

December 16, 2015

Valdosta-Lowndes County 5-Star Chamber of Commerce
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Chamber Member / VSU Alumnus
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RE: Go, Grow, Glow Program

This funding request is seeking an initial \$200,000
Current Program Budget \$0
Total Project Budget \$1,000,000 over 5 years
Fiscal Year runs July 1-June 30

We are pleased to provide this proposal for your review. We look forward to partnering with the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce to provide the Go, Grow, Glow program to Valdosta State University students. The program will be operated in conjunction with the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber Of Commerce and Valdosta State University's Office of Social Equity. The objective of this program is to help these two entities work together to increase VSU enrollment, retention and graduation rates, essentially adding a boost to the Valdosta economy.

During fall 2015, part of the program was tested with freshman students attending the entry program on VSU's campus. The initial self-quiz proved to be a success, and after sitting through a Go, Grow, Glow session, a number of students committed to transferring to VSU. The program plans to afford students the opportunity to work closely and network with chamber members in an effort to encourage and influence them to seek employment in Valdosta's Chamber of Commerce area before, during, and after graduation.

VSU's 13,089 student's during fall semester 2011 was an all-time high. Conversely, VSU's 11,302 students during the Fall 2015 semester represented an enrollment decline for the fourth consecutive year – ultimately resulting in a 1,787 overall drop in enrollment. Go, Grow, Glow will provide workshops, career fairs, seminars, mentoring, tracking of students and scholarship; accessible from one central location. This will all increase enrollment, and assist with retention at VSU, and within the Valdosta community after graduation.

Respectfully,
John Wallace Isom, Jr.

Go, Grow, Glow: Empowering Students to Empower Themselves—Retaining Valdosta State University students Beyond Graduation

Submitted to: Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce

Date: December 16, 2015

**Associate Pastor John Wallace Isom, Jr.
The U-Can! Man
Chamber Member / VSU Alumnus
(229) 548-5004**

Statement of Need

The Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce has three huge economic partners: Moody AFB, South Georgia Hospital and Valdosta State University. When one is in need of help, the Chamber has and will respond. VSU has witnessed four consecutive years of enrollment decline. It is projected that each student brings a possible \$30,000 to our local economy. Neither the university nor the Valdosta community can continue to lose students at such alarming numbers. The loss has dire consequences for both entities. The 1,787 students the university was unable to retain translate to over 53 million dollars of possible lost income for the community. More importantly, those 1,787 students did not have the opportunity to be exposed to the Chamber's mission and vast opportunities. We need to help increase VSU's enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. The Go, Grow, Glow program will help to enhance and expand many initiatives already in place, but additionally, it will ensure we not only recruit, but retain students even after graduation. This will be a win for the Chamber, VSU, and the Valdosta community. VSU has proven it can increase enrollment (see chart below), but the program will address the decline in numbers (chart also provided below), and work to reverse them over time.

VSU Enrollment from fall 2008-fall 2011

Semester	Enrollment Total	Enrollment Increase	Enrollment Decrease	Increase # x \$30,000
Fall 2008	11490	-----		
Fall 2009	12391	901		Over 27 Million
Fall 2010	12898	507		Over 15 Million
Fall 2011	13089	191		Over 5 Million
Total		1,599		Over 47 Million

VSU Enrollment from fall 2011-fall 2015

Semester	Enrollment Total	Enrollment Increase	Enrollment Decrease	Decrease # x \$30,000
Fall 2011	13089		-----	
Fall 2012	12515		574	Over 17 Million
Fall 2013	11885		630	Over 18 Million
Fall 2014	11563		322	Over 9 Million
Fall 2015	11302		261	Over 7 Million
Total			1,787	Over 53 Million

The decline in enrollment has had a direct effect on employment numbers at VSU. Fiscal year 2017 (beginning fall 2016) will see a reduction of at least 30 VSU employees. This impacts the Valdosta community tremendously (millions lost in revenue if the city cannot keep and employ the former VSU employees here), and could potentially have been avoided had the enrollment and retention numbers not declined at the university.

