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# Purpose Networks and the Effects of Student Engagement

2010 NASPA Annual Conference  
March 6-10, 2010

**Dr. Kristina M. Cragg**  
Assistant to the President for Strategic  
Research and Analysis  
Valdosta State University

**Peter Tomassi**  
Senior Vice President, Product Management  
EducationDynamics

**Dr. Kurt Keppler**  
Vice President of Student Affairs  
Valdosta State University

**Jessica Thompson**  
Institutional Research Analyst  
Valdosta State University

# About Us – Kurt Keppler, Ph.D.

- ▶ Valdosta State University
  - 12,391 student population
- ▶ Vice President of Student Affairs
- ▶ Has been involved in Student Affairs for 27 years
- ▶ Has been involved in NASPA for 25 years
- ▶ A recipient of the NASPA “Pillar of the Profession” in 2007
- ▶ Will begin in mid-March as the next Vice Chancellor at LSU

## Contact Information

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<http://www.valdosta.edu/studentaffairs/>

# About Us – Kristina M. Cragg, Ph.D.

- ▶ Valdosta State University
  - 12,391 student population
- ▶ Assistant to the President for Strategic Research and Analysis
- ▶ VSU's Liaison to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).
- ▶ Program Coordinator, Department of Educational Foundations and Policy Studies at Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida

- ▶ Higher Education Experience
  - Admissions Advisor
  - Program Coordinator
  - Instructor
  - Senior Analyst

## Contact Information

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<http://www.valdosta.edu/sra>

# About Us – Peter Tomassi, M.F.A.

- ▶ Head of product development at EducationDynamics - interactive marketing and information services company designed to help institutions enroll students and help them succeed.
- ▶ 20 years in “new media” content and product development (publishing, software, early pre-web communities – CompuServe, AOL, Apple, MSN – and web 2.0 portals)
- ▶ Former new media senior editor, Reader’s Digest Association and executive producer/editor-in-chief, LookSmart
- ▶ Focus on creating immersive web-based communities and content

## Contact Information

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(201) 377-3336

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# Agenda

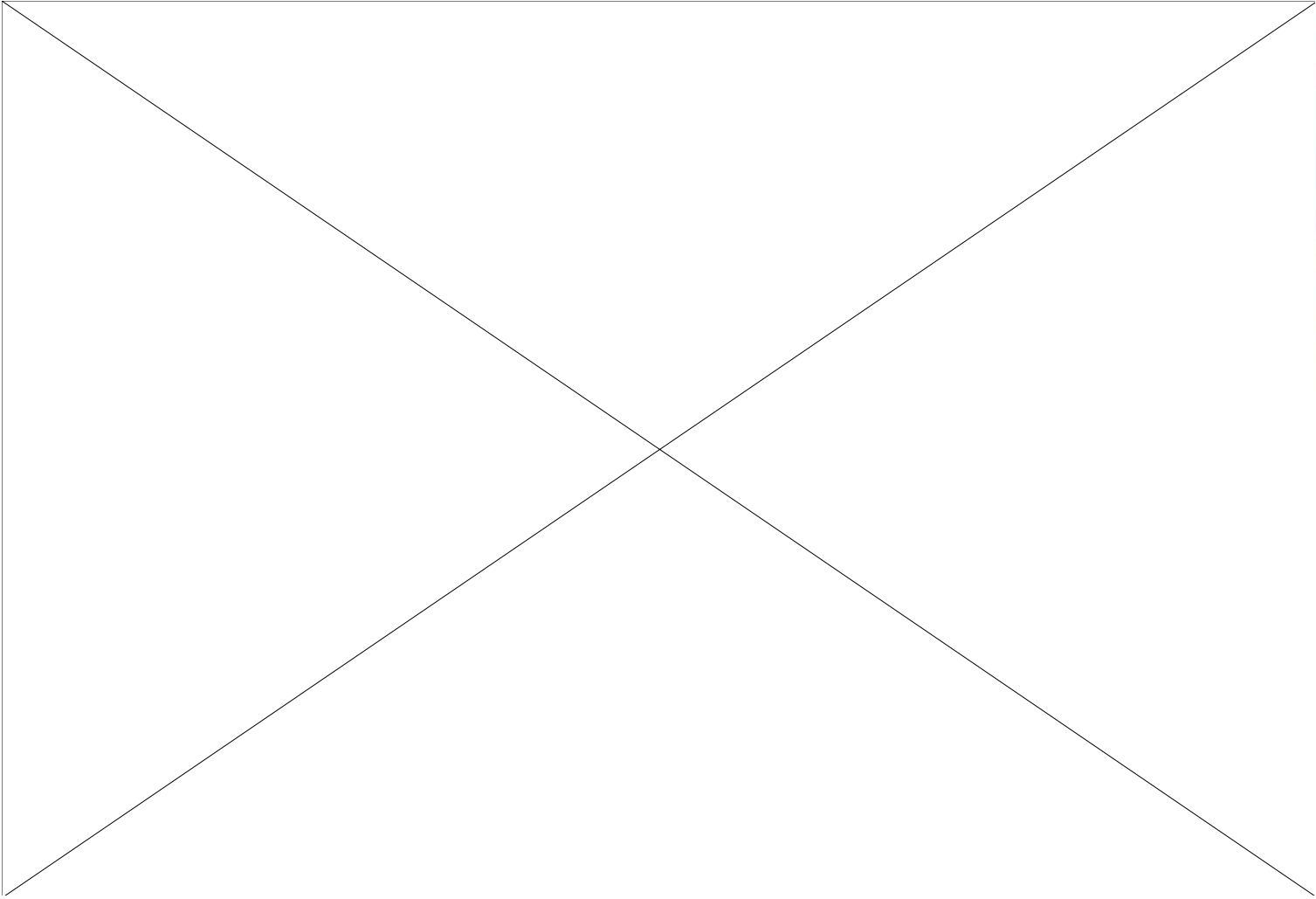
- ▶ To provide an understanding of purpose networks and their use within higher education.
- ▶ To show how connecting student development theory to student online usage trends led to the building of online resources for student success.
- ▶ To compare the use of purpose networks at one institution to national trends of purpose networks.
- ▶ To compare the use of purpose networks across different groups of students and analyze the multiple benefits within each student group.
- ▶ To show how data was turned into action plans.



