

EXCELLENCE
SERVING THE COMMUNITY



VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY **MANAGER'S** TOOLKIT



Recognizing the Excellent & Distinguished



OVERVIEW

About this Toolkit

Recognizing employees is a fundamental element of successful management. Genuine acknowledgment stands out as a potent means to convey an employee's importance and the significance of their contributions. Offering substantial, well-timed, and pertinent recognition fosters an atmosphere wherein employees sense their worth and can contribute meaningfully to the overarching mission of the University.

This interactive toolkit provides recognition resources that will help to build a culture of recognition among teams, departments, divisions, and beyond.

Tips to Use This Document

- Use the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader. To download visit [IT Solutions](#)
- Download a copy of this document, it contains editable fields and allows you to save as you go .
- Click on the icons at the bottom of each page and the links in each section to easily navigate.

Toolkit Sections



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Context



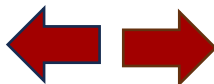
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OVERVIEW

About this Toolkit: Getting Started

I want to create a culture of recognition within my team.



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CONTEXT

What Recognition Means at VSU

Recognition at Valdosta State University is part of the **core** of our **culture of belonging**, where employees feel **valued** and have the opportunity to add value to the organization.

All University colleagues are encouraged and empowered to recognize others by expressing appreciation for and acknowledging contributions made by other team members.

Through these actions, everyone affiliated with the University is able to achieve our mission. [Igniting excellence and enhancing communities through life-changing experiences](#) through education, research, innovation, and service.

Why Recognition Matters



Key Principles for Recognition



Recognition Roles



Overview



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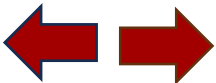
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CONTEXT

Why Recognition Matters

Employee recognition has a direct impact on employee morale and drives engagement, fosters an environment of trust, and reinforces organizational values. Recognition also leads to improvements of the top and bottom line, such as increased productivity, employee loyalty, and retention.

- 1.** Recognized employees are **happy** and **engaged**.
Being recognized at work, especially when it is tied to VSU's Values and Service Standards helps to connect to a greater sense of purpose.
- 2.** Recognition **improves** team **culture**.
Encouraging peer-to-peer, manager-to-peer recognition, builds a great team spirit and helps employees to see the positive attributes in one another.
- 3.** **Meaningful** recognition **lowers** turnover and **improves** retention.
People are more likely to stay in a position and happy if their efforts are noticed and valued.
- 4.** Recognizing others **supports** individual, team, and organizational **goals**.
Recognizing an individual's accomplishments and how they contribute to larger strategic goals help them feel connected to the University's mission of transforming lives.



Overview



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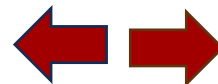
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CONTEXT

Key Principles for Recognition

Exceptional employees know what is expected of them and continuously strive to improve the organization. They live the mission of transforming lives and demonstrate VSU's values and standards in all they do.

The following principles help align recognition practices to our culture:

INCLUSIVE

Everyone deserves to be recognized for their contributions to the University's success.

SINCERE

A genuine thank you goes a long way.

INDIVIDUALIZED

Every person is unique in the way they like to be recognized.



Overview



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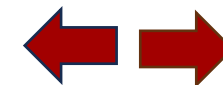
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CONTEXT

Recognition Roles

All employees at VSU, regardless of their role, play a part in recognition.

LEADERS

- Make recognition a priority, and demonstrate what recognition looks like in action.
- Share access to recognition tools and templates that make recognizing team members simple.
- Understand your team's recognition preferences and adjust your approach as needed.
- Ensure recognition is inclusive, sincere, and individualized.
- Ensure consistency in adherence to [established guidelines](#).

EMPLOYEES

- Take the time to express thanks and recognition to coworkers for their contributions.
- Share positive feedback about an individual with them.
- Recognize and celebrate key milestones or achievements of fellow coworkers based on their [preferences](#).
- Nominate a peer for an external or University award to formally recognize their contributions.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Provide tools, resources, and training to encourage formal and informal recognition practices.
- Encourage recognition at all levels: individual, departmental, leadership, etc.
- Participate in or facilitate formal recognition events.



