey on Sub-Saharan Africa to evaluate their level of awareness on the region and whether the field trip has impacted their knowledge base on Africa (See Form IV, p. 19).

Phase II: Throughout the field trip in Malawi, participants' understanding of Malawi culture and environment will be evaluated daily using a variety of formative assessment tools. Participants will keep daily journals that will review the day's experience and record their increasing knowledge of Malawi culture and environment as well as curricular ideas for incorporating in their Integrated Area Studies praxis. The Project Director or Curriculum Designer will hold daily discussions with the participants of their experiences and impressions, and will review the journals and help participants refine their critical thinking about the culture-ecology-environment connection and curricular applications. The Project Director will also use these discussions to get feedback about the day's program in order to glean ideas on how or if the experience can be improved. These daily observations, journal reviews, and artifact collections are the primary data collection methods for formative feedback.

Although the Chichewa language is not a competitive priority, the project will challenge participants to improve their foreign language appreciation by asking them to learn at least five vocabulary words and one phrase daily, and by completing the Chichewa Learning Materials on-line. Progress will be assessed very informally by way of contests and discussions.

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Phase III: When the participants return to the Mercer Campus, Dr. Vokhiwa and Dr. Gyagenda will conduct a post-assessment with the participants that will address the same questions as were addressed in the pre-assessment. The results will provide a measure of the increase in content knowledge as a result of participation in the program.

As part of the exit criteria for graduation from the Tift College of Education all students are required to assemble an electronic portfolio at both the initial and advanced levels of study via “Live Text”, The Professional Education Unit’s instrument for evaluating student growth. The framework is the underlying foundation for teacher education and educational leadership programs and is organized around the theme, “The Transforming Practitioner,” which honors, appreciates, nurtures, and demonstrates the ability to address diversity in the classroom. It uses knowledge of and sensitivity to diversities of people to create environments, design curricular goals, and plan for and employ instructional and assessment methods and resources. The ten student participants in our GPA will create portfolios that will meet the diversity requirements of the Tift College of Education program portfolios. A detailed rubric for portfolio evaluation is available on-line at http://www2.mercer.edu/Education/LiveText/rubrics_for_portfolios.htm.

In addition to the electronic portfolio, participants will also develop physical portfolios including journals, artifacts, contact information and internet resources in Malawi, and curriculum development plans, which will be assessed on an on-going basis.

A third assessment will take place within the integrated lesson plans the student participants will design. The lesson plans will be reviewed for accuracy and for appropriate incorporation of the field journals and resources collected during the experience in Malawi. The administrator participants will complete a survey on what they have learnt and collected and how they plan to use this knowledge to make Area Studies curricula changes in their K-12 school

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systems where they serve. The review will be done by the Curriculum Designer. He will work with the participants before, during and after the overseas portion of the GPA to insure the completion of their Live Text portfolios through the following seven processes: Stage 1: Defining instructional goals; Stage 2: Connecting the goals with the Georgia Performance Standards; Stage 3: Developing performance objectives; Stage 4: Selecting an instructional method; Stage 5: Assembling instructional material; Stage 6: Planning and conducting formative evaluation; and Stage 7: Planning and conducting summative evaluation.

There will also be a debriefing for summative evaluation and assessment, which will be useful for the participants as well as the project director in preparing a final report for the U.S. Department of Education. The debriefing will consist of a self-rating instrument and a questionnaire. The Curriculum Designer will carry out these evaluations. He will design the evaluation plan, develop the instruments, conduct the data collection, and analyze the results for the final report. As a culminating evaluation activity that will assess the quality and value of the full project, participants will be asked to prepare journal articles and/or conference presentations which will help disseminate the results of the project. These will be developed and submitted in the months following the study. (See Form IV, for a draft of formative and summative evaluation material). In addition, Dr. Gyagenda will carry out a survey on participants' attitude change before departure and after arrival from Malawi. The aim of this survey will be to find out whether the Area Studies Program has contributed to attitude change towards African, and specifically Malawian, environment and its associated culture. A standard pre and post survey form will be given to all the participants and then evaluated.

External Evaluation:

In addition to the above mentioned internal evaluations, Mercer University will engage

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the services of an external evaluator Dr. Robert Shoenberg. Dr. Shoenberg is a Senior Fellow with the Association of American Colleges and Universities. He is a frequent evaluator for the Department Of Education and other federally funded programs. He will examine the entire project including the qualitative and quantitative data collected during both the pre-and post departure and determine to what extent the project has met its goals and objectives. His evaluation will include individual interviews with each participant. The external evaluator's feed-back will also assist the project director in his preparation for a final summative report outlining the findings of the project and an overall achievement of the program for submission to the Department of Education.

