VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2027

Igniting *a Culture of Excellence*

Valdosta State University's Strategic Plan 2027 focuses the institution's people, resources, and talents on our highest priorities. By working together to promote a culture of excellence that has come to define this university, we will foster student success in and out of the classroom, cultivate an inclusive environment, impact South Georgia, and sustain our institution for generations to come.

GOAL 1

FOSTER *Student Success*

VSU will help students succeed in life by continuing to prioritize retention and degree completion and expanding experiential opportunities and career focus.

GOAL 2

CULTIVATE *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

VSU will be an inclusive community where differences are respected and embraced, understanding is sought, and all have equitable access to opportunities.

GOAL 3

IMPACT *Regional Progress*

VSU will solidify our role as South Georgia's flagship institution and improve the communities we serve by expanding career readiness, applied research, entrepreneurship, and regional engagement.

GOAL 4

SUSTAIN *Institutional Strength*

VSU will manage its resources efficiently and responsibly, making informed decisions and investments that ensure long-term organizational strength.

GOAL 1

Foster Student Success

VSU will help students succeed in life by continuing to prioritize retention and degree completion and expanding experiential opportunities and career focus.

OUTCOME 1.1

VSU will stabilize and then increase student retention, progression, and graduation rates.

Strategies:

- By spring 2023, update the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan to include appropriate actions and annual benchmarks to accomplish this outcome's strategies.
- By spring 2027, increase freshman-to-sophomore retention to the pre-pandemic success rate of 74%.
- By spring 2027, decrease the transfer-out rate to 30%.
- By spring 2027, increase the 4-year graduation rate by 2% and the 6-year graduation rate by 3% from the fall 2022 baseline.

OUTCOME 1.2

VSU will strengthen the student academic experience.

Strategies:

- By spring 2023, increase the number of undergraduate students registering for 15 credit hours per semester to 38% from the fall 2021 baseline of 35.3%.
- By spring 2023, conduct a comprehensive assessment of students' perspectives regarding their ability to successfully navigate the university's academic programs and services.
- By fall 2023, implement any strategies needed to address concerns identified by the assessment.
- By fall 2023, increase the proportion of traditional, first-year, undergraduate students taking face-to-face courses to 80% from the fall 2021 baseline of 65.5%.
- By spring 2024, increase opportunities for students to engage with VSU faculty by decreasing the number of traditional VSU students enrolling in eCore courses by 40% from the fall 2021 baseline of 1,352 students.
- By fall 2025, enroll all new students in a First-Year or Transfer Experience Course and/or Learning Community.

OUTCOME 1.3

VSU will enhance student mental health and well-being support services.

Strategies:

- By fall 2023, implement recommendations from the Georgia Mental Health Parity Act (HB 1013) and the USG Mental Health Consortium.
- By spring 2024, require all existing employees to complete a mental health training, and include mental health training in new employee training.
- By spring 2025, become recognized as a JED Foundation strategic planning graduate.

OUTCOME 1.4

VSU will maximize the return on investment of its recruiting and marketing efforts.

Strategies:

- By fall 2023, develop a comprehensive assessment of VSU's recruiting and marketing efforts, to include why students choose VSU and the effectiveness of each recruiting and/or marketing initiative or major expenditure. Share results with key decision-makers via an annual report.

OUTCOME 1.5

VSU will enhance student engagement.

Strategies:

- By spring 2023, develop, in all undergraduate programs, a comprehensive system of faculty-student mentoring focused on providing guidance toward a career path and/or post-graduate study.
- By fall 2023, assign all undergraduates, by the beginning of their sophomore year, to a faculty mentor in their program of study and create regular opportunities for engagement.
- By spring 2024, launch a recognition program that enables students to honor those faculty and staff who have a positive impact in and out of the classroom.
- By fall 2024, build into the Faculty Evaluation Model (including annual evaluations, promotion and tenure evaluations, and post-tenure reviews) recognition for faculty engagement in student success activities like experiential learning, community-based scholarly projects (such as those through the Center for South Georgia Regional Impact), and other student engagement activities.

GOAL 2

Cultivate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

VSU will be an inclusive community where differences are respected and embraced, understanding is sought, and all have equitable access to opportunities.

OUTCOME 2.1

VSU will ensure that staffing better supports the institution's ongoing DEI work and the success of all learners who enroll at the university.
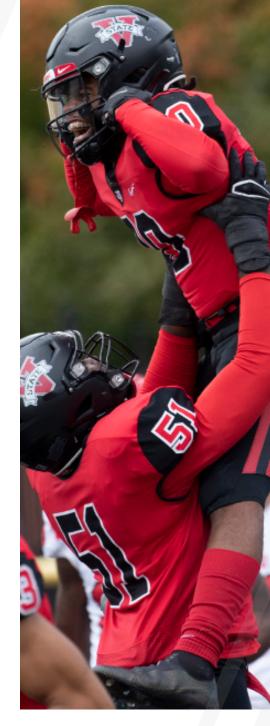
Strategies:

- By fall 2022, pilot a framework of university-wide DEI leadership, and university leadership will assess the effectiveness of that model by spring 2025.
- By fall 2022, re-establish the University Diversity Council as outlined in the institution's Statutes.
- By spring 2024, finalize and launch a comprehensive plan to recruit, support, and retain a faculty whose diversity more closely aligns with the diversity of enrolled students.

OUTCOME 2.2

VSU will identify a clear set of DEI priorities.

Strategies:

- By spring 2023, prioritize the recommendations of the Comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Planning Task Force and identify an approved set of short and long-term recommendations to address the institution's biggest challenges.
- By spring 2027, evaluate the success of DEI initiatives implemented over the course of this strategic plan.

