

**Valdosta State University**  
**2003-2004 Annual Report of Institutional Progress**  
**November, 2004**

*Section A: Summary of Major Institutional Accomplishments*

Valdosta State University's campus-wide strategic planning process has been instrumental in helping the institution remain focused on a broader vision as we prioritize our key directions and most critical needs in the current environment. During FY 2003-04, VSU continued to enhance our comprehensive strategic planning process by converting to a fully web-based system and incorporating additional functionality recommended by campus constituents. The University was honored to receive a Board of Regents Best Practice award in October 2003 acknowledging this integrated planning model as well as a Best Practice award from the Southern Association of College and University Business Officers and Spirit of Endeavor recognition from the technology firm, AeA. A sound strategic plan is more crucial than ever if we are to protect the institution's core academic mission, continue to provide high quality instruction, and effectively and efficiently serve our students. This model enables all faculty and staff within each department or unit to collectively develop unique departmental goals in relation to the strategic planning goals of the university and the University System of Georgia.

At the heart of VSU's integrated planning model, the Strategic Plan ties directly to the other four components of this model: the Budget Plan, Master Plan, Facilities Plan, and External Plan. The direct linkage between the Strategic Plan and the Budget Plan is a powerful element of the process. The Strategic Plan and goals form the foundation upon which the annual Budget Plan is based. Funds are specifically targeted to advance those goals, ensuring that the University's resources are systematically allocated toward the strategic initiatives of the institution as well as of the University System. The web-based process has proven to be an especially valuable tool in establishing priorities across campus and directing funds to those programs and initiatives.

Fall 2003 brought another record enrollment, with 10,547 students (a 6.5% increase). Given the need for adequate facilities to serve this growing number of students, VSU initiated a physical Master Planning process under the expert guidance of the University System's Office of Facilities. John Portman & Associates of Atlanta was selected to assist VSU in the preparation of the Master Plan document following a review of proposals from 12 firms. Portman partnered with the Valdosta firm Ingram Parris Group in this effort. The revised Master Plan was accepted at the May 2004 meeting of the Board of Regents. It included projections for continued growth of the University at an average rate of four percent per year through 2014. The resulting projected total enrollment in 10 years is 16,200, and the Master Plan document reflects possibilities for construction and renovation of facilities to help meet the growing demand for additional classrooms, laboratories, general use rooms, parking space, and housing to serve the increased student population.

With the hiring of a new Vice President for University Advancement following a national search, initial steps were taken toward developing the external component of VSU's planning model. The firm of Alexander Haas Martin & Partners assisted the university with an external assessment of both the Advancement Division and the VSU Foundation, Inc., and with the

development of preliminary goals. These goals will be refined during FY 2004-05 in preparation for the Centennial celebration.

During FY 2003-04 Valdosta State University continued to enhance our position as a learning community with national recognition. For example, the Exercise Science program received American College of Sports Medicine endorsement in November 2003. The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice achieved full accreditation of its undergraduate program track in Applied/Clinical Sociology as well as candidacy of its master's degree from the Commission on Applied and Clinical Sociology. The Master's in Public Administration program was reaccredited following a successful site visit by National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration. The Learning through Inquiry Science and Technology (LIST) project was selected as a finalist for AASCU's Christa McAuliff award, recognizing the program's demonstrated success in enhancing science and mathematics education. (Subsequently, the LIST project was named one of three national award winners.) Faculty members from the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders worked collaboratively with colleagues from Colorado to give a remote conference presentation at Gallaudet University using video conferencing technology.

A successful site review by the Georgia State Board of Nursing was accomplished in April 2004. Teacher Education programs in Music Education and Modern Foreign Languages (French and Spanish) met all standards on their program reviews by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. The College of Education also collaborated with the Professional Standards Commission in training 20 evaluators, the first time college personnel have accomplished this task in the state.

VSU continued to render vital services to the region and beyond. The Governor's Honors Program, a highly successful six-week summer program for many of the best and brightest high school students in Georgia, celebrated its twenty-fifth year in residence on the campus.

All of VSU's colleges were involved in special outreach activities. Faculty of the College of the Arts participated in over 200 varied activities serving our region, including hosting the Georgia Association of Jazz Educators Workshop and the 2004 South Georgia Regional Art Symposium. The symposium featured departmental tours and workshops in a variety of media and involved approximately 110 students and teachers. The College of Arts and Sciences helped sponsor the successful Janice Daugharty Festival, celebrating regionalism and Daugharty's latest novel, *Just Doll*. The College of Arts and Sciences also sponsored the South Georgia Writing Project, funded by a \$28,000 grant from the National Writing Project. The Division of Social Work continued to serve the region through an increased amount of grants and contracts with state and regional organizations, totaling \$475,696. This includes the successful completion of Phases I and II of a state contract with the Georgia Department of Human Resources using an innovative supervisory model to provide clinical supervision to post-MSW employees who desire state licensure.