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# RETENTION & STUDENT SUCCESS THEORY

*Using It to Drive Development of Online  
Tools for Student Success*



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# Theory

## ▶ Psychosocial Development

- Chickering – Develop competence: (Intellectual, Physical/Manual, Interpersonal)

## ▶ Mattering (vs. Marginality)

- Schlossberg – Students experience a more successful transition when they feel valued, attended to, and recognized

## ▶ Student Involvement

- Astin – Students who invest time and energy in their educational pursuits are more likely to be retained

## ▶ Academic and Social Integration

- Tinto – Academic and social integration defined by the sharing of academic values and developing friendships with students, staff, and faculty is essential to ensure student retention

## ▶ Engagement

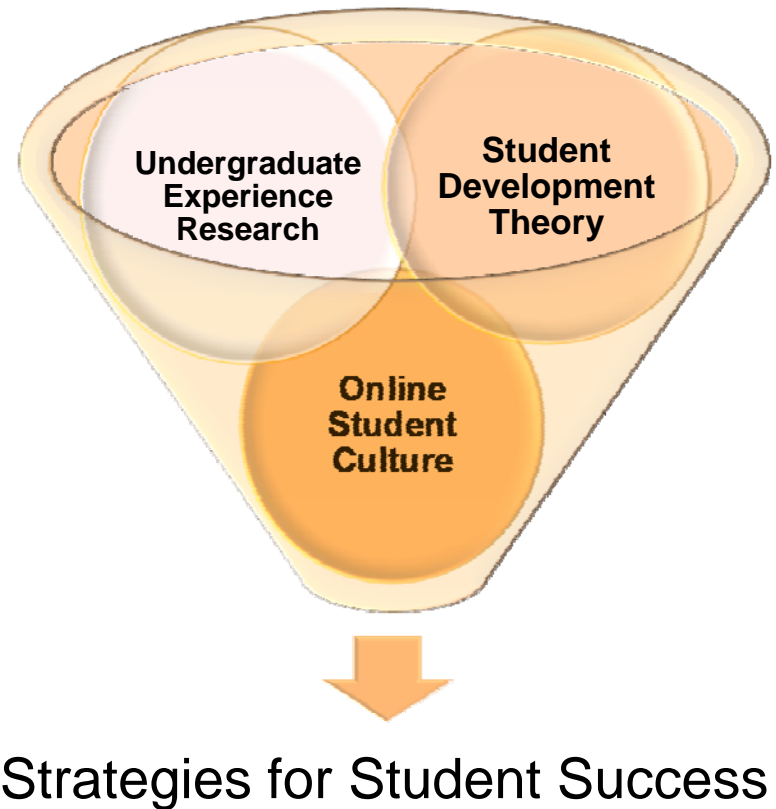
- Kuh – Frequency, quality, and duration of student integration into the institution are essential to the development of “goodness of fit” which increases the likelihood of persistence



# Student Development Theory Drives Practice (or it should)

## ▶ Practical Use of Theory & Research

- Drives content of outreach programs
- Provides a framework for how we support student success
- Context for assessment



# **ONLINE STUDENT CULTURE: UNDERSTANDING STUDENT INTERNET USE**



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“To this generation, the internet is like the fridge.”

– Don Tapscott (Author, *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World*)

# To Students, the Web Is...

- **Essential** – When asked to choose between TV and Net: 77% of Net-Geners said they would give up TV. 23% said Internet (nGenera). 61% of students on SN sites say they are interacting with people they've never met in person (Alloy/Harris).
- **Multiple Destinations** – 85% of University of Minnesota respondents visited a social network; 73% are a member of at least one site with 63% members of Facebook, 32% members of MySpace, 27% members of both + Mobile.
- **Not Just Facebook, In Fact...** – College and high school users have declined in absolute number by 20% and 15% respectively in recent months. More Facebook Users Are Not Listing Their Schools. (Facebook)



# To Students, the Web Is...

- **Flat Content Playing Field** – Web search as credible to students as the library (Pew); More influenced by viral mktg and peer-to-peer recommendation sites than “traditional” sites(Genesys).
- **Interactive** – There are now more than 500,000 apps on Facebook (Facebook)
- **User-Generated Content** – One in four student Internet users rely on *user-generated* content when choosing products and services, such as entertainment (comScore/Kelsey).
- **Their Canvas** – Over 70% of Net-Geners regularly add or change things online (such as posting comment on a blog, correcting a Wikipedia listing, writing a movie review, or uploading a YouTube video)
- **A Choose-Your-Own-Path World** – Online magazines/content portals (i.e., traditional websites) barely make it into top 10 website rankings. (CollegeHumor.com: #1 – 2005, #4 – 2006, #5 – 2007). In 08/09, emergence of streaming media (Anderson). +RSS growth (Noel-Levitz)

