

Valdosta State University
2002-2003 Annual Report of Institutional Progress
November 14, 2003

Section A: Summary of Major Institutional Accomplishments

Valdosta State University (VSU) continued to build upon its success with strategic planning by implementing a University-wide budget-planning program during the 2002-2003 fiscal year. The new computer-based system, linked to the Peoplesoft financial system, helped VSU set budget priorities. The new system emerged as an integral part of the university's five-component planning model, consisting of the Strategic Plan, Budget Plan, Facilities Plan, Master Plan, and External Plan. The new program allows departments and units to develop budget projections based on the strategic planning goals of the university and the University System of Georgia Board of Regents. VSU used the planning model to build its 2004 fiscal year budget, based on the university's goals and input from all budget units on campus. This university-wide planning model was one of VSU's three submissions for the University System's "Best Practices" competition in 2003.

A record enrollment of 9,915 students during the fall of 2002 gave additional urgency for the need to develop the fourth component of VSU's planning process, a new physical Master Plan for the campus. The Master Plan visually reflects VSU's overall strategic goals by addressing new buildings, use of space, landscape, walkways, traffic patterns, and parking. John Portman & Associates of Atlanta was selected, following a review of proposals from 12 firms, to assist VSU in the preparation of the Master Plan. Portman is partnering with the local firm, IPG.

Additional planning was done during the year on the fifth component of VSU's planning model, the External Plan. This led to a contractual agreement between the VSU Foundation, Inc., and Alexander Haas Martin & Partners. AHM&P was chosen to assist the university in the development of its External Plan, including developing preliminary campaign priorities; designing and integrating a basic centennial plan; identifying prospective Vice President for University Advancement candidates; assessing the Advancement Program, Foundation, and Alumni Association; developing a preliminary strategic plan for Advancement and the Foundation; and implementing a major gifts program.

As enrollment continued to climb, the VSU community was challenged to focus its best creative thinking to identify every possible budget savings and efficiency that could be achieved in daily operations. All departments were required to be selective in requesting authorization to fill any position and to continue to closely monitor their own budgets. Through the overall process, funds were found to support several one-time initiatives, such as the purchase of new computers for more than one-third of the faculty. Network upgrades were provided in several academic buildings, enabling faculty to use the latest web-based instruction. Eight new faculty positions were added in the core

curriculum to assist with the growing enrollment. The focus during the year was on the primary mission of providing high quality education to every VSU student. Teaching, learning, and academic programs remained the highest priorities. The new Budget Advisory Council, created through the Strategic Planning Initiative, was established to review budgets and set priorities on expenditures and needs in relationship to VSU's Strategic Plan and the Strategic Plan of the University System of Georgia.

During FY 2003 Valdosta State University continued to enhance its position as a learning community with national recognition. For example, the Department of Art in the College of the Arts underwent a successful accreditation review by a team from the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD). Also, the Division of Social Work had its accreditation reaffirmed for eight years by the Council on Social Work Education in November 2002.

VSU continued to render vital services to the region and beyond. The campus played host, for the twenty-fourth year, to the Governor's Honors Program, a very successful six-week summer program for many of the best and brightest high school students in Georgia.

All of VSU's colleges were involved in special outreach activities. The College of the Arts, which served as the initial venue to launch Presidential Inauguration Week, played a major PR role introducing the university to the South Georgia-North Florida area. The College of Education was announced as the base for two grants totaling \$4.4 million to the University System of Georgia, in partnership with VSU. The U.S. Department of Education provided the funding to launch Destination Teaching Grant, which will initially target individuals who want to change careers and move into teaching. The effort is designed to help meet the state of Georgia's increasing need for teachers.

Beginning in Fall 2002, VSU expanded its off-campus graduate offerings in Education by providing 28 course sections to 405 teachers enrolled in the Master of Education and Specialist of Education programs. The five off-campus sites included Douglas, Homerville, Moultrie, Thomasville, and Waycross. With the start of spring semester, three sites located in Nashville, Pearson, and Tifton were added with 621 teachers enrolled in 43 classes at the eight off-campus sites.

VSU's off-campus programs are designed to bring college credit courses to areas of Southeast Georgia not conveniently located near a post-secondary institution. Some undergraduate degrees offered during Spring 2003 include the BSED in Early Childhood Education, RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and the Bachelor of Business Administration. Also offered were Master's degree programs, including the Master of Science in Nursing, the Master of Public Administration, Master of Education in Adult and Vocational Education, and Master of Education in Instructional Technology (Online and Distance Learning).

