



*Notes From The President*

November 24, 2009

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Maureen and I wish you the best for a wonderful holiday season. I know the value of your efforts in making Valdosta State an outstanding institution, and I know that many families are thankful for your efforts. It is common for students, parents, alumni and community members to remind me of the effect you have had on their lives. There is no question that you are in the business of “shaping the branches on family trees.” You do it very well, and you do it under exceptional circumstances. I could not be more thankful to be able to represent you!

Regarding the difficult circumstances, Governor Sonny Perdue recently announced that the revenue collections in October were down by 17.8% from the previous year. The percentage decrease year-to-date is 15.1%. Despite the challenge, you have continued to provide outstanding educational opportunities.

You have also joined with me and the Planning and Budget Committee to craft a plan that protects all those employed by the institution from the risk of job loss and that insures the highest quality of education and campus life available. The plan we developed this summer fully accommodates the 8% reductions in the state appropriation indicated by the Board office last week. I hope you agree that we are doing well given the combined total budgetary loss in the past two years of more than 25% (\$12.5 million).

We must all be thankful that so many students and families have put their trust in us. The fall enrollment, with 12,391 students, is the largest in the university’s history. This year’s faculty is serving more students than in past years. Students and faculty alike appear to be adjusting to a limited number of strategic lecture-style classes. The large classes allow more seats without additional cost and provide funds for initiatives that continue to boost enrollment and support your scholarship.

It was with deeply mixed emotions that I announced the retirement of Dr. Louis Levy, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Dr. Levy has served Valdosta State University for more than 20 years and is one of the finest academic leaders with whom I have been associated. On behalf of the entire university and its alumni and friends, I wish Louis and Jerriann the very best in retirement and transition to “civilian life.” Louis, we thank you for your years of service and for your wisdom and friendship. You will be missed!

Valdosta State is fortunate to have many outstanding faculty and administrators who have served this institution with dedication and the utmost professionalism. I am thankful that Dr. Phil Gunter — an individual with a distinguished record as a scholar and administrator — has agreed to serve as the interim provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. This position serves an important role as the university's Chief Academic Officer and is responsible for overseeing all academic operations including five colleges, the Graduate School, Division of Social Work and Library and Information Science, as well as various administrative units. Phil will continue in the spirit of shared governance. He will continue to pioneer the role of the Chief Academic Officer as head of the Planning and Budget Council.

Dr. Jay Rickman, Executive Secretary of the Faculty Senate and Professor of History, has agreed to chair the search committee for a permanent Provost and VPAA. Members of the search committee will be named within the next few weeks and a replacement is expected to begin by fall 2010.

Earlier this month I joined members of the athletic staff in recognizing Chris and Tammy Wilmot for their generous financial support to the university. The computer lab located in the new Athletic Field House was named the "Chris and Tammy Wilmot Computer Lab." The Wilmot's are advocates for education and have personally mentored two students — both will graduate next year — and their influence and generosity will serve as a beacon for others.

In December we will break ground on Valdosta State's newest academic facility. The 15,700 square-foot building includes two auditorium-style classrooms, each with a seating capacity of approximately 350. Located on the corner of Baytree Road and N. Oak Street adjacent to the Education Center, this academic building will be named in honor of Jerry and Kay Jennett for their significant philanthropic contributions to Valdosta State. The Jennetts have taken leadership roles at Valdosta State by supporting many programs within athletics and arts. Jerry and Kay have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to VSU and higher education.

To the Wilmots, Jennetts and all that join in our important mission, we extend our deepest appreciation. They, like you, have kindled the real spirit of this season!

Best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Schloss, President