VSU Job Loss

Problem	VSU Job Loss	VSU Cuts	VSU Future Cuts	Solutions
Decline in Enrollment-Lead to:	30 announced for FY17	Vacant positions not filled	Noncritical positions not listed to be filled	Enroll More; Retain More; Graduate More
	Millions Lost in our community	Millions Lost in our community	Millions Lost in our community	Go-Grow-Glow; resources gained in our community (people and finances)

Project Description

Go, Grow, Glow will begin by empowering students to empower themselves. There are a number of reasons why students do not go to college, or choose to leave college. While it is not realistic to expect a 100% retention rate each semester, we can assist the university in achieving at least an 80% retention rate (10% above the current rate, and on par with the USG system retention rate) to start, and grow from there. Often times the problem is as small as not having the \$40 application fee or the \$500 needed to cover the rest of tuition or being unsure of yourself; not having someone to show you that you can be successful, and you can obtain a job after graduation. Go, Grow, Glow will address each of these issues.

The program will begin with an application to participate in Go, Grow, Glow. Students will be given a self-quiz to find out where they stand when it comes to how well they have taken stock in their education and future. It will allow them to take a look at themselves and see how much assistance they need, and how they can be successful in college, and after graduation, simply by truthfully answering a few yes or no questions that many have never been asked. The program will employ two liaisons, one at the Chamber, and one in VSU’s Office of Social Equity. Each will work to keep the other connected and informed of the happenings in their respected locations. They will assist in aided awareness of the university and the Chamber, connecting students to mentors within their organizations. Go, Grow, Glow will also focus on career fairs specifically for Chamber affiliated businesses, presentations given by VSU faculty members and Chamber members who agree to work with the program, workshops conducted by recruiting and training professionals, and structured weekend focus group sessions at least twice per academic year. The liaisons will also work with the program director to identify participants who might be in need of financial assistance. The Go, Grow, Glow program director will work to secure donations and other funding that will be used to provide working grants to selected participants. Other aspects of the program include working with South Georgia College students who are taking classes on VSU’s campus, assisting them with applications to ensure they transfer to VSU.

The cohort will consist of current (or incoming) freshman and sophomores. They will be tracked through graduation, and for up to a year afterward (3 years if funding continues). We want to ensure they have received what they needed to graduate college, and to continue as productive members within the Valdosta community. This will give them the opportunity to give back to the program; acting as an economic stimulus of sorts for the city, and help future students

complete the program, creating a positive empowerment/employment loop. The program will work to resolve any possible weaknesses and further strengthen current Chamber/University relationships by enhancing current practices where possible.

The main objectives include:

1. Enabling students who might not have been able to apply for college, to do so; this assists with recruitment (Go).
2. Providing students the means to empower themselves by addressing possible short falls; this assists with retention (Grow).
3. Helping students identify mentors that will help them graduate from VSU and pursue a career that will keep them here in Valdosta; this addresses graduation and community retention (Glow).
4. Making students aware of the Chamber, its mission, and the opportunities it provides.
5. Helping students become productive members of the community (VSU and city).

Budget Analysis

The budget will cover necessary positions, office space, program and promotional materials, training, campus weekend focus groups, and tracking software. The initial budget will be slightly higher than the 4 years following due to various furnishings and other supplies that will need to be purchased in the first year.

PROJECT Revenue and Expenses		
Project Name: "Go Grow Glow"		
	Cash Required	Total Budget
EXPENSES		
Salaries		
Program Director	\$ 43,680.00	\$ 43,680.00
VSU Liaison	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
Chamber Liaison	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
Training/program consultant	\$ 37,440.00	\$ 37,440.00
Part time secretary	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 12,000.00
TOTAL PERSONNEL:	\$ 123,120.00	\$ 123,120.00
		\$ -
Rent & Occupancy	\$ 12,100.00	\$ 12,100.00
Advertising and Outreach	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
Equipment	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
Transportation	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Training/workshops	\$ 800.00	\$ 800.00
Tracking software	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,800.00
Books	\$ 2,300.00	\$ 2,300.00
Job fairs	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
Promotional materials	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 8,000.00
Yearly awards lunch/dinner	\$ 5,250.00	\$ 5,250.00

Campus weekend (at least 2 a year)	\$	10,000.00	\$	10,000.00
Application waivers	\$	4,000.00	\$	4,000.00
Postage	\$	250.00	\$	250.00
Printing	\$	1,000.00	\$	1000.00
Utilities	\$	5,700.00	\$	5,700.00
Travel	\$	8,000.00		8000
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$	205,820.00	\$	205,820.00

Organizational/Staffing Details

It was mentioned previously that Chamber and VSU Office of Social Equity liaisons will be employed by the program. These positions will be filled by individuals already in place at their respective locations, and work on a part time basis for the program. Their duties will be essentially the same.