Enrollment in VSU programs at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, South Georgia College, Bainbridge College, and Waycross College, increased from 113 students during Fall 2002 to 140 students during Spring 2003. In addition, 484 students were enrolled at VSU's King's Bay Naval Base location in Fall 2002 and 474 were enrolled for the Spring 2003 term.

Valdosta State University continued to have a strong presence on the Internet. The City Management Track was offered exclusively online. VSU had the first MPA program that could be completed entirely online to be accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). The College of Business Administration positioned itself as one of five business schools in Georgia offering a quality, collaborative, web-based Master of Business Administration Program (WebMBA). VSU, along with Albany State, Georgia Southwestern, and the University of Georgia, received \$20,000 of an \$80,000 grant through the Regional Economic Development Partnership (REDP) to pilot a College Readiness Program modeled after the Texas program titled "Education. Go Get It." This program promotes a culture that values education and encourages students to remain in school and is being considered for statewide implementation by the University System.

VSU initiated ongoing and productive partnerships with the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County, the local public schools systems, medical community, Chamber of Commerce, and many other local and regional organizations that are committed to enhancing the educational and economic development of South Georgia. In April, VSU hosted an Economic Development Summit, where 50 key business, government, education and medical community leaders from Valdosta and Lowndes County met to discuss the economic climate of the region. Through this summit, the Partnership for Metropolitan Development was formed and partially funded through the REDP. The group serves as a catalyst for creative thinking to promote strategic vision for the geographic area and to build partnerships to enhance economic development. This Partnership represents one of VSU's ICAPP initiatives and it has created a task force to identify goals and action steps leading toward greater economic growth in Valdosta and Lowndes County.

VSU'S collaboration also continued with the South Georgia Medical Center to enhance educational opportunities for qualified health care professionals. The proposed North Campus expansion, near the hospital, is an example of utilizing available space and facilities that may lead to the establishment of new degree programs as well as strengthen existing ones. The partnership also will open up new opportunities with Valdosta Technical College. VSU surveyed physicians and medical administrators to assess the educational needs of the medical community. The survey was distributed to physicians and chief administrators at South Georgia Medical Center, Smith Northview Hospital, and Archbold Memorial Hospital.

During 2002 VSU's Small Business Development Center served 250 clients and closed 15 loans with a total loan amount of \$2,455,632. The SBDC serves a 10-county

region and during 2002 it helped create the first local loan pool in Valdosta. Through this service the SBDC served 108 clients and closed four loans totaling \$1,000,000.

Additional major accomplishments by Valdosta State University and its faculty and staff during the year 2002-2003, included the following:

- Classes began during the Spring Semester 2003 in the studios and labs of the new interior design facilities. The new facility is the result of three years of design, planning, and cooperation with the university plant operations, the department of Art, the architect, and contractors responsible for the project.
- The Fine Arts Gallery hosted eight exhibitions; all had excellent attendance with very diverse audiences.
- The Fine Arts Gallery served as the initial venue to launch the Presidential Inauguration Week, opening the “H2O Project” exhibition.
- In March the Art Department hosted an exhibition featuring 67 works of President Ronald Zaccari.
- Eric Nielsen, from the Communication Arts Department, was awarded the Georgia Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance College/University Dance Educator of the Year Award.
- The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra presented its 13th season. This season featured local and international soloists.
- The VSU College of Nursing received approval to offer a minor in Nutritional Studies.
- The Special Education and Communications Disorders Department was awarded Valdosta’s Community Partners in Education 2002 CPIE of the Year Award.
- A major accomplishment by the Curriculum and Instructional Technology Department was the conception, creation and implementation of HUB Learning Cooperative. The underlying foundation for the HUB was the ORBIT document, written during a departmental retreat, which clarified the role and goals of the department in relation to the Strategic Plan of the University.
- In the fall of 2002 the Educational Leadership Department scheduled meetings with chief administrative officers of twenty county schools systems to plan for school improvement programs. As a result, the department initiated a four-county partner school program in January 2003. Student cohorts at the Master’s and Specialist degree levels were begun in Thomas, Coffee, Berrien, and Tift county schools. Total cohort enrollment is approximately 160 students.

