



**Valdosta State University**  
Human Resources & Employee Development  
Policies and Procedures

## **Working Conditions**

One of the most important aspects of employment to both the employee and the employer is working conditions. The University makes every effort to provide a working environment that is conducive to individual development and job enrichment. In general, the policy of the University in this area is one of common courtesy and understanding. We must always strive to understand the needs of the employee, who likewise should realize the role he or she plays in the overall goals of the University.

The following policies have been established to help produce a good work atmosphere and enhance our employee-employer relationship.

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### **SECTION 804.01**

#### **Council on Staff Affairs(COSA)**

Valdosta State University established the Council on Staff Affairs in 1992 with the President's commitment to afford staff members a voice in University governance. The Council serves in an advisory capacity to the President in matters of concern to the staff.

COSA provides a forum for communication of ideas, may recommend policies and procedures relative to the staff for the President's consideration, and is generally concerned with the welfare of staff employees.

Representatives are elected from various occupational categories and areas of the University campus providing a cross sampling of the University staff in addressing matters of concern to the staff.

### **SECTION 804.02**

#### **Appearance.**

Employees are expected to use good taste in their clothing and remember that there are always guests on the University grounds. The University would like to leave a favorable impression with these people, and the employee's appearance can certainly help achieve this goal.

#### **a. Uniforms.**

Uniforms are provided to Food Service, Plant Operations, and Public Safety personnel and must be worn as a condition of employment. Employees who are provided uniforms, but do not report for

duty properly attired, may be sent home to change. Repeated failure to report in uniform may be considered just cause for disciplinary action.

### **1. Care of Uniforms.**

Employees are expected to take care of issued clothing and may be held accountable for damages not to be considered work related or normal wear and tear. All uniforms are to be returned upon termination of employment. Assessment for lost or damaged uniforms will be withheld from an employee's pay check if not otherwise handled in a timely manner.

**a.** Terminating employees will have charges for damaged or lost uniforms withheld from their final check.

**b.** Uniform costs, while saving employees the cost of personal clothing, are not considered in determining minimum wage or other wage competitiveness, in that they are considered conditions of employment.

### **SECTION 804.03**

#### **Confidential Information.**

Employees of the University having access to confidential material should refrain from discussing such information with fellow employees or other individuals. Evidence of disclosure shall be considered grounds for termination.

### **SECTION 804.04**

#### **Solicitations.**

It is the policy of the University that unauthorized solicitations of employees on the University grounds are prohibited. This applies both to employees and outsiders. Requests for solicitations must be approved by the Vice President for Finance and Administration.

### **SECTION 804.05**

#### **Outside Employment.**

Employees may have employment other than with the University providing such employment does not interfere with their regular and punctual discharge of duties. It is recommended that employees discuss such employment with their supervisor or department head prior to actual commencement of outside employment to be sure there is no conflict of interest. Use of any State property in such endeavors is prohibited.

### **SECTION 804.06**

#### **Loans to Employees.**

It is not the policy of the University to act as a lending or collection agency, and loans are not allowed. Employees are expected to conduct their financial activity within the scope of their compensation. Employees are not to act as loan agents either, and discovery of any employee loaning money and charging interest shall be considered just cause for termination.

### **SECTION 804.07**

#### **Political Activities.**

##### **a. Employees.**

As responsible and interested citizens in a democratic society, employees of the University System are encouraged to fulfill their civic obligations and otherwise engage in the normal political

processes of society. Nevertheless, it is inappropriate for System personnel to manage or enter political campaigns while on duty to perform services for the System or to hold elective political office at the State or Federal level while employed by the System. Therefore, the following policies governing political activities are hereby adopted:

1. Employees may not manage or take an active part in a political campaign which interferes with the performance of duties or services for which he or she receives compensation from the University.
2. Employees may not hold elective political office at the State or Federal level.
3. Employees seeking elective political office at the State or Federal level must first request a leave of absence without pay beginning prior to qualification as a candidate in a primary or general election and ending after the general or final election. If elected to State or Federal office such person must resign prior to assuming office.
4. Employees may seek and hold elective office at other than the State or Federal level, or appointive office, when such candidacy for or holding of the office does not conflict or interfere with the employee's duties and responsibilities to the institution or the System.