Faculty and staff of the College of Business Administration participated in 457 regional service activities and in 58 service activities to professional organizations. VSU's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) exceeded most contract deliverables for continuing education and consulting throughout the region: 1,905 hours consulting with 251 existing or pre-venture firms. The SBDC taught 40 continuing education courses with 673 participants and assisted 29 firms in acquiring almost \$4 million in financing.

The principal projects and activities of the South Georgia Institute were directed toward the support of regional economic development, applied research of regional economic issues, and public service activities for the South Georgia region. A survey of the Valdosta/Lowndes County Cost of Living was conducted quarterly and submitted to the American Chamber of Commerce Research Association for inclusion in its index. Each quarter, a regional economic forecast and executive summary was developed and posted on the South Georgia Institute's web page. Regional outreach also continued through the sponsorship of a chapter of the American Society for Quality (ASQ), an international organization serving regional quality professionals.

Faculty members in the College of Education's Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders designed and piloted a program to provide remote video interpreting for deaf students in rural areas. It is one of three in the nation and provides interpreting services for students in schools where full-time interpreting services are limited or non-existent. The Department of Early Childhood and Reading Education collaborated with Middle Grades and Secondary Education to deliver M.Ed. and Ed.S. programs in Early Childhood to eight school districts (Ware County, Thomas County, Atkinson County, Colquitt County, Clinch County, Coffee County, Berrien County, and Tift County). There were 58 active course sections in Fall 2003 and 67 in Spring 2004. Undergraduate programs in Early Childhood also were delivered to students at three two-year institutions (South Georgia College, Waycross College, and Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College) through a Board of Regents' Enhancing Access Initiative.

Other off-campus programs designed to bring college credit courses to areas of South Georgia not conveniently located near a post-secondary institution include the RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing and the Bachelor of Business Administration. Also offered were Master's degree programs, in Public Administration, Adult and Vocational Education, Nursing, and Social Work. The Kings Bay Center commenced new courses of instruction in Adult & Career Education, Anthropology, Computer Science, Criminal Justice, English, History, Perspectives, Religion, and Sociology.

VSU enjoys the opportunity for many productive partnerships throughout the region as outlined in one of our eight strategic goals and in the University System's goals to achieve a better educated Georgia and accelerated economic development. South Georgia Medical Center has proven a solid partner in the effort to enhance educational opportunities that will help meet the increasing demand for highly qualified health care professionals throughout the region and state. SGMC personnel have been key participants in the university's master planning process and support the "sector planning" concept of co-located academic buildings, residence halls, and internship sites. This might lead, for example, to classroom and housing space for College of Nursing students that is adjacent to the Regional Medical Center. Physicians from SGMC as well as Smith Northview Hospital and Archbold Medical Center participated in the design and completion of a needs assessment addressing how VSU can work more closely with them to develop meaningful partnerships for health care services, degree programs, and internships.

Another notable example of creative partnerships emerged with the receipt of a Charter School planning grant from the Georgia Department of Education. The target school, selected in cooperation with the Valdosta City Schools, is located close to campus, within several blocks of the College of Education. VSU also is pursuing a partnership with the Lowndes County Schools that will bring creative thinking into elementary and middle school classrooms through the use of Future Problem-Solving Project materials designed by the University of Georgia's Torrance Center for Creative Studies. The program will expand in the future to encompass all grade levels.

VSU has partnered with the City of Valdosta, Lowndes County, the Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Authority, Valdosta Technical College, the public schools, South Georgia Medical Center, and other local governments and organizations to form a collaborative entity called the Partnership for Metropolitan Development. By-laws and an organizational structure have been developed for this new Partnership which is dedicated to working collectively to achieve what none of the organizations can achieve individually. The Partnership is a catalyst to enhance communication and collaboration by bringing individuals and organizations together and will help build the community and this metropolitan region. This Partnership represents one of VSU's ICAPP initiatives, and it has created task forces addressing education, economic growth and development, and quality of life.

Continuing Education experienced an active year, generating 4215 CEUs. The number of Category I CEU programs (representing professional development training) reported to the Board of Regents increased from 237 to 292 (23%) over the previous year. The Learning in Retirement program, which provides learning and social activities for area seniors, had over 2850 registrations in 152 courses from 309 individuals during FY 2003-04.