- The Ed.S. School Psychology Program received Full Approval from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).
- The VSU College of Arts and Sciences sponsored the 9th Annual Symposium on Undergraduate Research, at which over thirty-five undergraduates presented the results of their research throughout the year.
- The College of Arts and Sciences also offered the Seventh Annual African American Lecture Series and the Eighth Annual Women's Studies Conference—both of which again attracted large, diversified audiences.
- The most significant accomplishment in the Biology Department was the completion of the proposal for the full proposal for a Master's Degree in Biology.
- Another significant and major accomplishment achieved within Arts and Sciences was the initiation of the Science Seminar Series by Dr. John Elder, Biology and Dr. Tom Manning, Chemistry.
- The Department of Mathematics and Computer Science began the process of developing a master's degree program in mathematics education. The program is envisioned to be a Master's of Science in Teaching Mathematics (MST) and will be focused on the mathematical content and teaching needs of practicing teachers in the schools.
- The Marriage and Family Therapy program within the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice completed a self-study and went through a site visit for candidacy for accreditation and received official candidacy. The Applied/Clinical track of the BA major in sociology and anthropology also completed a self-study and received accreditation after a successful site visit.
- The Freshmen Year Experience (FYE) Program at VSU was broadened and the FYE program continued to have a marked impact on retention rates of first-year students. A campus-wide survey conducted during the year to evaluate freshmen academic advising indicated that the FYE advising program was the most effective advising program on campus in all seven areas measured.
- In August 2002 it was announced that the Harley Langdale, Jr. College of Business Administration received an \$8 million plus bequest from the Estate of Ms. Lillian S. Steele honoring her husband, Mr. Rea Steele.
- Dr. Wayne Plumly of the Harley Langdale, Jr. College of Business Administration received the Leavey Award for Excellence in Private Enterprise Education from the Freedom Foundation in Valley Forge, PA.
- Graduate School enrollment remained strong during 2002-2003. Fall enrollment was 1500, exceeding Fall 2001 by 16 percent. Much of the success of graduate

- enrollment growth was due to the number of graduate programs offered off campus.
- The Master of Library and Information Science program continued to grow and complete necessary steps required for certification during 2003. Thirty-four students were enrolled in the program for Fall 2002, a significant increase from the eleven students enrolled in Fall 2001.
 - Through the Public Services Unit, 571 courses off campus were conducted at 21 locations.
 - The Center for International Programs hosted eight visiting international delegations from overseas partner institutions and organizations.
 - Dr. David McFarland, former President of Kutztown University in Pennsylvania, presented leadership workshops involving deans and academic department heads.
 - The University Advancement Division restructured and reorganized the VSU Foundation during the year, creating new bylaws, a new Spending Policy, a new Investment Policy, a new Gift Receiving Policy, a new Use of Discretionary Funds Policy, and the development of a Real Estate Management and Disposition Policy. A major accomplishment was the search and hiring of a total asset management firm, Synovus, to manage the Foundation's growing assets, including the \$8,000,000 bequest from the estate of Rea and Lillian Steele.
 - The Office of Alumni Relations initiated a Strategic Planning process with its Alumni Board members that tied the work of the Alumni Association to that of the University's Strategic Plan.
 - Despite difficult economic times the Office of Annual Giving continued its efforts to encourage private support. A major achievement was a record amount given via the Annual Faculty/Staff Campaign. More than \$126,000 was contributed surpassing the 2002 campaign by more than \$9,700.
 - The Office of University Relations received two Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE III) Awards for its promotional efforts related to the introduction and inauguration of President Ronald M. Zaccari. It also nominated *The Valdosta Daily Times* for its special tabloid on President Zaccari and that entry won the Grand Award from CASE District III.
 - The Odum Library added 14,996 volumes, increasing the book collection to 453,757.

Section B: Annual Progress in Institutional Strategic Planning

A sound strategic plan is more critical than ever in the current economic environment. During 2002-03, Valdosta State University fully implemented a new, integrated strategic planning model that began with the identification of eight University-wide goals at a strategic planning retreat in March 2002. This model encompasses five interconnecting components: the Strategic Plan, the Budget Plan, the Master Plan for the campus, the Facilities Plan for maintenance of the physical plant, and the External Plan for fund-raising. A Chief Planning Officer was hired to coordinate this process.

Eight strategic goal committees were formed to refine the goals and action steps and recommend initiatives that should be undertaken to accomplish the goals. These recommendations were presented to a newly-established University Planning Advisory Council. This twenty-three member Council is broadly representative, including faculty, staff, students, deans, department heads, alumni, and key community leaders. The Council is charged with coordinating and ensuring consistency among the five elements of VSU's planning process. It also identifies and ensures direct connections with the Board of Regents' Strategic Plan. Members are expected to communicate with the campus and with faculty, staff, and student constituents regarding the status of projects and progress toward action steps. The Council receives reports from the planning committees, requests clarification of those reports when necessary, and develops a supportive overview of VSU's overall planning process.

