

ANNUAL REPORT OF INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS

FY 1997

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

to

THE CHANCELLOR

and

THE BOARD OF REGENTS

of the

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

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1996-97 ANNUAL REPORT OF INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS

Section A: Summary of Major Institutional Accomplishments in the Preceding Year

New Programs: Valdosta State University (VSU) received approval to begin offering the Master of Accounting major and the Educational Specialist Degree in Instructional Technology. The Division of Social Work graduated its first cohort of Master of Social Work (M.S.W.) students in June 1997.

Learning Enrichment: As VSU dramatically reduces its developmental studies students, it is important to make improvements in the retention rates. VSU purchased computer software (Academic Systems) and additional hardware which will be used to create a Learning Enrichment Program for students in regular freshman courses in mathematics. The program will be in addition to the Math Tutoring Center which served 5,754 students during 1996-97 and the Writing Center, which served 26,599 users.

Satellite Up-Link: VSU received funding to establish a satellite up-link center. This technology will be used to advance VSU's regional mission through a variety of outreach programs, including continuing education activities, regular academic courses, staff development, and cultural enrichment. Equipment for this technology is now largely in place or on order. The up-link is operational, and the FCC license and a \$500,000 grant to upgrade to digital encoding have been received. The smaller TVRO antenna has been relocated and is operational, permitting the conduction of multiple simultaneous teleconferences.

Radio: WWET, the national public radio station, initiated local programming with the advent of *Daybook*, a program about activities and events at Valdosta State. The student radio station, WXVS, produced one thousand eighty hours of original programming.

Classroom Technology: VSU has methodically established a sophisticated environment of electronic classrooms, roll-around multi-media instructor stations, student computer labs, GALILEO workstations, e-mail (with classroom applications), highly utilitarian Web pages, and other technology-based capabilities to support instruction and research. A recent course content survey shows that over two-thirds of VSU classes include student use of technology and that multi-media instruction has become an integral part of VSU's technology-based academic delivery system.

Information Technology: During the year, \$2.4 million was spent to insure VSU's position as a technology leader. The major focus was to upgrade and increase the reliability of technology. For example, in the last 18 months, 792 Pentium computers were installed to replace older machines, and critical portions of the campus-wide network were increased in speed from 10 to 100 megabytes per second. With an extensive, reliable, campus-wide data network comprised of 18 miles of fiber and 55 miles of copper connecting every building, office, student lab, and classroom, VSU's faculty and students utilize 2,300 computer workstations for easy access to the capabilities of the Internet, World Wide Web, e-mail, and other resources.

The Library: During FY 97, the library added 7,884 volumes to the collection, increasing the book collection to 395,376 bound volumes. The total collection grew by 2.9 percent to 1,493,988 items. The library added an electronic classroom/PC lab, 18 PC's, 2MAC's, and one networked printer. The door count for the main library increased 10.2 percent from 432,923 to 482,023. GALILEO users logged in 85,645 times, performed 139,275 keyword searches, and 78,561 full-text inquiries resulting in 261,771 citations displayed. The position of Coordinator of Collection Development with primary responsibility to assess the library's collections in support of academic programs was created.

Semester Conversion: A new core curriculum which stresses inter-disciplinary perspectives, issues of diversity, and regional/global applications has been adopted. All departments have submitted new curricula, projected outcomes and assessments, and a two-year schedule of semester course offerings (1998-2000). A *Semester Conversion Handbook* was developed and placed on the VSU Semester Conversion Website.

Internationalization: Study abroad and international program development sessions were conducted at Bainbridge, South Georgia, Waycross, and Abraham Baldwin Colleges. Through the European Council of the University System, VSU's International Programs staff developed and administered a system-wide study abroad program at Roehampton Institute in England with 98 students and 12 faculty from across the University System. International scholars were welcomed in five departments of Arts and Sciences. Faculty again participated in exchanges with Syktyvkar State University in Russia and Esterhazy Karoly College in Eger, Hungary.