# Top Sites Among College Students

## 2005

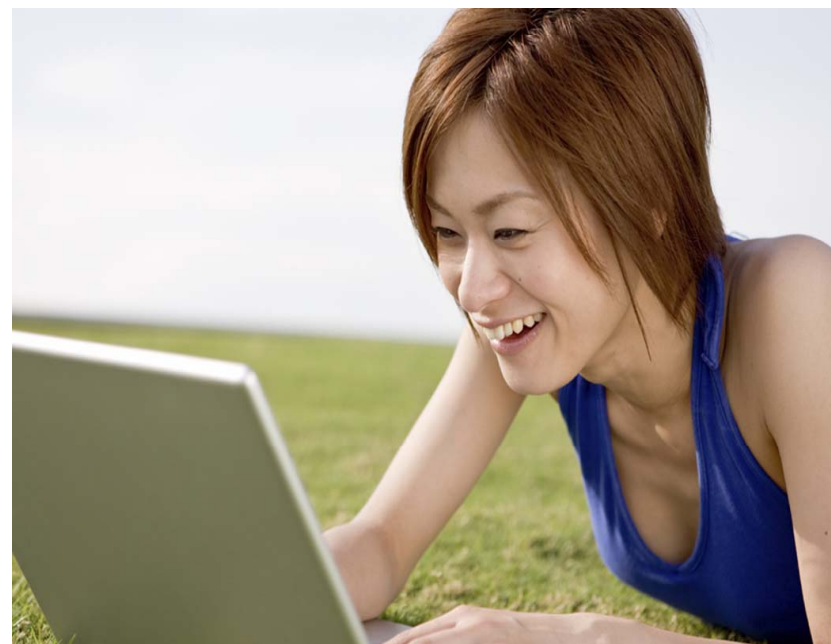
- ① CollegeHumor.com
- ② Facebook
- ③ Google
- ④ MySpace
- ⑤ eBay
- ⑥ ebaumsworld.com
- ⑦ ESPN
- ⑧ LiveJournal
- ⑨ Yahoo
- ⑩ ...

Source: Anderson Analytics 2006

## 2008

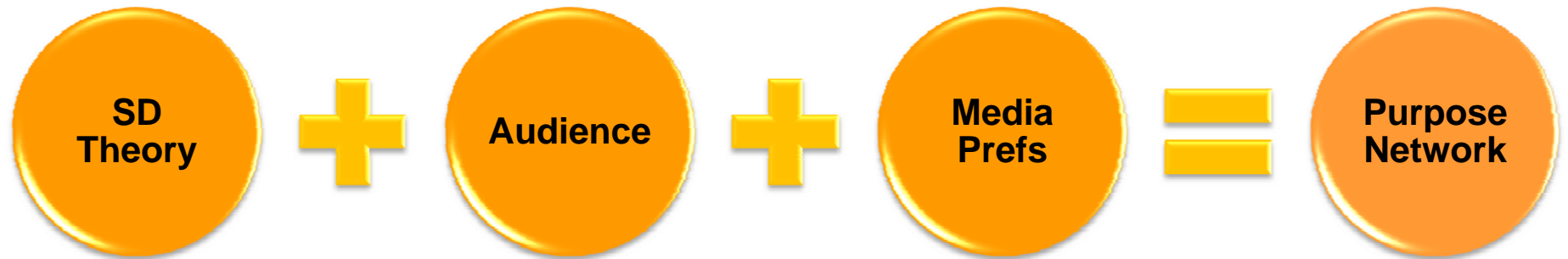
- ① Facebook
- ② Google
- ③ Yahoo
- ④ MySpace
- ⑤ YouTube
- ⑥ LiveJournal
- ⑦ ESPN
- ⑧ eBay
- ⑨ Amazon
- ⑩ CNN

Source: Anderson Analytics 2008



2009 results have Hulu.com in Top Ten - rise of streaming media

# Putting It All Together: The Purpose Network Equation



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# WHAT'S *NOT* A PURPOSE NETWORK?



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# Results of a Purpose-less Network



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# Facebook

Recent research – at The Ohio State University - suggests that use of Facebook contributes to lower GPAs.

- ▶ 85% of undergraduates were Facebook users, while 52% of graduate students had accounts.
- ▶ Facebook users in the study had GPAs between 3.0 and 3.5, while non-users had GPAs between 3.5 and 4.0.
- ▶ Facebook users say they averaged one to five hours a week studying, while non-users studied 11 to 15 hours per week.

FB User GPA:

3.0 – 3.5

Non-User GPA:

3.5 – 4.0

facebook Home Profile Friends Inbox 36 John Mathew Settings Logout Search

College [Become a Fan](#)

Wall Info Photos Boxes Events Calendar

**Kasi Reed** I am really looking into going to ... , so if anyone has anything at all they could tell me about it that would be great thank!  
Wed at 6:56pm · Report

**Chelsea E Eakle** College is great I am so glad I started going here! Best College ever!!!  
Wed at 6:40pm · Report

**Aneta Piatek** any photographers looking for a chance to shoot someone? ...I know that some college students can use this as an experience... I just wanted some portfolio pictures in ... If you know of someone that might, can you pleasecontact me thru message or feel free to email: piatekandrzej@sbcglobal.net thanks...  
Tue at 11:49pm · Report

**Bryttany Nicole Hunt** I've got the CISS 170 book package that MBS charges \$209 for. I'm selling it for \$100. I've only had the books eight weeks, and I was forced to buy them brand new for that \$209 price. There are no tears, no markings, nothing highlighted. If you interested send me a message.  
December 7 at 7:58pm · Report

**Bryttany Nicole Hunt** These books are the only required texts for CISS 170.  
December 7 at 7:59pm · Report

**Terrance Nye Hi** College Fam! :)  
December 6 at 2:59pm · Report

**Dave Lebrecht Hello**  
Tue at 3:42pm · Report

**Erica L. Jennings** If anyone is taking online classes and is thinking about taking astronomy DON'T! Quizzes are designed to keep u from going back and checking ur answers. once u leave a question, it's done. u can't change ur answer. this is done on purpose according to the instructors.

