



Valdosta State University

Graduate School

Strategic Plan

Graduate School Mission

The mission of the Graduate School at Valdosta State University is to support graduate education and associated scholarly activities. Graduate degrees conferred and the level of research conducted will be consistent with a regional university as defined by the Georgia University System Board of Regents.

Graduate instruction will be carried out in a manner that provides a solid foundation for continuous learning as our students grow as scholars and professionals. Valdosta State University Graduate School will provide programs that meet the identified needs of the citizens within its 41-county service area.

The Graduate School will cultivate a supportive environment for research, scholarly activities, and other creative endeavors that are integral to successful graduate programs. Working through the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration, we will support graduate faculty and students in obtaining external funds for research, instructional and curriculum development, and scholarship.

Graduate School Strategic Plan

This strategic plan arises from a planning retreat with all of the Graduate School staff as well as conversations with the graduate program coordinators through Graduate Executive Committee. The following goals are the strategic pillars for advancing the Graduate School at VSU over the next six years:

- Increase Graduate Enrollment
- Expand Support for Graduate Faculty
- Expand Support for Graduate Students
- Enhance Staff Development in the Graduate School

Goal 1: Increase Graduate Enrollment

Objective 1: Establish a realistic target in the short run for arresting the decline in graduate enrollment and then increasing graduate enrollment in the long run.

Objective 2: Aggressively market graduate programs in the state, region, nation, and internationally.

Objective 3: Add new graduate programs that meet education, health care, community, and economic development needs.

Objective 4: Identify low-enrolled graduate programs and facilitate the enhancement, merger, or closure of those programs.

Objective 5: Establish a totally online admissions process.

Action Steps to Increase Graduate Enrollment:

1. *Hold graduate student enrollment steady from Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 with projected growth of 2% in Fall 2015 and 3% in Fall 2016.*
2. *Market VSU graduate programs in print and web media throughout Georgia.*



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3. Market on-campus graduate programs in north Florida by highlighting in-state tuition rates.
4. Market VSU graduate programs at campus recruitment fairs throughout Georgia and the region.
5. Market VSU graduate programs at international student recruitment fairs in high-growth markets such as China, India, Brazil, and Turkey.
6. Develop a Viewbook which highlights graduate programs across all of our academic colleges for distribution at student recruitment fairs.
7. In collaboration with the recruitment staff from the Office of Admissions, highlight VSU graduate programs to the teachers, staff, and parents at high schools throughout Georgia.
8. Continue to push forward new graduate programs such as the Professional Science Masters (PSM) in Chemistry and the Doctor of Nurse Practice (DNP).
9. In addition to the PSM and DNP, explore the development of new graduate programs with department heads and academic deans to meet the health care, education, economic, and community development needs of our region.
10. Work with academic deans and department heads to enhance, close, or merge low-enrolled graduate programs.
11. Establish a task force between the Graduate School and Information Technology to create a totally online admissions process by the Fall 2015 semester.

Goal 2: Expand Support for Graduate Faculty

Objective 1: Expand support for graduate faculty scholarship.

Objective 2: Increase the number of graduate teaching and research assistantships to support faculty.

Objective 3: Simplify and streamline graduate faculty status applications.

Objective 4: Create endowed chairs for graduate faculty.

Action Steps to Expand Support for Graduate Faculty:

1. Collaborate with the Provost's Office to expand funding by \$10,000 in FY2014 for the Graduate Faculty Scholarship fund and continue to expand in future years.
2. Increase the number of graduate teaching and research assistantships over the next five years to expand support for faculty scholarship and teaching.
3. Collaborate with the IDEA Center and eLearning to support graduate faculty teaching and scholarship initiatives.
4. Expand the length of temporary graduate faculty status (from one to three years) and collapse associate graduate faculty status and full graduate faculty status into a single category of "graduate faculty status" for an appointment of five years.
5. Utilize Digital Measures for all graduate faculty status applications starting in Fall 2014.
6. Collaborate with the Division of University Advancement through the Capital Campaign to create endowed chairs for graduate faculty at VSU. These endowed chairs would provide \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year to a graduate faculty member to support scholarship and teaching.
7. Collaborate with the Division of University Advancement through the Capital Campaign to name the Graduate School and endow an annual fund to support graduate faculty scholarship and teaching.



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Goal 3: Expand Support for Graduate Students

- Objective 1: Create a fund to support graduate student research presentations at conferences.
- Objective 2: Improve the quality of writing and research in theses and dissertations.
- Objective 3: Increase the number and size of graduation assistant stipends.
- Objective 4: Expand the Graduate Student Research and Scholarship Symposium.
- Objective 5: Reactivate the Association of Graduate Students.

Action Steps to Expand Support for Graduate Students:

1. *Allocate \$5,000 - \$10,000 per year out of the Graduate Surcharge account to support graduate student travel to present at professional meetings and conferences. Collaborate with the Division of Institutional Advancement through the Capital Campaign to expand support for graduate students to present their research at conferences.*
2. *Establish a task force with representation from the Graduate Executive Committee and the Department of English to explore best practices for improving graduate student writing and ultimately the quality of theses and dissertations. The task force will also examine best practices to improve the research skills of graduate students. The task force will start its work in the spring 2014 semester.*
3. *Collaborate with the Student Success Center to more effectively utilize the writing tutor for graduate students.*
4. *Increase the number of graduate assistantships as well as the stipend levels to attract top-quality students to VSU graduate programs.*
5. *Continue to expand the number of poster presentations at the Graduate Student Research and Scholarship Symposium each April and explore the possibility of a symposium of paper presentations each fall.*
6. *Identify graduate students to reactivate the Association of Graduate Students (AGS) and improve collaboration between the AGS and Graduate School to meet the needs of graduate students.*

Goal 4: Enhance Staff Development in the Graduate School

- Objective 1: Promote office-to-office collaboration.
- Objective 2: Support professional development and training opportunities for staff.
- Objective 3: Hire and retain talented staff.

Action Steps to Enhance Staff Development:

1. *Collaborate with the Office of International Program to improve the admissions process for international students.*
2. *Collaborate with the Office of Admissions to maximize recruitment activities.*
3. *Collaborate with the Division of Communication, Marketing, and Enrollment Management to aggressively market VSU graduate programs.*
4. *Identify conference opportunities and fund travel for Graduate School staff to attend professional development workshops and panels.*
5. *Through these professional development opportunities, retain talented staff in the Graduate School and explore a position for retention, marketing, and enrollment management.*