Student Advising/Registration/Grade Reports: VSU was the first University System institution to implement all facets of the Banner software systems; VSU has now utilized that system for over two years to admit, advise, register, aid, bill, and successfully process over

60,000 registrants. In FY 97, PC self-registration was offered as an option for continuing students, and a telephone information system was an added option and permit students to access quarterly grade information.

Teaching: Under the P-16 initiative, VSU created a Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning located in facilities of the Valdosta City Schools. This collaborative effort permits VSU and public school faculty to work together on common concerns. The Regents' Distinguished Professor, Patricia Marks, and three Teaching Fellows, Deborah Davis, Phil Gunter, and Craig Klein, have aided the Center in the development and utilization of the "best practices" in different educational settings.

P-16: The College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education, partners in this effort, addressed a number of critical issues including, "best practices," standards development, the revised Quality Core Curriculum, funding initiatives for public schools, and the development of a Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning. Discipline Study Groups in language arts, mathematics, sciences, and social sciences were active.

Publications and Presentations: The faculty engaged in 1,089 scholarly activities (an annual increase of over 30 percent) and presented 830 papers at professional meetings (an increase of 25 percent). Many of these activities were supported through two VSU programs: the VSU Center for Faculty Development and Instructional Improvement (over \$125,000 awarded) and the VSU Faculty Research Grants Program. The Graduate School prepared to issue in the summer of 1997 the first VSU publication devoted to research entitled, *Research Perspectives*.

Students in Nursing: There are a number of indicators that students in nursing are reaching their educational goals. One received the only Helene Fuld Fellowship awarded in Georgia, and four hold offices in the Georgia Association of Nursing Students. Test scores on the Mosby Assessment which evaluates preparedness in nursing were higher than the national norm, and Nurse Practitioner students had a 100 percent pass rate on their certification exams.

Theater: The Communication Arts Theater program continued to perform at a demanding pace. Seven works (41 performances) were presented in Sawyer Theater and the Lab Theater.

The Jekyll Island Musical Theater Festival: Forty-three performances of three musicals were presented during the seventh season of

operation. The total attendance was 8,512. A new three-year contract has been approved, allowing continuity of planning.

Grants and Contracts: VSU increased its receipt of grants and contracts from \$3,768,349 in FY 96 to \$4,256,909 in FY 97, an increase of over 13 percent.

Disciplinary Program Accreditation: The College of Business Administration achieved initial accreditation of its MBA Program and reaffirmation of accreditation of its undergraduate programs by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business. The MPA Program was awarded National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) accreditation. The MSW Program received a positive review for its "candidacy status" from the Council for Social Work Education (CSWE), a required step in preparation for initial accreditation.

Institutional Accreditation: The University was elevated from Level IV to Level V by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), in recognition of its doctoral program in three areas of education. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) awarded the College of Education two commendations, for its relationship to its constituencies and for its use of technology.

SCI-FEST: In collaboration with the local Education Council, VSU hosted SCI-FEST, which brought hundreds of children to campus for experiential learning in the sciences.

Academic Conferences at VSU: During the year, the University hosted the annual meeting of the State Honors Council, the second annual Women's Studies Conference, the second annual Math-Technology Conference, a highly successful Writers' Conference, the first African American Lecture Series, a Mock Trial/International Court, and an appearance of Gloria Steinem.

Biology/Chemistry Building: Members of the Departments of Biology and Chemistry met throughout the year with one another and with architects and VSU personnel as they designed the proposed labs, classrooms, and faculty offices of the impressive new Biology/Chemistry building.

New Art Facilities in the University Center. The Art Department and the Dance Program occupied commodious new facilities in the University Center.

The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra: The VSO presented four "sold-out" subscription concerts in Whitehead Auditorium and a regional concert at Tifton. Youth concerts were expanded from four to six in an attempt to meet the demand from schools in the region.

