

President's Message

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Strategic Planning Under Way

I am gratified that over 118 VSU faculty, staff and students are continuing the strategic planning process through serving on committees related to the eight defined goals. The committees are currently refining the action steps associated with each goal, identifying priorities among the actions, and recommending the tangible results that we can anticipate by June 2003. Their reports will be completed by mid-December, and the recommendations will be considered by the University Planning Council, which will be named in January. Stay informed about this continuously evolving process through visiting the Strategic Planning Website that is directly linked to the University's homepage.

Budget Advisory Council

A vital component of VSU's strategic planning model is the budget plan. The first major step in the University's new budgeting process has been taken with the establishment of a Budget Advisory Council. The Council will coordinate the University's budget planning with the University System of Georgia and provide an opportunity for more active campus involvement in the process. Early in the coming spring semester, division heads, deans, and department chairs will be introduced to the new budget submission format which will coordinate with strategic plan initiatives. Budget Advisory Council members include Dr. Louis Levy, Mr. Jim Black, Dr. Marsha Krotseng, Dr. Kurt Keppler, Ms. Traycee Martin, and Ms. Jan Fackler.

Partnerships Formed

One of VSU's strategic goals emphasizes the importance of engagement in both the community and region. As state revenues decline, it is essential that VSU develop strong partnerships in an effort to find creative ways of moving forward. In the coming months, we will focus more extensively on forming partnerships within the community and region as well as with a variety of entities that offer grant funding. Partnerships open opportunities for private foundation, corporate, and federal support — all of which must become an integral part of external fund raising efforts. I invite you to actively pursue grants for research and other projects in alignment with VSU's mission and strategic plan. Targeted grant funds will be critical to helping the University advance toward its full potential.

I am optimistic about the recently formed partnership between Valdosta State University and the Valdosta Board of Education to construct a joint new football/soccer stadium. This partnership exemplifies the tremendous results that can occur as VSU and the Board of Education join forces to benefit our community and the entire South Georgia region.

Much collaborative work must be accomplished in the upcoming months to finalize plans for the new stadium. Working together, both the Wildcats and the Blazers will have a first-class athletic facility that serves as a symbol of this community's winning tradition.

A second partnership is taking shape with South Georgia's medical community. I've met with hospital administrators from South Georgia Medical Center and Archibald Memorial Hospital, in Thomasville, to gain support for a project that may bring at least four new academic programs to VSU — Pharmacy, Medical

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Information Technology, Physical Therapy and Health Care Management. In the upcoming weeks, I am scheduled to engage in similar conversations with representatives from Smith Hospital, in Hahira, and Satilla Regional Hospital, in Waycross.

As these partnerships progress, they will be reflected in VSU's Master Plan. During the spring semester the currently approved Master Plan will be amended to include a new Health Sciences Center on the North Campus. In addition to housing the new programs, this facility is projected to include a continuing education center that will provide on-going training for current medical professionals.

These partnerships — and others that are yet to be developed — will move this university to a new and exciting level of excellence. It is time to think differently about ways to operate this institution. As I observed in the "State of the University" address in August, "We need to build trust in one another...to advance this University on all fronts."

The next step is to begin to engage each of you in the process of planning and implementing these projects. We will need faculty, staff and students to become active participants, as we launch these initiatives and begin moving forward to meet our strategic planning goals.

Spirit Pins

On Monday, December 9, from 7:15 a.m. to 8 a.m., I invite all faculty and staff to join me in the University Center Magnolia Room, as we celebrate VSU's first "Salute to Service" day. You will receive a specially designed "spirit pin" that reflects the years of service you have given to VSU. A special medallion will be presented to employees with more than 25 years of continuous service to the University.

This is just the beginning of an on-going process that acknowledges the spirit of service that you exemplify each day. We all have multiple opportunities to shape VSU and make it the finest institution of higher learning in the state and in the country. Please join us for this celebration.

Spring Convocation

Among the first campus events scheduled for the coming semester is the Spring Faculty/Staff Convocation address on Thursday, January 9, 2003 at 2 p.m., in the Whitehead Auditorium. I welcome your attendance and look forward to seeing you there.

Searches Continue

Committee members are active in search processes for the positions of Dean of the College of the Arts, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dean of the College of Education, and Vice President for University Advancement. Interviews will begin with the spring semester, and the deans' positions should be filled no later than July 1, 2003.

Thank You

I extend my sincere appreciation to each individual on this campus for all you have given to this University. Your talents emerge in so many ways — in classrooms, on the grounds, shops, and in the hallways, in planning meetings, in studios and laboratories, in dining areas and offices, and in the community. You touch the lives of our students and serve as ambassadors for Valdosta State University. Your willingness to help in so many ways is a true reflection of the devotion you have for this institution.

Nancy and I thank you for all your efforts during this past year, and we wish you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season!