Valdosta State University

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Our Mission:

As a comprehensive institution of the University System of Georgia, Valdosta State University (VSU) is a welcoming, aware, and vibrant community founded on and dedicated to serving our community rich and diverse heritages. Through excellence in teaching, basic and applied research, and service, VSU provides rigorous programs and opportunities that enrich our students, our university, and our region. As such, the VSU mission consists of three interrelated parts:

• *Student Mission:*

To provide a diverse student population with an inspired education, a safe learning environment, a nurturing community, and a wealth of experience that assists students in molding their futures in a creative, conscious, and caring fashion while preparing them to be lifelong learners who will meet the needs of a changing global society.

• *University Mission:*

- To operate the university with a focus toward human, environmental, and financial sustainability while increasing value to our local, regional, national, and international stakeholders.
- To expand opportunities for our students, employees, and varied community members by promoting social justice and service learning.

• *Regional Mission:*

To provide our region and our home with the resources and support necessary to develop and sustain a higher quality of living, greater economic and community development, and inspired innovation that nurtures and respects our diverse population and beautiful environment while promoting academic outreach, public and private entrepreneurship, and collaboration with all regional entities.

Valdosta State University fulfills its mission by focusing on inclusion in all aspects of the educational experience.

Our Students:

VSU OFFICIAL ENROLLMENT, FALL 2009-FALL 2013

	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013
Total Enrollment	12,391	12,898	13,089	12,515	11,885
Undergraduate	10,328	10,794	10,728	10,290	9,718
Pell Eligible	3,768	4,642	4,978	4,715	4,575
% Pell Eligible	36.5%	43.0%	46.4%	45.8%	47.1%
First Generation Undergraduate	3,089	3,253	3,314	3,176	2,870
% First Generation	29.9%	30.1%	30.9%	30.9%	29.5%
Adult Learners	1,162	1,365	1,468	1,419	1,454
% Adult Learners	11.3%	12.6%	13.7%	13.8%	15.0%

Valdosta State University is committed to educating our diverse student population consisting of students from our local, state, national, and international communities. Our commitment to student success over the past year has led to partnerships with our technical and two-year institutions to implement our Pathways Program, restructuring to create Centralized Advising, and cross campus collaborations to develop both the Faculty and Advisor Portal and Math Placement.

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

High Impact Strategy 1: Pathways Programs (Goal 1, Strategy 1.1)

The Pathways Program centers on the priorities of Complete College Georgia, an initiative developed to increase the number of Georgians earning a college degree. These collaborations between Valdosta State University and partner institutions allow students with approved Associates of Applied Science or Associates of Applied Technology degrees to maximize the transfer of credits in order to complete a Bachelor Degree in two years or less.

Pathways students can expect 51 or more transferable credit hours to be applied to one of the two articulated programs: the Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership or to the Bachelor of Applied Science in Human Capital Performance. Our ten agreements are with the Technical College System of Georgia, the Community College of the Air Force, Georgia Military College, North Florida Community College, and Central Texas. These articulations not only increase accessibility, but they also expedite completion of a four year degree by the application of prior earned credit to a four year degree from VSU that otherwise would not be granted.

Transferring from one institution to another can be challenging for students. One way VSU has sought to address that challenge has been through an additional partnership with Georgia Military College. Each fall and spring semester, GMC Valdosta invites a team of advisors from VSU to meet with graduating GMC students to discuss transferring and

how credits earned at GMC will apply towards a degree at VSU.

High Impact Strategy 2: Centralized Advising (Goal 4, Strategy 4.2)

In August of 2013, VSU hired a Director of Centralized Advising to support the development of an intake model for first time, first year students. Over the course of the 2013-2014 academic year, the Centralized Advising Center established a team of eight professional academic advisors using five existing staff members and three new hires to serve incoming first year students. Advising assignments are based on major, and the goal of the Center is maintain an advisor to student ratio of no more than 1:300. The advisors developed and implemented a communication plan to expand communication with applicants in order to facilitate the "hand-off" from applicant to student. Additionally, advisors will gather qualitative data currently not being collected in regards to student engagement, motivation, and other issues impacting student success. As a result of these new strategies, VSU expects a 3% increase in retention rate of the fall 2014 cohort from the retention rate of the fall 2013 cohort.

The implementation of Centralized Advising will provide first year students with intrusive advising, a proven approach for enhancing student success, that has never been available across the incoming class at Valdosta State University. To be successful, students need assistance in transitioning into the role of college student, identifying appropriate campus resources, and learning to navigate a college campus. While such strategies are needed, creating a new office that impacts campus culture and process always has challenges. To address these challenges, the Director of Centralized Advising and Center staff met with the leadership team from each college to discuss partnerships to create an environment of support to enhance student success. Each professional advisor serves as a liaison to an assigned college and works to keep the communications lines open. Another challenge is advisor training and team development. To address these challenges, we partnered with VSU's Employee and Organizational Development team to facilitate advisor training opportunities and planning retreats.

