



Notes From The President

October 23, 2009

Vol. 1 No. 6

Valdosta State is on a roll. This semester, the university has experienced its largest enrollment growth, adding 900 students. The contributors are diverse and comprehensive — online courses, graduate students, on- and off-campus programs, fine arts and sciences, professional schools, out-of-state and international students. You name it, and there was growth.

A common thread among Valdosta State faculty and staff has been to work outside comfortable traditions and seek new ways to serve an increasing number of students. The new assistantship program accounts for more than 60 students who would have gone elsewhere, online courses account for several hundred students, the Blazin' Brigade represents an additional 15 students and increased recruiting outside the region has brought hundreds more students to the university.

Equally important, Valdosta State has expanded programs to accommodate growth. Even with no new faculty and 85 fewer staff, Valdosta State continues to provide more credit hours per student than in previous years.

The new Strategic Focus planning process has helped to ignite this growth. As we begin the second year of the Strategic Focus process, we must maintain the momentum that we gained during last year's process. The Strategic Focus 2011 process includes a review and evaluation of standards and proposals that will advance Valdosta State University from its status as a premier regional comprehensive master's institution to a national university with an increasing number of advanced degree programs.

This annual review solicits new standards and initiatives, measures the effectiveness of previously funded initiatives, and selects initiatives for funding in the coming academic year. The annual strategic planning process is characterized as an open process that places resources closest to the university's mission. The results in just one year have been stunning.

Specifically, the Strategic Focus process has provided Valdosta State University with new and expanded academic programs, improved extracurricular programs and services, added classroom space, and improved recruiting tools. The process has also opened the door to increased athletic opportunities for young women and the development of an "early leavers" degree completion program.

We must maintain this momentum as we begin Strategic Focus 2011.

The Mission

Valdosta State University is a "community of scholars in a culture of excellence." The Strategic Focus 2011 standards should emphasize propagation of scholarship through teaching, research and service — which is our reason for existence. All other activities either enable this work or are secondary.

The Vision

Valdosta State is a premier residential comprehensive master's level institution with limited doctoral programs and a relatively open admission.

Valdosta State aspires to be a nationally prominent institution distinguished for its attention to students and their engagement in significant disciplinary scholarship. We believe that doctoral students enrich the experience for undergraduate students. Similarly, Valdosta State aspires to be distinguished for its leadership training and innovative instructional methods, programs and services. As a university, Valdosta State aspires to rise from prominence in the southeastern United States to prominence across the country.

Strengths and Weaknesses / Opportunities and Challenges

Valdosta State is constrained by modest private financial support, limited extramural support, declining state appropriations, a heavy teaching load, challenging geographical footprint for our campus, limited population base close to our campus, and a non-central location in the state.

Using our shared governance model and the support of the Board of Regents we have the opportunity to set our own destiny, as we advance Valdosta State University. Though distant from large population centers, the interstate highway system gives us access to a growing region. Valdosta State is surrounded by a supportive community, and is a vital student-centered campus community of learners and scholars. Valdosta State has a national reputation for its quality of campus life, including intercollegiate athletics, and an attractive campus with an award-winning architectural style.

Standards for Change: Your Thoughts Needed

The initiative process considers this background, but more importantly considers your expectations as Valdosta State grows as a comprehensive university, opening the door for additional standards. Against this backdrop, the top five standards from faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the university have been identified to advance Valdosta State University from its status as a premier regional comprehensive master's institution to a national university with an increasing number of advanced degree programs.

Last year, the following standards were approved for Strategic Focus 2010:

- Recruitment/Enrollment
- Retention and Graduation
- Scholarship/Research
- Financial Solvency Resources
- Development of New Academic Initiatives

I invite you to recommend standards for Strategic Focus 2011 to me at pjschloss@valdosta.edu or to Kristina Cragg (Assistant to the President for Strategic Research and Analysis) at kmcragg@valdosta.edu. In a year where VSU was able to increase enrollment by nearly 900 students, this growth can be traced to specific initiatives that were funded through the Strategic Focus process. With this process our future is limitless. The deadline is **Friday, October 30, 2009**.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Schloss, President