Dr Shoenberg has been consultant to colleges and universities, higher education associations and government agencies on matters related to undergraduate education for twenty years. He has worked with more than 225 institutions. He has been an external evaluator for several multi-institutional grants as well as individual institutional projects and programs. Prior to his consulting work he served for fourteen years as Dean for Undergraduate Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. For eight years he was a member of the board of education of a large school system. He holds a doctorate in English literature from the University of Michigan.

5. Adequacy of Resources

The project benefits from an extensive wealth of experience and expertise of Dr. Vokhiwa and Dr. Gyagenda at Mercer University and Dr. Banda of the Malawi Institute of Education whose numerous contacts will assure linkages needed to make this project successful and meaningful for the participants. The financial support available will also guarantee the success and wide impact of the project. Mercer University is providing \$15,000 in matching

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funds: \$8,000 in cash and \$7,000 in kind, to cover the salaries and benefits of the Mercer Short-Term Seminar Project team and other related seminar expenses. The director and curriculum designer are committed to a time consuming endeavor before, during and after the seminar experience.

Participants will also be contributing to their experience financially. Each participant will pay \$500 of the overall expenses of travel. In addition, participants will cover their own expenses to attend the required pre-travel seminar, including, in some instances, lodging in addition to meals, and some books and other supplies to be purchased in Malawi. Finally, a four-week trip abroad requires the payment of incidental and personal fees, such as passports, taxi fares, laundry, and unscheduled meals or emergency situations, all of which will be the responsibilities of each individual participant. As indicated earlier, Mercer University will provide a \$1500 scholarship fund for qualified needy student applicants.

The phases of this project that will take place in the USA will utilize considerable resources of Mercer University, including but not limited to the following: (1) Meeting spaces for the pre-departure orientation week; audiovisual equipment and resources; and duplicating facilities for orientation materials, curricular development projects, and their dissemination; (2) Personnel and faculty from Mercer University Finance/Business Office, with fiscal and administrative experience in the successful management of grants, Dr. Vokhiwa and Ms Kelly Jones from the College of Continuing and Professional Studies (CCPS), Dr. Gyagenda and Dr. Cain from Tift College of Education, Professor Fontenot from the Africana Studies Program in College of Liberal Arts; and (3) Appropriate networks for disseminating the Interdisciplinary Area Studies Short-term Project experience and research materials through local workshops, professional meetings, and contacts with K-12 schools and educational cooperatives.

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The Malawi Institute of Education staff, likewise, possesses ample resources for the successful implementation of this project, including extensive experience in coordinating Study Abroad and exchange programs with other American and UK Universities. Further, Malawi Institute of Education enjoys cordial relations with the individual specialists, institutions, and organizations which are featured in the itinerary of this project. Other Malawian institutions that have agreed to participate in the field activities are: University of Malawi's College of Education, the Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust (MMCT), the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM), the National Herbarium and Botanical gardens (NHBG), Leaders in Environment and Development (LEAD), Government departments and agencies in Community Development and Gender, Economic Planning, Education, Environment. These partners will be provided with adequate information, materials and briefing from the Malawi facilitator, Dr. Banda. Participants will also be provided with texts and information on these partners during the pre-departure seminar to enable them to be well-prepared and familiar with the works and mandates of these partners before undertaking the project.

6. Potential Impact

The design of this GPA Short-Term Seminar Project aims to promote curricular development and teaching proficiency in Integrated Area Studies in US schools and teacher education programs at Mercer University and the Metro-Atlanta area school systems or districts.

Participants in the project will gain an awareness of and appreciation for the cultural, ecological, economic, historical, political, and social environment of contemporary Malawi. The project will also advance Mercer's strategic plan that emphasizes promoting global and interdisciplinary studies and enhance its connection with the African continent. The participants' first-hand experience of Malawi's people and environments will also engender a depth of

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understanding unattainable merely through an American-based course or workshop. The project will further enhance the participants' appreciation for African culture and environment and pedagogical skills in their school systems. They will also become African Studies resource persons and promoters of global education in their school districts and communities.

