

President's Message

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May 4, 2004

In January 2002, I began discussing the University's impending transformation—one that would be intentional, deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution, and occurring systematically over time. During the past two years, the transformation has been on a steady course of action. We are now at a point where we can begin to see tangible results of our hard work.

Housing

The 2002 planning retreat identified student housing as a priority on VSU's campus. In May 2003, we made our first housing presentation to the Board of Regents' Facilities Committee. Less than one year later, on April 21, 2004 the Board of Regents officially approved Phase I of VSU's \$32.5 million housing project. This plan incorporates a diverse mix of on-campus housing options to include renovation of traditional style residence halls and new construction offering private suite-apartment style accommodations.

Ground breaking for the new 518-bed facility is scheduled for June 2004 and renovations begin with Lowndes Hall in spring 2005 and Patterson Hall in fall 2005. Ambling Corporation was selected as the developer, and final designs are under development for the new facility that will be located adjacent to the Student Recreation Center on Sustella Avenue.

Master Plan

On May 18, 2004, our updated 10-year Master Plan will be presented to the Board of Regents. This comprehensive master planning process began in August 2003, with a broad-based Master Plan Committee that included faculty, staff, students, alumni, Foundation Board, and key members of our community. The process received productive assistance from University System of Georgia personnel and the Atlanta-based firm of Portman and Associates. Officials from USG and Portman visited the campus on numerous occasions and were instrumental in guiding VSU through this complex project.

The updated Master Plan identifies assumptions that VSU will:

- Have a headcount enrollment of 16,200 students by 2014
- Be a pedestrian campus
- Cluster programs in sectors (e.g., arts and sciences core, business, education, fine arts, and health care)
- Respect the historical significance of the campus and neighborhoods
- Maintain architectural integrity (Spanish mission on main campus)
- Provide on-campus housing for 20-25 percent of the student population by 2014
- Build on existing uniqueness such as our location across from South Georgia Medical Center; strong relationships with city and county schools; and solid accredited programs.

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Valdosta State University is an interactive campus engaged in the life of our city, and forty-one county region of South Georgia; thus, we must continue working collaboratively with local government officials and residents to create a viable vision for the University's future growth and development. Along with broad campus involvement, I had the opportunity to discuss our 10-year plan with community leaders, legislators, city and county officials, and members of local neighborhoods. The University System of Georgia staff was kept informed of the plan's progress and each transitional step was endorsed by open communication.

I deeply appreciate the long hours, dedication, and contributions to the Master Plan, and the ability to look beyond individual expectations and remain focused on the goals outlined in VSU's strategic planning efforts. The approval of VSU's Master Plan is only the first stage of a continuous process of campus transformation. Each of us must continue to direct resources and energies toward the implementation of the new Master Plan.

Strategic Planning

The Strategic Plan continues to advance through the work of six task forces that were identified by the University Planning Advisory Council (UPAC). The task forces are dynamic entities, and members have engaged in intense discussions focused on specific elements of the Strategic Plan. These areas include:

1. **Concise Mission Statement:** This statement does not supercede the existing full-length mission statement. It provides a brief, but direct, summary of VSU's mission and core values. The Concise Mission Statement was endorsed by the Faculty Senate, Council on Staff Affairs, and Student Government Association.
 - ❖ The mission of Valdosta State University is to
 - Prepare our students to meet global opportunities and challenges through excellence in teaching and learning.
 - Expand the boundaries of current knowledge, and explore the practical applications of that knowledge, through excellence in scholarship and creative endeavors.
 - Promote the economic, cultural, and educational progress of our community and our region, through excellence in service outreach.

VSU seeks to accomplish this mission in a dynamic, student-centered learning environment marked by respect for the diverse abilities, backgrounds, and contributions of all members of the university community.

2. The staff survey task force presented its final report to the UPAC on March 8, and I have charged the appropriate Cabinet officers to review the results and begin work to implement recommended outcomes.
3. The task forces addressing faculty workload, efficiency implementation, strategic grant seeking, and regional impact and partnerships presented their findings and recommendations to the UPAC on April 26.

Full reports on these items and other issues associated with the UPAC are available at www.valdosta.edu/planning/

In October 2003, VSU was honored by the Board of Regents with a best practice award for university-wide planning. Our planning model was submitted to a 15-state regional competition and recognized by the Southern Association of College and University Business Officers (SACUBO). VSU's presentation titled "Effective Allocation of Resources through an Integrated Strategic Planning and Budgeting Model" focused on key elements of the web-based budget-planning model, especially the direct connection from budget initiatives to departmental plans, and both VSU and the Board of Regents' strategic plans.

VSU's integrated planning model was one of four Best Practices selected by SACUBO, from 55 entries, and was presented in San Antonio on April 18, 2004. The other institutions invited to make presentations were the University of Tennessee, University of Virginia, and Florida State University.

Congratulations to everyone who worked to transform this conceptual model into a functioning system that empowers the campus to participate in the planning process and enables us to direct our resources to meet the expressed needs of the University.

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Budget

The latest information we received indicates there will be a 2 percent merit pool available for University System employees; however, this is subject to Board of Regents approval at the May 18-19 meeting. Chancellor Thomas Meredith has charged University System of Georgia institutions to administer increases based upon merit-worthy service. Only employees who have exhibited meritorious performance will be considered for merit increases; therefore, no employee whose performance has been evaluated as unacceptable is eligible to receive a merit increase. Across-the-board increases are not in keeping with the concept of "meritorious" service. I expect that decisions regarding merit recommendations will be based upon a systematic approach to the evaluation of employees' work. We are working to improve our annual evaluation process that ties job performance to evaluative instruments. The process we use this year will become a foundation for our financial planning for FY2006. All increases are only recommendations until approved by appropriate cabinet level officers, this office, and by the Board of Regents at its June meeting.