High Impact Strategy 3: Faculty and Advisor Portal (Goal 4, Strategy 4.2)

During the 2013-2014 academic year, we have continued to expand our data warehouse in size and scope to include some of the following: orientation tab, student contact information tab, textbook adoption, email tab, color coding for at-risk tab, advisor worklist, and departmental specific portals. Students

about whom a faculty member utilized the portal had a **4.9% higher retention rate** than those who did not. A chi-square test for independence was conducted to determine the significance of the relationship. The relationship was found to be significant, $\chi 2$ (1, N=1,880)=4.776, p=0.029. This means that students who had a faculty member utilizing the portal are more likely to retain at a higher rate than those who did not.

Faculty members who use the portal are attuned to the attendance patterns of students in their courses and the number of students who are struggling. This attention leads some faculty members to offer additional support to students and/or set a flag for students in academic distress. Additionally, when an instructor sets a flag, this action triggers a series of communication across divisions. A first year student living on campus will receive an email from the Student Success Center to remind the student of tutoring services, an email from the assigned advisor in Centralized Advising requesting the student make an appointment, and a resident assistant will check on the student in the residence halls to verify the student's wellbeing.

High Impact Strategy 4: Math Placement (Goal 4, Strategy 4.2)

Starting in Fall 2013, upon admission to VSU, students were assigned a VSU Math Index (VMI). The VMI is based on students' admission data (SAT score, ACT score, etc.), and it places students in mathematics courses based on these recorded math performances. The VMI assignments are:

Level 1 MATH 1101, MATH 1111

Level 2 MATH 1101, MATH 1111, MATH 1112

Level 3 MATH 1101, MATH 1111, MATH 1112, MATH 1261, MATH 1113, MATH 1113

Level 4 MATH 1101, MATH 1111, MATH 1112, MATH 1261, MATH 1113, MATH 1113H, MATH 2261

Students may enter at or below their assigned placement level. Should students desire to start beyond the level assigned by their VMI, they must complete a placement exam and achieve the necessary scores to begin at a higher level math.

The implementation of Math Placement assists the Centralized Advising staff in providing intrusive advising to first time students. Academic Advisors in Centralized Advising can help students building their first semester around the most appropriate math course. Students receive the VMI through the new student portal, and orientation leaders discuss it at orientation. Math placement at VSU has been a successful tool to support course completion. See APPENDIX TABLE 6.

SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

High Impact Strategy 1: Pathways Programs

Goal	**Target increases in access and completion for students traditionally underserved in postsecondary education.**
High Impact Strategy	The Pathways Program centers on the priorities of Complete College Georgia, an initiative developed to increase the number of Georgians earning a college degree. These collaborations between Valdosta State University and partner institutions allow students with approved Associates of

	Applied Science or Associates of Applied Technology degrees to maximize the transfer of credits in order to complete a Bachelor Degree in two years or less.
Summary of Activities	During 2013-14, VSU signed articulation agreements with nine Technical College System of Georgia institutions, as well as, Georgia Military College, North Florida Community College, and Central Texas College. We continue to accept degrees from the Community College of the Air Force into the Pathways Programs. The Pathways Program allows students to enroll in one of several programs including the Bachelor of Applied Science in Human Capital Performance and the Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership.
Interim Measures of Progress	Transfer students from technical colleges increased by 6.5% from Fall 2012 to Fall 2013 and an increase of 11.9% from Spring 2013 to Spring 2014. In the 2013-2014 academic year, 35 students enrolled as a direct result of the Pathways Program.
Measures of Success	The success of this program will be measured by the number of graduates who complete a degree through the Pathways Program.

High Impact Strategy 2: Centralized Advising

Goal	***Use predictive analytics to help identify students who are off track and help students understand their likelihood of success in particular programs.***
High Impact Strategy	In August of 2013, VSU hired a Director of Centralized Advising to support the development of an intake model for first time, first year students. Through reorganization and an increase in staffing, the Center for Centralized Advising now has eight professional academic advisors to serve incoming first year students. Students are assigned to the advisors based on academic major.
Summary of Activities	Under the direction of the new Director, 5 existing employees and three new hires developed and implemented a communication plan implemented with the incoming class of fall 2014. The goal of the communication plan is to expand communication with students in order to facilitate the "hand-off" from applicant to student. Advisors in Centralized Advising will advise students until they have earned sophomore status; at that point, students in good standing will move to advising in the departments of their major. In addition to student support, Centralized Advising has increased the use of tools in the Faculty and Advisor Portal to support first-year student success through the implementation for the communication plan.
Interim Measures of Progress	During Summer 2014, the Centralized Advising team began advising students as part of New Student Orientation and advised 2175 students over 12 orientation sessions and months leading up to fall semester. The advisors served a major role for applicants as they transitioned to students before, during, and after orientation. This form of communication and relationship was absent prior to the development of this unit.
Measures of Success	The university is using first year student retention as a measure of success. The goal for the fall 2014 cohort is a 3% increase in retention from the fall 2013 cohort's retention rate.

