

Student
Assistant
Handbook

2008

A guide on policies and procedures for STUDENT ASSISTANTS.

Equal
Opportunity
Employment

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
STUDENT ASSISTANT HANDBOOK

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The Student Employment Office

Department of Human Resources

Valdosta State University

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Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer

Valdosta State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, marital or veteran status, political affiliation, or the presence of a non-job related condition or handicap under Federal or State law.

This handbook is available on-line at
http://www.valdosta.edu/finadmin/human_resources/studemp/.

WELCOMEPage 5

YOUR NEW EMPLOYERPage 7

- Valdosta State University and YouPage 7
- Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)Job DescriptionsPage 7
- Equal Opportunity Employer Job PostingsPage 7

YOUR JOBPage 8

- Academic ResponsibilityPage 8
 - Mandatory 2.0 GPAPage 8
- AppearancePage 8
- ConductPage 8
- Confidentiality of Student Records.....Page 10
- Continuing EmploymentPage 10
- Drug-Free Workplace Policy.....Page 10
- E-Mail.....Page 11
- Giving Notice.....Page 11
- Grievance ProceduresPage 11
- Performance EvaluationPage 11
- Risk Management.....Page 12
- Safety & InjuriesPage 12
- Sexual Harassment Policy Statement.....Page 13
- Telephone Etiquette.....Page 13
 - Cell Phones.....Page 13
- Work Hours.....Page 14
 - AbsencesPage 14
 - Maximum 20 Hours/WeekPage 14
 - LunchPage 14
 - Rest Periods/BreaksPage 14
 - Scheduling Work HoursPage 14

YOUR PAYPage 14

- Direct Deposit/CashPayPage 15
- TaxesPage 15

YOUR SUPERVISORPage 16

QUESTIONSPage 16

ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMSPage 17

- Casual LaborPage 17
- Federal Work-Study (FWS) ProgramPage 17
- Graduate AssistantshipsPage 17
- Off-Campus EmploymentPage 18

WELCOME

Dear student,

Welcome to a thriving, unique organization: On-Campus Student Employment. We hope you find your work experience both pleasant and rewarding. As you will soon learn, one of the most important benefits of your job will be the personal growth experienced through working. You will find your employment can be an asset to your lifelong learning experience.

The information in this handbook has been compiled to answer questions regarding the policies, procedures, and general rules that govern on-campus, part-time employment for student assistants at Valdosta State University (VSU). Although the information in this handbook is in effect at the time of publication, future changes in policies and procedures may be necessary. When such changes occur, student employees and supervisors will be notified.

If you have questions, comments and/or suggestions concerning any of the information in this handbook, you may contact the Student Employment Office at (229) 333-7574, or by e-mail at studentjobs@valdosta.edu.

Sincerely,

The Student Employment Office

Congratulations!

As an employee at VSU, you are part of a staff of about 600 student assistants. This University is busy and complex, and each student who works here helps to keep it running smoothly.

VSU student assistants are valuable employees, who keep this university's offices, libraries, labs, and facilities operating smoothly. Similarly, on-campus employment often becomes an important part of students' lives, not only as a source of income but as way to expand their knowledge, skills, experiences, and friendships. Additional benefits may include:

- Scheduling work hours around classes.
- Becoming more involved with campus life.
- Establishing networking contacts.
- Enhancing academic and career goals.
- Exploring different work opportunities.

You may be somewhat nervous about starting your job. You may also have concerns or questions, such as:

- What are my duties?
- How do I dress?
- What if I don't know how to do something?

Relax. We hope this handbook will help you feel at ease about these concerns by giving you a good understanding of what you can expect from your job and what will be expected of you.

After reading your STUDENT ASSISTANT HANDBOOK,

please keep it for future reference.

YOUR NEW EMPLOYER

Valdosta State University and You

A special act of the Georgia Legislature established an institution of higher learning in Valdosta, Georgia, in 1906. However, no appropriation was made for buildings or maintenance until the summer of 1911, when the state appropriated \$30,000 for one building and equipment.

With a community enthusiasm that has continued, the City of Valdosta donated 60 acres and \$50,000 to be used toward the establishment of the University campus. The first building, Converse Hall, was erected and furnished at a cost of \$55,000.

In 1912, the Legislature granted an adequate annual appropriation for maintenance, and the future of the institution was assured. The University, called the South Georgia State Normal University, opened to “young ladies” on January 1, 1913, offering two years of University work.

An act of the Legislature in 1922 changed the name to Georgia State Women’s University at Valdosta and authorized a four-year program leading to the bachelor’s degree.

