



STRATEGIC FOCUS 2011 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Valdosta State University is a premier residential university, characterized by outstanding instruction, a wide range of student life opportunities, and a close connection to the community.

Executive Summary

Valdosta State University has embarked on an aggressive strategic planning initiative entitled “Strategic Focus.” Faculty, staff, and students have participated in developing standards that will advance VSU. Strategic Focus 2011 allows VSU to ask the questions:

- **“What can we do to attract new students who would otherwise not apply?”**
- **“What can we do to keep students at VSU who would otherwise leave?”**
- **“How can we enhance VSU’s reputation as a community of scholars?”**

Strategic Focus has become part of our annual planning cycle, which includes review and evaluation of proposals, as well as reconsideration of standards. This annual review solicits new initiatives, measures the effectiveness of previously funded initiatives (in future years), and selects initiatives for the coming academic year. The Strategic Focus annual process places emphasis on the importance of this strategic planning effort as a continuing practice at VSU.

The strategic planning activity, referred to as “Strategic Focus,” literally defines those enhancements to academic life at VSU that have the potential to grow VSU into premier residential university with a national reputation.

Background

Valdosta State University’s revised budget model calls for us to focus clearly on our strategic priorities. In the past budget cycles, we have often distributed a substantial amount of money to wide-ranging, but anticipated essential projects (e.g., repairing roofs, procuring instructional technology, enabling transportation). The revised process removes these anticipated essential items (and the typical budgetary support for them) from the strategic funding pool. Instead the appropriate divisions are expected to establish and efficiently manage these anticipated essential projects and their associated funds. To ensure transparency and shared governance, the divisions are expected to use existing budget advisory groups or to develop new advisory groups to assist with their operations. Budget unit heads continue to be responsible for the day-to-day operations of their units. Because of the limited amount of funds for strategic priorities, four standards have been identified against which proposals can be evaluated. The standards are those elements that, when achieved, advance VSU to an increased position of excellence. To this end, the University community has engaged in a critical strategic planning activity.

While Strategic Focus is the funding pool from which strategic initiatives are funded, there are other fund pool sources for other items (i.e., computer replacement, maintenance, etc.).

Strategic Focus Process

The Strategic Focus process differs from the year-end “sweep-up” process in that our planning enables important activities that advance VSU to be funded throughout the year, rather than spending money within a short period of time and on limited items.

The Problem

- Nearly \$15 Million Reduction in State Appropriations Over Two Years: In fiscal years 2009 and 2010, VSU has permanently lost nearly \$15 million or 25% of its state appropriations.
- Increase Student Enrollment: It is critical that we increase student enrollment as money from tuition and state appropriations comprises more than 95% of the Education and General budget.
- Short-Term vs. Long-Term: We need to solve the short-term problem of budget reductions, but we also need to think strategically, reengineering for long-term improvements. Through activities such as the President and Provost meetings with faculty and staff, participation in developing Strategic Focus 2011 standards, etc., consensus was formed to increase enrollment, thereby increasing revenue to offset the budget reduction. If we only focus on the short-term and are reactive to emergencies then long-term and proactive enhancements will never enter the discussion. The Strategic Focus process has asked us to think strategically and find a way to meet the short-term problem. Are we up to the task of thinking about the reactive and proactive? We will likely miss important opportunities that can advance VSU if we are reactive rather than proactive.
- Developing Our Presence: Regardless of economic climate, we must continue to develop our presence as a premier residential university, characterized by outstanding instruction, a wide range of student life opportunities, and a close connection to the community.

Availability of Funding

- Funding Available Now: The new budget model has identified Strategic Focus as a top priority, which is not subjected to being funded from “sweep-up” money. The VP for Finance and Administration has rebalanced budgets to identify a dollar amount comparable to Strategic Focus 2010 that is available beginning July 1 for projects that advance VSU in the four identified standards.

Guidelines for Proposal of Ideas

- Colleges/Departments Must Fund Improvements: This might include several funding sources: salary salvage, grants, gifts, etc. If a project is proposed which needs university-wide funding, but funds are not available, then a proportion of Strategic Focus funding may be used to fund the project.
- Link Proposal to Standard: Proposals must be linked to Strategic Focus 2011 Goals – Recruitment/Enrollment of Students; Retention & Graduation of Students; Scholarship/Research; and Financial Solvency Resources.

- *New Positions:* There are three options for funding new positions, as outlined in [Allocation and Funding of New Positions](#):
 1. Strategic Focus. Submit a Strategic Focus proposal that aligns with a standard and demonstrates the need for a new position. Proposals are due in January.
 2. New Position Allocation (based on a formulaic process using enrollment growth). New position requests are evaluated against all new position requests within each division. Funding calculations are available in [Allocation and Funding of New Positions](#).
 3. Mid-Year Authorization through the Administrative Chain. Steps:
 - a. Reassign within the department (encouraged)
 - b. Reassign within the college (encouraged)
 - c. Reassign with Provost (rare/discouraged)
 - d. Shift budgeted funds through the Planning and Budget Council (very rare/discouraged)

- *Allocation of Funding:* Strategic Focus funds are generally made on a one-year basis. Those initiatives found to be highly effective may request continued support. Support for these initiatives in fiscal year 2011 will be determined along with review of new proposals along with a progress report describing how funds from the project's first year were spent and what progress was made toward the goal(s) stated in the SF2010 award letter. After three consecutive years of sustained funding (not to include start up funds), the allocation will become permanent to the department, or as long as the program/activity continues. In rare circumstances multi-year funding may be awarded. Proposers will need to describe why multi-year funding is needed (not preferred). The Vice President for Finance and Administration will be asked to evaluate the risks associated with each multi-year proposal. Notification of awards will occur as budget scenarios crystallize but no later than the Fall Convocation.