Valdosta State University maintained a strong presence on the Internet, including participation in the eCore program. The use of technology, including the Internet, to provide graduate offerings increased during 2003-04. Four graduate degree programs delivered exclusively online include the MPA (the first such program to be accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration), the WebMBA, MLIS, and a new web-based Social Work program that successfully completed its first year with retention of all students.

VSU was one of four Georgia institutions that received a \$20,000 grant to implement the "Education: Go Get It" college readiness program. Fifty-four individuals representing over 25 community-based organizations participated in the initial training workshops.

Faculty and students experienced numerous opportunities for involvement in international programs and activities. For example, the Department of Early Childhood and Reading Education coordinated and carried out the first Student Teaching Study Abroad program in the College of Education in the Central American country of Belize with four students and one faculty member; Modern and Classical Languages faculty member Amy Aronson-Friedman spent July 2003 on a Fulbright-Hayes supported travel/study seminar in Chile and Argentina; the University's Mass Choir and Jazz Ensemble were invited to perform in Europe.

Additional major accomplishments by Valdosta State University's faculty, staff, and students during the year 2003-2004, included the following:

- The \$14.2 million, 95,000 square foot addition to Odum Library was completed in November 2003 and opened to the university community on January 12, 2004. The new library addition provides: a second entrance to the building enabling 24 hour access to an Internet Café; a 100 seat auditorium; 210 computers available in the GALILEO Technology Center, electronic classroom, computer lab, and Internet Café areas; climate-controlled archives; and numerous other services for faculty and students.
- VSU received approval from the Board of Regents and broke ground in June for a \$35.6 million new construction (518 additional beds) and renovation project in student housing.

- The University's proposed \$37.6 million Health Sciences and Business Administration Facility was selected for inclusion on the University System's Capital Projects list in June 2004.
- The University achieved the highest audit rating of 1.
- The Valdosta State University Plant Operations Department received a special "distinguished services" award from the Board of Regents at the October 2003 statewide Facilities Conference. This was the first award of its kind within the University System in that it was presented to a group of individuals. The award was given in recognition of the collective work of VSU's Plant Operations unit over a period of years.
- The University's institution-specific and system-wide graduation rates improved to 33.3% and 43.1% respectively.
- VSU's Chapter of the Society of Collegiate Journalists received the highest National honor from the Society of Collegiate Journalists, the 2004 Edward E. McDonald Award for Outstanding Service for College Journalism.
- Valdosta State University's Society for Human Resource Management Student Chapter received its first Merit Award from the National Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). This award demonstrates that the chapter has done an outstanding job of providing opportunities for growth and development to its members.
- Valdosta State University's Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) presentation team finished fourth out of 850 SIFE teams nationwide during national competition. The SIFE team implemented a total of 44-community service learning projects. Highlights include the creation and opening of after-school programs for underprivileged children, teaching 575 children about great American entrepreneurs, reaching the Latino population by teaching basic business skills, and aiding 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in starting a business and earning money for savings accounts.
- Valdosta State University received a grant from the LI-COR Biosciences, Inc. Genomics Education Matching Fund for 2004 in the amount of \$41,250. LI-COR is based in Lincoln, Nebraska. This grant will be used to further educate the next generation of genomic researchers by providing a LI-COR instrument. The equipment will be used to aid researchers for DNA sequencing.
- Students in the Communication Disorders, Middle Grades Education, School Counseling and School Psychology, and Kinesiology and Physical Education programs had 100% passing rates on the Praxis II exam. Students in the Special Education program had a 95% passing rate on the Praxis II exam.
- Twenty-two students completed all requirements in the Honors Program; thirty-six students engaged in Honors Option work during the academic year. Five students attended and presented at both the Georgia and the Southern Regional Honors Council annual conferences.
- The Mathematics and Computer Science Department sponsored the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual VSU Mathematics Technology Conference.