High Impact Strategy 3: Faculty and Advisor Portal

Goal	Use predictive analytics to help identify students who are off track and help students understand their likelihood of success in particular programs.
High Impact Strategy	The Faculty and Advisor Portal is an electronic portal that connects faculty, students, and support services. The portal enables faculty to view an interactive class roster with photos, reports, and easy referral methods. If an instructor marks a student as at-risk due to attendance, an email is sent to that student's advisor, housing, & the academic support office. If an instructor flags a student as having problems with course content, a notification is sent to a professional advisor or tutor who will then reach out to the student.
Summary of Activities	During the 2013-2014 academic year, we have continued to expand our data warehouse in size and scope to include the following: orientation tab, student contact information tab, textbook adoption, email tab, color coding for at-risk tab, advisor work list, and departmental specific portals.
Interim Measures of Progress	For faculty who had 100 views or more, students in their classes had a 6.3% higher pass rate than those who had less than 100 views. In order to determine if the increased pass rates were statistically significant, a chi-square test for independence was conducted. The relation was significant, $\chi2(1, N=7,475)=28.097, p<.001$. This means that students whose faculty had at least 100 views in the portal are more likely to have higher pass rates than students who had a faculty who had fewer than 100 views.
	For faculty who set at least five flags, the pass rate of their students is 10.2% higher than the pass rates of the faculty who set fewer than five flags. In order to determine if the increase in pass rates was statistically significant, a chi-square test for independence was conducted. The relation was significant, $\chi2 (1, N=7,475)=50.078, p<.001$. This means that faculty who set at least five flags in the portal are more

likely to have higher pass rates than the faculty who had set less than five flags.

Students who had a faculty member who utilized the portal had a 4.9% higher retention rate than those who did not. A chi-square test for independence was conducted to determine the significance of the relationship. The relationship was found to be significant, $\chi 2$ (1, N=1,880)=4.776, p=0.029. This means that students who had a faculty member utilizing the portal are more likely to retain at a higher rate than those who did not have a faculty member who utilized the portal.

Measures of Success	The university is using numbers of alerts (in-progress grades, absentee) and grade change for in-progress to final grades. Additionally faculty pass rates compared to themselves from years with non-portal use to years with portal use will be assessed.

Completion Priority: Math Placement

Goal	***Use predictive analytics to help identify students who are off track and help students understand their likelihood of success in particular programs.***
High Impact Strategy	Starting in Fall 2013, upon admission to VSU. Students were assigned a VSU Math Index (VMI). The VMI is based on students' admission data (SAT score, ACT score, etc. See APPENDIX TABLE 5), and it places students in mathematics courses based on these recorded math performances. Students with a Level 1 are eligible to begin college level math in either MATH 1101 or MATH111. Students with a Level 2 are eligible to begin college level math in MATH 1112. Students with Level 3 are eligible to begin college level math in MATH 1261 or MATH 1113. Students with Level 4 are eligible to begin college level math in MATH 2261. Should a student desire to start beyond the level assigned by their VMI, he or she must complete a placement exam and achieve the necessary scores to begin at a higher level math.
Summary of Activities	The Data Warehouse; Enrollment, Marketing, and Communication; and the Department of Math and Computer Science partnered to identity math placement levels for all incoming students without math credit in order to properly place students in the first math at the college level. The placement scores were provided to the Office of the Registrar to add registration rules to prevent students from taking a math course at a higher level than the assigned level. Placement level was provided to the student in the admissions check list and students are now advised into the appropriate math during orientation. Math and Computer Science complete analysis each semester to verify the level placement indicators are correct.
Interim Measures of Progress	The focus course for math placement was Math 1111 in which student enrollment increased from 63% in fall 2011 prior to math placement to 70% in fall 2013; the first term math placement was implemented. For full results see APPENDIX TABLE 6.
Measures of Success	The University is using student pass rates of the first math course taken at Valdosta State University as a measure of success.

OBSERVATIONS

Of our high impact practices in support our CCG efforts, we have found the implementation of the Faculty and Advisor Portal to be our greatest success. The portal provides key data about student success in a timely manner to faculty and student success professionals. Additionally, the portal connects faculty and student success professionals in a way that allows for timely intervention across divisions. The flexibility of the portal allows our Data Warehouse team to accommodate additional data requests or enhancements to the system as we continue to seek to support students complete a college degree at VSU.

Valdosta State University (VSU) has made observable and measurable progress toward implementing our Complete College Georgia (CCG) plan which was submitted to Governor Deal in 2012. We have reorganized staff members and redirected resources to maximize the use of our data warehouse to create additional reports and to identify major strategies to address quality completion for Georgia's citizens. VSU's original plan and subsequent status reports are available at our institution's website.