Create an Ad

**Jerry Garcia Art Exhibition & Sale**

This Weekend Only. New, Free Exhibit of Jerry Garcia's Artwork and Personal Belongings in Asbury Park, NJ. Bring the Family. Coupon.  
RSVP to this event

**Girls Who Want Larger Guys**

Meet girls who want to meet larger guys. Click Here.  
Like

**Hey Rutgers Alums**

TEST YOUR VIDEO GAME IQ  
PLAY NOW  
Help Rutgers dominate the



# WHAT IS A PURPOSE NETWORK?



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## Social Network

vs.

## Purpose Network

- A public place to “hang out”
- Focus on lifestyle, entertainment, trivia
- Favors “anything goes” interaction
- “Friend” status driven by social connections
- Intentionally designed to drive numerous social interactions
- Provides a more passive model of behavior and success

- A private place to build school-based community
- Focus on student success, campus involvement, life-goals
- Favors mission-based context and themes
- “Friend” status open to peers, mentors, administrators, faculty
- Intentionally designed to drive learning outcomes
- Provides a more active/ directional model of behavior and success

Source: EducationDynamics, 2009



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# Purpose Network

- ▶ An online community that intentionally integrates the attractive aspects of social networks and intelligent information necessary to be successful on a college campus
- ▶ Engaging AND educational
- ▶ Mission-based vs. “anything goes” or all-purpose network



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# Benefits of Purpose Networks to Schools

To increase retention rates of first-time students.

To encourage campus involvement and participation in student activities.

To enable a network of students and departments on campus to ensure accessibility for student outreach.

To aid in supplementing first-year course materials.

To aid in targeting diverse groups of students.



# Benefits of Purpose Networks to Students

Become acquainted and find common goals and interests with their peers.

Become knowledgeable on “success-centric” topics – e.g., how to overcome obstacles – and high-impact activities (e.g., study abroad).

Students are able to stay informed of current campus activities and become more involved on campus.

Students are able to become aware of the surrounding community and its offerings.

Help “marginal” students connect.



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# National Data & Trends

- Students involved in purpose networks were retained at a 7% higher rate than students who were not.
- 13% of students reported the purpose network was “very important” or “extremely important” in their decision to remained enrolled.
- Identifying those students who are more or less likely to “opt-in” and engage provided actionable intelligence to obtaining and using institutional data.

Source: EducationDynamics, 2009



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HAVE A QUESTION?

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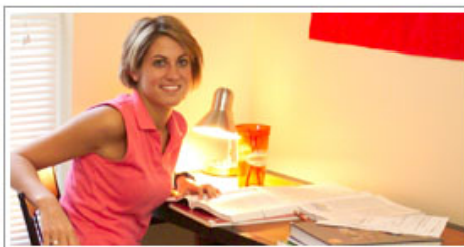
FEATURED ARTICLE

## Academic Tips: Writing Skills

Feb 20 [Writing Skills, Academic Skills, College Success](#) [Leave a Comment](#)

### Why Writing?

Writing is really an extension of talking; it's the way we communicate. Still, you may not have thought about how critical writing is to everything we do.



[Continue reading...](#)

FEATURED ARTICLE

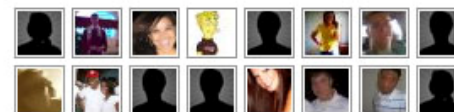
## Valentine's Day With Valdosta

Feb 06 [Relationships, College Success, Relationships, Mind & Body](#) [Leave a Comment](#)

Written by April Payne, Trailblazin' Advisor  
Valentine's Day is highly anticipated by some and dreaded by others. I ask myself, why does this holiday that is supposed to be a day for people to exchange feelings of affection dreaded by so many?



### People Recently Online



POPULAR

CATEGORIES

TWITTER



### Popular Categories

- [Relationships](#)
- [Relationships](#)
- [General Transitioning](#)
- [Risk Behavior](#)
- [Living With Others](#)
- [Physical Health](#)
- [Mental Health](#)
- [Res Hall/Apt Living](#)
- [Working with Profs](#)
- [Professors and mentors](#)

### Recent Discussions

[political science book for sale for \\$40](#)

# The Game of Life



Rank these descriptions in terms of how they fit you.

I like to work with people to help them and learn about them. My friends would say I'm a good listener, and I'm very understanding and helpful. I tend to dislike manual labor or physical work.

Doesn't Fit Me

Fits Me



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## Places

[MAP VIEW](#)

**What are places?** Classes aren't the only part of the college experience. Discover all the places to go and things to do on and off campus.

**Click On A Category:** [Athletics](#) | [Coffee](#) | [Food](#) | [Grocery](#) | [Hardware](#) | [Mexican](#) | [Movie Theaters](#) | [Nightlife](#) | [Pizza](#) | [Recreation](#) | [Restaurant](#) | [Seafood](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Steakhouse](#) | [show all](#)





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**HAVE A QUESTION?**  
We're here to help. Click here to Ask Valdosta now.

## Your guide to keeping your cool during finals.

It's finals time again, and for many students, completing projects, writing papers and taking tests go hand-in-hand with stress. Check out these strategies and resources to help you get prepped and stay sane during finals.

### Have a Question? We're here to help.

Enter your question to the right and we'll respond with advice or additional resources.