- The College of Arts and Sciences 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 first Superintendents' luncheon sponsored by the President of VSU brought administrators (primarily superintendents) from around the VSU service region together to talk about their needs, continue our strong relations with them and forge new ones with the new superintendents.
- The College of Nursing developed a strategic initiative for a MET Human Simulator which was acquired and installed in summer 2004. This offers students the opportunity to experience a high tech, simulation laboratory. Two simulation stations, one exclusively for "code blue" training, will double the number of students the college can train in laboratory settings at one time.
- Ms. Karen Costlow-Nolan was selected as the 2004 NASW Student Member of the Year by the South Georgia Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.
- Men's tennis student-athlete, Eduardo Rincon, was named the recipient of the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) Arthur Ashe Award for Leadership and Sportsmanship. This national award is one of the most prestigious collegiate tennis awards given.
- Valdosta State University junior Christopher Crenshaw, competing against some of the best trombone players in the United States, was named the 2004 Eastern Trombone Workshop's National Jazz Solo winner. The Thomson, Georgia, student competed against students from the Julliard School of Music and the Manhattan School of Music.
- The New York International Independent Film and Video Festival debuted Mass Media major Tina Sauls' video project "Derailed" during its annual Festival this April.
- The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra presented its 14<sup>th</sup> season. This season featured local and international artists.
- The Theatre program's Children's Theatre Tour completed its 22<sup>nd</sup> year.
- The "If I Had a Hammer Project" which resulted in over 2000 fifth graders visiting VSU's campus last year, is funded again for the upcoming year with additional funds secured for implementation of web-based curriculum development.
- Dr. Martha Giddings, Director of the Division of Social Work, was selected as the 2004 Outstanding Alumna of the Year by the University of Georgia School of Social Work, Athens, Georgia.
- Dr. Kenneth Rumstay was elected to a three-year term on the National Council (Physics and Astronomy section) of the Council on Undergraduate Research.
- Frank Barnas, Associate Professor in the Communication Arts Department, was awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant to attend the Fulbright German Studies Seminar.

- Dr. Larry Etling (Assistant Professor in the Communication Arts Department) was the recipient of a 2004 Educator in the Newsroom Fellowship from the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation. The program places university-level broadcast educators in radio and television newsrooms for four weeks during the summer to refresh their skills and master new technologies.
- Dr. Catherine Badura, associate professor in VSU's History Department, was the winner of the Georgia Historical Society's 2004 E. Merton Coulter Award for the best article published in the Georgia Historical Quarterly in the previous year. Badura's article is titled, "The 'Seemingly Contradictory' Life and Legacy of Georgia Novelist Corra Harris." The Coulter Award, established in 1973, honors Dr. E. Merton Coulter, editor of the Quarterly from 1923 to 1973.
- Catherine Schaeffer's teaching and choreography were recognized at the Southeast Regional American College Dance Festival in Miami.
- The Georgia Reading Association has honored Valdosta State University's Dr. Jo Ann Bass, professor in the Department of Early Childhood and Reading, with the Reading Teacher of the Year University/College award. The presentation was made in Atlanta on February 28, 2004.
- Valdosta State University's Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Kurt Keppler, was elected President-Elect of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA).
- The *Spectator* and its staff received the "Best Web Site" award from the Georgia College Press Association.
- VSU won the 2003-04 Gulf South Conference Men's All-Sports Trophy. This is VSU's second GSC Men's All-Sports Award in the last three years and third overall.
- Seven sports teams participated in NCAA National Championship Tournaments:
  - Football
  - Men's Cross Country
  - Women's Cross Country
  - Men's Basketball
  - Golf
  - Women's Tennis
  - Men's Tennis
- Valdosta State University's cheerleaders took 2nd place honors for Division 2 small co-ed in the National Cheerleader Association (NCA) College National Cheer Competition in Daytona Beach, Florida, in April.

*Section B: Annual Progress in Institutional Strategic Planning*

A sound strategic plan is more critical than ever in the current economic environment. During 2003-04, Valdosta State University's integrated strategic planning model was honored as a "Best Practice" by the University System of Georgia as well as the Southern Association of College and University Business Officers. 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. The direct link between the University's Strategic Plan and the Budget Plan ensures that resources will be directed to the highest priorities and needs of the campus as expressed by departments, deans, and cabinet officers. VSU further refined and enhanced this model in the past year, including developing a web-based format to facilitate entry of proposed budgets and strategic initiatives. 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.

Each of VSU's eight strategic goals is closely aligned with one of the strategic goals of the University System of Georgia. The strategic goals and related action steps that constitute VSU's Strategic Plan were reviewed at a retreat in September 2003. Following structured discussions in small and large group formats, the action steps were revised to reflect progress that had occurred and to move the strategic initiatives to a new level. One recommendation resulting from the retreat was the initiation of task forces assigned to specific action steps. Each task force is created by the 23-member University Planning Advisory Council to address a defined charge and is held accountable for presenting its recommendations to Council members within a brief time period (generally six to eight weeks). Recommendations approved by the Council are forwarded to the President who assigns various actions to cabinet members for follow through and implementation. Task forces involve faculty, staff, and students with special expertise and interest in the topic being examined and, therefore, they are positioned to offer thoughtful solutions.

The six task forces created during 2003-04 focused on the following issues: development of a concise statement of mission, efficiency implementation, faculty work, staff survey, strategic grant-seeking, and regional impact and partnerships. Sixty-six faculty, staff, and students participated in one or more of these task forces. Advances resulting from the task forces include a collaborative effort to implement the faculty workload module in Banner, creation of an employee exit interview protocol, development of a web-based database useful to grant writers, allocation of postage and telecommunications budgets to the department level for monitoring, additional managerial-level training on staff retention, and continuing identification of efficiencies.