The project participants will also be able to establish continuing linkages with those they have visited throughout Malawi. As already stated, MercerPen and Ning will be an added-value instrument that will connect the US participants with their counterparts in Malawi. Networks of communication between the project participants and their Malawian counterparts can remain useful and vital in future years through the continuing exchange of personal and professional news, teaching ideas, and curriculum development materials. Malawian classrooms will be connected to American classrooms to enhance cross-cultural understanding. This will be accomplished through website which will be accessed by the participants and other interested students both in the US and Malawi K-12 schools and colleges.

The production of curriculum materials and the establishment of website will be the project's most tangible and enduring outcomes. Through the means of dissemination previously described in this narrative, these research materials will benefit educators throughout the US, well beyond those directly participating in the Area Studies Short-Term Seminar Project.

From interaction with participating educators, faculty from Colleges of Continuing and Professional Studies (CCPS), Education, and Liberal Arts-Africana Studies at Mercer University will continue to learn about issues, problems and concepts outside their usual domains of teaching and research. Upon returning to the US, the faculty will continue to collaborate on interdisciplinary area studies courses, projects and special presentations based on the shared experiences. They will also be available to consult with future groups of faculty, teachers and

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students who plan to embark upon similar study abroad programs, Fulbright-Hays Group Projects, or other internationalizing experiences in Malawi and other developing nations.

Based on literature from other prior experiences in some African and developing countries, educators participating in similar Area Studies Short-Term Seminar Project will have a significant impact on their schools and communities upon their return. The project director and curriculum designer will contact local news media for coverage, including major features, especially in local papers where the participants originate from. The participants will be encouraged to give presentations, not only for their own institutions, but also in other schools in their respective areas and beyond. The participants will also be encouraged to address community groups such as Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, various school districts and various religious congregations in addition to their required professional presentations. They will be required to prepare unit and integrated lesson plans on Malawi for their praxis when they return to their school systems to improve their pedagogical skills, teaching and administration.

The participants will utilize the data and research materials they acquired in seminar papers and, in some cases, build Masters Theses from the project. They will keep in touch with each other, share their successes and failures and motivate each other to keep the project alive and salient in their personal and professional lives. Beyond these personal benefits, the project commits the participants to an ongoing partnership with schools, individual teachers, administrators, and education specialists in Malawi and the prospect of building an ever growing database and resource online for other teachers and researchers. The impact of the project, therefore, is potentially more far-reaching than similar projects that depend upon a temporary or static connection with the host country and their personnel. This project forecasts a living and expanding community of educators who will interact and exchange ideas and concerns on a

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regular basis. The participants will provide digital record of what they have accomplished from the project and they will be encouraged to share their experiences at local, state, regional and national environmental and educational seminars and conferences in the US.

7. Project's Relevance to Institutional Development

Mercer University has long been involved in international studies and research and is firmly committed to international education and global perspectives in education through its Study Abroad Program, Mercer on Mission (MoM) programs among others whose main objective is to blend service learning and engage Mercer students in serving peoples and cultures. Some of the countries where these international service learning programs have been conducted include Brazil, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Greece, Guatemala, Kenya, Italy, Liberia, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, Trinidad, and Vietnam. *Mercer University's Tift College of Education is the largest private preparer of teachers in the state of Georgia.* The College has for the last four years been taking teachers and student teachers to the Ricks Institute in Liberia for summer study-abroad program. At the Institute, the participants engage in collaborative teaching with the Liberian staff and are immersed in the daily activities of the staff and the students of the institute. Likewise, from their experiences in Malawi these participating educators will provide their students with new insights and examples different from the Eurasian perspective so characteristic of most American texts and lesson plans. Reaching out to the local community on international issues is a high priority for Mercer University. Apart from teachers trained from Mercer University's Tift College of Education and the College of Continuing and Professional Services, participants from Mercer's Department of Africana Studies and the College of Liberal Arts will also benefit from this integrated Interdisciplinary Area Studies Short-Term Seminar Project.

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Offering a program in Malawi will fulfill Mercer University's objective of increasing the numbers of students studying internationally. This project will therefore help Mercer University promote diversity in Study Abroad initiatives, which is one of the major goals of the institution. Further, Mercer University is committed through its programming to internationalize curricula and student populations, using web-based courses and degree programs to diversify their delivery models. This project will enhance efforts already underway to achieve these goals.

8. Need for Overseas Experience through the Proposed Project

There is a great need to bring to American schools and classrooms a perspective that allows students to understand and appreciate the views of people throughout the world. Our proposed project will provide a rare opportunity for participants to observe the complex web of ecology, culture, and the environment that affects the socio-economic issues facing most countries in Southern-central Africa as they struggle to provide a better future for their people. Since the events of September 11th, Americans are more keenly aware that events in far away places impact their lives. However, television "sound bites" and passive reading in the library and exploring the Internet are no substitute for first-hand experiences.