- *Out-of-Planning Cycle Opportunities:* If an important idea/opportunity occurs prior to the scheduled Strategic Focus process, the idea would be initiated by the respective Vice President to the Planning and Budget Council to capture the opportunity. The proposer will need to demonstrate that sufficient funding was not available within their department/dean, the Vice President will need to demonstrate that sufficient funding was not available within their division and that the opportunity is such that VSU should capture at this time utilizing university funding. The opportunity will be evaluated utilizing the Strategic Focus evaluation method outlined in this document.

The parameters provided above are not a commitment to funding but rather guidelines for planning purposes. Please work with your respective Department Head/Dean/VP to develop proposals within these guidelines. The Strategic Focus 2011 schedule, proposal submission form, proposal review form, frequently asked questions, and other supporting documents are available online at <http://www.valdosta.edu/sra/StrategicFocus2011.shtml>

STRATEGIC FOCUS SCHEDULE

Date	Activity	Due By	To
December 1, 2009	Call for Proposals	January 25, 2010	Department Heads
January 25, 2010	Department Head's Review	February 1, 2010	Dean
February 1, 2010	Dean's Review	February 8, 2010	Dean's Council
February 8, 2010	Dean's Council Review	February 22, 2010	Vice President
February 22, 2010	Vice President's Review	March 8, 2010	Strategic Research and Analysis
March 9, 2010	Strategic Research and Analysis will compile proposals	March 18, 2010	Planning and Budget Council voting members
March 22, 2010	Planning and Budget Council voting members review and rank	April 1, 2010	Strategic Research and Analysis
April 30, 2010	Aggregate funding recommendations presented to Planning and Budget Council		

Call to Best Practices

Strategic Focus 2011 has engaged the campus in comprehensive strategic planning to better utilize VSU as an intellectual, cultural and economic resource for the state of Georgia. The following standards have been identified by the campus community and possible best practices are listed to facilitate discussion. [Note: This is not an exhaustive list and in no particular order.]

RECRUITMENT/ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS

- Expand international partnerships/agreements to increase international enrollment.
- Expand/enhance course and program schedules that allow adult learners to obtain degrees on weekends and evenings.
- Provide additional support to recruit students in specific disciplines/departments.
 - Engage faculty/staff in discipline/department specific recruitment.
- Expand marketing strategies using the Internet, media, and special events.
- Promote activities that bring high school teachers and students to campus (i.e., academic events/contests, etc.).
- Establish a program that sends current VSU students to their high schools to promote VSU.
- Develop dual enrollment programs with high schools.
- Provide new programs or expand existing programs that attract new students who would not otherwise attend VSU otherwise (i.e., Band, MLIS, recovery program, etc.).
- Develop new programs that will attract students who would not otherwise attend VSU (i.e., women's soccer, etc.)
- Develop strategic plans in areas which are underdeveloped.

RETENTION & GRADUATION OF STUDENTS

- Increase attention to the first-year experience through:
 - Mandatory scheduling of essential courses.
 - Stronger relationships between students and academic disciplines.
 - Enhanced tutorial opportunities.
 - Expanded supplemental instruction.
 - Expand affinity groups/support (i.e., living-learning, athletic, group/club, etc.).
- Strengthen campus support for students with disabilities and promote their availability.
- Encourage learning communities that engage students in academic disciplines while outside of the classroom.
- Increase retention efforts for sophomore through senior level students.
- Enhance advising.

SCHOLARSHIP/RESEARCH

- Develop new academic programs in areas of competitive advantage (i.e., Communication Disorders, etc.).
- Increase scholarships for special talent.
- Provide consultation and technical support to enhance scholarship activities.
- Expand curricular opportunities that engage students in research.
- Efforts to increase contracts and grants obtained (i.e., technical support, travel to NSF/NIH training, release time program to faculty).

FINANCIAL SOLVENCY RESOURCES

- Maintain a planning model that links fiscal to programmatic priorities as assessed by all divisions.
- Process improvements that result in financial savings.
- Support major gifts campaign.
- Identification of alternative revenue sources (i.e., camps, conferences, etc.).

Future Iterations of Strategic Focus

Strategic Focus 2011 is a dynamic plan. A review of progress on these initiatives and consideration of new initiatives will take place annually. The annual review will measure the effectiveness of the initiatives, with emphasis on the importance of this planning effort as a continuing practice at Valdosta State University. It is anticipated that the Planning and Budget Committee will collect new initiative proposals each spring. In the following fall, the Planning and Budgeting Committee will assess the results from projects funded the previous year and update projects to be funded in the following academic year.