

The Clarence Thomas Center for Historic Preservation is located at 439 East Broad St. in Savannah, Georgia. The former convent Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, which has been fully restored by SCAD, is a three-story brick structure in the Greek Revival style that was constructed in 1908 and sits in the heart of the original St. Benedict the Moor church property. It is flanked on either side by St. Benedict church facilities that are still thriving centers for parish life.

THE HONORABLE CLARENCE THOMAS, ASSOCIATE JUSTICE, SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

In 1955, at a cost of \$25 in annual tuition, young Clarence Thomas and his brother Myers enrolled in St. Benedict the Moor Grammar School. The school was run by the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, strict disciplinarians who pushed their students to achieve their utmost potential. In his memoir, *My Grandfather's Son*, Thomas credits the sisters with imparting an active, loving faith, and he writes, "The sisters also taught us that God made all men equal, that blacks were inherently equal to whites, and that segregation was morally wrong." Thomas credits the Franciscan Sisters at St. Benedict with cultivating in him his earliest concepts and beliefs about justice, equality, and the right uses of discipline and education.



With its adaptive reuse of nearly 90 historic buildings around the world, the university is practicing recycling on the macro level, bringing life to underdeveloped communities and dormant local economies.

A LEGACY OF PRESERVATION

SCAD has one of the largest historic preservation departments in the United States, currently with nine professors and more than 100 students enrolled in the Bachelor of Fine Arts, Master of Arts, and Master of Fine Arts degree programs in historic preservation and international preservation—including programs offered at SCAD Savannah and through SCAD eLearning. The university's commitment to the preservation of architectural and cultural heritage is evident in SCAD's repurposing of more than 90 historic buildings at its locations in Savannah and Atlanta, as well as the university's international campuses, SCAD Lacoste (France) and SCAD Hong Kong.

The Savannah College of Art and Design is proud to carry forward the legacy of Justice Clarence Thomas, Savannah's most honored native son, through the creation of this new center that bears his name. At SCAD, historic preservation is not merely a single academic department. It's a wellspring of ideas for the rebirth of communities and economies. It's a union of history and architectural expression. This practiced focus on revitalizing the past for the benefit of future generations is why the SCAD Clarence Thomas Center for Historic Preservation will become the nexus of preservation education and heritage conservation for the United States and the world.

SCAD
The University for Creative Careers.

SCAD
CLARENCE THOMAS
CENTER FOR
Historic Preservation
SAVANNAH COLLEGE of ART and DESIGN



MISSION STATEMENT

The Clarence Thomas Center for Historic Preservation is the preeminent site for the study of historic preservation and heritage conservation in the world. As part of the Savannah College of Art and Design, a private, non-profit, accredited institution of higher learning, the Thomas Center houses a conservation laboratory for the study of preservation artifacts, a restoration workshop for the study of research processes, an outdoor work pavilion, lecture and drafting classrooms, a computer lab, exhibition space, and a lecture hall. The Thomas Center serves as home to the university's Bachelor of Fine Arts, Master of Arts and Master of Fine Arts degree programs in historic preservation, its Master of Arts degree program in international preservation, and the university's outreach programs in historic preservation, where students and faculty work to advance the restoration, adaptive reuse and sustainability of historic buildings—locally, nationally and internationally.



In 1874, barely a decade after the emancipation of America's slaves, two Benedictine priests arrived in Savannah to minister to the city's African-American community. These champions of justice, faith and equality established St. Benedict the Moor Catholic Church on Savannah's east side, and the parish quickly grew to include a convent and grammar school. The Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception staffed the school from 1907 until its closing in 1969. During those six decades, the Franciscan Sisters demonstrated the deepest love and service to African-American children who had been overlooked by the status quo.



In addition to a rigorous major curriculum, all SCAD historic preservation students are required to take courses in drawing, color theory and art history, as well as courses in effective writing and speaking—ensuring that SCAD historic preservation graduates have a cultivated sense of aesthetics, history and professionalism.

One of those children, a young man who cultivated his earliest ideals of liberty and law at St. Benedict, would make history by succeeding Thurgood Marshall as the second African-American in history to serve on the United States Supreme Court. That young man was Justice Clarence Thomas. While St. Benedict's grammar school has long since closed, the original Franciscan convent remains. The Savannah College of Art and Design refurbished and restored this extraordinary building as the SCAD Clarence Thomas Center for Historic Preservation. Now, more than a century after the convent's construction and 40 years since its closing, this facility is named in honor of Thomas's remarkable legacy of law and letters—a legacy that began on that hallowed ground at the corner of Gordon and Broad streets. The new Thomas Center houses all academic, research and outreach programming for the finest historic preservation department in the world—named to honor Thomas's personal bond to the facility, his eminence as a native son of Savannah, and his legacy as a scholar, historian, author, jurist, orator and educator.



SCAD historic preservation students learn their discipline most immediately through fieldwork in communities across the United States and around the world.