Valdosta State University
Division of Academic Affairs
Strategic Plan 2019-2024

Academic Affairs Mission

The Division of Academic Affairs provides academic programs and services to prepare students for a lifetime of learning and work, utilizing the scholarly skills and expertise of our highly-qualified faculty and staff.

Academic Affairs Strategic Plan

Goal #1: Valdosta State University will increase retention, progression, and graduation rates through creating a campus culture focused on individual student success.

1.1   By Fall 2018, in line with national best practices, VSU will implement a University-wide advising model with professional advisors working in conjunction with faculty as mentors within all academic colleges.

- By Fall 2019, revise Faculty Activity Report to update the Faculty Advising section to include mentoring.
- By Fall 2019, in addition to an academic advisor, a faculty mentor will be assigned to every undergraduate student.
- By Spring 2020, provide internal and external benchmarking for faculty mentorship to provide models for mentoring and means of assessing its effectiveness.
- By Spring 2020, all colleges/departments will define their respective faculty mentorship model to include recognition of strong mentors/assessment, clear communication between departments and professional advisors, and full integration into the faculty evaluation model.
- By Spring 2020, identify and implement faculty development trainings that elevate mentoring skills.

1.2   By end of 2018-2019, VSU will develop evidence-based responses to identify and address barriers to successful retention, progression, and graduation of students at the University.

- By Fall 2019, reach out to undergraduate and graduate students who are leaving before graduation to determine the reason for leaving and how any policies, procedures, and/or university culture may have impacted their decision to leave, etc. Use this information to help identify patterns that indicate where additional efforts may have made a difference.
- By Fall 2019, survey faculty to identify barriers to retention, progression, and graduation of undergraduate and graduate students.
- By Fall 2019, survey undergraduate and graduate students to identify barriers to retention, progression, and graduation of undergraduate and graduate students.
- By Spring 2020, merge the results of faculty survey and plan from Student Success and evaluate for implementation.

1.3   By Spring 2019, VSU will complete a university-wide revision of its three-year Strategic Enrollment Management Plan that addresses barriers found in Outcome 1.2.

- By Fall 2019, VSU will share its revision of its three-year Strategic Enrollment Plan with university community.

1.4   By Spring 2019, VSU will develop clear academic pathways for all undergraduate degree programs, publicize corresponding two-year rolling course schedules, and implement an annual review process to ensure that all posted information (e.g., catalog, DegreeWorks, website, etc.) remains accurate and up-to-date.

- By Fall 2019, create a process for ensuring that all posted information is accurate and up-to-date and remains so.
- By Fall 2019, share degree maps with undergraduate students (and graduate students, where appropriate) during major-specific orientation sessions.
- By Spring 2020, develop a data-driven forecasting model to predict the demand for all required courses, using this data to inform scheduling.

1.5   VSU will attract, develop, and retain a quality and diverse workforce that promotes student success by forming a more outcomes-oriented training program for Deans, Department Heads, and Directors by Spring 2019; completing a classification & compensation study for faculty and staff by Fall 2019; creating a faculty workload model that is consistent with comparator norms by Spring 2020; and connecting promotion & tenure, as well as funding to support research and High Impact Practices, to the values inherent in this plan by Spring 2021.

- By Fall 2019, develop a clearinghouse of available resources to aid in recruiting a more diverse applicant pool for faculty and staff positions and make available to Deans and Department Heads.
- By Fall 2019, survey faculty hired in the past 3 years to identify barriers and supports to their success.
- By Fall 2019, develop and distribute a list of best practices for Department Heads and Program Directors to help them support and retain new faculty.
- By Fall 2019, include the following in faculty exit interviews: reason for leaving; policies, procedures, and university culture impact on their decision to leave, etc. This information will help to identify patterns that indicate where additional efforts may have made a difference.
- By Fall 2019, each college/department will have a plan to ensure that tenure-track/non-tenure-track faculty members understand how promotion and tenure decisions are made and to provide guidance in preparing for promotion/tenure application (for example, via a mentorship process, departmental workshops, etc.).
- By Fall 2019, revise the Faculty Activity Report to include the reporting and recognition of High Impact Practices
- By Spring 2020, develop a faculty workload model that is consistent with comparator norms
- By beginning of Fall 2020, new faculty orientation activities will extend throughout the first two years, and include Department Heads and faculty mentors. Efforts will be made to promote the cohort as an interdisciplinary support system, with the aim of increasing faculty retention and instilling a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration.
- By Spring 2021, revise the UTPC document to include language regarding High Impact Practices as part of the review process

- By Spring 2021, each college/department will develop a plan to increase diversity among faculty and staff.

1.6   By Fall 2018, VSU will move to a new entrepreneurial model to fund summer schedule instruction and increase available seats in high-demand courses to meet programmatic needs of both majors and non-majors as evidenced by a decrease in the number of courses with waitlists in excess of 25 students by 50% from the Spring 2018 baseline.

- By Fall 2019, deans and department heads will participate in a review of the summer scheduling/budget model with an eye toward improving the model and understanding the distribution of revenue.
- By Fall 2019, determine causes of waitlists and develop strategies to enhance course offerings.