Regional Service: The South Georgia Institute provided support for regional development, economic development activities, applied research on important regional issues, and public service activities; significant consulting and training projects were provided for regional companies, some lasting throughout the entire year. The Educational Technology Training Center (ETTC) provided workshops for over 10,000 educators. The College of Education's Mobile Technology vans were used throughout the year at many schools in the south Georgia region. The MSW students brought the AIDS Memorial Names Quilt to Valdosta; in this project, students were taught useful concepts in organizing a community, public relations, working in task groups, budgeting, etc.

Undergraduate Research: The Council on Undergraduate Research sponsored its third annual symposium, at which over thirty undergraduates made presentations.

Air Force ROTC: The cadet corps maintained an enrollment of 88 throughout the year. VSU exceeded its "send to camp goal" for the fourth consecutive year and achieved a 100 percent success rate at 1996 summer training. VSU cadets received three Distinguished Graduate and three Superior awards, more than twice the national average.

Business and Finance: The Business and Finance Division continued to improve its customer service operations, focusing on professional and staff training. The overall effectiveness of this year's growth was due to the recommitment to external as well as internal customers. The Financial Services Division successfully implemented the new registration system and new paperless billing, which eliminates students' waiting for fee invoices to be mailed. The system allows students to register over the phone and know the amount of fees due. The Personnel Division implemented guidelines which resulted in a major improvement in handling applications, employment of full-time personnel, and termination of employees. In the Auxiliary Services Division, Food Services and Catering increased sales and surplus revenue. The rapidly growing University Bookstore installed a point-of-sale register system which affords improved control of inventory. Privatization of physicians' services in Student Health resulted in some cost savings and improved delivery of services. The Public Safety Division continued to conduct initial and subsequent training for its officers. The crime and rape prevention programs were well

received and aided in improving rapport with the students. The Business Services Division processed 2.5 million pieces of mail and conducted a customer survey which identified areas that need to be improved. The Plant Operations Division completed a number of construction, renovation, and maintenance projects. By doing many projects "in house," the institution saved valuable resources which were used in other areas.

Institutional Advancement: For the calendar year ending December 31, 1996, gifts to the University reached \$2,006,009. There were 4,161 total donors, compared to 3,615 in 1995. Plans were formulated to initiate a major capital campaign in the fall of 1997, with public activities beginning in the fall of 1998.

Division of Student Affairs

Alcohol and Drug Education: In FY 97 the Office of Alcohol and Drug Education was established and a Program Coordinator hired. VSU received an institution-wide Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) grant to provide supplemental funds for this office. The Program Coordinator presented over 75 programs to approximately 2,100 students in classes, residence halls, Greek organizations, and to other various student groups.

Career Planning and Placement: The Office of Career Planning and Placement established contact with 6,806 students via class/group presentations and office visits to provide them career counseling and job search assistance. It forwarded 1,974 employer-requested resumes to 471 organizations. An automated telephone notification system was purchased, which will increase communication with students registered for placement services.

Cooperative Education: Co-op and internship placements remained strong, with a total of 109 new co-op placements for the year. There were 172 total placements. The program is the largest in Georgia outside the Atlanta metropolitan area. Quarterly written evaluations are required of Co-op students and their employers. These evaluations are reviewed by the Co-op staff to ensure that the work experience is appropriate for the students' program.

Counseling Center: During the year, the Counseling Center provided individual and group counseling to 1,090 individuals. This figure accounted for over 2,422 client contact hours. Consistent with the Center's philosophy of a pro-active outreach model of counseling, the staff met with over 2,916 individuals outside of their offices.

Financial Aid and Veterans' Affairs: The office is completing the first year of the U.S. Department of Education Quality Assurance Program. This program is a structured way to assess every aspect of the financial operation, from the admissions process to the disbursement of financial aid.

