

## **Graduating With Honors: If I Can, U-Can!**

**By**

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Foreword:

I graduated high school in the early summer of 1998. By fall of that same year, I entered Valdosta State University as a fresh faced, traditional freshman student. It was my first time leaving home and living on my own. I have to admit I was wide eyed with both excitement and fear; fear of the unknown. I had no idea what to expect. We like to believe that high school thoroughly prepares us for college life. In some instances, it does. However, we are all unique individuals, and until now, I am not sure there was a one size fits all roadmap (so to speak) to college. I'll explain.

I have had the opportunity to be both a traditional and non-traditional student. As a traditional student, I entered college armed with all high school had taught me; including some bad habits I picked up, and a slightly diminished skill set since I used most of my senior year to take "easy" courses. A couple of the bad habits were procrastinating and not studying. I was able to pick up on information quickly in high school, and procrastinated when it came to studying. Yet, I was an honor graduate. College was a different ballpark. Here, studying was crucial, and I learned quickly that procrastinating wasn't always going to ensure my success like before (I was convinced for a long time that I did my best work if I waited to the very last minute).

Procrastination doesn't ensure success, but it doesn't guarantee failure either. However, why chance it? Taking that chance can put you further and further behind. That very thing happened to me when I needed to register for one of my biology classes here at VSU. I thought if I waited until a specific professor was teaching the class, I would have greater success; I

procrastinated, for a number of semesters. Procrastinating didn't determine whether I would succeed or fail in that class, it was up to me the grade I would earn, but I didn't think about that at the time. If I had created a smart plan and executed it properly, I would not have wasted so much time. Eventually, I did earn a biology degree from VSU. Since then, I have even earned a second degree from VSU-in organizational leadership-as a non-traditional student.

Valdosta State University has afforded me the opportunity to be a student, a student assistant, a casual laborer, and currently a staff member. It has also taught me lifelong lessons and allowed me to work with some of the pioneers here at Valdosta State University. One of those pioneers, Dr. Maggie Viverette, brought me on as a part of her Social Equity Team, and has given me work experience that I can take with me within or outside of the university. I have also been fortunate enough to meet lifelong friends here at VSU who have taught me a lot. One of those individuals is Elder John Isom, the author of this book. He opened my eyes to resources here at the university I had never taken advantage of. He helped me to understand that being a nontraditional student, a mother, a full time employee, and an advocate for a number of causes, can be done simultaneously and successfully. It does, however, take a lot of smart planning and continuous execution of that smart plan. A part of smart planning is knowing how and when to use the tools you have been given; like this book (the one size fits all roadmap I needed before beginning my freshman year). It is universal and works for EVERYONE, no matter your background. While I have enjoyed the more than twelve years I have spent here at VSU (student and employment years combined), I have no doubt I would have had a smoother journey if I were afforded the information you are about to receive. So take it, and allow it to help you in every way possible. Know that you are great, and this road map will only help you continue to become greater; to one day be a VSU giant. You may be perplexed by that phrase (VSU giant),

but a very intelligent man once told me that at VSU, we are all giants, no matter what position you may hold. Keep reading and you'll find out why.

Selenseia Holmes

Valdosta State University Blazer