



*Notes From The President*

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You can go anywhere from here...

Valdosta State University continues to mature as a university. Enrollment will soon reach 12,000, and thousands of students have graduated and achieved success in their professional careers. Today, more than 43,000 alumni are scattered across the United States and around the world.

The phrase "you can go anywhere from here" increasingly applies to our academy. Valdosta State University alumni are leaders in education, the arts, business and industry, government, health care, and athletics.

This year's Georgia Teacher of the Year, Gwen Desselle, received her undergraduate and master's degrees from Valdosta State. The 32-year veteran educator teaches social studies at Colquitt County High School. During this coming school year, she will travel the state conducting workshops and programs for educators.

Dr. William "Billy" Greer, a 1965 graduate, has ascended to the position of president of Virginia Wesleyan College, a private liberal arts school with approximately 1,500 students. He is actively engaged in higher education leadership and serves as chair of the Old Dominion Athletic Conference President's Council.

Chris Crenshaw, a former participant in the Governor's Honors Program, attended Valdosta State University and studied trombone with Dr. Doug Farwell. Chris graduated in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in jazz performance. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in jazz studies at The Julliard School and performs with the Lincoln Center jazz ensemble under the direction of Wynton Marsalis.

Bernard L. Brown is author of "Lessons Learned on the Way Down." His book describes 30 years of insights acquired while working as CEO of some of Georgia's largest health care organizations. The 1961 graduate found that effective leadership begins when you turn a company's organizational chart upside down. He advocates the empowerment of all individuals within the enterprise. Brown, who received the 1989 Distinguished Alumnus of the Year, has been a speaker at the Harley Langdale Jr. Lecture Series and is a member of the Langdale College of Business Administration Advisory Board.

VSU's 2004 Distinguished Alumnus of the Year, David Ratcliffe, earned a bachelor's degree in biology in 1970. He has risen through the professional ranks to become chairman, president and CEO of the Southern Company. The Southern Company is one of the largest generators of electricity in the nation, serving both regulated and competitive markets across the southeastern United States.

The Southern Company provides electricity for more than 4.4 million retail customers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and the Carolinas.

Mr. Ratcliffe is proud that his service has resulted in an effective balance between the earnings interests of shareholders; rates and reliability interests of customers; growth and impact interests of communities; and policy interests of regulators. We trust that Valdosta State University has played a small part in providing the tools that have led to these achievements.

Tim Golden, VSU's 1993 Distinguished Alumnus of the Year, is serving his sixth term as state senator and is currently secretary of the Senate Appropriations Committee and senior member of the Senate Finance Committee. The 1977 graduate formerly served as a state representative during which time he was instrumental in securing university status for his alma mater. Senator Golden and Representative Amy Carter, a 1993 graduate, join representatives Jay Shaw and Ellis Black in supporting our region and university. They are genuine partners in our mission.

It is not hard to find stories of VSU graduates who have gone to great heights in athletics. Most recently, VSU alumnus Briny Baird has earned more than \$10 million and has had 25 top 10 finishes on the PGA tour. Briny was the 2004 recipient of the Jack Nicklaus Award, which is given to the nation's top NCAA Division II golfer. This year, VSU senior Brent Witcher received this prestigious award.

Jessie Tuggle, VSU alumnus and former NFL player, is a 1992 business graduate. Jessie joined the Atlanta Falcons in 1987 and went on to play 14 years. He earned five Pro Bowl appearances and led the Falcons in tackles in 10 out his 14 seasons. In 2007, Jessie was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame. He continues to generously give back to his alma mater and is a true ambassador for Valdosta State University.

Felicia F. Norwood graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in political science from VSU, a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin and a juris doctorate from Yale Law School. As CEO and president of ActiveHealth Management, she oversees one of the nation's leading health care companies. She was recently named one as one of the "100 Most Powerful Executives in Corporate America" by Black Enterprise. The Network Journal listed her as one of "25 Influential Black Women in Business."

VSU students come from varied background, rich and poor. Not all have the same advantages. The achievements of some are all the more impressive because of their humble beginnings.

Lynda Bernhard is not your typical college student. The 38-year-old mother of two is part of a growing number of non-traditional students at Valdosta State University. Working towards a double major in biology and philosophy has not been an easy road for the former diesel mechanic. At the age of 33, Lynda was encouraged by a co-worker to go to college. With this push she presented her GED and took the required placement test to be admitted to Valdosta State. She has excelled in her career: she is a member of the VSU Honors Program and various academic groups, including the Golden Key Club, Alpha Chi National Honor Society, and Phi Sigma Tau.

It is nostalgic to reflect on Valdosta State University's humble beginning as a small institution open exclusively to women preparing for careers in education. Today, Valdosta State University is a premier residential university with a national reputation. We offer more than 100 programs of study leading to associate, bachelor, master, specialist, and doctoral degrees.

Chris Crenshaw, David Radcliffe, Briny Baird, Jessie Tuggle, Felicia F. Norwood and innumerable others represent the contemporary graduates, individuals who have acquired a world class education in diverse disciplines and have captured the national stage. They clearly demonstrate that "You can go anywhere from here!"

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Schloss