## 12 Tips for Exam Time



In a just world, the score you receive on an exam would reflect how much you know and how well you studied. Unfortunately, this isn't always the reality. From the moment you walk into the exam room, you need to make the right moves to maximize your performance. Here are 12 tips for doing just that . . .

[Read more...](#)

### Other Finals Resources

[12 Tips for Exam Time](#)

[Test Anxiety Reduction -1-2-3](#)

### On Campus Resources

#### Academic Resources for Students

Get Skills! Are you starting to wonder if some of your academic skills aren't totally up to speed? There are many on-campus resources where you can find help, and it never

### Current Events

[Create the first finals event](#)

### Recent Discussions

[political science book for sale for \\$40](#)

Posted by [kamkam](#)

[Books for sale!!!](#)

Posted by [Talie09](#)

[Engl 1101 book sale](#)

Posted by [30302girl](#)

### More Discussions

[Create a new finals discussion.](#)

### Groups

- [RED](#)
- [PATTERSON!](#)
- [HOPPER HALL](#)



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**ASK**  
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## Race2Rise at Valdosta Are You Fast Enough?



### Race2Rise at Valdosta is easy to play:

Each week you'll get 5 questions. The answers are found in the articles in [Trailblazin'](#). Once you start, the timer runs—the faster you answer the questions correctly the more points you'll get. The winner at the end gets a \$150 Amex gift card.

Week Four Questions

Your Time: **0:53**

### 1. CAB stands for...

- College Action Board
- Campus Activity Board
- Campus Activity Buzz
- College Aid Board

### 2. Since 9/11 volunteerism has increased by...

- 10%
- 20%
- 30%
- 40%

### 3. WorldTeach was founded by Harvard University students in...

- 1985
- 1987
- 1986
- 1990

### 4. Where can you find a pool and a climbing wall on campus?

- University Union
- Odum Library
- Student Rec Center
- Athlete Center

### 5. An outdoor weekend retreat destination in Georgia is...

- Cumberland Island
- Stowe
- Outer Banks



YOUR POINT TOTAL SO FAR:

**0**

## CURRENT STANDINGS

As of March 6, the leaders are:

	<a href="#">alijane</a>	2735 points
	<a href="#">jamiewillis</a>	2177 points
	<a href="#">Michael</a>	2011 points
	<a href="#">jwhite</a>	1722 points
	<a href="#">LaBella</a>	1283 points
	<a href="#">Jacoia09Twiggy</a>	860 points
	<a href="#">Trevor</a>	772 points
	<a href="#">Hayley8D</a>	760 points
	<a href="#">TjAkins</a>	628 points

### Race2Rise Instructions

- [How do I play?](#)
- [How do I win?](#)



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## Goals

[MOST POPULAR](#) [MOST RECENT](#) [YOUR GOALS](#) [YOUR FRIENDS' GOALS](#) [ALL GOALS](#)

**What are goals all about?** Do you want to climb Mt. Everest? Read more books? Travel to every continent? Setting goals is the best way to accomplish what you want in life. Discover what other students are trying to accomplish, set goals yourself, and start accomplishing them together.

What do you want to accomplish?

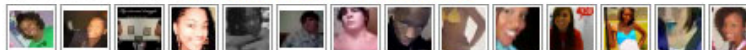
I want to do this

1 2 3 4 →

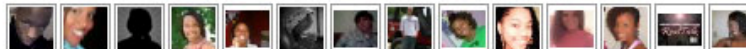
(25) people want to [maintain good grades and not gain freshmen 15!](#)



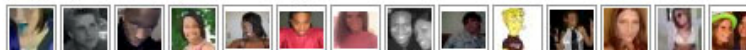
(20) people want to [have the time of my life at vsu!](#)



(16) people want to [wants to live for god in college and give him the glory for it](#)



(16) people want to [to get a 4.0 gpa](#)



(13) people want to [complete my undergrad in four years!!](#)



You made changes to another copy of this item. [Click here to view the existing item](#) or to replace it with this version.

From: Valdosta State University [students@message.valdosta.edu]

Sent: Tue 2/16/2010 6:01 PM

To: Peter Tomassi

Cc:

Subject: Study abroad will change your life

## VALDOSTA TRAILBLAZIN'

[Log in now!](#)

Many VSU graduates remember [studying abroad](#) as one of the most important experiences of their undergraduate career.

How can you learn a language, discover a new culture and expand your educational horizons? Through study abroad opportunities.

Want another reason to pursue a study abroad experience? When you live and learn in a foreign country, you'll gain skills and knowledge that'll come in handy in today's global workforce.

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## Features Articles, videos and resources



### [Core Aint No Chore](#)

In this video, a student confesses she appreciates General Education and Core requirements. [transcript](#)



### [Meet My Roommate: Incompatibility 101](#)

Roommates need to learn to work out their problems...when that fails, it's a recipe for disaster. [transcript](#)



### [Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes](#)

It's an interesting freshman conundrum: How can you enter college, thinking you know everything? [transcript](#)



### [Listen, Professor – I Pay Your Salary](#)

"I pay your salary; here's what you're going to do."



### [Study? I Can Barely Make it to Practice](#)

Study? I can barely make it to practice... [transcript](#)



### [Credit Cards: Is Plastic So Fantastic?](#)

Is plastic so fantastic? [transcript](#)



### [Take the Fries Off Your Lap](#)

Commuting students face special challenges. See how one student rose above these challenges.