A significant element of the planning model involves the direct linkage between VSU's strategic plan and the budget to ensure that the University's precious resources are allocated toward the strategic goals of the institution and of the University System of Georgia. This was facilitated through creation of a computer-based strategic planning and budgeting system. The system provides for the development of regular departmental operating budgets as well as new strategic initiatives that directly link departmental budget priorities to VSU's strategic plan and goals. This process requires careful planning and prioritization at all levels – from academic and administrative departments to the dean and/or vice president and, ultimately, the president. Priorities that emerge through the process direct the allocation of funds. The system clearly documents projected activities supporting the strategic plan and their associated cost and builds a solid list of initiatives that may be advanced through grant or other external funds. The information in this system is used by the President's Budget Advisory Council which holds budget hearings with each cabinet-level officer and develops an overall institutional budget for review by the President. As a result, the University has experienced strengthened decision-making with sound data and information that identify the most strategic uses for its valuable resources.

The need for contemporary student housing emerged as the University's top priority at the initial strategic planning retreat. VSU addressed this need by presenting a Comprehensive Housing Plan to the USG Board of Regents in May 2003. Given guidance from the Board of Regents, the University is proceeding to develop plans and a timeline for this critical project. Additional progress toward VSU's eight strategic goals is evidenced in the following illustrative accomplishments:

- Selection of Portman & Associates to update the University's master plan and ensure that it is directly aligned with the goals of the strategic plan.
- Completion of a parking study and the resulting development of 198 additional parking spaces on campus. A Parking and Transportation Advisory Committee was established to assist in this process.
- Creation of the HUB initiative by faculty which encourages greater interdisciplinary cooperation among faculty and staff through connecting individuals with similar research interests or particular areas of expertise.
- Participation in the national Delaware Study of Faculty Work which provides recognized external benchmarks for comparison. This represents a collaborative effort of central administration, Faculty Senate, the AAUP chapter and the Office of Institutional Research working toward the common goal of obtaining meaningful comparative data on faculty workload.
- Implementation of a new administrative internship program, enabling three faculty members to work on specific projects with a cabinet-level officer for a semester. Projects undertaken by this initial group include a study of faculty workload, strategic planning, and faculty evaluation.
- Creation of an advising task force that analyzed numerous issues related to student advising and developed recommendations to enhance the process.
- Partnering with the local school systems to develop a proposal for a charter school that will provide an exemplary model for instruction.
- Collaborating with the local and regional medical communities on a survey to identify opportunities to enhance health professions education and meet the critical need for health care professionals in areas such as nursing.
- Working closely with representatives of city and county government, Valdosta Technical College, the public schools, local Chambers of Commerce, business, industry, and the medical community to form the new Partnership for Metropolitan Development. This Partnership focuses on economic development and achieving collectively what none of the organizations can accomplish individually.
- Meeting with budget unit heads to listen to and record creative suggestions that will continue to make VSU more efficient and help us redirect our resources to the goals of the strategic plan.

Detailed information and materials related to VSU's Strategic Planning process, including planning retreat documents, minutes of the University Planning Advisory

Council meetings, and accomplishments are located at:
<http://www.valdosta.edu/planning>.

In addition, each academic and support department submitted an extensive annual report that contained the unit's progress toward the strategic institutional goals. The reports contained examples of departmental goals/activities, the status of each activity (percent complete), and evidence supporting the success of the activity.

Section C: Annual Progress in Assessing Institutional Effectiveness

Valdosta State University is committed to planning, evaluating, and ensuring that all academic departments use evaluation results to improve programs. In addition, the institution is committed to ensuring systematic, across-the-board, documented evidence to demonstrate this use. Each department/unit was required by the SACS review to present evidence that steps are taken to use evaluation results to improve effectiveness. Moreover, the institution has developed and approved a plan for cyclical review of the academic programs. The program review process started in 2001-02 with several programs in the College of Arts and Sciences (mathematics, computer science, and philosophy), Social Work, and all programs in the College of Education. Programs reviewed in 2002-03 include Art, Art Education, Interior Design, Music, Music Education, Music Performance, Chemistry, Political Science, Legal Assistance Studies, Sociology and Anthropology, and the MS in Sociology.

A number of external and internal assessments of student learning have been completed over the last year. For example:

- Overall, VSU students pursuing teacher certification have a high success rate on the PRAXIS II, with 92% of the students who took the PRAXIS II in 2001-2002 passing.
- The graduates of the Master's in Social Work Program scored a 100% pass rate on the LMSW national examination for beginning social work practitioners. Moreover, their Project Healthy Grandparents Program received a high rating from state auditors who cited the Program as being "very effective."
- The average pass rate on the N-CLEX RN licensure examination has fallen below our institutional standard of 85%, and we have instituted the diagnostic instrument ERI Total testing as a requirement for progression in the nursing program. We are anticipating positive results from the Fall scores.

