

President Thomas is the ninth President of Central State University after serving nearly a decade as president of Western Illinois University (WIU). Dr. Thomas brings visibility and insights from experience in every aspect of academia. Roles he has held have included president, interim president, provost and academic vice president, executive vice president, executive assistant to the president, dean, department chair and English professor.



Upon arriving at Central State University, Dr. Thomas empaneled a Blue-Ribbon Taskforce charged with conducting an exhaustive review of University operations and structure and providing recommendations for improvement rooted in University best practices. Dr. Thomas introduced his nine (9) strategic priorities for the University – among them are to increase degree offerings, offer graduate programs, provide flexibility in course delivery, launch a multi-million-dollar capital campaign, continue to meet and enhance the 1890 land-grant mission and to develop a marketing and rebranding campaign. In partnership with the University Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni and community stakeholders, he has worked to develop the next university strategic plan under the University mantra, “Innovation is in our DNA”. In a very short period, Dr. Thomas’ energy, leadership and focus have resulted in the development of a campus-wide mentoring program, launch of a University Honors College, and an increase in overall student enrollment of 97%.

At WIU, Dr. Thomas was responsible for several accomplishments, including increasing diversity, creating new academic programs, managing fiscal and cash flow issues brought on by the state’s financial crisis, investing in STEM and other academic programs, increasing funding for student scholarships, and establishing a presidential institute to foster and improve corporate, community and K-12 relations. Under Dr. Thomas’ leadership, the Institution constructed a new campus in Moline, Illinois and achieved its multimillion-dollar capital campaign goal. WIU has been rated as a “Best in the Midwest College” by the Princeton Review and as a top tier Midwest Universities Master’s institution by U.S. News and World Report.

Dr. Thomas spent more than 20 years serving in various capacities in several institutions of higher education. A nationally and internationally recognized leader in higher education administration, Dr. Thomas' influence on the academic community extends to his service on several distinguished boards including the Marguerite Casey Foundation Board of Directors; the Stillman College Board of Trustees; the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education Board; the American Council on Education Council of Fellows; the NCAA Presidential Forum.

Dr. Thomas is the author of numerous publications and professional presentations including his most recent book titled, *Within These Gates: Academic Work, Academic Leadership, University Life, and the Presidency*. Dr. Thomas has been a committed advocate for diversity and inclusion. He has been recognized by Minority Access, Inc. and others for his work helping to provide meaningful and transformative opportunities for minorities through mentorship and access at various universities.