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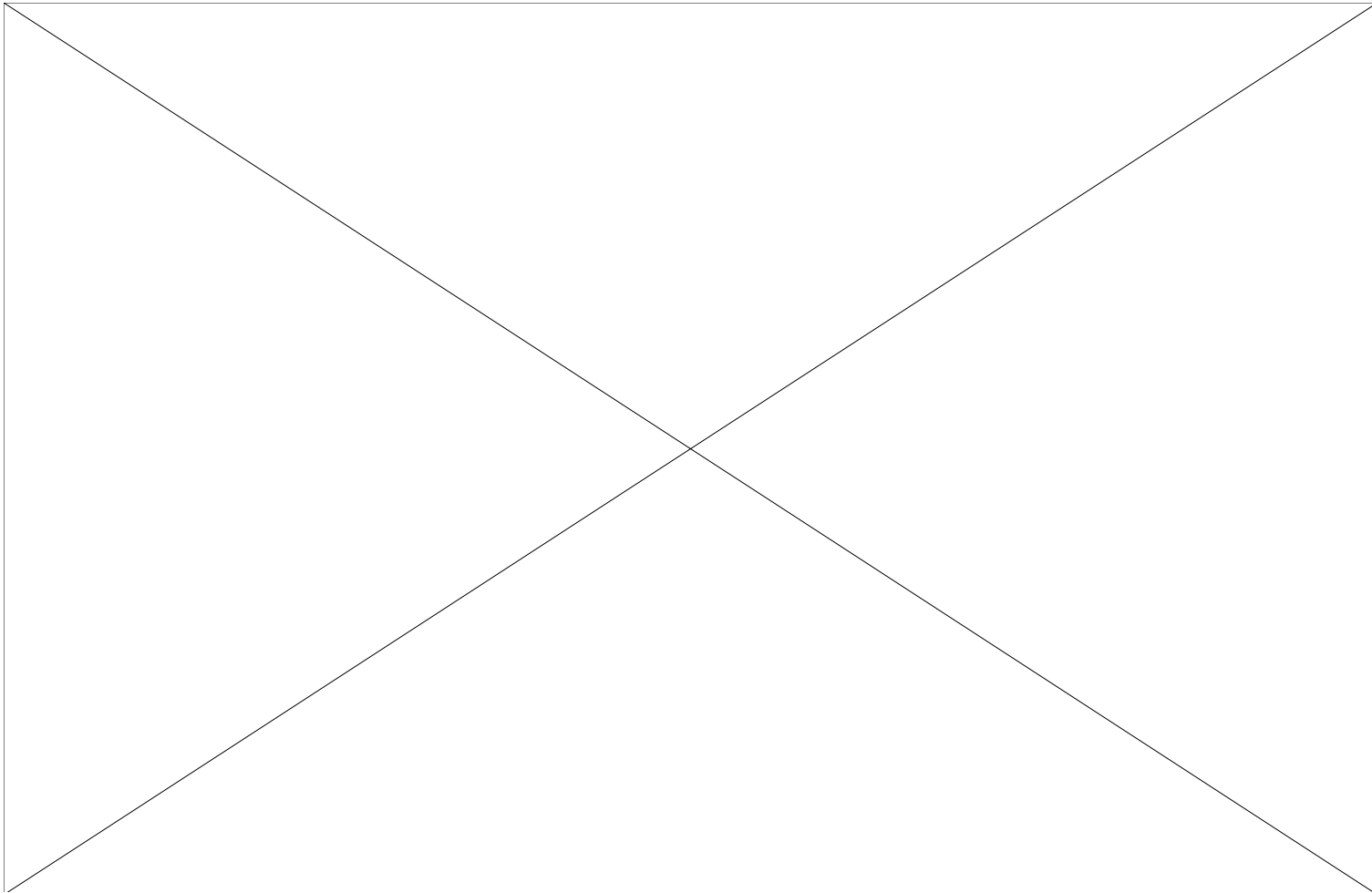
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# PURPOSE NETWORK PROGRAM OUTCOMES

*How Valdosta State University Used It's  
Purpose Network*



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# Valdosta State University

*a case study*



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# Valdosta State University

## Current

- ❖ 12,391 Total Campus Population
- ❖ Freshmen Class Size
  - ❖ Fall 2005 Cohort: 1,775
  - ❖ Fall 2006 Cohort: 2,015
  - ❖ Fall 2007 Cohort: 2,029
  - ❖ Fall 2008 Cohort: 2,106
  - ❖ Fall 2009 Cohort: 2,422
- ❖ 72% Freshman-to-Sophomore Retention
  - ❖ Fall 2005 cohort: 73.6%
  - ❖ Fall 2006 cohort: 71.5%
  - ❖ Fall 2007 cohort: 71.2%
  - ❖ Fall 2008 cohort: 71.8%
- ❖ 43% Graduation Rate

