

Office of University Relations

Address 111 West Moore Street • Valdosta, Ga. 31698-0215

Phone 229-333-5980 • Fax 229-245-3891

Web www.valdosta.edu/news

**Valdosta State
University**



For more information, contact:
Charles Harmon
Acting Vice President for
University Advancement
and Director of University Relations

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**“Value of University System of Georgia Education” Study
Shows Payoffs for Valdosta State University Graduates,
State of Georgia, and Lowndes County**

The economic value of a degree from Valdosta State University continues to rise and Lowndes County is one of several Georgia counties gaining the most educational value through the employment of graduates of the University System, a new report on higher education in Georgia shows. The report on recent graduates of the University System of Georgia (USG) states that a college degree is worth an average of \$14,000 a year more than a high-school graduate could expect to make. Over the course of a working career, the average graduate of a public college or university in Georgia can expect to earn nearly \$1 million more than a high-school-educated neighbor. The educational value to Lowndes County through the employment of graduates of the University System of Georgia is \$11.4 million.

Commissioned by the USG’s Intellectual Capital Partnership Program (ICAPP), the “Value of University System of Georgia Education” study was conducted by researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology. The authors analyzed the earnings of nearly 90,000 University System students who graduated between 1993 and 1997 and found that, overall, the increased earnings resulting from their college degrees added \$1.25 billion to the state’s economy during 1998—the most recent year for which data was available.

The report shows that a person without a college degree will make an average of \$12,502 less than a recent Valdosta State University graduate. Additionally, the report indicates that Valdosta State University graduates made an average of \$30,934 in 1998.

“The economic value of college graduates is so massive, so widespread and so long-lasting that we tend to take it for granted,” said Bill Drummond, a professor in Georgia Tech’s City and Regional Planning Program, who collaborated with Jan Youtie, a researcher in Georgia Tech’s Economic Development Institute (EDI), in preparing the report.

“As our funding partners struggle with grave budget issues, I would encourage them not to harm this generator of economic growth,” said University System Chancellor Thomas C. Meredith. “Georgia so far has resisted the trend we see in many states to reduce substantially the state’s investment in higher education,” he noted.

In addition to measuring the value of a college education the report looked at the educational specialties that offer the greatest financial rewards, the demand for specific college disciplines, occupations in which shortages are anticipated and migration patterns related to occupational needs.

Not surprisingly, the programs with the greatest earnings potential are professional degrees in dentistry, medicine and law.

“It is interesting to note the report shows that business administration, nursing and teaching are the programs with the greatest total economic impact, and these are areas where we already have major impact,” said VSU President Dr. Ronald M. Zaccari. He added that the report also found significant shortages of labor among elementary and kindergarten teachers, registered nurses, pharmacists, and in various technical medical and clinical laboratory fields.

“Our whole approach to Strategic Planning is to position Valdosta State University to be a key partner in providing our students and the citizens of our region with the best options in higher education,” said Zaccari. “We are delighted that this report shows that VSU is fulfilling its mission as a productive regional university.”

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(EDITORS: Full copies of “The Value of University System of Georgia Education” may be downloaded from the ICAPP website at: <http://www.icapp.org/publications.htm>. News releases detailing the economic impact of specific USG institutions also may be found at this address.)