#### **b. Use of Property in Political Campaigns.**

1. The President of each institution may authorize the use of institutional facilities for campaign speeches. However, such use shall be limited to meetings sponsored by recognized organizations of the institution and shall be held only at places designated by the President.
2. The use of University materials, supplies, equipment, machinery, or vehicles in political campaigns is forbidden.

### **SECTION 804.08**

#### **Gratuities.**

Employees of the University shall not accept gratuities, courtesies, or gifts in any form whatsoever from any person or persons, corporations, or associations that, directly or indirectly, may seek to use such gratuities for securing favorable comment or consideration on any commercial commodity, process, or undertaking. Should evidence of such become available, the employee might be subject to reprimand, suspension, or possibly discharge, depending on the merit of the case.

#### **1. Vendor Disclosure Report.**

Georgia Statute requires that any vendor doing business with the state who give a public employee a gift or gifts that exceed \$250 (in the aggregate) in value complete a Vendor Disclosure Report. Details of the law are found in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, Code Section 45-1-6.

### **SECTION 804.09**

#### **Service Awards.**

Appropriate awards denoting various lengths of service may be presented by the University, providing that State funds are not used to purchase such awards.

### **SECTION 804.10**

#### **Employee Continuing Education.**

The University encourages employees to enroll in various academic programs offered, whether they

are credit or non-credit offerings; however, such enrollment should not conflict with normal working hours. Occasionally employees pursuing a degree may find it necessary to take a class during normal working hours. If this situation arises, the employee must have an alteration in work schedule approved by the immediate supervisor. Additionally, the Department of Human Resources should be advised of the variation so payroll adjustments can be made.

#### **a. Non-Credit Courses**

When non-credit courses are judged to be for staff development purposes and when the intent of such enrollment is to improve the skills of the employee for the performance of his or her current job, an employee may attend on a "space available basis" at a reduced rate or without payment of a fee.

#### **b. Seminars.**

With proper approval, employees may attend seminars and other training programs offered by various consultants. Such seminars and training should be deemed appropriate to enhance performance, advancement, etc., and the cost can be paid from departmental travel budgets.

#### **c. Waiver of Non-Resident Fees.**

Regular employees of the institution and their eligible dependents will be assessed matriculation charges at the resident rate, in accordance with Board of Regents policy.

### **SECTION 804.11**

#### **Employee Suggestions.**

Employees should be urged to submit bona fide suggestions concerning office procedures, working conditions or University policies to their immediate supervisors. If such suggestions deserve merit, they should be routed to the Department of Human Resources for possible implementation. Such suggestions become an integral part of the employee's personnel file and may be used for reference in making promotions, salary increases, etc.

### **SECTION 804.12**

#### **Disruptive Behavior.**

The Board of Regents and the University are deeply concerned with those students, faculty members, administrators and employees who, acting individually or in concert with others, disrupts or obstructs or attempts to disrupt or obstruct any teaching, research, administrative, disciplinary or public service activity or any other authorized activity to be held or discharged on any University System campus. Those employees having attempted or conducted such disruptive activities shall have committed an act of gross irresponsibility and shall be subject to disciplinary procedures possibly resulting in dismissal or termination of employment.

### **SECTION 804.13**

#### **Internal Investigations.**

Internal investigations may be of a routine nature, i.e., cash audits, inventory confirmations, etc., or may be initiated by the Department of Public Safety in response to a specific problem, i.e., theft of materials, cash shortages, etc. Employees in the area are expected to assist in such investigations, and failure to do so shall be considered an act of insubordination. Failure to cooperate fully shall be grounds for adverse personnel action, including possible termination of employment.

### **SECTION 804.14**

#### **Seniority.**

Although there is no formal seniority system within the University System, Valdosta State does

recognize the value of providing employment security. When such actions as work force reductions, temporary layoff, reduction in work hours, etc., are necessary, the seniority of the effected employees will be one factor considered. This is not meant to imply that persons having extended length of service and who are not qualified for other employment will be retained over other less senior, more qualified employees. Rather, with all other factors being equal, the more senior employees are the least likely to be adversely effected by such actions.