Program Director will create material and literature that will be distributed for the program; monitor and evaluate program effectiveness; coordinate weekend focus groups; establish social media presence; coordinate awards and other group programs; devise and monitor budget, making sure it is adhered to throughout the fiscal year; maintain records and prepare reports; follow up regularly with program staff and volunteers; create and supervise student events and training sessions; plan and launch fundraising events to support the Go, Grow, Glow Life Happens grants; reach out to community for volunteers and program support.

Liaisons will report to the program director. Key duties and responsibilities will include establishing and maintaining working relationships with program students and community partners/stakeholders; assist in resolving issues with purposeful interaction as necessary; recruit and train volunteers as necessary to work in the program; assist with distributing program material and literature to inform the community of the program; assist with program planning, organization, and implementation (including career fairs, key recruiting events and classroom training sessions); maintain regular communication with program participants; coordinate routine surveys of program participants and stakeholders.

Training/program consultant will assist in creating, revising, and editing training print materials; provide web or pod cast training sessions when necessary; create webinars that can be distributed to program students; conduct on-site training sessions for student participants; analyze training survey feedback; generate reports regarding success or suggested changes for future training sessions.

Secretary will coordinate meetings and special gatherings in support of the program; maintain program calendar; greet students and other customers; answer telephone, produce information by transcribing, formatting, inputting, editing, retrieving, copying, and transmitting text, data, and graphics; other office duties as assigned.

Conclusion

Per Valdosta State University Interim President Dr. Cecil Staton, each VSU student brings about \$30,000 to our local community. Based on the four year decrease in enrollment at VSU over the past four years, (numbers totaling 1,787 students) this has had an estimated 53 million dollar economic impact. This trend is one that the Valdosta-Lowndes County 5-Star Chamber of Commerce can and must help change. If the current trend continues, VSU, one of the Chambers dependable partners, could look different. One possible new look could be VSU downsized to as few as 5,000 Students. If this were to happen it would be a projected \$242,670,000 lost to the Valdosta area. The Go, Grow, Glow program will help the Chamber be involved from enrollment to graduation, and local retention. Dr. Staton has stated that in his opinion, VSU is a hidden jewel, and the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce is a 5-Star Chamber. The Go, Grow, Glow program is a win-win for student participants and all stakeholders. The program will bring that jewel front and center, assisting in recruiting, retaining, and graduating students. The program will prepare students to be productive members of the Valdosta community. It will empower them to empower themselves, and eventually empower other students as well. Go, Grow, Glow will help to enhance some programs and relationships that may be in place, or were at one time in place. Ensuring students are able to enroll at VSU is a necessary part of recruiting. The program will assist with that. Showing students how to thrive and succeed is a major part of Go, Grow, Glow. The program will make them privy to opportunities they might not have known were available to them here in Valdosta. These opportunities, shown to them through the Go, Grow, Glow program, is what will make them remain in the city that too many students too often refer to as the place “with nothing to do”. Valdosta will remain their home and they will be active members of the community. No more Valdosta State University employees will have to lose their jobs. Each loss, student and employee, delivers a negative blow to the economic stimulus, and Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce business partners cannot afford to allow that to continue. Full implantation of Go, Grow, Glow will not only help stop this downward trend, but help the turnaround begin quicker and remain long lasting.

U-CAN!

John Wallace Isom Jr

The U-Can! Man

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College Graduate 7 Dec 2013, Valdosta State University

BA Sociology, Minor African American Studies

1st Book: Return To Honor: A Soldier Story

<http://www.blackgospelpromo.com/press627.htm>

2nd Book Graduating With Honors: If I-Can, U-Can!

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00HNY8SAU>

Memberships & Affiliations

2007 Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce

2012 National Society of Leadership Success

2013 Who's Who Class Among College Students

2014 VSU Phi Kappa Phi. Honorary Society

Well done is better than well said? BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Research and References

While conducting research, I found that a number of Chambers have Go, Grow, Glow tenets laced throughout their initiatives. With enrollment down and not enough retention in college, we can take note from others.

www.valdosta.edu

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