Housing and Residence Life: A hard-wired smoke detection system which provides a smoke detector in each student room was installed in the traditional residence halls. A second project that impacts all of the residence halls involved the installation of a card access system at each building's primary entrance. Patterson Hall received new carpet and a facelift of many of its public areas. In Brown Hall the first floor bathrooms were converted to accommodate wheelchair-bound students. A total of 876 programs were provided by the Office of Housing and Residence Life, with 18,749 students in attendance. For the first time, the residence halls opened for fall and winter quarters with 100 percent occupancy.

Testing: Tests from 22 testing programs were administered to 8,188 test-takers. The computerized test center within the Office of Testing was expanded to a total of 16 computer stations. Beginning spring quarter, these stations were used twice daily to administer placement tests to incoming students.

The Faculty Senate: The Faculty Senate approved the new core curriculum and all major program curricula under the semester system. It developed a closer working relationship between the administration and faculty in minimizing the environmental impact of campus expansion and approved policies on Planning and Assessment for Institutional Effectiveness and Assessing Institutional Effectiveness. It also developed and approved administrative evaluation instruments and a Pre- and Post-Tenure Review Policy. The Senate convened eight times during the year, and many committees were very active. Each Statutory and Standing Committee published its own annual report.

Athletics: In FY 97, VSU became the second institution in the sixteen-member Gulf South Conference's history to win the Men's and Women's All-Sports Trophies in the same year, and VSU athletes were named as the Conference's Male and Female Athletes of the Year. Construction was completed of a privately funded \$750,000 addition to the Billy Grant Baseball Field. The GPA's of athletes in six of the 11 University varsity sports were 3.0 or better during the spring quarter.

Continuing Education: In FY 97, Continuing Education offered 10 contract training courses with local area businesses. It initiated a four-course series in Medical Coding and the first community courses

for the Certificate in Management series presented in cooperation with the American Management Association. It co-sponsored a series of programs on Small Business Development with the University of Georgia Small Business Development Center, hosted two successful Elderhostel programs, and, through the S.C.O.P.E. Program, provided weekend enrichment activities for 451 students.

Eighty faculty members taught 201 courses to 1,681 registrants at ten locations off-campus. The institution developed a network of site coordinators at four other institutions. At each site, it developed newsletters and projected long-range schedules, including tables of course offerings.

Fifty-seven faculty members taught 61 courses at 20 locations on the distance network. An undergraduate business administration external degree cycle program was televised to Bainbridge College, Waycross College, and South Georgia College, an undergraduate Nursing external degree cycle program to ABAC, South Georgia College, and Waycross College, and an undergraduate Middle Grades Education external degree cycle program to Charlton County High School. The third year of post-secondary option courses was offered to regional high schools via distance learning. The complete interconnection of all the meeting rooms in the Regional Center for Continuing Education to the satellite uplink's technical operations center was begun, and the digital encoding equipment for the uplink was ordered.

Section B: Annual Progress in Institutional Strategic Planning

Major Institutional Planning Goals: Substantial progress was made in realizing the planning priorities which were grouped under four categories:

1. **Instruction: Addition of New Programs to Meet Regional Needs**
 - 1) Master in Information Studies--Preparation of a largely virtual program is under way. Completion date is June, 1998.
 - 2) Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design--Planning and needs assessment are well under way; the proposal should be completed by December, 1997.
 - 3) Master of Science in Criminal Justice--A proposal is pending at the Board of Regents' office.
 - 4) Master in Family Therapy--A new department head has initiated a national study of best practices as a first step in developing a proposal. The proposal is anticipated in spring, 1998.
 - 5) Master of Science in Physical Therapy--A consultant has been brought to campus, and a feasibility study is under way.

