



Notes From The President

September 3, 2010

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I am proud to report the start of another year at Valdosta State University. I like to say that we measure our achievements by every life we touch. In one way or another, we touch every person in Lowndes County. Most directly, this year we will provide classes for approximately 13,000 students — a 5 percent increase from last year and more than 13 percent increase from two years ago when I first arrived. Many of these students are first generation collegians who will use their college degrees to shape a stronger economy.

This year, we will touch the lives of about 60 additional faculty and an equal number of new staff. For every 22 new students, we employ a new faculty and staff member. Recently, VSU made a commitment to hire faculty in tenure track positions, with the strong likelihood they will continue employment through a 30-year career. This is a departure from employing temporary faculty, who are more likely to stay a few years prior to finding permanent positions. We continue to upgrade staff positions with a goal of providing wages that engender long-term commitments to the university.

The faculty, staff and students impact others in a variety of ways. Our economists emphasize that each student contributes \$18,000 to the community. This year's growth alone will account for approximately \$11 million, in addition to the \$526 million from last year.

Much of the economic impact is through the students, faculty and staff — and the important multiplier factor, those individuals we have touched, but may not have met. A great supporter of our university once told me that he seldom sees students in his business. At first blush, one could conclude that our students do not impact his profit margin; however, how many of his customers run businesses or are employed at businesses that benefit from students? While our students may not eat at the restaurant, the folks that sell sundries to students, style their hair, or maintain their cars may be restaurant patrons. When you consider the multiplier effect, there are more than 5,500 people employed in Lowndes County as a direct result of the university — including those we employ and those that benefit from the multiplier.

Recently, we have touched a number of architectural, engineering and construction firms. Since my arrival, we have completed more than \$80 million in new construction. We anticipate continued activity through the development of new athletic fields, residence halls, academic buildings and clinics. While a number of the projects connect us with folks in Atlanta, Jacksonville, and Savannah, we are always excited when our construction money remains in the region. I can assure you that more money finds its way from Fulton County to Lowndes than from Lowndes to Fulton.

Our reach extends beyond the economic impact. Those who watched our NCAA Division II women's softball team and men's tennis team finish second in the nation, and our men's basketball team make the national tournament, have been touched by a standard of athletic excellence. Few communities can boast the cultural opportunities available through venues such as the Peach State Summer Theatre, Valdosta Symphony Orchestra, Jazz Ensemble, and Concert Choir. Did I mention the first edition of VSU's Madrigal Dinner that will premier this holiday season?

Our contributions to the regional "talent pool" are legendary. Ask your ophthalmologist where he or she earned a bachelor's degree — chances are it was Valdosta State University. The majority of our local school teachers are graduates of the Dewar College of Education. We have a number of accountants, bankers, and business professional who are graduates of the Harley Langdale Jr. College of Business Administration. While we are happy that young people growing up in Atlanta want to come to Valdosta to attend college, we are just as excited when they decide to stay in Valdosta and become professional, civic leaders and entrepreneurs.

Many of us realize that civic engagement of our students does not begin upon graduation. Last year, our student-athletes volunteered more than 1,500 hours through the annual Blazer Build and other community service projects. We placed more than 200 nursing students at local hospitals and health care facilities throughout South Georgia. Members of VSU's nationally recognized Students in Free Enterprise team contributed approximately 10,000 hours of community service, which directly impacted school-aged children in this community.

No one dislikes traffic and long lines more than me; but as a friend once said, "The economic activity indicated by student involvement in the community cannot buy happiness, but it makes any challenge easier to deal with."

We are proud to be partners in the growth of this great region!

Sincerely,
Patrick J. Schloss, President