1.7   By Spring 2020, VSU will create a clear definition for "under-enrolled courses" and decrease the number of such courses by 25% from the Fall 2017 baseline in order to focus existing resources on growing academic programs as evidenced by student demand and/or regional need.

- By Fall 2019, conduct an audit of graduate and undergraduate programs that turn away students due to staffing limitations. Determine the financial viability/advantage of adding faculty to grow those programs that currently demonstrate the ability to grow on demand.
- By Spring 2020, each college will propose a definition of "under-enrolled courses" based on the number of students, type of course, and programmatic/accreditation standards.

1.8 By Spring 2020, VSU will develop a new University-wide model for evaluating the quality of teaching that promotes excellence in both face-to-face and online modalities, and then implement that model in Fall 2021.

- By Fall 2019, develop clear documentation and directions for the promotion of Lecturer to Senior Lecturer.
- By Spring 2020, assure that the items and language in all assessment materials (such as merit raise rubrics, SOIs, FARs, and P&T documents) reflect expectations and values inherent in a Regional Comprehensive University that places teaching first while also considering those faculty members in areas where classroom teaching is not a part of their instructional responsibilities, for example, library faculty.
- By Spring 2020, develop a new faculty evaluation model that expands the current dichotomous rating model and approve it for implementation in Spring 2021, during the annual faculty review process, providing a means to encourage and distinguish excellent faculty performance.
- By Spring 2020, develop specific criteria for evaluating teaching excellence in face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses.

- By Spring 2020, revise SOIs and the Faculty Activity Report forms to include the full range of teaching that takes place: online and face-to-face, graduate and undergraduate, clinical training, supervision of internships, supervision of labs, and service and experiential learning.

1.9 By Fall 2022, VSU will increase freshman-to-sophomore-year retention by 13% over the Fall 2017 baseline of 67%, increase on-time progression by 10% over the Fall 2017 baseline of 26%, and increase the University's six-year graduation rate for all students by 10% over the 2017 baseline of 36%.

- By Spring 2019, amend the grade appeal form (section 2: Instructor Section) to include an indication of the instructor's use (or lack of use) of the Student Success Portal.
- By Fall 2019, evaluate the trends of DFWUI rates by relevant stratification categories, e.g., class, demographics, instructional modalities, etc.
- By Fall 2019, develop a plan in every college/department to engage first- and second-year majors with faculty and students within their respective program.
- By Fall 2019, add a prompt in the Faculty Activity Report that asks faculty to discuss their DWFUI rates, including their strategies (such as the use of the Success Portal) to decrease these rates while maintaining course/programmatic rigor.
- By Fall 2019, using the data collected, develop strategies to address the identified trends above.
- By Spring 2020, increase number of users of the Success Portal in all 1000 and 2000 level courses by 30% over the baseline to include flagging students for lack of consistent attendance and for those who have a D or worse in class.

Goal #2: Valdosta State University will increase student participation in expanded transformational and experiential opportunities through implementing high impact and best practices focused on evolving student needs.

2.1   By Spring 2018, VSU will establish a faculty-led task force on cross-disciplinary experiences to identify and evaluate such opportunities for future launch. By Spring 2019, the task force will report back to the Provost with recommendations for immediate opportunities for implementation by Fall 2020.

2.2   By Spring 2019, VSU will develop a system to track and assess success in High Impact Practices (HIPs) as identified by the Association of American Colleges & Universities, such as common intellectual experiences, undergraduate research, global learning, and internships, within the University and against comparative and aspirational competitors.

- By beginning of Fall 2019, APL nextED will be amended to prompt faculty to report on their use of undergraduate research, global learning, internships, and other high impact practices (HIPs) for the purposes of the annual performance evaluation as a means to encourage excellence and distinguish excellent faculty performance in the new faculty evaluation model.

- By Fall 2019, identify current HIPs being used, survey resources for supporting HIPs, and develop a plan to coordinate and leverage existing resources.
- By Fall 2019, train academic advisors to encourage international study experiences and develop ways to ensure progression towards degree completion
- By Spring 2020, assess the impact of HIPs on specific student populations such as first generation, etc.
- By Spring 2021, VSU will convene a task force to investigate the use of a common reading/text used in the university for one year.

2.3   By Spring 2020, each undergraduate degree program will identify a menu of experiential learning opportunities and require that students select and complete at least one in order to graduate.

- By the beginning of Fall 2020, experiential learning opportunities will be published on each program's webpage.
- By Fall 2020, each program will collaborate with advising centers to document the successful completion of experiential learning.
- By Spring 2021, each program will collaborate with Career Services to highlight experiential learning in student portfolios and resumes.

2.4   By Fall 2020, VSU will complete a housing master plan, to assess existing housing inventory, occupancy projections, and competitive housing options, and provide a recommendation regarding the future needs of housing inventory at the University.