2. Scholarship

- 1) Each academic unit is implementing plans to perform research and/or creative work to meet the needs of the regional service area.
- 2) Increased collaboration has been undertaken with area public schools and two-year colleges. The increased activities include those associated with the P-16 initiative, Project Right Track, electronic mentoring, VSU site coordinators at regional two-year schools, and a Coca-Cola grant focusing on utilization of technology in math and science instruction in public schools.
- 3) To enhance environmental stewardship, a degree program in environmental geography was approved. VSU acquired Lake Louise to be used as an outdoor laboratory by university and public school students. A minor in environmental studies is under consideration.

3. Institutional Service

- 1) Regional Initiatives--Plans for a Center for South Georgia Culture were formulated, a satellite uplink installed, and the roles of ArtSouth and the South Georgia Institute expanded. New planning procedures were instituted, requiring each unit to address the role it can fill in this area.
- 2) Leadership and support of P-16--Primary focus this year has been on standards development. Workshops for teachers were held with experts from Pueblo, Colorado, joining university faculty as consultants and facilitators. The Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning served as a center for pedagogy in partnership with public schools, an outgrowth of the P-16 program.
- 3) Service learning and service as a capstone experience--The growth of co-op education, "just-in-time" training, and use of students as peer tutors and mentors on- and off-campus advanced this goal.
- 4) Rosalyn Carter Center Expansion--VSU was selected to develop a Care-Givers unit in cooperation with the Rosalyn Carter Center at Georgia Southwestern University. This program will have a major impact on the delivery of social services in the region.

4. Enhancement of the Professional Environment

- 1) Opportunities for faculty and staff development were aggressively promoted. Pre- and post-tenure review processes have been linked to opportunities for faculty development. Funding for faculty professional activity was increased 20

- percent. Research support for graduate faculty added an additional \$25,000 to the research pool.
- 2) VSU broadened faculty and staff training in Alternate Dispute Resolution. Additional staff attended BOR-sponsored ADR training.
 - 3) VSU created a leave-with-pay program for faculty and a tuition remission plan for staff to support professional growth.
 - 4) The concept of "learning community" was introduced on campus. VSU was the only institution in the Southeast invited to send a team to the AAHE summer Quality Academy, which emphasized a learning community focus. The staff development program, also learning community influenced, emphasized client-centered service.
 - 5) VSU continued to be a leading institution in promoting international faculty and student exchange. This year, VSU and the Valdosta business community hosted a business delegation from Syktyvkar University.

Advancement of Earlier Adopted Goals

- 1) Academic majors were systematically reviewed as to length, coherence, content, educational outcomes, and means of assessment.
- 2) International faculty and student exchanges increased and funds redirected to enhance this endeavor.
- 3) New programs such as electronic mentoring and the use of e-mail to enhance retention of a diverse student population were implemented, with specific regard given to at-risk students.
- 4) All academic units prepared *Bulletin* copy specifically identifying educational outcomes for each major and a minimum of two means of assessment.
- 5) VSU offered entire classes over the web with students as far away as China participating.
- 6) Admission criteria were raised as part of an effort to enhance retention and reduce time-to-degree.
- 7) VSU greatly increased its contact with two-year, technical, and public schools in the area through several initiatives including P-16, a Coca-Cola grant focusing on teachers and technology, and Project Right Track.
- 8) A Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning was developed in cooperation with the Valdosta City Schools.
- 9) As in each of recent years, a GSAMS/model classroom was added to bolster course delivery across the region.

Section C: Annual Progress in Assessing Institutional Effectiveness: A Discussion of Major Progress in Institutional Effectiveness Processes

All efforts to assess institutional effectiveness in academic programs or academic support units must originate in a mission statement that describes directly and effectively what the purpose of the unit or program is. The unit-specific statements reflect the broader mission of the University. This past year the University Mission Statement was amended and approved by the Faculty Senate. This Board of Regents approved document served as the template for academic units to prepare statements of purpose. A central tenet was that all units and programs should work in concert to fulfill VSU's mission. Assessing program quality requires assessing tasks or outcomes for their effectiveness and utilizing the lesson learned from reflection to improve practices and devise new goals promoting improvement in purpose or activities. Academic program reviews must focus on student learning, while the review of support units must focus upon the delivery of services and student perceptions of those services.

