Valdosta State University
Division of Academic Affairs
Strategic Plan 2030

The Division of Academic Affairs is committed to fulfilling the goals of the University 2030 Strategic Plan. The VSU 2030 Goals and Strategies included in this document fall under the purview of Academic Affairs. The Methods to Accomplish are action items that follow each of the Goals and Strategies to address how Academic Affairs will accomplish the points set forth by the 2030 Strategic Plan.

GOAL #1 – Create Career-Ready Graduates

Academic Affairs will align VSU's degree program mix with student and employer demand and ensure that all programs ready their graduates to succeed in their careers, in life, and as citizens.

Strategy One: Align the university's degree portfolio with student and employer demand.

- **Strategy 1.1a** Partner with University System Office (USO) and Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) to review the feasibility of all degree programs based on current and future employer and prospective student demand and create and implement a rubric for ongoing evaluation of degree program viability and relevancy.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - By end of Fall 2025, develop rubric for evaluating degree program viability and relevancy based on current and future employer and prospective student demand. (Lead: Deans' Council)
  - By end of Fall 2025, establish a process for an evaluation of degree program viability and relevancy. (Lead: Deans' Council)

- **Strategy 1.1b** Guided by the outcome of Strategy 1.1a, Academic Affairs will create and implement a plan to increase faculty in programs with unmet demand; launch, consolidate, or reactivate programs where it is strategic and/or appeals to new markets; and deactivate programs where decreased student enrollment and/or dwindling employer demand warrant it.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - By end of Spring 2026, institute an annual planning session for strategic academic program implementation based on the results of the evaluation of degree programs. (Lead: Deans' Council)

Strategy Two: Market and infuse career readiness throughout the student experience.

- **Strategy 1.2b** Implement the new USG core curriculum to enhance the extent to which students find career and life value in their core curriculum.
  Methods to Accomplish:

- Before Spring 2026, create Inquiry courses focused on career options. (General Education Coordinator in collaboration with respective Department Heads)
- Before Spring 2026, revise program degree maps that relate courses to degree and career goals. (Lead: Department Heads in collaboration with the Office of Career Opportunities)
- Before Summer 2026, contextualize the importance of core courses to students (e.g., in syllabi statements, General Education website, program maps, catalog descriptions, etc.) (Lead: General Education Council)
- Before Fall 2026, develop resources for professional and faculty advisors to connect the student experience in core courses with degree and career goals. (Lead: Council of Department Heads (CDH) in collaboration with University and OCCA Advising and the Office of Career Opportunities)
- Before Fall 2028, update the Orientation, Open House, and Convocation media to demonstrate the student academic experience and connect with their college/department/program (i.e., update videos that are outdated). (Lead: CDH in collaboration with Office of Orientation and University Marketing and Communications / Enrollment Marketing)
- Before Summer 2030, add catalog feature (mini-pop up description) about how core courses relate to real-world objectives that can be linked to the CourseLeaf platform and materials – at a minimum of 10% of courses per year, 50% by 2030 (Lead: Catalog Editor in collaboration with General Education Coordinator and Department Heads)

- **Strategy 1.2c** Complete and implement a model for regular review of curriculum in every program of study that is led by faculty and informed by external content experts to ensure ongoing alignment with current job needs.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Before Fall 2026, draft a model incorporating curriculum review into each program's comprehensive program review (CPR). (Lead: Office of Institutional Effectiveness in collaboration with Deans and Department Heads)
  - Before Fall 2027, beginning with the Fall 2027-Spring 2028 cycle, comprehensive program reviews will incorporate the approved model that includes the curriculum review of each program. (Lead: Office of Institutional Effectiveness in collaboration with Deans and Department Heads)

- **Strategy 1.2d** Ensure that academic department websites identify experiential learning opportunities and expectations in the degree maps, outline potential career options, and highlight examples of successful alumni for every undergraduate degree program.