2.5   VSU will increase the total annual duplicated headcount at all student engagement activities, such as those offered by faculty and/or academic departments, student life, recreation, fine arts, diversity & inclusion, athletics, Greeks, and registered student organizations, by 3% annually over the fiscal year 2018 baseline, while also increasing total annual unduplicated headcount at such programs by 2% annually over the FY18 baseline through the end of the strategic plan period in Spring 2022.

- By Fall 2019, utilize BlazerLink to capture attendance at all student engagement activities.
- By Fall 2019, create a task force to explore how intellectually stimulating student engagement activities can be developed, offered, and promoted across campus

Goal #3: Valdosta State University will increase community and regional impact through leading development in and serving as a resource for industry, health care, arts, education, athletics, and other changing economic regional needs that support the growth of South Georgia and the communities our students will serve.

3.1   By Spring 2018, VSU will conduct a comprehensive assessment of current community outreach activities and launch an external marketing campaign to educate the community about services and impact already offered.

- By Fall 2019, each department/school will develop and maintain a list of current community outreach activities and assess the associated impact of these activities on the region.
- By Fall 2020, APL nextED will be revised to prompt faculty to report on how their current community outreach activities are integrated in their teaching and/or scholarly activity, providing the means to distinguish excellence in the new faculty evaluation model.

3.2   VSU will establish the Center for South Georgia Regional Impact and hire an Executive Director (ED) for the center. By Fall 2018, the ED will: 1) compile a content-area expert database including VSU faculty, staff, and administrators, and 2) a database of key contacts in the fields of government, economic development, education, healthcare, and the arts for each county in VSU's service area. By Spring 2020, the ED will: 1) compile an initial list of issues confronting communities in South GA and will connect those issues to faculty, staff, and student expertise, 2) prepare a quarterly report that outlines areas of concern from VSU's service area and the outcomes offered by VSU assets, 3) prepare an annual report of the impact that VSU has made in our 41-county service area, highlighting specific problems that VSU identified or was brought to VSU by the community and the specific solutions offered by VSU experts, and 4) work with AA leadership to create a robust "Study Away" program that will be managed within each college with the goal of providing students with service learning opportunities by working with area businesses, non-profit organizations, and other entities primarily within VSU's 41-county service area.

- By Fall 2019, each college will determine what resources will be needed to support a "Study Away" initiative.

3.3   By Spring 2019, each college will have an industry/community advisory board comprised of industry/discipline leaders (preferably alumni) who reflect the diversity of the region, which will provide input into course and program development, to ensure that VSU students are well-prepared to enter the workforce, graduate school, or professional school.

3.4   By Spring 2021, VSU will complete a renovation of Ashley Cinemas to provide enhanced space for the theatre and dance programs and to create an improved and more visible performance space for Peach State Summer Theatre and other high-value cultural opportunities.

Goal #4: Increase the capacity of the campus to foster an inclusive environment.

- By Fall 2019, add a prompt in APL nextED to allow faculty to discuss how they have included materials from underrepresented groups and/or fostered an inclusive environment in their courses.
- By Fall 2020, develop an Academic Affairs response plan to be implemented after racially charged or divisive incidents occur. Such a plan may include the development of classroom strategies or student activities that would help to minimize the effects of the aforementioned incidents.
- By Spring 2020, create opportunities for on-campus and online faculty, staff, and students to organize, or take part in, social or other events fostering diversity and inclusion.

- By Spring 2020, create opportunities for diversity training (especially, on how to handle diversity in hiring processes) for faculty/staff/students that would facilitate learning about best practices in workplace culture and challenges faced in diverse and/or homogenous environments
- By Spring 2021, develop a plan to increase the capacity of faculty, staff, and students to 1) engage with different perspectives and ideologies and 2) conduct constructive conversations about divisive issues. Ongoing professional development opportunities should be developed for the campus community.
- By Spring 2022, create or acquire a bank of training videos for faculty, staff, and students to learn strategies for increasing accessibility to their spaces and curricula. Some examples include overcoming mobility limitations in labs and studio courses, and language issues for students for whom English is a second language or learning/social differences.

Goal #5: Foster improved communication across campus.

- By Fall 2019, add a tile for The Spectator on MyVSU landing page.
- By Fall 2019, develop and maintain a Webpage thoroughly outlining the administrative structure and responsibilities (including committees) for VSU.
- By Fall 2019, create additional avenues for more direct communication within the Academic Affairs Division among administration, faculty, staff, and students at regular intervals
- By Spring 2020, develop a one-message, annual campaign to educate faculty and staff about a key message or practice that is deemed essential to the mission of the university, for instance: the academic mindset, the use of the success portal, or the value of experiential learning.
- By Fall 2020, work with IT to create avenues for archiving and sharing of results from ongoing assessments of student learning and program performance
- By Spring 2021, create avenues for sharing and archiving of information, in a centralized manner, regarding major achievements and/or initiatives taken by individual divisions/departments/colleges to foster collaboration and inspire VSU community (could be semester or year-end summary of activities and success stories, categorized by colleges/divisions in one location (webpage) with searchable tags of key words.
- By Fall 2021, develop a plan to address knowledge deficits regarding the budget model and specifically how enrollment and student credit hour production impact the budget.

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