Valdosta State University made considerable progress in reviewing and revising strategic planning processes and developing a plan for assessing institutional effectiveness. Three policy statements were developed and approved by the campus Institutional Planning Committee, the Faculty Senate, and central administration. These include: (1) Strategic Planning to Attain Institutional Goals; (2) Assessing Institutional Effectiveness; and (3) Procedures for Institutional Program Review.

1. Planning to Attain Institutional Goals. For several years VSU had focused its planning around 22 goals. Individual units selected three from the larger group, developed action plans, and assessed progress toward the end of the year. This procedure did not effectively engage units in the mainstream of campus initiatives. This year the 22 goals were grouped into four areas: (1) instructional; (2) scholarship/creative activity; (3) service; and (4) professional environment and institutional effectiveness. Each unit of the institution addressed mandatory or common goals, while some of the goals in the four clusters were considered optional. Each academic unit prepared specific action plans responding to mandatory and optional goals of the institution.
2. Assessing Institutional Effectiveness. It was recognized that "Institutional Effectiveness" is of primary importance and constitutes a key element of the SACS *Criteria for Accreditation*. Several important steps have been taken to develop broadly accepted and useful procedures to assess effectiveness. Each unit

has developed unit mission statements reflecting the institutional mission statement. Unit goals, of necessity, bear the imprint of the unit's vision for itself exemplified in the mission statement.

In FY 98, units will develop methods for assessing and attaining goals. This information will be reviewed in annual budget presentations by the academic and academic support units in an effort to "close the loop." Effective planning and regular assessment provide budgeting information critical to the setting of institutional priorities, allocation of funds to improve quality, and redirection of current dollars to strengthen existing programs or seed money for new program development designed better to meet regional needs.

Academic units were asked to use studies related to semester conversion to make changes in the infrastructure, policies, and procedures necessary to influence the effectiveness of programs. As a result, the *University Bulletin* will now list for each major a statement of purpose, expected educational learning outcomes, and a minimum of two forms of assessment. One may be locally developed, and the other must be an external measure.

Academic Programs

- 1) Each major will address learning goals and explain how students will be expected to use what they have learned in the program.
- 2) Each program will define its major content and pedagogical expectations.
- 3) Each program will have at least two measures of student achievement.
- 4) Scholarship goals must be defined in the departmental personnel manuals and must address the various forms of scholarship as described by Ernest Boyer and how these will be assessed in the department.
- 5) Service activities vary in importance across units. Each unit must define service expectations consistent with its mission and institutional expectations.
- 6) All programs will be subject to cyclical program review (see below), and the record of annual reviews and budgetary planning will constitute a significant aspect of assessing unit effectiveness.

Academic Support Units

Each unit in its mission statement and extended statement of purpose will identify its major tasks, principle clientele, goals, and means for measuring effectiveness.

3. Program Review. A statement of guidelines for program review has been developed and approved by the Faculty Senate and central administration.

Program Review will be done in all cost centers on campus on a cyclical basis. In addition to annual self-assessment, Program Review will provide a comprehensive review of each program's performance over a five-year period. This policy has positioned VSU to respond to Board of Regents' evolving policy on Program Review currently under consideration.

Academic Programs

A complete inventory of items to be assessed has been developed. Departments and the Office of Institutional Research are collecting data to permit a detailed review of selected programs in the spring of 1998. The final form of this formal review program awaits Board of Regents adoption of the recently completed Program Review Task Force Report.

Academic Support Units

Student Services and Business and Finance contribute to VSU's achieving its mission. Periodic assessment of administrative activities in student services, facilities and facilities maintenance, student learning support, campus life, auxiliary services, and other activities will emphasize client assessment of unit services.