#### **SECTION 804.15**

##### **Safety.**

Employees should make every effort to form safe working habits for themselves and to create a safe work environment for those around them. Too often, safety is thought of only in terms of the Plant Operations area, and this attitude alone can prove dangerous. Every year cabinet drawers left open, electrical cords strung across walkways to be tripped over, etc. are reported to the National Safety Council from across the country. Understandably, the probability of accidents occurring is greater among plant workers, but we all should make a conscious effort to make our campus as accident-free as possible.

Employees should use all required safety equipment when performing their duties, observe area work rules, and report all hazardous conditions to their supervisors upon detection.

Upon employment, the Division of Environmental Health and Safety will advise employees of hazardous materials, etc. in accordance with the [Right to Know laws](#) and other appropriate federal legislation.

#### **SECTION 804.16**

##### **Sexual Harassment.**

Federal law provides that it shall be an unlawful discriminatory practice for any employer, because of sex of any person, to discharge without cause, to refuse to hire, or otherwise discriminate against any person with respect to any matter directly or indirectly related to employment or academic standing. Harassment of an employee on the basis of sex violates this Federal law.

Sexual harassment of employees or students at Valdosta State University is prohibited and shall subject the offender to dismissal or other sanctions after compliance with procedural due process requirements. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or academic standing; or
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment or academic decisions effecting an individual; or
3. Such conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or academic environment.

**a. Sexual Harassment Policy.** Employees who feel they are being subjected to sexually harassing behavior have a grievance mechanism available to them and are encouraged to follow the procedures established to quickly deal with such situations. For more information go to the following web site <http://www.valdosta.edu/eopma/>.

#### **SECTION 804.17**

##### **DRUG FREE WORK PLACE POLICY**

Valdosta State University as a recipient of Federal funds supports and complies with the provisions of the Drug Free Work Place Act of 1988. As an employer, Valdosta State University will aggressively promote and strive to maintain a drug free work place for its faculty and staff.

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession or use of illegal drugs by Valdosta State University employees is prohibited. Violations of this policy, to include misdemeanor and/or felony drug convictions during the course of one's employment will result in appropriate disciplinary actions being imposed by the institution. Said penalties may include suspension or termination of employment.

Employees who feel they have a potential substance abuse problem are encouraged to seek professional assistance. The Valdosta State University Counseling Center staff will treat such requests for evaluation or therapy confidentially and provide short-term assistance limited to five sessions where indicated. Longer term counseling or therapy will remain the individual's responsibility and use of private practitioners or rehabilitation facilities is encouraged by the institution.

Faculty, staff members and student employees of Valdosta State University are expected to adhere to the policies of the institution, observe the basic rules of good conduct and to meet appropriate standards of performance. This policy, as with other institutional policies, including state and federal laws, and Board of Regents policies shall be observed.

New employees of Valdosta State University shall have this policy communicated to them, and said policy shall be included in the Faculty Handbook, the Classified Personnel Policy Manual and the Student Handbook.

#### **SECTION 804.18**

##### **Use of Tobacco Products.**

The use of tobacco products in University offices is prohibited. Those employees found guilty of use of such products within facilities during their normal work hours may be subject to disciplinary action(s).

#### **SECTION 804.19**

##### **American with Disabilities Act Policy (ADA)**

###### **ADA Employment Policy**

Valdosta State University complies fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act and provides equal employment opportunity for all qualified persons with disabilities. Reasonable accommodation is available to all employees and applicants, and works sites are accessible to the disabled. All employees, without regard to disability, will be afforded all benefits and privileges of employment.

###### **Request for Accommodation**

All requests for accommodations will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine the appropriateness of the request. Upon request to the Human Resources Office, applicants will be provided reasonable accommodations in completing the application and/or interview process. An employee wishing to request a modification to the job and/or work environment should discuss their needs with his/her supervisor. Individuals wishing to participate in University-sponsored events should contact the sponsor of the event to arrange accommodation.