Over a period of four weeks, the group will see, hear and interact with educators, decision makers, and community leaders in Malawi that are presently determining what forms of economic development, educational opportunity, and global promotion of indigenous knowledge will best serve their needs. This group project will strengthen Mercer University's Interdisciplinary Area Studies, Environmental Science Field Studies, Africana Studies Program and Teacher Education. The College of Continuing and Professional Studies and Tift College of Education have a responsibility for encouraging, promoting and facilitating education and outreach related to cross-cultural issues and globalization to both traditional and non-traditional

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undergraduate and graduate students at Mercer University.

The project will, therefore, enhance efforts to broaden its base of support in the community and create interest in Mercer University's traditional study abroad programs. It will also generate wider enrollment in our existing courses about culture, ecology, and environment. Further, it will strengthen Mercer University's programs in education by encouraging the practicing teachers to integrate multi-cultural and environmental aspects into their interdisciplinary studies curricula. Most importantly, this project will meet a growing need for elementary and secondary schools to increase their coverage of a less frequently studied region of the world and will encourage the participants in traditional social studies and humanities departments to include knowledge about Africa in their classes. (See Form IV for sample lesson plans.)

The participants' research projects will entail the conducting and recording of interviews with Malawian people (including teachers, students, oral historians and story-tellers, musicians, religious leaders, and workers in industries and on farms, etc.). Many of these individual and group projects also require the compiling of visual records of the diverse environments in which Malawi's society and cultures have evolved: the architecture of contemporary cities; traditional village compounds; educational facilities; agricultural and industrial sites; infrastructures of local transportation; and local cultures' adaptations to a variety of geographical settings, from Lake Malawi and Liwonde National Parks to Zomba Plateau and Mount Mulanje. Participants' research project plans may also include the on-site collection of local artifacts, publications (such as newspapers and textbooks), music CD's and instruments, and the products of local industries and artisan groups (such as cloth or textiles); these activities of conversing, recording, photographing, and collecting need to be conducted on-site, amidst the relevant cultural and

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social contexts that endow them with meaning.

This phase of overseas experience in Malawi is essential both to the completion of the projects begun in America, and to the participants' growth and credibility as resource people who can promote the teaching of Malawi in their classes and school districts. Teachers with personal experience in Malawi will be able to make their material "come alive" for their students and challenge them to learn more. Again, the Internet/web-based component envisioned for the development of an online database and curriculum resource center, extends the life and relevance of this project beyond the typical limits of Group Projects Abroad. The online community will knit together K-12 educators and college faculty and administrators and students in both the U.S. and Malawi in meaningful, dynamic ways.

Finally, participants in this project will be able to conduct their own community involvement through presentations on the Malawian culture to Mercer University surrounding local areas groups or the local areas where they are teaching or working. This project will enhance cooperation in sustainability and integration of some examples of issues that affect livelihoods in a Malawian through the participants' visits and excursions to Lake Malawi and Liwonde National Parks, Mulanje Mountain, Zomba Plateau, The Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust, and other historical sites, among others.

9. Competitive Priority II - Relation to Fulbright-Hays Priorities

This project meets the priorities for this granting year in several ways. First, it is compatible with the International Education Programs' Goal 5 to enhance the quality and access to postsecondary and adult education by improving and internationalizing teacher education at Mercer University. The project will further strengthen Interdisciplinary Area Studies at Mercer University, and will improve the teacher education offerings for K-12 schools educators in the

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Metro-Atlanta area. Not only will the participants be better informed about a significantly understudied area of the world, but those who may not normally include Area Studies in their classrooms, will gain added knowledge and experience to integrate environmental and cultural information about Malawi into their teaching and curricular development.

This program fulfills the Competitive Preference Priority II – Inclusion of K-12 educators for FY 2012, Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i) – CFDA 84.021A - Short-Term Seminar Projects abroad that develop and improve foreign language and/or area studies at elementary and secondary schools. The participants will develop intellectually sound, practical strategies and plans for introducing what they have learned into what they teach. Mercer University will follow the participants long enough to see evaluate their curricular and pedagogical plans in action. The project will provide a platform to the participants for improving their pedagogical skills in Interdisciplinary Area Studies curricula in the US school systems where they serve, as a result of their participation in this five weeks immersion experience in Malawi.