Methods to Accomplish:

- Beginning Fall 2025, requests for curriculum changes will require updated degree maps and crosswalks linking courses and programs to workforce needs and added as a checkbox to the Request for Revised Curriculum form. (Lead: Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Services in collaboration with department and college curriculum committees and the Academic Committee)
- Before Spring 2026, establish a process of annual evaluation of department webpages reflecting updates to academic department websites incorporating experiential learning opportunities, potential career options, and examples of successful alumni for every degree program. (Lead: Academic Deans in collaboration with Department Heads and the Office of Alumni)

- **Strategy 1.2e** In collaboration with the Division of Enrollment & Student Affairs, Academic Affairs will create and implement a comprehensive plan – to include universal participation with Blazer Ready – that ensures that every undergraduate student benefits from experiential learning opportunities in- and out-of-the classroom throughout their program of study.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Before Spring 2026, provide an annual list of experiential learning activities in each program to be included in Blazer Ready to Student Affairs for students to track and earn competencies. (Lead: Deans in collaboration with the QEP Experiential Learning Coordinator)
  - Beginning Fall 2025, submit the list of students who successfully completed the Experiential Learning designated courses each semester to be added to Blazer Ready. (Lead: QEP Experiential Learning Coordinator)
  - Before Spring 2026, develop a form for faculty to submit for inclusion in Blazer Ready students who have engaged in non-classroom experiential learning activities. (Lead: QEP Experiential Learning Coordinator in collaboration with Associate Director of Student Organizations & Leadership)

Strategy Three: Finalize and/or improve the systems necessary to maximize institutional success toward this goal.

- **Strategy 1.3a** Launch a robust Mary Virginia Terry Center for Experiential Learning that supports the Blazer Summer Research Institute, the Undergraduate Research Symposium, a new Experiential Learning Exposition, study away opportunities in our region, and other experiential learning initiatives supported by VSU's 2027 Quality Enhancement Plan.
  Methods to Accomplish:

- Before Spring 2027, the Mary VirginIa Terry Center for Experiential Learning will launch. (Lead: Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs)
- Before Fall 2029, form a committee to research and develop a new Quality Enhancement Plan to launch in Fall 2030. (Lead: Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs in collaboration with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness)

- **Strategy 1.3b** Support ongoing completion of those community-based projects which are coordinated through the Center for South Georgia Regional Impact by creating an annual calendar for faculty project review that aligns with course preparation timelines as well as a compensation model for faculty who complete projects and/or who coordinate the participation of students in project completion.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Before Spring 2026, establish a representative committee of deans, department heads, faculty, and OSPRA that meets regularly to create an annual calendar for faculty project review as well as a compensation model for participating faculty and/or students. (Lead: Deans' Council in collaboration with the Director of the Center for South Georgia Regional Impact)

- **Strategy 1.3e** Produce a plan to be vetted by the Cabinet, that assesses, creates, and maintains innovative lab, studio, and teaching spaces that promote increased student engagement in the learning process.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Beginning Fall 2025, produce and manage an ongoing plan that creates innovative lab, studio, and teaching spaces promoting student engagement in the learning process (Lead: Deans' Council)
  - Beginning Fall 2025, prioritize a yearly list of associated costs for the innovative lab, studio, and teaching spaces to submit to the Budget Advisory Council. If one-time funds through the BAC process do not cover the remodel of these redefined spaces, the Division of Academic Affairs will use available internal funds as funds become available. (Lead: Deans' Council)
  - Through 2030, reassess and maintain these innovative spaces on a yearly basis. (Lead: Deans' Council)

GOAL #2 – Build on Our Foundation

Academic Affairs will assist to make VSU's traditional undergraduate opportunity a first-choice option of prospective learners who desire an on-campus learning experience that is dynamic, engaging, distinct from fully online programs of study, and supported by services that build community and aid completion.

Strategy One: Promote student success through teaching innovation and excellence.