The need for contemporary student housing emerged as the University's top priority at the initial strategic planning retreat in March 2002. With strong guidance and support of the Board of Regents, VSU has begun to address this need by obtaining approval to break ground for a new 518-bed apartment-style complex in June 2004. Additional progress toward VSU's eight strategic goals is evidenced in the following illustrative accomplishments:

- Presentation of the updated Master Plan for the campus developed with the assistance of John Portman & Associates. (VSU Goal 1: Effective Planning and Resource Utilization)
- Board of Regents' inclusion of the Health Sciences and Business Administration Facility on its list of capital projects. (VSU Goal 1)
- Continued strategic allocation of resources to the institution's highest priorities as identified through the strategic planning process. (VSU Goal 1)

- Initial planning for consolidated fund-raising activities aligned with the Strategic Plan. (VSU Goal 2: Successful Outreach)
- Implementation of a new Emerging Leaders program for freshmen students. (VSU Goal 3: Excellence in Student Learning and Retention)
- Greater coordination of service learning activities. The Office of Volunteer Services was created to link the student body and the volunteer agencies in Valdosta. Along with connecting the students to the community, the office provides volunteer opportunities for VSU's students as well as the faculty and staff. This initiative has increased students' involvement in volunteering and also provides good outreach to the Valdosta community. (VSU Goal 3)
- Continued development 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. (VSU Goal 3)
- Active involvement in the "Education: Go Get It" and African American Male initiatives. (VSU Goal 4: Access and Participation)
- Partnering with the local school systems to develop a proposal for a charter school that will provide an exemplary model for instruction and help students develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills. (VSU Goal 5: Student Preparation)
- Continued involvement in the Delaware Study of Faculty Productivity, including individualized presentations to each academic department. This initiative was further expanded to include participation by several departments in the separate non-instructional activity survey. (VSU Goal 6: High Quality Personnel)
- Implementation of new training opportunities based on the results of the staff survey. (VSU Goal 6)
- Close collaboration with representatives of city and county government, Valdosta Technical College, the public schools, local Chambers of Commerce, business, industry, and the medical community as members of the Partnership for Metropolitan Development. The Partnership focuses on economic development and achieving collectively what none of the organizations can accomplish individually. A grant through REDP supported an informative one-day workshop by the Executive Director of the Florida Council of 100 and several strategic work sessions. (VSU Goal 7: Engagement in the Community and Region)
- Collaboration with the local and regional medical communities on opportunities to enhance health professions education and meet the critical need for health care professionals in areas such as nursing. (VSU Goal 7)
- Communication with the local legislative delegation as well as our federal representatives in Washington concerning VSU's vision and Strategic Plan. (VSU Goal 8: Strategic Alliances)

Detailed information and materials related to VSU's Strategic Planning process, including planning retreat documents, minutes of the University Planning Advisory Council meetings, task forces, 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 has been required 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 2003-04 include several programs in the College of Arts and Sciences (French, French Education, Spanish, Spanish Education, Astronomy, Environmental Geography, Physics, and Public Administration) and Odum Library (Library and Information Sciences).

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

- Students demonstrated success on the Praxis examination. Students in the Communication Disorders, Middle Grades Education, School Counseling and School Psychology, and Kinesiology and Physical Education programs had 100% passing rates on the Praxis II examination. Early Childhood and Reading Education had a 100% Praxis II pass rate, total as well as on both Knowledge and Analysis. Students in the Special Education program had a 95% passing rate on the Praxis II exam. Students in the social studies program had a 93% pass rate, with 14 of 15 students achieving passing scores in Fall 2003.
- The graduates of the Master's in Social Work Program scored a 90% pass rate on the LMSW national examination for beginning social work practitioners.
- 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. Instituting techniques to help improve these scores is among the highest priorities for the University's new Dean of Nursing.

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. A number of the resulting recommendations were implemented during 2003-04, and effective advising continues to be a major focus.

The Annual Reports from academic and support units help to monitor the institution's improvements in effectiveness. For example, the Department of Educational Leadership's Annual Report demonstrates how the institution promotes positive change through the use of data and the assessment of learning. Significant improvements were introduced to M.Ed. candidates' field experience and internship requirements, and "real-time" candidate assessments were built into the curriculum. At the Specialist level, changes to syllabi increased rigor in the capstone courses. 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. Through the strategic planning process, VSU also has recognized the importance of academic advising, evaluating the effectiveness of the Freshman Year Experience (FYE) program, expanded opportunities for student development, and a strong international dimension of the students' educational experience.

