



VSU Connection

For the Faculty, Staff and Members of the Valdosta State University Community

Vol.1 • No.2 | Sept. 2007

VSU Partners with Global Firm to Strengthen Campus Diversity

Valdosta State University has partnered with the National Multicultural Institute to analyze diversity on campus in hopes of building an academic community that is culturally inclusive and scholastically diverse.

The three-month organizational audit to collect campus opinions and data will establish objectives for VSU to diversify its student body, personnel and curriculum — one of VSU's five University Strategic Planning Goals developed in 2006.

"It is our responsibility to make sure VSU students are exposed to diversity in their coursework and in social situations to prepare them for life after college," said Maggie Viverette, VSU's Director for Equal Opportunity Programs/Multicultural Affairs. "I am so excited that VSU is committed to a university of many voices."

Results from the collection of qualitative and quantitative responses from telephone interviews, focus groups

and online surveys will set a benchmark to measure against future progress made to enrich the university and community through multiculturalism.

"We want as many voices as possible to contribute to this mission because it is the first time VSU has taken such initiative on such a large scale," said Viverette, who has worked at VSU for 14 years. "And because we are using three methods of information collection, everyone will have

and VSU personnel to address the university's opportunities for strengthened diversity.

The council will also select a cross-section of 15 VSU constituents to participate in one-on-one telephone interviews. External consultants will speak with participants about diversity issues on campus and within the greater Valdosta area.

NMCI will gather the viewpoints expressed in focus groups and telephone interviews to formulate an online questionnaire that directly relates to participants' campus experience. All university stakeholders will be able to fill out the Web-based

survey. VSU students and personnel may request a paper copy of the survey, which will include an address where they can mail the completed questionnaire directly to NMCI.

"The online survey will yield the most data and provide more comprehensive recommendations for creating a diversity plan," NMCI's proposal states. "The quantitative data may confirm themes discovered in the qualitative phase and provide measurable data that will help guide the strategic planning process."

Nationwide studies confirm the comprehensive benefits of campus diversity and culturally inclusive curriculum. The Association of American Colleges and Universities released data from 300 research studies that indicates diverse curriculum and racially mixed student populations result in better retention, greater intellectual and social self-confidence and higher college grade point averages.

For more information about the audit, call VSU's Equal Opportunity Programs/Multicultural Affairs office at (229) 333-5463 or e-mail Viverette at viverette@valdosta.edu. ■



the opportunity to be heard."

VSU's Diversity Council, established in 2005 to implement long-term diversity initiatives on campus, will oversee the assessment process. The 17-member council of representatives from various segments of the VSU community will organize five focus groups of students

Plugging Pedestrian Safety on Campus



Meredith Lancaster, Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator (left), hands graduate student Heather Buchanan a pamphlet about pedestrian safety as Buchanan crosses Patterson Street.

Lancaster and other representatives from VSU's Council on Staff Affairs, University Police and Department of Environmental and Occupational Safety passed out pedestrian safety pamphlets Tuesday, Sept. 11, to VSU students and personnel crossing intersections on Patterson Street, Baytree Road and Brookwood Drive.

BERNARD ZANNINI

Student Expenditures Help Fund Countywide Improvements

Lowndes County voters will have an opportunity to extend the current Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST) on September 18. If approved, proceeds from the estimated \$183 million collected from SPLOST VI will fund a variety of projects, including bridge and road construction, improvements to parks and recreation facilities, and construction of a new community-wide emergency operation facility.

In a recent study conducted by Dr. Cynthia R. Tori, VSU Associate Professor of Marketing and Economics, VSU's student expenditures are expected to contribute approximately \$7.78 million in total SPLOST contributions during the six-year collection period of SPLOST VI. As a major economic contributor to Lowndes County and South Georgia, VSU's total economic impact of related activities to

Valdosta's metropolitan statistical area was \$331.7 million for fiscal year 2006.

Funds from the Lowndes County and City of Valdosta portion of the tax will assist in the construction of a parking facility that the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County will own and operate. The multi-level parking facility will be shared with VSU to provide parking for the projected \$43 million Health Sciences and Business Administration facility.

"The construction of the Health Sciences and Business Administration facility along with SGMC capital improvements will represent a significant step in improving the nursing shortage and healthcare workforce issues in South



Georgia," President Ronald M. Zaccari said. "The new facility will expand VSU's current health-related degrees and offer more programs directly related to the current and projected shortages of our local and statewide medical communities." ■

Above: Artist rendering of the proposed Health Sciences and Business Administration facility, which will be located near the multi-level parking deck.

Faculty, Staff Seminars Address Campus Violence

Valdosta State University is offering a series of workplace and campus violence seminars to discuss warning signs of violent behavior, techniques to address problematic situations and resources available on campus.

University Police, Counseling Center and Human Resources an Employee teamed up to develop the informational sessions, which are being held in October and November.

Campus Violence: What Professors Should Know will review campus violence risks and offer faculty suggestions to mitigate potentially explosive situations on campus.

University Police Assistant Director, Ann Farmer, and VSU Counselor Leah McMillan will instruct faculty how to recognize threatening acts on campus.

The 2-hour seminar will be held Wednesday, Oct. 17, at 10 a.m. in the University Center Rose Room and Wednesday, Nov. 14, at 2 p.m. in the UC Cypress Room.

Workplace Violence: Don't be Caught Unprepared is an overview of crisis prevention strategies for VSU staff. McMillan and Farmer, a member of the Georgia Association of Campus Law Enforcement, will teach participants how

to assess workplace climates and offer effective communication strategies when confronting volatile situations. The three-hour seminar will be held Tuesday, Oct. 2, at 1:30 p.m. and Thursday Nov. 8, at 9 a.m., both in the UC Rose Room.

The sessions are a part of VSU's greater mission to enhance student safety and security on campus. In April, the university initiated the VSU Campus Alert system, which allows campus leaders and security professionals to send cell phone messages that inform VSU students and personnel of emergencies. Students, faculty and staff may enter their emergency notification numbers at www.valdosta.edu/editalertinfo/.

The campus has continued its commitment to providing exemplary prevention and cautionary measures by installing 9-foot emergency call boxes with hands-free, two-way communication and offering free consultations at the Counseling Center to VSU students and staff.

Register for campus and workplace violence seminars online at www.valdosta.edu/finadmin/training/. For more information about the sessions, call VSU's Employee and Organizational Development at 259-5105. ■

USG Recognizes Stellar Customer Service

The University System of Georgia is recognizing those who excel in customer service through the Chancellor's Customer Service Recognition Awards. USG colleges, universities and system office employees were encouraged to submit nominations for consideration.

Nominations were submitted for individuals and teams, who had been previously recognized through the I Caught You Caring program, COSA's Employee of the Semester and the 2007 Staff Excellence Awards.

VSU nominees will be evaluated alongside others from across the state. Winners will receive special recognition from Chancellor Davis and a chance to compete in the Team Georgia Governor's Recognition for Excellence in Customer Service Awards to be held on Oct. 30. ■

VSUConnection

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The *VSU Connection* is a semimonthly newsletter designed to inform VSU personnel and students about the latest campus-wide news. Check out the *Connection* online at www.valdosta.edu/news/.

For more information about the *Connection* or to submit a story idea, email Kate Heine, Communication Specialist for the Office of the President, Communication Unit, at kaheine@valdosta.edu.