The Board of Regents made the University co-educational in 1950 and changed the name to Valdosta State University.

On July 1, 1993, Valdosta State University became a Regional University within the University System of Georgia.

The institution has been led by seven presidents: Richard Holmes Powell (1913-1933), Jere Madison Pound (1933–1935), Frank Robertson Reade (1935–1948), James Ralph Thaxton (1948–1966), Sidney Walter Martin (1966–1978), Hugh Coleman Bailey (1978–2001), and Ronald M. Zaccari (2002 to present).

Equal Opportunity Employer

It is the policy of Valdosta State University to employ student assistants of the highest quality available based on ability, experience, training, intelligence, character, and physical fitness according to the needs of the University departments. No applicant for student employment otherwise qualified for employment will be excluded because of race, color, sex, age, religion, creed, physical handicap or national origin.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Valdosta State University is governed by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, which specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Valdosta State University is committed to complying with the goals and objectives of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Persons needing accommodations should contact the Assistant to the President for Affirmative Action or the Director of Human Resources.

YOUR JOB

Academic Responsibility

As a student assistant of the University, you should view your employment as secondary to academics. Although your employment can be a meaningful part of your University experience, it should not interfere or be detrimental to your academic studies.

You should consult with your supervisor if your workload or schedule creates a problem with your academics. Most departments will work with you to rearrange or reduce work schedules around heavy academic commitments such as final examinations.

Mandatory Grade Point Average

As a student assistant, you must maintain a cumulative 2.0 grade point average. Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 2.0 will be terminated.

Appearance

Student assistants are expected to dress appropriately and in a manner consistent with the university's public interests. Student assistants working at the front desk are expected to dress professionally and in a manner that is inoffensive to the public that you are serving.

Conduct

Since VSU employs many students, extended conversation and socializing can be distracting to others and disrupt work. Please discourage friends and family from visiting you at work.

Please understand that employment may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

- Insubordination
- Theft
- Entering an unauthorized area at any time
- Wasting materials
- Willful violation of safety regulations

- Continued failure to perform assigned duties
- Negligence
- Falsifying records, reports or information
- Intoxication or drinking on the job
- Habitual absence or tardiness
- Unauthorized absence from assigned work area
- Willful damaging of equipment or property
- Gambling
- Sleeping while on duty

Confidentiality of Student Records

Student assistants are required to maintain VSU's confidentiality policy. All student employees are required to abide by the policies governing review and release of student education records. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 mandates that information contained in a student's education records must be kept confidential, including:

- Student's Class Schedule
- Academic Transcripts
- Grade/GPA Information
- Student ID number (SSN) – may not be given out or posted in any manner

Records must be treated confidentially and professionally. Any student assistant who provides confidential information to anyone outside their specific department will be terminated immediately.

Follow these guidelines to prevent pressure on yourself concerning access to records.

1. Do not let friends, relatives or acquaintances know you have access to confidential data.
2. Do not use computer terminals or files for any purpose other than to perform functions assigned to you by your supervisor.

3. Report to your supervisor anyone's attempts to gain unauthorized access to information.

Continuing Employment

If you do your job well, the department that you work for may continue to employ you during the next academic year. A student assistant that continues with the same department has the opportunity to advance to higher levels of responsibility, better pay, and more challenging work. However, continued employment is never guaranteed. The University reserves the right to make changes in staffing and programs as needed.

Drug-Free Workplace Policy

The following are required of the university and its employees:

1. An employee shall notify his or her supervisor or other appropriate management representatives of any criminal drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace no later than five days after such conviction.
2. The university shall notify any federal contracting agency within ten days of having received notice that an employee engaged in the performance of such contract or grant has had a criminal drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace.
3. The university will take appropriate personnel action against any employee who is convicted for a violation occurring in the workplace or will require the employee's satisfactory participation in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program.

For a complete statement of VSU's Drug-Free Workplace policy, consult the Student Employment Office web site at: <http://services.valdosta.edu/studemp/docs/drugfreepolicy.pdf>.

E-Mail Policy

According to Georgia Statutes, e-mail information is defined as a public record. E-

mail created or received by VSU employees in connection with official business, which perpetuates, communicates or formalizes knowledge, is subject to the public records law and open for inspection.

Giving Notice

A two-week notice is generally considered to be a good business practice, so it is important for you to notify your supervisor two-weeks in advance if you decide to resign your position. If you are unable to give a two-week notice, it is advised that you consult with your supervisor as soon as you know that you cannot keep your work commitment.