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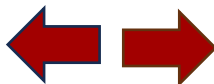
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How to Create a Culture of Recognition

Now that you have a good foundation of understanding the importance of showing recognition at VSU, let's go into what steps you can take to keep the momentum going.

This section offers checklists, questionnaires, and resources to deepen your understanding of your team's needs and to help you build recognition practices that support your team's goals and VSU's mission of transforming lives.

Manager's Checklist



Understanding Preferences



Languages of Appreciation



Recognize What Matters



Overview



Context



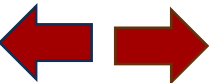
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Ideas



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STEPS

Manager's Checklist

- Identify your own recognition style.**
Complete the [My Personal Recognition Style Questionnaire](#).
- Get to know how your team likes to be recognized.**
Send the [Employee Recognition Preferences Questionnaire](#).
- Add your employee's milestones to your calendar.**
Review your team's preferences and plan ahead to celebrate them in the way they want to be celebrated.
- Schedule time with your team to review and recognize them regularly.**
Need ideas? Refer to the [IDEAS section](#) in this toolkit for inspiration.



Overview



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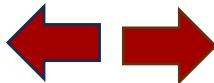
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STEPS

Understanding Preferences



Employees are like fingerprints – no two are exactly the same. They have different personalities and come from different paths that shaped who they are, how they work, and even how they prefer to be recognized.

For example, some employees like to be praised publicly while others are more reserved and prefer private recognition.

Take a few moments to fully assess your recognition style and your team’s recognition preferences. Download the [language of appreciation assessment](#)

Understand the four Languages of Appreciation at Work

My Personal Recognition Style Questionnaire

Employee Recognition Preferences Questionnaire



Overview



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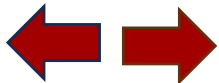
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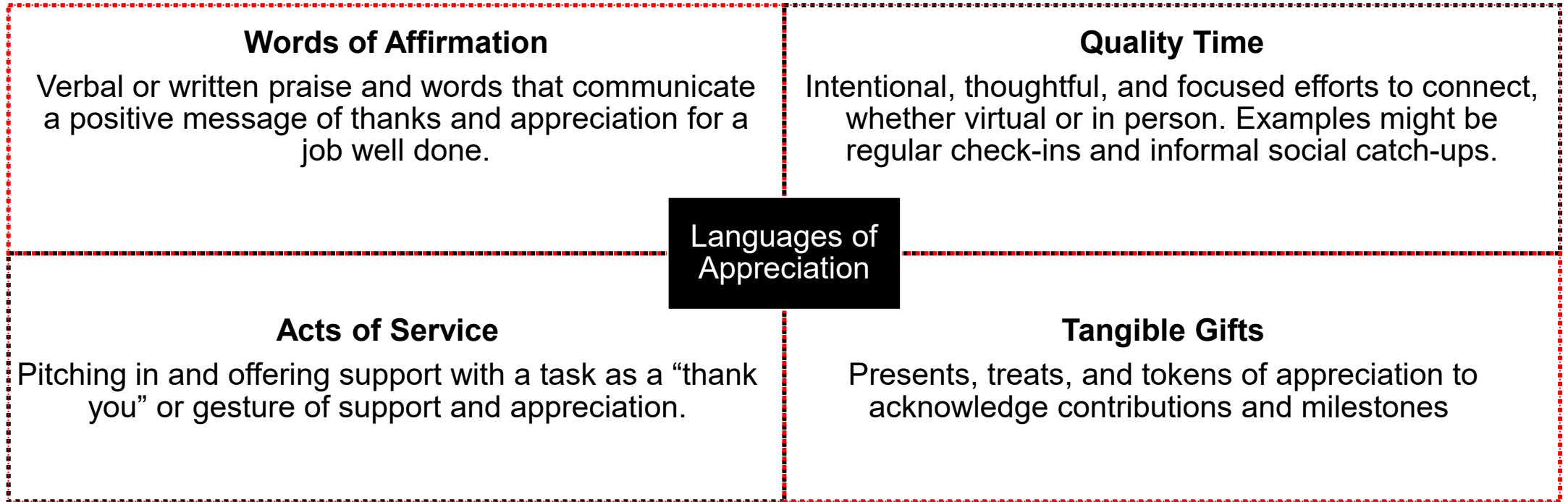




STEPS

Understanding Preferences: Four Languages of Appreciation at Work

At work, people express and receive appreciation in different ways.