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 2004. Twenty-five percent of VSU's students represent ethnic minorities.

**TABLE 1: Student Composition By Ethnicity (Fall 1998 – Spring 2004)**

Quarter/ Semester	Caucasian	African American	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Multiracial	Total
Fall '98	7038 (75.0%)	2002 (21.3%)	26 (.3%)	138 (1.5%)	101 (1.1%)	81 (.9%)	9386
Spring '99	6577 (74.6%)	1902 (21.6%)	22 (.2%)	124 (1.4%)	107 (1.2%)	88 (1.0%)	8820
Summer '99	3266 (74.6%)	937 (21.4%)	17 (.4%)	67 (1.5%)	49 (1.1%)	44 (1.0%)	4380
Fall '99	6546 (75.0%)	1842 (21.1%)	19 (.2%)	118 (1.4%)	116 (1.3%)	88 (1.0%)	8729
Spring '00	6327 (75.0%)	1777 (21.1%)	17 (.20%)	121 (1.4%)	112 (1.3%)	84 (1.0%)	8438
Summer '00	3310 (74.4%)	964 (21.7%)	14 (.3%)	65 (1.5%)	60 (1.3%)	36 (.8%)	4449
Fall '00	6612 (75.2%)	1819 (20.7%)	21 (.2%)	121 (1.4%)	129 (1.5%)	90 (1.0%)	8792
Spring '01	6262 (74.5%)	1781 (21.2%)	21 (.2%)	119 (1.4%)	127 (1.5%)	90 (1.1%)	8400
Summer '01	3544 (75.2%)	993 (21.1%)	11 (.2%)	66 (1.4%)	60 (1.3%)	40 (.8%)	4714
Fall '01	6920 (75.0%)	1912 (20.7%)	23 (.2%)	132 (1.4%)	142 (1.5%)	101 (1.1%)	9230
Spring '02	6599 (74.5%)	1880 (21.2%)	18 (.2%)	120 (1.4%)	140 (1.6%)	99 (1.1%)	8856
Summer '02	3573 (74.9%)	996 (20.9%)	12 (.3%)	71 (1.5%)	72 (1.5%)	47 (1.0%)	4771
Fall '02	7454 (75.3%)	2021 (20.4%)	29 (.3%)	122 (1.2%)	152 (1.5%)	122 (1.2%)	9900
Spring '03	7262 (75.4%)	1979 (20.5%)	28 (.3%)	108 (1.1%)	143 (1.5%)	116 (1.2%)	9636
Summer '03	4043 (76.41%)	1034 (19.54%)	12 (.23%)	65 (1.23%)	79 (1.49%)	58 (1.10%)	5291
Fall '03	7982 (75.68%)	2114 (20.04%)	29 (.27%)	128 (1.21%)	155 (1.47%)	139 (1.32%)	10,547
Spring '04	7587 (75.42%)	2049 (20.37%)	28 (.28%)	122 (1.21%)	147 (1.46%)	127 (1.26%)	10,060

The Office of Admissions generated 6,789 undergraduate applications for Fall 2003, an increase of over 4% from Fall 2002. New undergraduates enrolled in the Fall of 2003 numbered 2,494 of whom 1,883 were freshmen. Enrollments have steadily increased since the adoption of higher admissions standards in 1998. The institution's reputation has been enhanced, and recruitment has continued to improve, (a 6% increase in enrollment for Fall 2003 with a 7% 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. 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, retention rates for VSU students at the system level have increased by at least one percentage point per year for the past four years. The slight decrease in institutional retention marks the first dip in retention in the past four years.

**TABLE 2: Fall-to-Fall One-Year Student Retention Rates (1997-2003)  
(All First-Time Full-Time Freshmen)**

<b>Cohort Year</b>	<b>Institution Retention Percent</b>	<b>System* Retention Percent</b>
1996-1997	64.3	74.3
1997-1998	69.4	78.7
1998-1999	66.2	78.0
1999-2000	70.6	79.5
2000-2001	72.0	81.6
2001-2002	74.8	83.7
2002-2003	74.1	84.8

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

During FY 2003-04, the six-year graduation rate was 33.3% (1997 cohort institutional rate). Over the past four years, the rate has averaged 32%. The six-year graduation rate for VSU students finishing their degrees either at VSU or at another system institution has increased to 43.1% (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 are expected to increase as the new admissions 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 (1991-1997)  
(All First-Time Full-Time Freshmen Fall Cohorts)**

<b>Cohort Year</b>	<b>Institutional Graduation Rates</b>	<b>System Graduation Rates</b>
Fall 1991	31.4	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
Fall 1997	33.3	43.1

### *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 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Undergraduate Research, at which over forty-one undergraduates presented the results of their research throughout the year.
- VSU Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) provided 41 service projects to the community, won the Atlanta regional competition, and finished 4<sup>th</sup> at the national competition in Kansas City, MO in May 2004.
- The College of Arts and Sciences continued work on the Quality in Undergraduate Education Initiative, sponsored by an \$11,000 grant from the Pew Charitable Trust.

