



VSU Connection

For the Faculty, Staff and Members of the Valdosta State University Community

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Gray Encourages VSU to Reach Grant Potential

Director of the Office of Grants and Contracts, Barbara Gray, recites federal grant regulations with the ease most people repeat their home telephone numbers. The Pennsylvania native knows her trade, which is precisely why Valdosta State University hired her in January to encourage and assist faculty and staff in their pursuit of external funds.

"I am passionate about what I do. Few things are as exciting as helping faculty members, especially first-time grant applicants, get their proposals out the door," Gray said. "What drew me to VSU is its potential for growth. We are in the beginning phases of a cultural shift from a traditional four-year teaching institution to one that will be actively involved in research."

Dr. Louis Levy, Vice President for Academic Affairs said, "We searched everywhere to find the perfect candidate for directing the Office of Grants and Contracts. We are very pleased with the direction Barbara Gray is taking the office and the transformative effect she is having on our efforts in the area of external funding for new academic ventures."

Gray has been in the business of identifying funding sources, preparing grant proposals and administering awards for universities and research institutes for more than 20 years. Her goal is to prepare VSU — a university poised for growth — for the institutional infrastructure needed to support an expanding research portfolio.

"VSU is on its way to becoming a very visible research-active institution — one that puts value on research and sees it as a way for faculty to remain on the cutting edge of their fields and as an avenue to teach students new information and skills," said Gray, who served for 12 years as Director of Research & Grants

Administration at the College of Charleston in South Carolina.

Connecting faculty and staff with funding opportunities and guiding them through the rigorous proposal process is half the battle, Gray said. In late September, Gray's office held two information sessions to introduce faculty and staff to the newly acquired SPIN and GrantSelect funding databases. Both databases include email notification functions that alert faculty and staff when funding opportunities that matches their research interests become available. The next hour-long database demonstration sessions will be held Friday, Oct. 12, at 2 p.m. in Odum 1480 and Wednesday, Oct. 17, at 4 p.m. in Odum 1604. Gray said she hopes to eventually offer workshops and information sessions on proposal writing, budget preparation, general grant administration topics, and the protection of human research participants.



COURTESY PHOTO

"Faculty on this campus need to know that government grants are funded on merit, so a VSU faculty member with a sound research idea and a well-written proposal has just as good a chance to receive funding as a professor at an Ivy League institution," Gray said. "A number of federal agencies have funding programs that are geared toward the smaller institution. Our faculty need to take greater advantage of these programs." She adds that, "Yes, the rules and procedures are ever changing, but that is why this office is here. We worry about the forms, the budget, and electronic proposal submission so that



KATE HEINE

Dr. Emily Cantonwine explains the anatomy of an onion to freshman D.C. McElreath. Cantonwine acquired a grant to develop the first organic agriculture class in south Georgia.

faculty and staff have time to concentrate on the narrative part of the proposal."

Dr. Emily Cantonwine, an assistant professor in the Department of Biology, said she appreciated the feedback Gray provided during her request for funds to develop the first organic agriculture course in southern Georgia. Gray said Cantonwine's project was one of four funded out of 19 submissions for an Intellectual Capital Partnership Program (ICAPP) award, which is a University System of Georgia initiative to encourage economic development in Georgia.

"The creation of this class is so important because organic agriculture

Gray Continued —

is the fastest growing industry in the United States, and Georgia is behind in production and research,” said Cantonwine, who started teaching at VSU in August. “It helps so much to have an office [Grants and Contracts] that supports you along the process of funding and development.”

The Office of Grants and Contracts works with faculty and staff across all disciplines to fund research, curriculum development, professional development and service projects. The Biology Department was awarded several grants in 2007, including one to conduct mosquito collection for the study of West Nile Virus and another to study the effects controlled burns have on vegetation at Moody Air Force Base to facilitate better management of natural resources. Grants and Contracts assisted with the Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Education’s project to increase awareness and compliance with DUI and seat belt laws among VSU students and the public, and

with the Marriage and Family Therapy Program’s continuation of a Homeward Bound program to provide therapy for homeless persons.

“The money is out there, but we do have to be savvy and determined. I worked with one faculty member who said he had been talking about applying for a grant from a particular agency for ten years, and we finally sent his proposal off four weeks ago,” Gray said. “If I get people through the application process that can feel so overwhelming, then they are one step further along in building their research careers and VSU is one step closer to reaching its goal.”

Gray is also striving to update policies and develop procedures that will ensure the university’s ability to accept federal funding for social, behavioral, educational and health-related research that involves human participants. She is focused on preparing the university’s assurance to the federal government (called a Federal Wide Assurance, or FWA) that promises that VSU will comply with the regulations that protect the rights and welfare of

people who volunteer to participate in research. This is one of the strategic goals for the Office of Grants and Contracts for the current year.

“We’re an office of three plus a student, but we have to play by the same rules as large institutions. But you know, the smaller office is another thing I love because you’re involved in the whole process,” Gray said. “At larger institutions, each person is in charge of only a phase of sponsored project administration and may never know if a proposal is funded or how a project turned out. I much prefer the cradle-to-grave involvement because I can see how a particular project unfolds and contributes to the mission of the institution.”

For more information about grants, explore www.grants.gov, the premier source of federal grant information, or go to the Office of Grants and Contracts Web site at www.valdosta.edu/grants. The Web site has links to funding opportunity databases, policies and regulations, and educational resources. ■

Cragg Heads Strategic Research and Analysis

Valdosta State University President Ronald M. Zaccari has appointed Kristina M. Cragg, Ph.D., as Assistant to the President for Strategic Research and Analysis.

Cragg will provide leadership for institutional effectiveness, quality enhancement and accountability functions, including oversight of institutional research, assessment and evaluation. Cragg will serve as VSU’s liaison to the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS), which is responsible for coordinating the university’s accreditation and reaffirmation process. She will report directly to the President and serve as a member of the Cabinet, Budget Advisory Council and University Council.

Cragg has an extensive background in statistical reporting and analysis within higher education. Most recently, she served as a consultant for MGT of America, Inc., where she worked to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education institutions on a



variety of issues, including student retention, enrollment management and strategic planning. She served as program coordinator for the Florida State University Certificate in Institutional Research Program, which offers post-master’s courses in institutional research theory and practices, higher education administration and educational research.

“I am pleased to join Valdosta State University and the VSU family,” Cragg said. “I look forward to working with the campus community in providing data and information that will contribute toward VSU’s continued success.”

Cragg earned a Certificate in Institutional Research, a master’s degree in Higher Education Administration and a doctorate in Higher Educational Policy, Planning, and Analysis, all from Florida State University.

She has replaced Marsha Krotseng, who took the position of Vice Chancellor for Strategic Planning with the North Dakota University System. ■



VSU Champions!
Support is our strategy.
Education is our game.

Friday, October 12, 2007 • 11AM– 2PM
Outside the PE Complex
(in the event of rain, inside the PE Complex)

*Join us for delicious food, entertainment,
games, door prizes, and displays*

STAFF ID REQUIRED

VSUConnection

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The *VSU Connection* is a semimonthly newsletter designed to inform VSU personnel and students about the latest campus-wide news. Check out the *Connection* online at www.valdosta.edu/news/.

For more information about the *Connection* or to submit a story idea, email Kate Heine, Communication Specialist for the Office of the President, Communication Unit, at kaheine@valdosta.edu.