As concerns are noted, programs are developed on campus to improve and enhance services. For example, through Auxiliary Services' Partners for Campus Excellence, services to students are assessed and training programs are initiated. These programs are often campus-wide in nature. Through scanning the campus environment, the Partners for Campus Excellence Program found that academic advising was a critical issue for student retention. Consequently, an Advising Task Force was charged during 2002-03 to study the process and make recommendations for continued improvement.

The Annual Reports from academic and support units help to monitor the institution's improvements in effectiveness. The Department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology's Annual Report demonstrates how the institution promotes positive change through the use of data and the assessment of learning. Enhanced effectiveness results from positive changes on campus.

Section D: Improving Student Retention and Graduation

Retaining students through graduation is an integral part of Valdosta State University's strategic plan. Goal three of the VSU strategic plan encourages continuous enhancement of curricula and research opportunities, resulting in informed graduates and increased student retention and graduation rates. Action steps associated with this goal include facilitating a sense of commitment to and connectedness among faculty, staff, administrators, and students to a larger vision through the establishment of the HUB learning cooperative and Partners for Campus Excellence. Another step toward encouraging retention and graduation includes involving students at all levels of the strategic planning process. Other action steps aimed at increasing retention and graduation rates include improving the quality of teaching and learning, developing a learning culture on campus, and developing a system of programs designed to develop interdisciplinary cooperation among students and faculty. VSU also has committed to improve the advising process, evaluate the effectiveness of the Freshman Year Experience (FYE) program, provide expanded opportunities for student development, and strengthen the international dimension of the students' educational experience as a part of the strategic planning process.

Goal five of the VSU strategic plan will increase student retention and graduation rates by increasing the academic skill level of high school students in the region. This long-term approach toward improving retention and graduation rates keys on helping local K-12 students become better prepared for college and therefore more likely to attend college, be retained, and graduate. VSU is engaged in numerous collaborations with the city and county schools to increase college readiness and attendance, including consideration of a charter school and outreach efforts into classrooms as well as other community organizations emphasizing the value of obtaining education beyond high school.

VSU views retention and graduation of students as a global issue that involves admission to the university, advising, orientation, freshmen retention, and progress to graduation. Significantly, as indicated in Table 1 below the institution has maintained its ability to attract, retain and graduate African American students over the years of rising admission standards. This fact can be attributed largely to an environment that is conducive to addressing the needs of a diverse student body. Table 1 reflects the composition of the student body by ethnicity for the period Fall 1998-Spring 2003. Twenty-five percent of VSU's students represent ethnic minorities.

TABLE 1: Student Composition By Ethnicity (Fall 1998 – Spring 2003)

Quarter/ Semester	Caucasian	African American	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Multiracial	Total
Fall '98	7051 (74.9%)	2006 (21.3%)	26 (.27%)	139 (1.47%)	101 (1.07%)	81 (.86%)	9404
Spring '99	6591 (74.5%)	1908 (21.57%)	23 (.26%)	124 (1.4%)	108 (1.22%)	88 (.99%)	8842
Summer '99	3329 (74.5%)	958 (21.57%)	17 (.38%)	69 (1.54%)	49 (1.09%)	46 (1.02%)	4468
Fall '99	6559 (74.91%)	1853 (21.16%)	19 (.21%)	118 (1.34%)	117 (1.33%)	89 (1.01%)	8755
Spring '00	6327 (74.98%)	1777 (21.05%)	17 (.20%)	121 (1.43%)	112 (1.32%)	84 (.99%)	8438
Summer '00	3387 (74.19%)	996 (21.82%)	14 (.31%)	69 (1.51%)	62 (1.36%)	37 (.81%)	4565
Fall '00	6626 (75.12%)	1831 (20.76%)	21 (.24%)	122 (1.38%)	129 (1.46%)	91 (1.03%)	8820
Spring '01	6284 (74.49%)	1790 (21.22%)	22 (.26%)	120 (1.42%)	129 (1.53%)	90 (1.07%)	8436
Summer '01	3605 (75.03%)	1017 (21.17%)	11 (.23%)	69 (1.44%)	62 (1.29%)	41 (.85%)	4805
Fall '01	6924 (74.95%)	1915 (20.73%)	23 (.25%)	132 (1.43%)	143 (1.55%)	101 (1.09%)	9238
Spring '02	6612 (74.49%)	1885 (21.24%)	18 (.20%)	121 (1.36%)	141 (1.59%)	99 (1.12%)	8876
Summer '02	3611 (74.67%)	1017 (21.03%)	12 (.25%)	73 (1.51%)	75 (1.55%)	48 (.99%)	4836
Fall '02	7463 (75.27%)	2029 (20.46)	29 (.29%)	121 (1.22%)	151 (1.52%)	122 (1.23%)	9915
Spring '03	7268 (75.30%)	1985 (20.57%)	28 (.29%)	112 (1.16%)	143 (1.48%)	116 (1.20%)	9652