- **Strategy 2.1a** Charge a Presidential Task Force of academic and student leaders with identifying best practices in the facilitation of face-to-face and hybrid learning and offer relevant pedagogical training regarding those best practices via the Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - During early Fall 2025, identify faculty, staff, and a representative group of students to serve on the Presidential Taskforce to study the best practices in face-to-face and hybrid learning (Lead: Deans' Council and Council of Department Heads)
  - Before Fall 2026, implement the taskforce's findings. (Lead: Director of the Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching)

- **Strategy 2.1b** Charge the Faculty Success Council with creating and implementing a model for Core Faculty Status to recognize excellence in teaching the core curriculum.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Before Spring 2026, develop a peer observation/review rubric with basic minimums provided to reflect subject specific requirements. (Lead: Faculty Success Council in collaboration with the Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Department Heads)
  - Before Spring 2026, identify a streamlined method by which faculty can be evaluated for Core Faculty Status on an annual basis (Lead: Faculty Success Council in collaboration with Department Heads and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness)
  - Before Fall 2026, develop a peer review schedule and rotation for all faculty continuing in Core Faculty Status Level I and above. (Lead: Faculty Success Council in collaboration with Department Heads)

- **Strategy 2.1c** Improve student retention and persistence among traditional undergraduates by creating and implementing a culture of community that supports student success through learning communities, a first-year inquiry course, targeted academic interventions, experiential learning, and career opportunities.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Before Spring 2026, create an Early Alert Taskforce to develop and implement the best use of the early alert system, including forging a strong partnership with Student Success staff and resources. (Lead: Deans' Council in collaboration with the Office of Student Success and Retention)

- Before Fall 2026, re-establish First-year Learning Communities (FLCs). (Lead: University College in collaboration with the Division of Enrollment & Student Affairs)
- Before Fall 2026, develop and implement strategies to strengthen connections between Inquiry courses and experiential learning. (Lead: Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Services in collaboration with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Experiential Learning Advisory Committee, and General Education Council)
- Before Fall 2027, increase experiential learning endorsed course sections and programs, as well as student participation, by embedding experiential learning in the core curriculum and academic programs. (Lead: Experiential Learning Advisory Committee)
- Before Fall 2027, establish an assessment schedule for experiential learning endorsed courses and programs to ensure quality and student success (Lead: Experiential Learning Advisory Committee)
- Before Fall 2027, establish the Experiential Learning Exposition to showcase student-submitted experiential learning. (Lead: Experiential Learning Advisory Committee in collaboration with the Undergraduate Research Council)

- **Strategy 2.1d** Building on lessons learned from an in-depth review of success data, each semester enroll every first- and second-year traditional undergraduate student in an academic schedule made up by a majority of fully F2F classes.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Before Fall 2026, assess and update program maps and course schedules to ensure the availability of fully face-to-face courses for the majority of first- and second-year students' schedules. (Lead: College Deans in collaboration with Department Heads and University Advising)
  - Before Summer 2026, explore alternative scheduling methods such as block scheduling and/or year-long schedules with recommendations reported to the Provost. (Lead: General Education Coordinator in collaboration with University Advising and Department Heads)

Strategy Three: Reawaken in-person engagement in the on-campus learning environment.

- **Strategy 2.3a** Unveil and administer a new university-wide minimum expectation of 60% seat time devoted to in-person learning in all traditional undergraduate hybrid courses.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Before Spring 2026, VSU's institutional Credit Hour and Instructional Equivalencies Guidelines will be updated to clarify VSU's minimum required seat time of 60% for

traditional undergraduate hybrid courses. (Lead: Director of Institutional Effectiveness)
  - Before Spring 2026, all traditional undergraduate hybrid courses will incorporate at least 60% in-person learning, with all face-to-face meeting dates and locations listed in Banner and all syllabi. (Lead: Deans in collaboration with Department Heads and Director of University Advising and the Registrar).

- **Strategy 2.3b** Renew, embrace, and reward a student-first work culture where all faculty and staff who teach in or support traditional undergraduate programs are regularly on campus engaging with their students in and out of the classroom, proving daily that we care about every student's success, and then charge all Cabinet-level units with ensuring consistent observance of these expectations.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Fall 2026, launch a faculty-led mini-conference focused on enhancing classroom engagement during opening week and archive the best practices to foster ongoing collaboration. (Lead: Director of the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching in collaboration with the Faculty Success Council and the President's Office)
  - Before Spring 2026, develop an asynchronous faculty training focused on increasing engagement in the classroom. (Lead: Director of the Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching)
  - Before Spring 2026, develop and implement a plan to enhance faculty engagement with students in and out of the classroom, including strategies to encourage meaningful interactions, promote faculty presence on campus, and track and evaluate the impact of these efforts. (Lead: Faculty Success Council)
  - Before Spring 2026, departments will offer opportunities for small groups of students to engage with faculty separate from class time and academic advising. (Lead: Faculty Success Council in collaboration with the Council of Department Heads)
  - Before Fall 2026, propose a system of recognition, administered through Academic Affairs, to celebrate outstanding faculty and staff contributions to student service and engagement. (Lead: Faculty Success Council)

GOAL #3 – Maximize Growth

Academic Affairs will capitalize on the Online College for Career Advancement, Graduate School, and international student recruitment by removing roadblocks and making timely strategic investments.