The expansion and renovation of campus facilities is another indicator of institutional health. Valdosta State University continues growth through **new construction** and renovation projects. A 95,000 square foot addition to the Odum Library was opened. The Nevins Hall renovation project continues and will provide upgraded facilities for Physics, Astronomy, Geology, and Communication Arts. Projects that were underway in Summer 2004 include the replacement of a major portion of the 50 year-old 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 13,803 volumes, increasing the book collection to 467,560.

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

- New servers and storage array from Sun were procured and installed as part of an initiative to enhance support for Email, Web, Portal, Database, and Online Courseware services. A room on the first floor of the Odum Library was retrofitted with electrical power and cooling and humidity control to support the new Sun equipment.
- Martin Hall, Pound Hall, Powell Hall, and the Education Center all received major network equipment upgrades to increase 10Mb speeds to full 100Mb speeds. Additionally, the new Odum Library expansion was outfitted with network equipment for operation.
- The core campus network router, the central hub that connects all segments of the campus network, was upgraded to a new system to support gigabit ethernet replacing ATM to all segments of the campus network.
- The main server supporting the Banner Student Information System was upgraded to full memory (32GB), processors (8 450MHz PA-RISC CPUs), and a new high speed storage array to improve overall system performance and reduce peak use bottlenecks during registration and to prepare for new advising and prerequisite processes.

- Using Student Technology Fees, a computer support specialist staffer and 12 student workers were hired to provide greater coverage at the IT Helpdesk as well as for events and special instructional support in auditoria and smart classrooms.
- As part of a new initiative to systematically replace desktop computers for faculty, new computers were purchased and deployed with updated software to 160 faculty members, fully one third of the faculty body.

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:

- Implemented the “Education: Go Get It” Campaign for College Readiness funded through the Regional Economic Development Program. Fifty-four individuals representing over 25 community-based organizations participated in the initial training workshops.
- Developed and implemented a review workshop for the Regents Examination.
- Co-Sponsored Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Workshops with the Office of Legal Affairs.
- Conducted Cultural Diversity Week, March 22-26, 2004.
- Provided Cultural Diversity Training in September 2003.
- Sponsored the Martin Luther King, Jr., Celebration with Chief Annetta Nunn as guest speaker on January 15, 2004.
- Co-Sponsored Hispanic Heritage Month activities and a celebration of the Chinese New Year with the Valdosta Asian Cultural Association.

**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:

- Implemented a new Faculty Associate Program, involving quarter-time assignment of a faculty member to the Center for International Programs to strengthen linkages between International Programs and the faculty, build capacity among faculty members in international activity, and increase CIP sensitivity to faculty interests and needs.
- Functioned as the leading institution in the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP) Consortium with funding from the Board of Regents, involving 7 USG institutions and 26 students spending a semester or academic year abroad.
- Continued leadership of the USG’s European Council, including coordination of System-wide study abroad programs in London (141 students/17 faculty), Paris (65 students/10 faculty), and St. Petersburg (31 students/6 faculty).

- Launched a new USG European Council study abroad program in Southern Germany to take place in summer 2004.
- Implemented a new semester-long student teaching practice program in Belmopan, Belize, led by Dr. Brenda Dixey and involving four students with joint specializations in early childhood education and special education.
- Initiated a new semester-long student exchange program at Paisley University, Scotland.
- Organized and coordinated faculty exchanges, including a Chinese faculty member and prominent martial arts expert to VSU's Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education; one faculty member in Physical Education from Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic to VSU; and one VSU History Department faculty member to the Czech Republic.
- Coordinated the exhibition of art works produced by Chinese faculty and students from Yangzhou University in VSU's art gallery in March 2004.
- Organized a two-month visit of a music faculty member to our partner institution in Eger, Hungary, Eszterhazy Karoly College as well as a one-week tour in Hungary of VSU's jazz combo (including four students and three faculty members) hosted by Eszterhazy Karoly College.
- Hosted visit by chair of the Department of Political Science at Tavricheskiy National University in Simferpol, Ukraine, to plan collaboration in the areas of political science and public administration.
- Served as host institution for three highly selective federally funded programs that sponsor year-long exchange visits by foreign scholars and students: The Russia-U.S. Young Leadership Fellows for Public Service Program, and the Freedom Support Act Undergraduate Program, and the Junior Faculty Development Program.
- Hosted the Louie A. Brown Scholar from Hungary in the Curriculum and Instructional Technology Department for the spring semester.