The Office of Admissions generated 6,522 undergraduate applications for Fall 2002, an increase of over 13% from Fall 2001. New undergraduates enrolled in the Fall of 2002 numbered 2,345 of whom 1,752 were freshmen. The new admissions standards adopted in 1998 at VSU had a negative impact on enrollments during 1998-99; VSU lost well over 1000 potential students. However, the institution's reputation has been enhanced by the new standards and the above statistics indicate that recruitment has actually improved, (a 7% increase in enrollment for Fall 2002 with a 2% increase in new freshmen). Moreover, the University was able to exceed the University System's requirements for reducing the number and percentage of Developmental Studies students by eliminating Developmental Studies except for a few non-traditional students. Also, on the positive side, the average SAT score of new freshmen is now 1021, the highest ever recorded for VSU. Finally, more students utilize the web, with over 30% of all applications being received via the VSU web site. Special emphasis was placed on the recruitment of transfer students, and articulation transfer handouts were developed for all area USG two-year institutions.

As Table 2 below suggests, increasing admissions standards also has resulted in higher student retention rates. In fact, for the past year, retention rates for VSU students (both at the institution and system levels) have increased by approximately two percentage points per year for the past two years. This increase also reflects the success of some of the programs mentioned in this report (e.g., Freshman Year Experience, Advising Programs, Counseling Center, etc.).

**TABLE 2: Fall-to-Fall One-Year Student Retention Rates (1997-2002)
(All First-Time Full-Time Freshmen)**

Cohort Year	Institution Retention Percent	System* Retention Percent
1996-97	64.3	74.3
1997-98	69.4	78.7
1998-99	66.2	78.0
1999-2000	70.6	79.5
2000-2001	72.0	81.6
2001-2002	74.8	83.7

*Students who began at VSU and returned and those who transferred to other USG schools.

During FY 2002, the six-year graduation rate was 30.1% (1996 cohort institutional rate). Over the past several years, the rate has averaged about 30%. The six-year graduation rate for VSU students finishing their degrees either at VSU or at another system institution has decreased slightly, to 38.6 % (see Table 3 below). The increased graduation rates for the 1994 and 1995 freshmen cohorts reflect, in part, the importance these two cohorts placed on completing their degrees with the implementation of the semester system. Both institutional and system graduation rates should increase as the new admission standards and new retention programs become effective. Additionally, graduation rates will increase to reflect the increasing retention rates of the 1999 and beyond freshman cohorts.

**TABLE 3: VSU 6-Year Graduation Rates (1991-1996)
(All First-Time Full-Time Freshmen Fall Cohorts)**

Cohort Year	Institutional Graduation Rates	System Graduation Rates
Fall 1991	29.7	38.1
Fall 1992	31.0	39.6
Fall 1993	30.2	38.3
Fall 1994	30.8	41.3
Fall 1995	33.6	43.1
Fall 1996	30.1	38.6

Section E: Overall Institutional Health

Examples of **student success**, the ultimate barometer of institutional health, include the following accomplishments:

- The VSU College of Arts and Sciences sponsored the 9th Annual Symposium on Undergraduate Research, at which over thirty-five undergraduates presented the results of their research throughout the year.
- VSU Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) implemented Entrepreneurs of Georgia, a television program interviewing some of the top entrepreneurs in the state. The SIFE team also added two additional off-campus computer centers to teach disadvantaged children the basic skills needed to thrive in the free enterprise system.

The expansion and renovation of campus facilities is another indicator of institutional health. Valdosta State University continues growth through **new construction** and renovation projects. University Center projects have been completed to add space for Interior Design, the South Georgia Educational Consortium, and the University Credit Union. A 95,000 square foot addition to the Odum Library is near completion. A major infrastructure improvement project has been completed to replace the main electrical distribution system switchgear and transformers. The Nevins Hall renovation project is underway and will provide upgraded facilities for Physics, Astronomy, Geology, and Communication Arts. Pending projects include the replacement of a major portion of the underground steam distribution system, ADA Elevator and Stair Tower construction at Nevins Hall to serve the rooftop observatory, and a new chiller and cooling tower at the new library to serve the existing chilled water loop.