Strategy One: Maximize Online College for Career Advancement (OCCA) growth.

- **Strategy 3.1a** Invest in recruiters, advisors, eLearning professionals, and other staff as needed to fully capitalize on the leads which are created by extensive enrollment marketing; adopt a plan to expedite transfer credit acceptance in all OCCA degree programs; offer the courses students desire (including SmartPath Core courses) when they want them; incorporate experiential learning opportunities in every OCCA program; seek University System of Georgia (USG) approval for additional OCCA undergraduate degree programs or concentrations in high demand areas; cultivate new partnerships with large employers looking to promote degree completion among their employees; invest in faculty lines as needed to support documented unmet demand; and seek philanthropic gifts in support of recruitment and completion scholarships.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Before Spring 2026, explore additional OCCA program offerings through workforce demand data with the guidance of academic leadership (Lead: Deans' Council in collaboration with the Council of Department Heads and the OCCA Solutions Committee)
  - Before Spring 2026, expand and optimize the use of hosted part-time pool through the expedited hiring process for Smart Path Core courses. (Lead: Department Heads)
  - Before Fall 2026, devise a process to foster and review experiential learning opportunities in all OCCA programs (Lead: Respective Department Heads in collaboration with eLearning, Subject Matter Experts, Experiential Learning Advisory Committee, OCCA Solutions Committee)
  - Beginning Fall 2026, hire additional faculty and staff as outlined in the OCCA Business Plan timeline (Lead: Deans in collaboration with the Chief Information Officer and Executive Director of OCCA)

Strategy Two: Maximize Graduate School growth.

- **Strategy 3.2a** Implement a comprehensive enrollment marketing and recruitment plan, to include program-specific advertising, dedicated graduate-level recruiters, consistent timely admission decisions in all graduate programs, and an increased number and dollar amount of stipends for graduate assistantships; support the addition of faculty lines in programs with documented unmet demand; seek USG approval to add new graduate degree programs in high demand areas; and seek philanthropic gifts in support of recruitment and completion scholarships.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - In July 2024, $100,000 was strategically added to the GA Stipend pool and allocated to divisions and colleges across campus to increase GA stipends or to hire more GAs

as a recruitment incentive. (Lead: Associate Provost for Graduate Studies & Research in collaboration with Division Vice Presidents and College Deans)
    - In Fall 2024, hired a Graduate Student Services Coordinator whose responsibilities include recruitment, communications, and GA onboarding efforts. (Lead: Associate Provost for Graduate Studies & Research)
    - Beginning Fall 2024, conduct an annual graduate program capacity analysis of current programs as well as recommend new graduate programs aligned with student and workforce demands. (Lead: Associate Provost for Graduate Studies & Research in collaboration with Deans and Department Heads)
    - In Spring 2025, began rotation of program specific advertising beginning with programs with capacity and market demand. (Lead: Associate Provost for Graduate Studies & Research in collaboration with Department Heads and University Marketing and Communications)
    - During Fall 2025, establish a Strategic Graduate Enrollment sub-committee of the Graduate Executive Committee to develop ongoing strategic graduate enrollment plan recommendations. (Lead: Associate Provost for Graduate Studies & Research in collaboration with the Graduate Executive Committee and College Deans)
    - Before Spring 2026, develop and implement a comprehensive enrollment marketing and recruitment plan based on the results of RNL's action plan. (Lead: Associate Provost for Graduate Studies & Research in collaboration with Enrollment Marketing and Dean of the University College)

- **Strategy 3.2b** Meet established Graduate School enrollment goals laid out in the university's Strategic Enrollment Management Plan.
  Methods to Accomplish:
    - Beginning Fall 2025, work to meet established Graduate School enrollment goals laid out in the university's Strategic Enrollment Management Plan each semester by implementing the actions from Strategy 3.2a. (Lead: Associate Provost for Graduate Studies & Research in collaboration with College Deans, Department Heads, and Graduate Program Coordinators)

Strategy Three: Maximize international student enrollment.

