



## *Notes From The President*

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We are reaching the end of an incredible academic year. While much of our focus has been overshadowed by challenging financial times, Valdosta State has risen above the arduous forecast to experience one of the greatest periods of development in our history.

We measure our success by the number of lives we touch. This year VSU added 900 students, and we are projecting a similar increase in the coming fall. This past year's growth was the largest percentage increase in 16 years and the largest head count increase in history. This was not a chance occurrence. Our faculty, staff and students have been tireless in finding innovative ways to attract the brightest and best.

The Strategic Focus planning process, which began last year, has helped to ignite this growth and provide funds to recruit and retain students who would otherwise attend college elsewhere. The Strategic Focus 2010 funds have allowed us to develop new online degrees and certificate programs, enhance support for services and scholarships, grow our marching and pep bands, add competitive athletic opportunities for women, build more classrooms and office space, and improve extracurricular programs. Many of these initiatives broaden our appeal for the young people of Georgia; and others extend our reach to nontraditional students.

We are on schedule to add more than 100 new tenure track faculty positions within the next three to four years. We are also adding a proportionate number of critical staff in our counseling center, student health care, security offices, and academic support areas. For the first time, we have added an admissions professional who resides in and focuses on the Atlanta area.

As my dear father would say about the Depression era in the Dakotas, the only certainty was that a family would scrape together enough money to buy seed and plant crops. Planting was the only occasion for hope. The programs funded through our Strategic Focus initiatives are the seeds that will pay great dividends.

We are not manufacturing money. In fact, our state appropriation has been reduced by more than \$15 million in the last two years. The achievements are the result of aligning resources with priorities that are well accepted by our faculty, staff, students and the community.

Our new open planning and budget process aligns resources with mission. New "funding pools" allow departments to purchase equipment and develop programs that otherwise could not be funded through the regular budget process. Funding pools are used to connect faculty efforts with regional research/service needs, support the acquisition of scientific equipment, permit timely renovation of dated classroom space, provide modern instructional equipment, strengthen library holdings, and maintain our focus on the arts.

An example of the success of these funding pools was demonstrated last month with the opening of our new Advanced Spectroscopy and Biotechnical Facility. The facility contains more than half a million dollars in cutting edge equipment. It provides an opportunity for our students to work with advance technology that they will use in graduate school or commercial enterprise.

We are committed to maintaining momentum. Our efforts are fixed on the goal of becoming a regional provider with a national reputation. We are proud of our focus on student engagement, the quality of campus life, and our close connection to the wonderful community of Valdosta. We aspire for the rest of the country to see what we see.

This move toward national prominence is evident in recent accomplishments. One such achievement is that Valdosta State received no recommendations for corrective action from our accreditation body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). This outcome is nearly unheard of and exemplifies the Valdosta State culture of excellence.

We are proud of our close relationship with the community of Valdosta. This relationship was never more evident than at this year's "Blazin' Hot Night" dinner and auction. The second annual event, held in our new Student Union Ballroom, has quickly become a premier social event. Hundreds of community leaders and businesses gave generously of their time and resources. More than \$100,000 was raised to support Valdosta State's mission to enhance educational excellence.

Senator Tim Golden, Representatives Ellis Black, Jay Shaw and Amy Carter demonstrate the value of our relationship with the region. They were tireless in seeking funds for the design of a new Health Sciences and Business Administration facility.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill, and highlight the perspective of our faculty and staff, "excellence—at all costs; excellence—in spite of all obstacles; and excellence—however long and hard the road may be." The momentum demonstrated to date, provides our students with the benefits that accrue from a world class education and insures our community will receive the cultural and intellectual resources second to none in South Georgia.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Schloss, President