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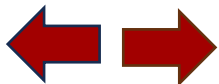
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STEPS

Understanding Preferences: My Personal Recognition Style

Use this questionnaire to help you reflect on the ways you like to express recognition and your own personal preference.

Think about a time when you provided recognition to an employee that was meaningful

What were the circumstances (what, who, where, when)?	
What specifically made it meaningful?	
How could you repeat this experience with other employees?	
Which Language of Appreciation did this experience represent?	<input type="checkbox"/> Words of Affirmation <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Time <input type="checkbox"/> Acts of Service <input type="checkbox"/> Receiving Gifts

Think about a time when you provided recognition to an employee that was NOT meaningful

What were the circumstances (what, who, where, when)?	
What specifically made it not meaningful?	
Which Language of Appreciation did this experience represent?	<input type="checkbox"/> Words of Affirmation <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Time <input type="checkbox"/> Acts of Service <input type="checkbox"/> Receiving Gifts



Overview



Context



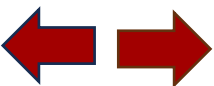
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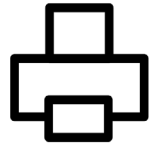
STEPS

Understanding Preferences: Employee Recognition Preferences Questionnaire (Optional)

In order to provide recognition for your contributions and achievements in a way that is meaningful to you, please fill out this questionnaire with as much information as you comfortable sharing, and return it to your supervisor.

Name	
Job Title	
Important Dates (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.)	

Name	
Job Title	
Important Dates (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.)	



[Print slides 12-13](#)

Favorite Drinks and Snacks		Favorite Flower/Plant/Color	
Favorite Cookie/ Restaurant/Fruit		Hobby You Enjoy	
Favorite Sports Team or Vacation Spot		I prefer these forms of recognition:	<input type="checkbox"/> Verbal in person <input type="checkbox"/> Work Schedule Flexibility <input type="checkbox"/> Being asked to take new tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Written Email/Notecard <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to learn new skill <input type="checkbox"/> Being asked for input

Based on the four Languages of Appreciation at Work, what is your most preferred way to be recognized?	<input type="checkbox"/> Words of Affirmation <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Time <input type="checkbox"/> Acts of Service <input type="checkbox"/> Receiving Gifts
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Overview



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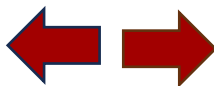
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Ideas



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IDEAS

How to Get Started

Employee recognition refers to all the ways an organization shows its appreciation for employee's contributions. It can take many forms and can be done in creative, engaging ways.

Organizations recognize employees for things like:

- Achievements
- Exhibiting desired behaviors
- Going above and beyond expectations
- Service milestones and anniversaries

In-the-Moment Recognition



Celebrations and Milestones



Formal Recognition at VSU



This section will help inspire you and give you ideas to incorporate your own recognition practices. Select ideas that work for you and try them with your team!



Overview



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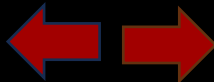
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IDEAS

In-the-Moment Recognition (1 of 2)



In-the-Moment recognition is

- Timely
- Authentic
- Sincere
- Simple

Consistently practicing in-the-moment recognition may only take a few minutes, but these small efforts can make a big impact.

To effectively practice in-the-moment recognition, remember [individual recognition preferences](#) and target your efforts according to what the employee likes.