Grievance Procedures

Because VSU encourages informal resolution of grievances and complaints, your immediate supervisor is available to help you resolve any work-related concerns or misunderstandings.

Performance Evaluation

Your supervisor should evaluate your performance annually. If your work is unsatisfactory, you may be evaluated sooner.

Risk Management

Safety of all employees cannot be stressed enough. Emergency Action Plans will be in place for all departments. Plans should cover the following (where applicable): fire, bomb threat, severe weather, participant/employee injury, fights, etc.

- **Be Aware**: Always be aware of your surroundings. Try to anticipate any problems and move to correct them as quickly as possible.
- **Think Prevention**: Take an active role. Use equipment correctly and survey activity area for potential hazards.
- **Think Safety**: Above all be aware of safety in any activity that you may be involved in.

Safety & Injuries

If you get hurt during working hours, you, your immediate supervisor, and the departmental safety coordinator must contact the Human Resource Department (229-333-5709) before you go to an authorized medical provider, unless your injury requires emergency medical care.

Sexual Harassment Policy Statement

Valdosta State University is committed to a working and learning environment that is free of discriminatory intimidation. The exploitation of institutional, academic, or supervisory authority to sexually harass students, faculty, or staff members is a form of illegal sex-based discrimination in violation of [the] law as well as Valdosta State University policy. Such conduct will not be tolerated on this campus or in connection with any university function wherever conducted.

The Equal Opportunity Commission's Guidelines on sexual harassment state: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to that conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or education;
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for academic or employment decisions affecting that individual; or
3. The conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's academic or work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment, education, or living environment.

QUID PRO QUO SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1. Explicit or implicit promises of rewards for cooperation via misuse of institutional authority, e.g. to affect a subordinate's employment/admission,

professional/academic advancement, salary/financial aid, performance ratings/grades, tenure/graduation, etc.

2. Explicit or implicit threats of punishment for non-cooperation via misuse of institutional authority, e.g., to affect a subordinate's employment/admission, professional/academic advancement, salary/financial aid, performance ratings/grades, tenure/graduation, etc.

Examples of sexual harassment may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Unwelcome sexual propositions
- Sexually graphic comments about a person's body
- Unwelcome touching, patting, pinching, or leering
- Persistent, offensive, and unwelcome sexual jokes and comments
- Unwelcome displays of sexually graphic pictures

Sexual harassment is illegal under both state and federal law. It is also unlawful to retaliate against an employee or student for filing a complaint of sexual harassment or for cooperating in an investigation of sexual harassment. In some cases, sexual harassment may be subject to prosecution under criminal law.

Telephone Etiquette

The following instructions may be used when answering a departmental phone call:

- Greet the caller- "Good morning (afternoon, evening), Campus Recreation
- Introduce: "This is ..."
- Fact-finding question: "How may I help you?"

Employees are not allowed to use the office telephone for personal calls without their supervisor's permission, and then it should only be in the event of an emergency.

Cell Phones. You are not allowed to have or carry your personal cell phone with you while working a scheduled shift. If you do bring your cell phone, you need **to turn it off** and

store it with your belongings. If violation of the cell phone policy occurs, disciplinary action may follow.

Work Hours

Absences. If you know in advance that you will be late or absent from work, it is your responsibility to notify your supervisor. If you have something unexpected happen that will make you have to miss work or be late, you must contact your supervisor to let them know when you expect to return to work.

Maximum 20 Hours/ Work. The maximum hours that you are allowed to work are 20 hours per week cumulative (in all jobs) for Fall and Spring Semester. This is because you are exempt from Social Security and Medicare taxes as a STUDENT ASSISTANT. If at any time your work hours exceed the 20hrs/wk, we will reassess your classification resulting in your termination as a STUDENT ASSISTANT.

Lunch. Employees working more than six consecutive hours must take a 30-minute, off the clock, lunch break. Your supervisor sets your lunch break.

Rest Periods/Breaks. Employees who work four consecutive hours are entitled to and should take a 15-minute rest period. During this period, you are encouraged to leave your work station and relax. Rest periods may NOT be accumulated to extend your lunch hour, arrive late or leave early.

Scheduling Work Hours. Let your supervisor know in advance if you need to work fewer hours or plan to take some time off. Plan to make up any work you miss. You will have some flexibility in scheduling work around your class schedule, but remember to discuss any schedule changes with your supervisor by the first day of class each semester.