- **Strategy 3.3** Contract with recruiting agents in countries that are deemed to have high numbers of potential international students who can afford a U.S. education; restore an appropriate level of staffing to process required federal paperwork and support students while they are in-country; provide additional transportation options to and from international airports and to in-town home stay, grocery, and entertainment

venues as appropriate; and seek philanthropic gifts in support of recruitment and completion scholarships.

Methods to Accomplish:

- During Fall 2025, explore affordable transit options for international students, connecting them to home stays, grocery stores, and entertainment venues. (Lead: Dean of the University College and Assistant Director of the Center for International Programs)
- Before Spring 2026, expand recruitment and exchange programs with international partner institutions, focusing on those with the greatest potential for success, including 3+1 and 4+0 collaborative degree programs. (Lead: Dean of the University College and Director of Global Initiatives)
- Before Spring 2026, streamline admissions processes for international degree-seeking students by ensuring notification of admission with relevant academic units ensuring the advising and immigration compliance requirements of the international students are met. (Lead: Dean of the University College in collaboration with University Admissions, Graduate Admissions, and University Advising)
- Before Spring 2027, restore appropriate level of staffing to support international students while in the country. (Lead: Dean of the University College in collaboration with Deans' Council and the Office of Orientation)

Strategy Four: Support students where they are.

- **Strategy 3.4a** Ensure virtual access to all student services regularly used by OCCA, Graduate School, and international students.

Methods to Accomplish:

- Before Spring 2026, develop and deploy a series of virtual events targeted to OCCA students that are designed to enrich academic understanding, develop professional skills, and foster a sense of community among students enrolled in OCCA programs. These initiatives will address the unique needs of online learners while building connections between students, faculty, and staff. (Lead: Respective Department Heads in collaboration with the Deans' Council, and Student Affairs)
- Before Spring 2026, ensure, for all online graduate and undergraduate programs, that websites and syllabi clearly identify how students can access virtual services available to OCCA students, graduate students, and international students. (Lead: Respective Department Heads, Dean of the University College, and Online Graduate Program Directors)
- Before Spring 2026, establish an audit process to ensure remote access to virtual services and resources meets the needs of students and faculty. (Lead: Deans'

Council in collaboration with the Chief Information Officer, Odum Library Collection and Resource Services, and the Associate Director of E-Learning)
  - Before Spring 2026, include in the Graduate Student Research Symposium a virtual component to allow participation for online Graduate Students. (Lead: Associate Provost for Graduate Studies & Research in collaboration with the Graduate Executive Committee)
  - Before Spring 2026, include in the Undergraduate Research Symposium a virtual component to allow participation opportunity for OCCA students. (Lead: Chair of the Undergraduate Research Council with OCCA Executive / Associate Director)
  - Before Spring 2026, explore opportunities to offer virtual workshops, conferences, and career development programs with the goal of piloting the most promising of these programs for graduate students. (Lead: Graduate Executive Committee in collaboration with the Association of Graduate Students)
  - Before Spring 2026, explore opportunities to offer virtual workshops, conferences, and career development programs with the goal of piloting the most promising of these programs for OCCA students. (Lead: Respective Department Heads in collaboration with the Office of Career Opportunities and Executive / Associate Director of OCCA)

- **Strategy 3.4b** Renew, embrace, and reward a student-first work culture where all faculty and staff who teach in or support online learning are regularly engaging with their students, proving daily our desire to impact their success, and then charge all Cabinet-level units with ensuring consistent observance of these expectations.
  Methods to Accomplish:
  - Before Fall 2026, develop and implement a plan to enhance faculty engagement with students in the virtual learning environment, including strategies to encourage meaningful online interactions and track and evaluate the impact of these efforts. (Lead: Faculty Success Council)

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