Capital Improvement Request

Last month VSU submitted a strong case to support our FY2006 Consolidated Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan request to the University System of Georgia. The presentation focused on projects that are consistent with our Master and Strategic Plans and vital to our mission as a regional university.

VSU's major capital project request includes the efficient use of the North Campus property and the construction of the proposed Center for Health Sciences and expansion of the College of Business Administration. The estimated cost is \$38 million. Three minor capital projects were submitted that include renovations to Nevins Hall (phase two); Ashley Hall; and Pine Hall (for consolidation of technology services). These minor projects have an estimated cost of \$13.8 million.

Additionally, VSU submitted a request for an estimated \$2.75 million in funds for FY2005 Major Repair and Renovations (MRR). These funds address various facility improvements across campus.

HUB

Last year the HUB initiative was conceived when faculty, staff, and administrators came together to enhance teaching and learning. This concept has evolved into an initiative that unites individuals on campus to meet their common educational, social, and cultural needs. I am inspired and energized by so many individuals who made a commitment to integrate creativity throughout this campus. There are countless examples of faculty, staff, and students who are working within their departments to facilitate change and support the ideas of their colleagues and fellow students. This is the principle behind the HUB initiative. This campus-wide idea was recently the focus of several sessions at the American Association of Higher Education Annual Meeting, where academic professionals from across the country offered their enthusiastic support for the HUB initiatives. I encourage you to submit your Collaborative Agreement Plans (HUB*CAPs) before the end of the semester.

Members of the VSU community (students, faculty, staff, and administrators) have been discussing the idea of using a broad, inclusive theme to link segments of our campus. Conversations facilitated through HUB have identified "Creativity, Innovation, and Vision" as the theme for 2004-2005. This theme can bring the campus together through a number of exciting opportunities, including shared readings, presentations, and performances; renowned guest speakers; group discussions following presentations; celebration of the unique accomplishments of our colleges, departments, and other campus organizations (for example, an "Artists at Work" day); and the relation of this theme to classes.

For more information, please visit the HUB website at <http://www.teach.valdosta.edu/hub>.

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Commencement and Awards

Last year I charged a Faculty Senate committee to examine all aspects of commencement and make recommendations to enhance the dignity of this academic event and allow it to become more visually exciting.

One of the first changes involves specially designed banners carried by the graduating student with the highest GPA from each college or division. The students will lead the processional, followed by the dean of their respective college or division. The banners are individualized with the college or divisions name and designated colors. This display gives special recognition to the high academic achievement of the students and individual colleges and division.

A second addition to this semester's commencement ceremony is presentation of awards for Excellence in Teaching, Excellence in Professional Activity, and Excellence in Service for Faculty. These awards symbolize the distinguished professional service of Valdosta State University's faculty and will be presented annually at spring commencement. In 2005, we will add Excellence in Advising to the awards list. I am very pleased with the caliber of nominations we received and the selection process.

Faculty Dining Facility

After receiving input from faculty members concerning their desire to have a place to assemble during lunch hours, I have designated the President's Dining Room in Palms Dining Center as a faculty dining room. The new facility will open at the beginning of fall semester, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday through Friday.

Search for Human Resource Director

After 35 years of service, Inman Grimsley, Director of Human Resources, will retire effective June 1, 2004. His leadership and dedication have brought heightened service to Valdosta State University and the entire University System of Georgia. He has the distinction of having the highest number of years for human resource service within the University System of Georgia. In his 35 years, Inman has helped thousands of employees in so many positive ways. On behalf of the entire University, I wish Inman a long, healthy, and happy retirement.

We are in the process of finding a new Director of Human Resources and position announcements have been placed in national, regional, and local publications. A search committee is being formed and given the charge to have a new Director of Human Resources in place by September.

Athletics

This was a tremendous year for our athletic teams, football, men's basketball, and men and women's tennis all ranked in their respective polls. These teams, along with the golf team also received NCAA championship bids. During Fall Semester 2003, 58 student-athletes made the Dean's List, 14 had a 4.0 GPA, and 117 earned a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Nine athletic squads had a team cumulative GPA of 2.9 or higher.

Thank You

The President's Message serves as a communication tool to inform the campus and community of our accomplishments, goals, and vision. The successes we celebrate today were accomplished through the dedication and teamwork of every faculty, staff, and student who made the commitment to move this University forward. The strategic planning retreat in March 2002, was the first step in creating VSU's future. Today, I believe the greatest accomplishment lies in the energy of collaboration and spirit of unity that has emerged from the planning process. This is an extremely important element in our transformation—the willingness of each of us to look beyond our personal expectations and focus on the overall enhancement of Valdosta State University.

Thank you for sharing your ideas and generating excitement and enthusiasm for the work that lies ahead. Please mark your calendars to join me for Fall Convocation on Monday, August 9, 2004 at 10 a.m. in the Whitehead Auditorium, followed by the annual Faculty and Staff luncheon in the University Center at 11:30 a.m. As we close another academic year, I hope you will enjoy a safe, productive, and relaxing summer.