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:

- The Counseling Center was awarded a fifth year of full accreditation from the International Association of Counseling Services, Inc. (IACS) and received a very positive evaluation following an on-site field visit for re-accreditation. The Counseling Center remains one of only four centers in the State of Georgia to be accredited by IACS.
- Student Affairs successfully completed the first year of the Emerging Leaders program. A total of 75 students were enrolled in three different cohorts.
- Student Health provided acute, routine, and preventive care to 17,866 patients; performed 5,548 laboratory tests; filled 7,101 prescriptions; and provided 330 female wellness physicals.

- The Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Education participated in 53 programs, presentations, and training sessions, addressing a total of 1,789 students, parents, and staff. AOD also reached a potential 6,750 students through campus-wide events, including The Happening, Alcohol Awareness Fair, Safe Spring Break, Health Fair, Diversity Fair, Staff Appreciation Day, and Great American Smoke-Out activities.
- Articles appeared in two national magazines, (*Recreational Management* and *Athletic Business*) recognizing VSU's state-of-the-art Student Recreation Center.
- The Brown Hall renovation project began in Fall 2003 and was completed for a Fall 2004 reopening. This residence hall now includes space for academic activities, including seminar rooms and music practice rooms.
- VSU broke ground for the first phase of the \$35 million Centennial Hall project, a 518-bed comprehensive student apartment living community and the first new residence hall to be constructed in 35 years. This project also includes renovation of the existing Lowndes and Patterson residence halls.

**Athletics** is another important component of campus culture, and this division's accomplishments further enhance the health of the university. In addition to winning the 2003-04 Gulf South Conference Men's All-Sports Trophy for a second time in three years and having seven sports teams participate in their respective NCAA National Championship Tournaments (see page 7):

- The Men's Tennis team participated in national championship finals.
- 106 student-athletes earned Dean's List honors, 57 in the Fall Semester and 49 in the Spring Semester. Two-hundred thirty students-athletes had 3.0 or better grade point averages during the year.

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:

- 2,800 donors gave a total of \$5.6 million during the fiscal year to support academics, arts, and athletics. \$4.3 million was added to endowment funds. \$120,000 was given with no restrictions. \$198,000 was paid out from endowments and given toward student aid.
- The VSU *Alumni Voice* magazine was mailed to 30,000 alumni, and special alumni events were held in various towns from Atlanta to Jacksonville, Florida.
- An internal audit of the Division of University Advancement and the VSU Foundation was performed by VSU internal auditors, and a third-party external audit of the VSU Foundation, Inc. was completed by Brandon, Rackley, and Dukes, CPAs.
- Completion of the Council for Aid to Education (CAE) Voluntary Support of Education (VSE) report provided an internal self-audit of private fundraising and reporting.
- An external assessment of the Advancement Division and the VSU Foundation, Inc. was completed by the consulting firm of Alexander, Haas, Martin & Partners.

- The VSU Foundation Real Estate I, LLC was created and \$36 million raised via a municipal bond offering to construct two student residence halls and to renovate two others. In addition to investment bankers, attorneys, bankers, and others hired for the planning and bond issue, a construction architect, developer, contractor, and oversight contractor were hired.
- The Publications and Design Unit created 1,011 individual publication and design projects. The Public Information and Media Relations Unit prepared and distributed 116 news releases to radio, TV, and newspapers, 416 joint hometown news releases related to Deans' lists, and another 350 hometown news releases for graduates.

VSU demonstrated an increased awareness of the legal issues in post-secondary education. The **Office of Legal Affairs** proactively presented a number of workshops relative to legal issues surrounding higher education, sexual harassment, HIPAA, and legal issues in academic advising. The wealth of information in these workshops can be used to protect the interests of the university, its employees, and its student population.

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

- Financial Services achieved the top audit rating.
- The Plant Operations Division was recognized by the Office of Facilities of the University System of Georgia for the first ever Distinguished Service Award given by the Board of Regents to a Plant Operations Division.
- For the BL3 lab, Robert DeLong completed a background search and finger printing process that was performed by the FBI. He was approved as the Responsible Official on campus by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta and Select Agent Program.
- Business Services implemented use of the State Fuel Card.
- Specialized training in regard to Homeland Security has been instituted for all University Police personnel.
- University Police participated in Stock Pile emergency planning with County and State officials.
- Organizational Development and Training delivered 7882.5 contact hours, trained 1,061 VSU employees, and 43 non-VSU employees.