



# 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's 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

Student Categories	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014
Undergraduate Students	10,794	10,728	10,291	9,718	9,328
Pell Grant Recipients	4,642	4,978	4,715	4,570	4,374
First Generation	3,253	3,314	3,176	2,870	2,780
Adult Learners	1,365	1,468	1,410	1,454	1,441

Valdosta State University is committed to educating our diverse student population which consists of students from our local, state, national, and international communities. Our commitment to student success over the past year has led to continued partnerships with our technical and two-year institutions to implement our Pathways Program, implementing Centralized Advising, and cross campus collaborations to develop both the Faculty and Advisor Portal and Math Placement. These endeavors support student success by eliminating barriers and realigning approaches through increased communication between faculty and student services providers.

## INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

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

*CCG Goal 1: Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions*

*CCG Strategy 1.1: Target increases in completion for students traditionally underserved in post-secondary education.*

*VSU Goal 1: Recruit, Retain, and Graduate a Quality, Diverse Student Population and Prepare Students for Roles as Leaders in a Global Society*

*VSU Strategy 1.1.2.: Improve access and completion for students traditionally underserved.*

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.

<b>Goal</b>	<i>Target increases in access and completion for students traditionally underserved in postsecondary education.</i>
<b>Summary of Activities</b>	During 2014-2015, VSU signed an additional 7 articulations agreements increasing the institution Pathway Partners to 10. 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.
<b>Baseline Status</b>	2013-2014: 3 articulation agreements were signed. See Table 4 for Entering Students (adult learners and military) See Table 9 for Degrees Conferred (adult learners and military)
<b>Interim Measures of Progress</b>	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 2014-2015 academic year, 65 students enrolled as a direct result of the Pathways Program. This is nearly double from the 2013-2014 academic year.
<b>Measures of Success</b>	The success of this program will be measured by the number of graduates who complete a degree through the Pathways Program. Three students graduated during the 2014-2015 academic year.
<b>Lessons Learned</b>	Students from the technical college system are looking for ways to continue their education in a way that acknowledges their prior learning and technical knowledge. These partnerships have strengthened recruitment efforts for both traditional students and adult learners.

### High Impact Strategy 2: Centralized Advising (Goal 4, Strategy 4.3)

*CCG Goal 4: Provide intentional advising to keep students on track to graduate.*

*CCG Strategy 4.3: Establish criteria for identifying students who may need special interventions in the semester.*

*VSU Goal 1: Recruit, Retain, and Graduate a Quality, Diverse Student Population and Prepare Students for Roles as Leaders in a Global Society.*

*VSU Strategy 1.3.1.: Establish a centralized academic advising center for students with 0-30 credits.*

During the 2014-2015 academic year, all freshmen and undecided students regardless of credit hours were advised in a centralized location for the first time in the history of VSU. Advising assignments are based on major, and the average advisor to student ratio for this academic year was 1 to 325. Across advisors, over 1600 students were advised in the new model. The advisors implemented a communication plan to expand communication with applicants in order to facilitate the “hand-off” from applicant to student. Advisors responded to risk factors for individual students. These risk indicators during the semester are identified by faculty who “flag” students in our faculty/advisor portal as at risk for either attendance or course performance. Additionally, advisors began gathering qualitative data currently not being collected in regards to student engagement, motivation, and other issues impacting student success.

Centralized Advising provides first year students with intrusive advising, a proven approach for enhancing student success, that has never been available across the incoming classes 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 alleviate some of those challenges, each professional advisor serves as a liaison to an assigned college and works to keep the communication 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.

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<b>Goal</b>	<b>Use predictive analytics to help identify students who are off track and help students understand their likelihood of success in particular programs.</b>
<b>Summary of Activities</b>	During the 2014-2015 academic year, all freshmen and undecided students regardless of credit hours were advised in a centralized location for the first time in the history of VSU. Additionally, the role of advisors at new student orientation evolved to establish the beginning of the relationship through ice breakers and small group communication. Historically advisors only assisted with registration during the day long programming.
<b>Baseline status</b>	Fall 2014 Retention Rate: 69.8% (unofficial awaiting official number from USG Research and Policy Analysis) See Table 19 for 5 year retention data.
<b>Interim Measures of Progress</b>	Centralized Advising triaged student focus based on at-risk indicators developed through the use of data analytics and in response to faculty use of the faculty portal to signal “flags” for attendance or progression challenges. The students with the most or most immediate risk were contacted through email, phone, and the MyVSU portal. See Tables 20-23 for 5 year retention data by risk type and student percentile.
<b>Measures of Success</b>	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.
<b>Lessons Learned</b>	The Centralized Advising team is reevaluating the communication plan to determine the most effective means of communication, quantity of communication, and frequency of communication with students with and without risk indicators. Additionally, we have created a method for collecting exit interview data that will be gathered for the first time during the 2015-2016 academic year.