YOUR PAY

Audit procedures require that the Employment Packet, which contains all appropriate federal and state forms, be complete and on file with the Payroll Office before time sheets can be

processed. Time sheets must be submitted to the Payroll Office by 12:00 pm on the specified day of each month. If the Employment Packet is incomplete or missing information, it may delay the processing of timesheets which will results in delay of scheduled pay.

All student assistants are required to select Direct Deposit or CashPay during completion of the Employment Packet.

- **Direct Deposit** is for those employees who have or plan to establish a savings or checking account with a banking institution of their choosing. You will need to present a voided check and/or a deposit slip at the time you complete your form.
- **CashPay** is for those employees who opt not to have a banking relationship with any banking institution. You do not need to have an existing bank account to participate in CashPay. Once you sign up, it will take approximately 2 weeks for you to receive your CashPay Card.

Under both plans, VSU will electronically deposit your pay directly into your account on payday. You will receive an “Advice Slip” indicating the amount of money deposited into your account, your gross pay, taxes, and any deductions/reductions taken. The following are benefits of both plans: For additional information, you may visit the following website:

<http://www.valdosta.edu/finadmin/financial/directdepositmemo.shtml>

Taxes

All earnings are subject to statutory state and federal income tax regulations. Students, who are enrolled for 6 credit hours or more during the academic year, are exempt from FICA and FICA Med taxes.

During the fall and spring semesters, the maximum hours a student assistant can work is 20 hours per week cumulative (in all jobs). This is because he/she is exempt from Social Security and Medicare taxes as a student assistant. If the student assistant is working hours in excess of 20hrs/wk, we will reassess his/her classification resulting in termination as a *Student Assistant*;

however, supervisors have the option to refer the student to the Human Resources Department to be hired as a *Casual Laborer* which will result in earnings being subject to FICA Med tax.

YOUR SUPERVISOR

Your supervisor's primary responsibility is to provide you with adequate guidance, training and support.

The following detail some of the responsibilities of your supervisor:

1. Provides a job description that includes the purpose of the job, the duties and responsibilities, and the name of the student's supervisor.
2. Allocates job assignments. If you are scheduled to work, expect a work assignment to be ready for you to complete during the scheduled hours.
3. Certifies timesheet. The certification must include or be supported by a time record showing the hours worked in clock time sequence and total hours worked per day. Certification implies direct knowledge of the student having worked the hours reported.
4. Coordinates work schedule which is acceptable to both student and supervisor. Standard policy is that students are not allowed to work during scheduled class hours, even if class is cancelled or dismissed early. Instruction will be provided regarding procedures to be followed if you cannot report for scheduled work.

QUESTIONS

Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for help. It's better to admit you don't know something but are willing to learn than to give someone incorrect information.

If you have questions and/or concerns, please contact the Student Employment Office at 229-333-7574, or by e-mail at studentjobs@valdosta.edu.

ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Casual Labor

Casual labor is twelve month position which requires a 30 day (consecutive) break. Employee may work a maximum of 40 hours per week. No benefits are associated with this classification. Laborers must pay Georgia Define Contribution which is 7.5%; this is a retirement system for temporary, seasonal, and part-time employees of the State of Georgia who were not eligible for membership in the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) or the Teachers Retirement System (TRS).

For further information, please visit the Human Resource Department's website, http://www.valdosta.edu/finadmin/human_resources/, or contact Freda Wade at 229-333-5709.

Federal Work-Study (FWS) Program

Federal Work-Study is available through the Financial Aid Department; and this employment program is based on established financial need. Jobs are located on and off campus and work schedules can be planned around your class schedule. Assignments are made for the entire academic year.

For further information, please visit the Financial Aid Department's website, <http://www.valdosta.edu/financialaid/>, or contact Rhett Moore at 229-333-5935.

Graduate Assistantships

VSU's graduate assistantships are designed to promote the research, teaching, and service responsibilities of the University and to provide students with valuable professional development opportunities while earning a graduate degree. Therefore, the graduate assistantship involves the dual responsibilities of maintaining a satisfactory academic performance and of successfully performing the assigned teaching, research, or other responsibilities.

For further information, please visit the Graduate School's website, <http://www.valdosta.edu/GRADSCHOOL/>, or contact Teresa Williams at 229-333-5694.

Off-Campus Employment

Career Services maintains a listing of off-campus jobs in areas such as administrative, retail, child care, manufacturing, social services and sales. Career development and awareness, experiential learning, and professional employment opportunities are provided for undergraduate and graduate students.

For further information, please visit Career Service's website, <http://www.valdosta.edu/career/>, or contact DeLois Hargett at 229-333-5942