GOAL 3

Impact Regional Progress

VSU will solidify our role as South Georgia's flagship institution and improve the communities we serve by expanding career readiness, applied research, entrepreneurship, and regional engagement.

OUTCOME 3.1

VSU will make the Center for South Georgia Regional Impact the preferred partner in South Georgia for economic and community development, research, analysis, planning, and training.

Strategies:

- By summer 2022, launch the Rural Development Institute as a premiere rural economic development certification program for leadership groups from selected communities across Georgia.
- By spring 2024, implement a plan to strategically select community-enhancement projects that positively impact the region, the university's reach, and student learning. Incentivize and reward faculty participation in those projects.

OUTCOME 3.2

VSU will be known for having a best-in-class comprehensive model of experiential preparation embedded throughout a student's experience that maximizes the career readiness of our graduates.

Strategies:

- By spring 2023, expand the Blazer Ready program, Terry Center for Experiential Learning, and other initiatives supported by VSU's Quality Enhancement Plan.
- By fall 2024, align all career planning, experiential learning, career preparation, practical experience, and student/alumni engagement programs into one best-in-class package.
- By spring 2025, make that package of experiential programs a focal point in marketing to prospective students in traditional programs.

OUTCOME 3.3

VSU will prepare local communities to better address the region's workforce shortage.

Strategies:

- By spring 2025, launch a comprehensive three-part program that:
  – Educates regional leaders on the importance of making their communities attractive to young adults entering the workforce and the steps to do so.
  – Educates VSU students on the opportunities and benefits of remaining in South Georgia after graduation.
  – Connects recent VSU graduates with young professionals in the greater Valdosta area.

OUTCOME 3.4

VSU will positively enhance the university's brand and increase tourism in the region by fully leveraging the designation of Peach State Summer Theatre as Georgia's Official Music Theatre.

Strategies:

- By fall 2024, construct and open a new state-of-the-art Performing Arts Center.
- By summer 2025, partner with the Valdosta-Lowndes County Tourism Authority and One-Valdosta Lowndes to rebrand Peach State Summer Theatre as the centerpiece of a new series of South Georgia Tourism Weekends.

GOAL 4
Sustain Institutional Strength

VSU will manage its resources efficiently and responsibly, making informed decisions and investments that ensure long-term organizational strength.

OUTCOME 4.1
VSU will increase our focus on and investment in the health, wellbeing, and careers of faculty and staff.

Strategies:
- By fall 2022, implement a telework policy.
- By summer 2024, dependent upon enrollment, complete the final phases (four and five) of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) proposed employee pay adjustments.
- By spring 2025, dependent upon enrollment, propose round two of the CVIOG comprehensive classification and compensation study.

OUTCOME 4.2
VSU will make the Online College for Career Advancement a free-standing virtual campus focused on adult learners seeking an alternative educational experience (separate from the traditional VSU experience that will continue to focus on traditional learners in traditional degree programs).

Strategies:
- By fall 2022, complete a revised Growth Plan that includes, at minimum, the following benchmarks:
  – By fall 2023, finalize course development in all eight existing degree programs.
  – By spring 2025, articulate new workforce enrollment partnerships with at least five large Southeast employers.
  – By spring 2026, complete a degree program assessment to evaluate existing success and new undergraduate potential.
  - By fall 2026, enroll at least 3,000 eDegree students.
  – By spring 2027, promote program quality by earning Quality Matters certification status for 50% of all eDegree courses (10% annually beginning spring 2023).

OUTCOME 4.3
VSU will mitigate existing fee-funded project debt.

Strategies:
- By spring 2023, partner with the University System of Georgia to develop an updated plan that better supports student fee-funded capital projects and activities like the Student Union, parking decks, athletics, and student life by:
  – Stabilizing the number of fee payers each year.
  – Right-sizing program expenses.
  – Decreasing debt.
  – Creating flexibility with the use of funding sources.

OUTCOME 4.4
VSU will initiate a major gifts campaign to support student scholarships, institutional areas most impacted by declines in student fee revenue, and Center for South Georgia Regional Impact operations.

Strategies:
- By fall 2022, conduct a fundraising feasibility study.
- By fall 2023, use results of the study to launch a major gifts campaign.
- By spring 2027, collect gifts and pledges in excess of the fundraising goal.

OUTCOME 4.5
VSU will reach and attract more new students in traditional degree programs.

Strategies:
- By fall 2022, utilize the USG-led "Academic Strategic Planning" initiative to identify ways to better align VSU degree offerings with student and employer needs.
- By spring 2026, use the results of the Academic Strategic Plan to launch new high-demand, self-sufficient undergraduate degree programs.
- By spring 2024, create a plan to make the university more attractive to prospective students interested in Greek life.
- By spring 2027, increase participation in Greek life by 15%.
- By spring 2027, increase new, traditional, first-year student enrollment by 6% (1.5% annually).

OUTCOME 4.6
VSU will increase graduate enrollment by 15%.

Strategies:
- By fall 2022, develop a graduate-specific marketing plan.
- By fall 2023, implement a plan to expedite admission decisions and notifications.
- By fall 2024, leverage graduate assistantship opportunities to better support student recruitment.
- By spring 2025, initiate synchronous graduate education at satellite locations in underserved areas.
- By fall 2025, seek BOR approval for VSU's first graduate eDegree.
- By fall 2026, expand existing graduate programs with strong enrollments and/or launch new, traditional high-demand graduate degrees.