The learning community at Valdosta State University continued to improve its resources. For example, the **Odum Library** purchased 14, 996 volumes, increasing the book collection to 453,757.

Information Technology has permeated and enhanced every segment of the VSU community. Examples include the following:

- Over 10% of all applications for admissions are received electronically. Tuition and fees can now be accepted via a credit card web payment gateway. The server hardware supporting the student information system was upgraded to full capacity to support peak registration and new advising functionality.
- The campus network was upgraded with a new core switch which facilitated migration from ATM to gigabit ethernet. Twenty-five new Smart classrooms

were created this year. Computer Lab equipment was upgraded with six new labs, bringing the total computers available to students to 1,600.

- Online courseware (WebCT) and the campus portal (Campus Pipeline) enjoy participation by 25% of the student body. A new strategic planning and budgeting process was facilitated by an online database system which won a system-wide best practice award.

Diversity is an important part of a healthy campus. The Office of **Equal Opportunity Programs and Multicultural Affairs** promotes diversity on campus. This year the office

- Co-Sponsored Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Workshops with the Office of Legal Affairs.
- Conducted Cultural Diversity Week, November 3-7, 2002.
- Provided Cultural Diversity Training to 30 campus constituents.
- Sponsored the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration with Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin as guest speaker on January 17, 2003.
- Sponsored Disability Awareness Month in October, 2002.
- Participated in New Employee Orientation for 120 Employees.
- Trained 30 employees on “Identifying and Preventing Harassment on Campus.”

International Studies continued to be a major initiative at VSU which enhanced the health and diversity of the institution. This program is in part a response to the Board of Regents’ initiative on the internationalization of the campus. VSU’s Director of International Programs chaired the USG European Council, overseeing system-wide programs in Europe including three study abroad programs in England, France, and Russia. With the support of the Office of International Programs, VSU

- Hosted eight visiting international delegations from overseas partner institutions and organizations.
- Organized and sponsored two thematic lecture series in the spring: “Germany in the Heart of Europe” and “War in Iraq.”
- Implemented a new system-wide summer study abroad program in Spain.

- Increased VSU student participation in study abroad to include 99 students in group study programs and 16 students participating in semester or year-long exchanges abroad.
- Developed a new mission statement and strategic goals for the Center for International Programs.
- Continued leadership of the USG's European Council, including coordination of system-wide summer study programs in summer 2003 that included 142 students and 16 faculty in London, 67 students and 10 faculty in Paris, and 28 students and 6 faculty members in St. Petersburg, Russia.
- Organized and coordinated faculty exchanges, including two VSU faculty members to the Czech Republic, one VSU faculty member to Russia, and three Czech faculty members at VSU.
- Designed a new Faculty Internship program to facilitate awareness and capacity-building in international education among VSU faculty.
- Organized Cinema International (a series of foreign films) each semester. A total of 12 films were shown, and there was an average attendance of 75 persons.
- Continued operation of the English Language Institute providing intensive English training to non-native speakers to prepare them to meet proficiency requirements for admission to VSU; sixteen students attended ELI and four of these began study at VSU as regular students.
- Successfully received designation as a host institution for two highly selective federally-funded programs sponsoring year-long exchange visits by foreign scholars and students: The Russia-U.S. Young Leadership Fellows for Public Service and the Freedom Support Act Undergraduate Program; four fellows attended VSU under these programs.
- Hosted the Louie A. Brown Scholar from Belize in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages.

Through its programs and its services, VSU's Division of **Student Affairs** improved the quality of life on campus. Examples of its service include the following:

- Student Health provided acute, routine and preventive care to 15,045 patients, performed 4,202 laboratory tests, filled 9,035 prescriptions, and provided 190 female wellness physicals.
- Housing and Residence Life had 104% Fall semester occupancy and 92% Spring semester occupancy.