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

*CCG Goal 4: Provide intentional advising to keep students on track to graduate.*

*CCG Strategy 4.2: Use predictive analytics to help identify students who are off track and to help students understand their likelihood of success in particular programs.*

*VSU Goal 1: Recruit, Retain, and Graduate a Quality, Diverse Student Population and Prepare Students for Roles as Leaders in a Global Society.*

*VSU Strategy 1.3.3: Encourage utilization of DegreeWorks and Data Warehouse tools.*

During the 2014-2015 academic year, we continued to expand our data warehouse in size and scope to include some of the following: watch list, expanded application access, financial aid data, and registration status.

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.

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<b>Goal</b>	<b>Use predictive analytics to help identify students who are off track and help students understand their likelihood of success in particular programs.</b>
<b>Summary of Activities</b>	During the 2014-2015 academic year, we have continued to expand our data warehouse in size and scope to include some of the following: watch list, expanded application access, financial aid data, and registration status.
<b>Baseline status</b>	Fall 2012: 24,420 page views 1375 flags set See Table 18 for 3 year rates.
<b>Interim Measures of Progress</b>	Overall university usage is slightly higher for fall 14 compared to fall 13. This is primarily due to a huge increase in Math flags from 410 to 1,254. Math page views also had a big increase from 4413 to 6098. 23% of students taking a MATH 1000 level course who got a D were flagged 35% of students taking a MATH 1000 level course who got an F were flagged 7% of students taking a BIOL 1000 level course who got a D were flagged

24% of students taking a BIOL 1000 level course who got an F were flagged

<b>Measures of Success</b>	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.
<b>Lessons Learned</b>	The majority of flags set are set by faculty members who are part of retention programming efforts such as First Year Learning Communities or Extended Math. The alert system is effective when in use and we must find ways to expand the use for first year students who may not be a part of such programming.

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

- CCG Goal 4: Provide intentional advising to keep students on track to graduate.*
- CCG Strategy 4.2: Use predictive analytics to help identify students who are off track and to help students understand their likelihood of success in particular programs.*
- VSU Goal 1: Recruit, Retain, and Graduate a Quality, Diverse Student Population and Prepare Students for Roles as Leaders in a Global Society.*
- VSU Strategy 1.1.3.: Shorten time to degree.*

Math placement levels have been assigned for two academic years. Upon admission to VSU, students are 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. Fall 2014 an additional level, 1e, was added. Students in level 1e were limited to MATH 1101 or a five day a week extended MATH 1111. The VMI assignments are:

<b>Level 1e</b>	MATH 1101, MATH 1111 Extended
<b>Level 1</b>	MATH 1101, MATH 1111
<b>Level 2</b>	MATH 1101, MATH 1111, MATH 1112
<b>Level 3</b>	MATH 1101, MATH 1111, MATH 1112, MATH 1261, MATH 1113, MATH 1113
<b>Level 4</b>	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.

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Use predictive analytics to help identify students who are off track and help students understand their likelihood of success in particular programs.</b>
<b>Summary of Activities</b>	The Data Warehouse; Enrollment, Marketing, and Communication; and the Department of Math and Computer Science partnered to identify 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. In year two, an additional level was added to the model.
<b>Baseline Status</b>	Math 1111 pass rate in 2011 63% Overall math pass rate in 2009 61.5%
<b>Interim Measures of Progress</b>	The focus course for math placement was Math 1111 in which student enrollment increased from 63% in fall 2011 (prior to math placement) to 71% in fall 2013 (the first term math placement was implemented) to 76% in fall 2014 (with extended VMI levels); Additionally the overall math pass rate has increased from 61.5% in fall 2009 to 76.5% in 2014. See Graph 1 and 2.
<b>Measures of Success</b>	The University is using student pass rates of the first math course taken at Valdosta State University as a measure of success.
<b>Lessons Learned</b>	We must communicate early and often to students regarding math placement levels. The earlier students understand the impact of the placement level, the earlier they are able to take the ALEKS exam. Having this exam completed prior to orientation reduces stress for students when registering for courses. It is also clear math placement is making a positive difference in passing math the first time. We now have two years of data to back up our

requirement to share with students and parents who question placement.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

Of the four high impact practices, math placement has had the greatest impact. We are currently identifying five other gateway courses that have high DFWI rates to participate in the John Gardner Institute. While the use of the faculty portal shows great promise based on the results we have had over the last three years, we need to increase the overall use of the tool. We are rolling out a new version of the faculty portal in January. As a part of this endeavor, we will seek to increase faculty use of the tool through marketing and faculty involvement in product testing.

The collaboration across departments for each of our high impact practices shows the strength in team work at VSU. We have leveraged the skills, abilities, and knowledge across divisions and disciplines to impact success. We have collaborated across educational sectors to technical college systems and high schools to increase access, progression, and graduation for underserved populations. Three of our four high impact practices intersect. Increased success in one area has a systematic impact on the other two high impact practices. Our institution can continue to leverage and adapt these four high impact strategies to increase student success outcomes.