

President's Message

Ronald M. Zaccari



December 12, 2003

Spring Convocation

The Spring Convocation is scheduled for Thursday, January 8, 2004 at 10 a.m. in the Whitehead Auditorium. The presentation will focus primarily on Valdosta State University's Master Plan that includes enrollment trends, space inventory, physical analysis, and academic goals as they relate to the University's overall strategic plan and vision.

Budget

It is difficult to discuss the budget without first mentioning enrollment. VSU's final enrollment headcount this semester was 10,547, an increase of 6.5 percent from Fall Semester 2002. This year our retention rate increased to 75 percent from 72 percent in 2002. The Graduate School experienced a record 11 percent increase, as compared to Fall Semester 2002. This semester's freshmen class increased 5.5 percent from last fall. Despite two successive years of budget cuts, enrollment at University System of Georgia institutions continues to skyrocket. Since Fall 2000, the USG Fall Semester enrollment has increased by 20 percent or 41,142 students.

VSU has completed FY04 budget cuts. The 2.5 percent (\$1.1 million) came from increases in enrollment and tuition revenue as well as unfilled administrative positions. The good news is we were able to meet the budget reduction for this fiscal year without layoffs.

VSU has taken many proactive steps to deal with mandated budget cuts. The first was the formation of a Budget Advisory Council and development of an integrated database budgeting system. This system allows administrators to connect budget priorities with the institution's strategic goals. Through this strategic process, we have enhanced efficiencies in our daily operations without eliminating direct services to our students.

As we continue to monitor our current budget situation, we are preparing for an additional 5 percent budget reduction in FY05. The Budget Advisory Council is working diligently with directors and department heads to identify critical need areas and secure funding for those initiatives that have been prioritized through VSU's strategic planning process.

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Appointments

After completing two extensive national searches, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Scott Henderson Sikes as Vice President for University Advancement. Scott has worked in a series of positions with the University of Georgia's Division of External Affairs for nearly 14 years, each with increasing budgets and administrative responsibilities. He has extensive knowledge and expertise in all areas of fund raising and development. Scott will join VSU on January 1, 2004.

Dr. Anita G. Hufft, associate dean for Academic Programs at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center School of Nursing, will become VSU's new dean of the College of Nursing effective February 16, 2004. Dr. Hufft has served as a nursing education administrator and faculty member at William Carey College, Houston Baptist University, Spalding University and Indiana University.

I wish both of these individuals success as they join VSU and embark on their new areas of responsibilities. Please extend a warm VSU welcome to our newest colleagues!

Awards

VSU was recognized by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents as one of eight institutions to win an award for best practices. Our "University-Wide Planning" program received \$10,000 and was recognized along with seven other USG institutions for best practices designed to help their college or university become more efficient and effective. VSU's Information Technology staff did a remarkable job of transforming a conceptual design to a functioning model. This has been a valuable tool in tracking VSU's strategic planning goals, connecting the campus plan with the mandated Board of Regents' goals, and applying financial resources to defined action steps.

Employees within Plant Operations Department received the first of its kind "Distinguished Service Award" from the University System of Georgia. This is a tremendous honor and it recognizes the men and women who work diligently to keep VSU operating in a productive and efficient manner. I am proud of their accomplishments and applaud their efforts in working as a team to move this University forward.

Partners for Campus Excellence

I am pleased to introduce the "I Caught You Caring" program, developed and implemented by the Partners for Campus Excellence team. This program recognizes employees who go out of their way to create positive experiences for the people they serve. VSU's future depends on all faculty and staff members making a positive connection to current and prospective students, parents, alumni, and members of the community. More information about this program will be available at the beginning of next year.

Thank You

I want to extend my appreciation to each individual on this campus and the dedication and service extended throughout 2003. Nancy and I wish you and your family a joyful holiday season!