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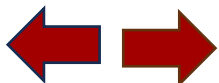
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Ideas



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IDEAS

In-the-Moment Recognition (2 of 2)

In-the-Moment Recognition Ideas to Get Started:

1. Offer a genuine and timely “thank you” for a specific contribution.
2. Read out emails from happy customers, coworkers, students, etc...
3. Bring someone their favorite beverage for a job well done.
4. Recognize an accomplishment by sending a thank you email, letter, or certificate.
5. Have each member of your team share their proudest moment for the week at the next staff meeting.
6. Give encouragement when you notice they are struggling with a task or a project. Say “I know this will be hard, but I believe in you!”
7. Schedule an impromptu meeting, face-to-face or through **TEAMS** just to say thank you for something they recently accomplished.
8. Leave a hand-written note on the employee’s desk to recognize their contributions.
9. Reach out to someone outside of your department to say thank you for supporting your team’s efforts.



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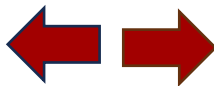
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Ideas



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IDEAS

Celebrations and Milestones (1 of 2)



Recognizing important milestones in your team members' personal and professional careers is a great way to build a positive environment and highlight significant moments or achievements.

These might be

- Wrapping up a big project/Meeting a goal
- Birthdays/Weddings/Arrival of a new family member
- Work anniversary
- Completing a development course

These types of milestones are less frequent than in-the-moment recognition and are less structured than formal awards or celebrations. Make sure to tailor the recognition for these events to your employees' preferences.

Look back on the [Recognition Preferences Questionnaire](#) to see how your team prefers to be recognized.



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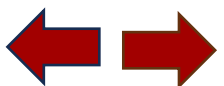
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Ideas



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IDEAS

Celebrations and Milestones (2 of 2)

Celebrations and Milestones Ideas to Get Started:

1. Set calendar reminders for career milestones and send a personal note, card, or letter.
2. Organize a bulletin board, virtual card, or [Kudo Board](#) and invite the team to post a nice message.
3. Create a swag bag of treats or VSU themed giveaways for the employee.
4. Order pizza or lunch for the team to celebrate completing a big project.
5. Have your supervisor or a leader from another area recognize your employee for their accomplishments.
6. Use **RED (Recognizing the Excellent and Distinguished)** to acknowledge their contribution.



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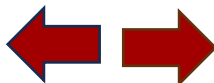
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Ideas



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IDEAS

Formal Recognition and Examples of University Programs

Formal Recognition and Awards are structured programs with clear criteria and processes, linked to big achievements or career milestones.

The University celebrates and recognizes faculty and staff for teaching, years of service, volunteering, and research at the division, department, or unit levels.



A few examples include*:

- **Presidential Excellence Awards**
- **Years of Service Recognition**
- **Retirement Recognition**
- **RED (Recognizing the Excellent and Distinguished)**

*This list is not all inclusive. If you would like your recognition program to be highlighted on this document, or you are interested in starting your own recognition program, please email vpfa@valdosta.edu



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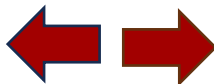
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RESOURCES

Available Tools to Make Recognition Easy

Valdosta State University has many existing tools to support you in your recognition efforts.

This section provides several examples, designs, and links to tools that you may customize and use with your team

[Send a Thank You Card](#)



[Recognize a Colleague](#)



[Send Praise Through MS Teams](#)



[Recognition Scripts and Templates](#)



[Additional Training Opportunities](#)



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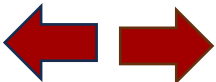
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RESOURCES

Send a Thank You Card

[Thank a Blazer](#) is webpage that allows you to send a note of gratitude to any VSU employee or student. There are several templates for you to choose from that can be easily downloaded and shared with your team.



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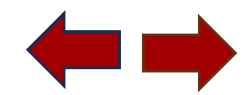
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RESOURCES

Present a Certificate



Recognize colleagues for outstanding service by customizing a certificate of recognition.