Implementation of Academic or Non-Academic Program/Process Changes as a Result of Assessment Evidence

Several significant changes in programs and processes have evolved from assessment activities. These include the diminution in the number of remedial students and raising of academic standards in an effort to improve program quality, student success, and student retention. Developmental studies will be phased out, but a "learning community" concept of educational enrichment will be developed for those who meet admission standards but need some support services to attain their maximum potential. The learning enrichment unit will be re-located in the College of Arts and Sciences, a move which will afford broader interdisciplinary involvement in the core by all faculty. Students enrolled in core courses will have immediate access to all of the services of the learning enrichment staff, who will provide needed intervention and skills development in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Delivery of support services will become increasingly computer based. VSU has installed Academic

Systems software to provide learning assistance in math. This program will help assess student weaknesses in math and provide "just-in-time" instruction at the same time the student continues in core mathematics.

Assessment has also influenced the decision to require mandatory advising for all students and BANNER training for all faculty to enable them to track students through their educational program. Revised procedures for late registration, dropping, adding, and withdrawals make the procedures more accessible and student-friendly.

The new requirements for *Bulletin* copy that will communicate to students vital information about the major, its uses, learning outcomes expectations held by the faculty, and assessments of student learning have been implemented. As the semester system begins, all departments will develop a handbook for majors that will amplify the issues raised above and provide greater insight into the culture of the department and discipline.

In the academic support area, review of the perceptions of graduates about campus services has led to the introduction of staff training geared to providing more learning-supportive and client-friendly personnel.

As a result of the attention to the quality aspects of the undergraduate and graduate learning experience, VSU's reputation for academic excellence and learner support should be sufficient to attract and retain a growing student population which will soon exceed 10,000.

Section D: Overall Institutional Health

Valdosta State University continues to be a dynamic institution. It has directed additional resources to provide enhanced educational programs, scholarship, and services that are regional in scope. The University's energies are now directed toward quality improvement and program development with an applied, regional focus. The new Ed.D. and M.S.W. programs are examples of the University's commitment to serving the educational needs of the region.

Planning has become a central part of the institutional culture, and program assessment, continuous program improvement, and assessment of educational outcomes are a normal part of the educational process at Valdosta State University. This procedure encourages departments to remain focused on the major objectives of their programs and on improving their quality. Through a strategic analysis of the institution's budget and through cabinet-level budget hearings with

representatives from each area of the University, the University is "closing the loop" on the planning cycle.

In addition to changes in the institution's role, scope, and mission, there have been significant changes in academic personnel over the last year. New deans were hired in the College of the Arts and the College of Nursing as well as new department heads in Communication Arts, Educational Leadership, Music, and Sociology/Anthropology/Criminal Justice. Also, new administrators were appointed at the VSU Kings Bay site. During the past year, VSU continued to attract a talented group of new faculty. These individuals were chosen in large part because they have a commitment to quality improvement and to planned change that is driven by the institution's unique mission, its goals, and a sensitivity to the characteristics of its service region. Moreover, the new faculty bring with them new perspectives on their disciplines, new methods of instruction, and new agendas for service. Taken together, the strength of the "established" faculty/administrators and the dynamics of the "new" faculty/administrators have resulted in a positive academic atmosphere.

Also, the University has taken positive steps in the area of advanced educational technology. Distance education continues to be an import vehicle for delivering courses and curricula to remote sites in the service area. Through satellite down-link technology, VSU will become one of three sites for Georgia Public Television's Satellite Communications for Learning Program. This technology will allow VSU to receive numerous international programs which can be transmitted through distance education to other sites in the region. The satellite uplink will extend VSU's ability to be a participant in collaborative state-wide programming by early 1998. Additionally, VSU has created a number of model electronic classrooms, new computer labs, and additional microcomputer workstations. Although this technological enhancement is almost revolutionary in nature, VSU has maintained the personal attention to students that has long characterized its campus culture, a condition it will sustain.