## Goal

### *In 2010*

- ❖ 12,800 Total Campus Population
- ❖ 3,000 Freshmen

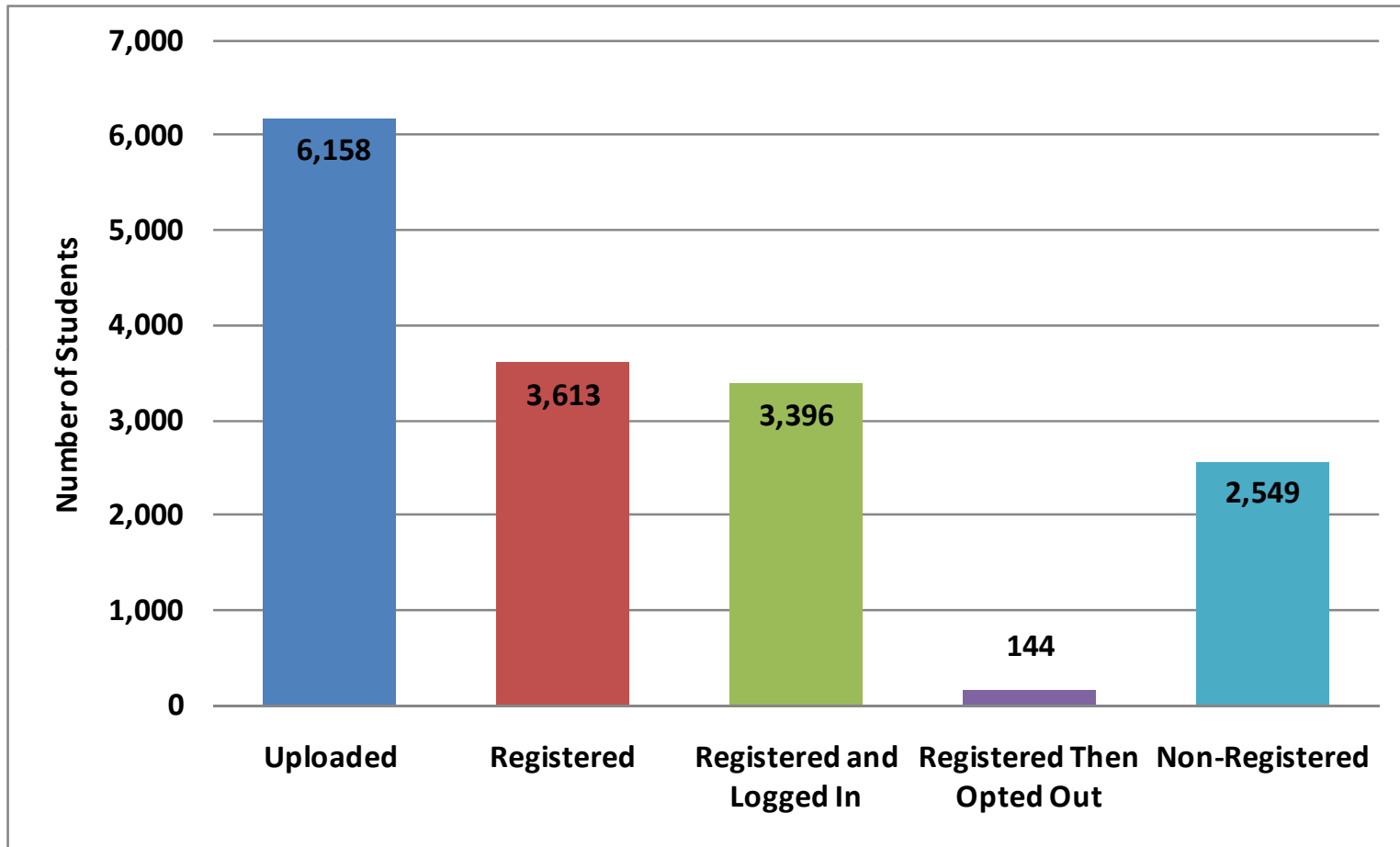
### *Eventually*

- ❖ 75% Freshman-to-Sophomore Retention
- ❖ 48% Graduation Rate



# Trailblazin' Demographics

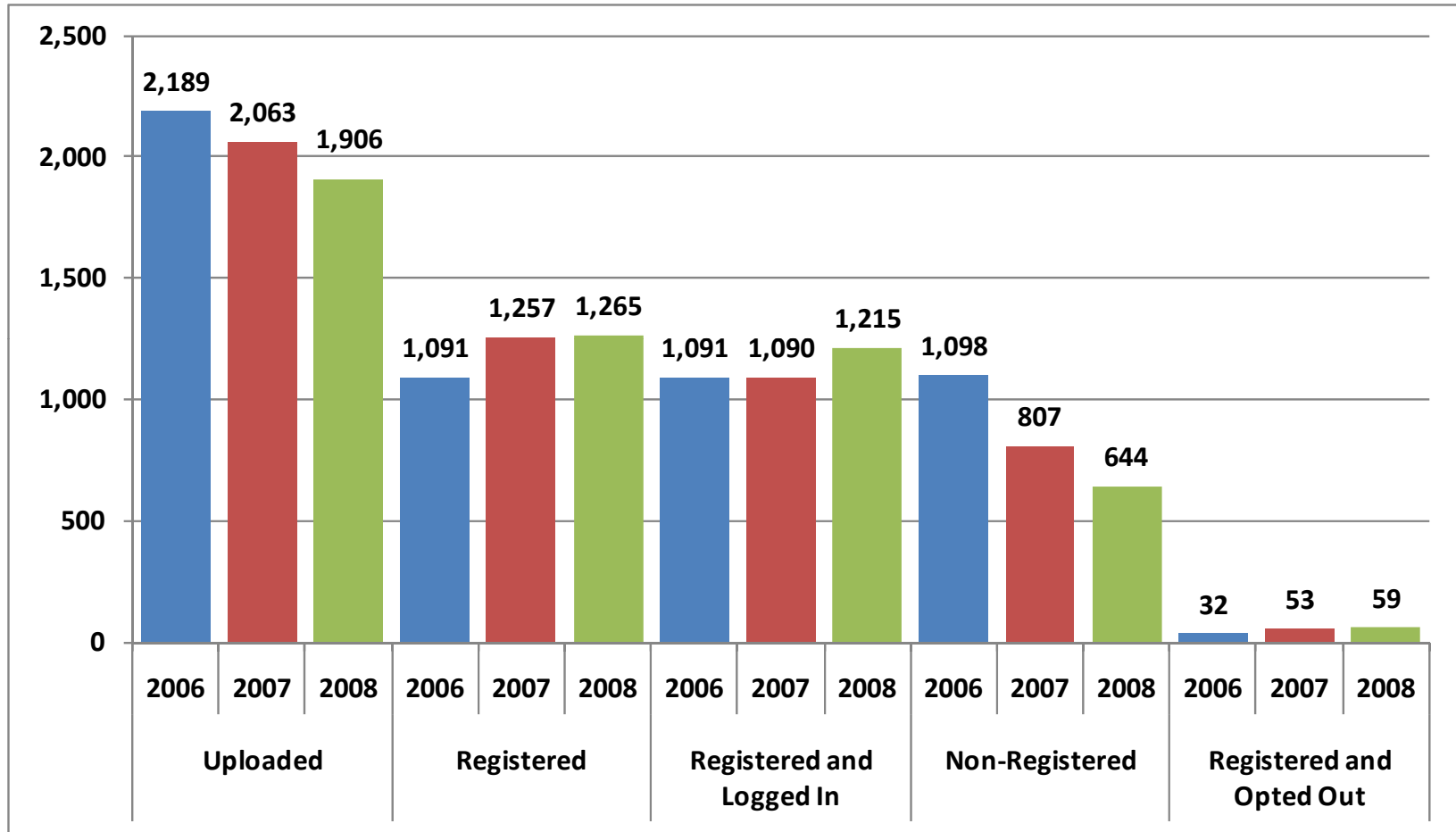
EXHIBIT 1: NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITHIN EACH GROUP, 2006-2008 COHORTS