Recognition Letters

- Individual
- Team (Same Department)
- Team (Different Departments)



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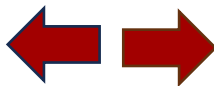
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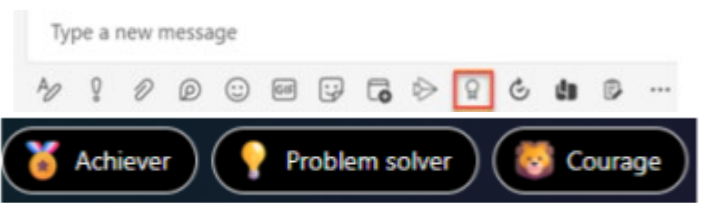
RESOURCES

Send Praise Through Microsoft Teams

Sometimes a quick, in-the-moment recognition is appropriate. For that, you can send “Praise” through **Microsoft Teams**.

To send Praise:

1. Below the space where you write a new message or reply, select “Praise Icon” or click the three dots to find it.



2. Choose a badge.
3. Add the name of the employee you want to praise and an optional description. (You will need to exchange a message prior to sending a badge)
4. Select Preview, then Send.

Leaders don't look for recognition from others, leaders look for others to recognize.

SIMON SINEK



Overview



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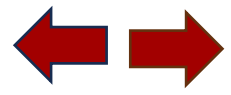
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RESOURCES

Recognition Scripts and Templates (1 of 2)

Sometimes we don't always know the right words to say. Use these sample scripts as inspiration to write something personal for your employee.



Work Anniversary:

Happy anniversary, [NAME]! As we continue to grow as a team and organization, I am increasingly thankful for all of your contributions and effort to fulfill our mission of transforming lives. You continue to add so much value to this team, and I appreciate how you approach every day with the same energy, focus, and enthusiasm as the first day you arrived.

Thank you for everything, and I am looking forward to celebrating many more years together.

Thank You Message #1:

[NAME], thank you for your positive attitude and incredible effort on [PROJECT OR TASK]. I appreciate the way you approached this complex situation and worked with the team to get the job done. Great Job!!

Thank You Message #2:

Thank you [NAME] for your recent effort on [PROJECT OR TASK]. Your contributions resulted in [Accomplishment]. This is the type of commitment we need to achieve our mission of transforming lives. I look forward to seeing what else you can do!

Thank You Message #3:

I could not have completed the [PROJECT OR TASK] without your expertise in [SPECIFIC AREA]. I know I speak for all of us when I say that we feel lucky we had you on the team leading the way. Excellent work!



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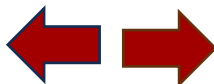
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RESOURCES

Recognition Scripts and Templates (2 of 2)

Quick Phrases to Add to a Card, Email, or Note:

1. Your hard work and dedication is an example to everyone on our team! Thank you for being your best every day!
2. I'm so grateful for all of your hard work. It definitely hasn't gone unnoticed!
3. The perfect employee lifts others up. Thank you for being a positive influence!
4. I'm so grateful that you always take the time to help your coworkers. It's really made our team come together.
5. Thank you for being such a team player. We wouldn't be the same without you!
6. Your unique perspective adds so much to our team. We're so grateful to have you with us!
7. You did a fantastic job helping our team reach its goal. Thank you for setting such a fantastic example.
8. I'm so grateful that you're not afraid to ask questions! It helps me be a better leader.
9. Watching you strive to improve has been an inspiration for both me and the entire team. You're amazing!



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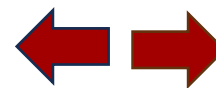
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RESOURCES

Additional Training Opportunities

There are many opportunities to continue learning and develop your employees.

Employee and Organizational Development offers a variety of management focused trainings via [Percipio](#). Some examples include: leadership development, recognition, coaching, and many more.

For more information on training options, contact Employee and Organizational Development at training@valdosta.edu.



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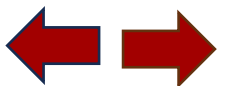
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Ideas



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Questions



thank
FOR ALL THAT YOU
DO **you**

YOUR DEDICATED
WORK IS
TO SUC

“Thank You for
all that you do”



“Honoring the
individual in the
community”



Recognizing the Excellent & Distinguished