- Judicial Affairs converted the VSU Student Handbook from a printed publication to a CD-Rom format, which saved approximately \$2,500 in printing cost.
- The Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Education coordinator conducted 24 programs, presentations, and training sessions, addressing a total of 1,641 students. AOD also reached a potential 3,227 students through campus-wide events, including The Happening, Alcohol Awareness Fair, Safe Spring Break, and Great American Smoke-Out activities. KARMA (Peer Education) students reached an additional 427 students through eight presentations to residence halls, classes, and community outreach. Twenty-seven Natural High events provided 1,691 students with an opportunity to have fun in a safe, alcohol and drug free environment.
- A new campus-wide leadership program was designed and implemented. This program, called “EEE” incorporates separate tracks for emerging, existing, and experienced leaders, and focuses on both training and personal development.
- The Cooperative Education Office and Housing and Residence Life Office were relocated from small houses on Georgia Avenue into renovated space in Powell Hall. Now, Powell Hall consists entirely of student support services: Testing, Counseling Center, Career Services, Housing and Residence Life, and Cooperative Education. This allows for a more central location for students who desire these services.
- A new state-of-the-art Recreation Center officially opened in August 2002 with a multi-purpose gymnasium, racquetball courts, cardio theatre, weight rooms, jogging track, indoor pool, aerobic rooms, and climbing wall. This heavily used facility has impacted student life extensively, as students use the various components of the building seven days and nights each week.
- A new campus organization, the Campus Community Council (CCC), was established in November 2002. This new organization has a three-fold purpose: 1) diversity education; 2) community building; and 3) discussion of campus issues. The committee meets regularly and has engaged faculty, staff, and students in active discussion.
- The Financial Aid Office relocated to the newly renovated section of the University Center. This new space allows for better customer service and is located adjacent to related offices.
- The common areas in each of the residence halls received significant refurbishing throughout the year. The emphasis was placed on new paint and new carpet. Additionally, tile was placed in lobbies and hallways.

Athletics was another important component of campus culture. Their accomplishments further enhance the health of the campus:

- Five VSU sports advanced to the NCAA post-season championship play highlighted by the football team playing for the national championship, which was televised live on ESPN.
- Other VSU teams to make their respective NCAA championship fields were men's and women's tennis and softball.
- Women's basketball and baseball earned berths in their Gulf South Conference Tournaments giving VSU a total of seven, out of eleven, teams in post-season play.
- A department record of eight teams earned team GPA's of 3.0 or better during the spring term. Also, 45 individuals were Dean's List honorees. This is the second highest total of honorees since athletics started tracking academic results during the 1993-1994 year.
- The Athletic Department's overall GPA of 2.93 in the Fall semester tied the previous high mark set in the spring of 2001.
- Baseball Coach Tommy Thomas became the all-time "winningest" coach in the history of Division II baseball with 1,199 career victories.

Many of the accomplishments mentioned in this report would not have been achieved without the support of private donations to the Division of **University Advancement**. Highlights from that area include:

- The Office of Annual Giving continued its efforts to encourage private support. A major achievement was a record amount given via the Annual Faculty/Staff Campaign. More than \$126,000 was contributed surpassing the 2002 campaign by more than \$9,700.
- The Office of University Relations received two Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE III) Awards for its promotional efforts related to the introduction and inauguration of President Ronald M. Zaccari. It also nominated *The Valdosta Daily Times* for its special tabloid on President Zaccari and that entry won the Grand Award from CASE District III.
- The Office of Alumni Relations initiated a Strategic Planning process with its Alumni Board members that connected the work of the Alumni Association to the University's Strategic Plan.

VSU demonstrated an increased awareness of the legal issues in post-secondary education. Workshops were conducted by the **University Attorney** on Legal Issues in Higher Education, Sexual Harassment, HIPAA, and Legal Issues in Academic Advising. The University Attorney also has served as guest lecturer for some courses.

The division of **Business and Finance** promotes efficient business practices. Examples include the following:

- Auxiliary Services completed, in conjunction with MGT of America, the Housing Comprehensive Plan. The plan was approved by the Board of Regents.
- The Grill, located in the University Union, was renovated and re-opened as a franchise of The Loop Pizza Grill on January 23, 2003. Through June 30, 2003, the Loop had served 75,121 customers and realized \$466,558 in sales.
- Business Services updated the copier in Printing Services to allow higher speed digital printing and online job submittal.
- Environmental Health and Safety received registration of the BL3 Lab by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta.
- Financial Services developed and implemented a plan to move the registration fee payment from the P.E. Complex to the Bursary to provide better service to our students.
- Human Resources prepared an in-depth study of potential retirements for FY 2003 – 2008. This manpower-planning document was developed to determine staffing needs and to anticipate retirements.
- Plant Operations brought several Major Repair and Renovation (MRR) projects to completion including major upgrades to the campus underground electrical distribution system.
- Key personnel in Public Safety received special training in Weapons of Mass Destruction Awareness by the Department of Justice.
- Training and Development delivered 382.50 training contact hours, trained 758 employees, and implemented several new programs including Who Moved My Cheese?; Legal Issues in Higher Education; Training for Event Services Student Employees; Service Excellence Training for RA's and Front Desk Workers; and Custodial Safety Training for Housing Custodians.