Source: VSU SRA Office, February 2009.

# Trailblazin' Demographics

**EXHIBIT 2: NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITHIN EACH GROUP, 2006-2008 COHORTS**

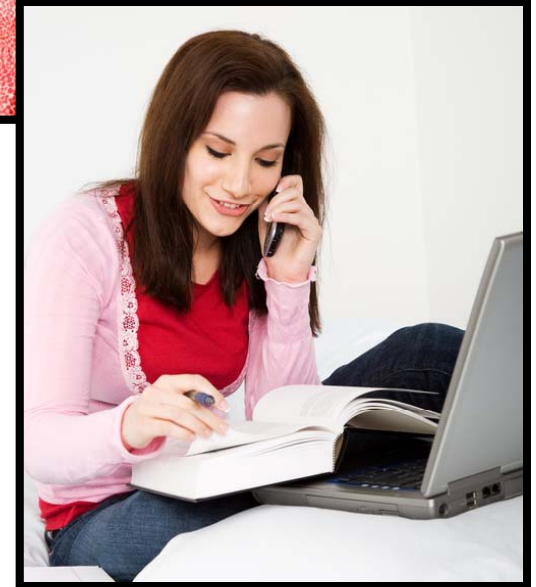
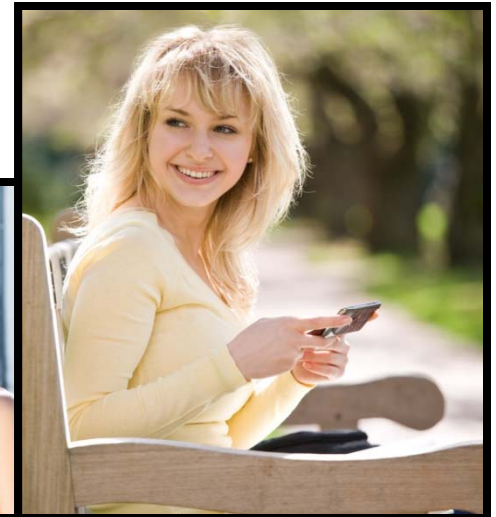


Source: VSU SRA Office, February 2009.

# Trailblazin' Demographics

## Uploaded Group Characteristics

- ▶ Slightly less than **60.0%** of students were female in all three cohorts.
- ▶ From 2006-2008, 34.4% of the students who were uploaded into the Trailblazin' website had high school GPAs between **3.00 and 3.49**.
- ▶ Both cohorts had a higher percentage (**26.0% and 23.4%**) of students generate between a 3.00 and a 3.49 first-term GPA
- ▶ A **majority** of the students in each cohort lived on campus.
- ▶ An average of **704** students who were uploaded to Trailblazin' also joined a fraternity or sorority each year.





# Trailblazin' Demographics

## Registered/Logged in Group Characteristics

- ▶ Slightly less than **66.0%** of students were female in all three cohorts.
- ▶ From 2006-2008, **35.5%** of the students who registered and logged into the Trailblazin' website had high school GPAs between **3.00 and 3.49**.
- ▶ Both cohorts had a higher percentage (**27.5% and 23.4%**) of students generate between a 3.00 and a 3.49 first-term GPA.
- ▶ A **majority** of the students in each cohort lived on campus.
- ▶ An average of **139** students who registered/logged in with Trailblazin' also joined a fraternity or sorority each year.

## Non-Registered Group Characteristics

- ▶ Slightly more than **51.0%** of students were female in all three cohorts.
- ▶ From 2006-2008, **34.8%** of the students who did not register with Trailblazin' had high school GPAs between **2.50 and 2.99**.
- ▶ In 2006, the highest percentage of students (**24.3%**) generated a first-term GPA of 3.00-3.49. In 2007, the highest percentage of students (**24.9%**) generated a first-term GPA of 0.01-2.00.
- ▶ In each cohort, a higher percentage of students lived **off campus** than in the previous groups (uploaded and registered).
- ▶ An average of **138** students who did not register with Trailblazin' also joined a fraternity or sorority each year.

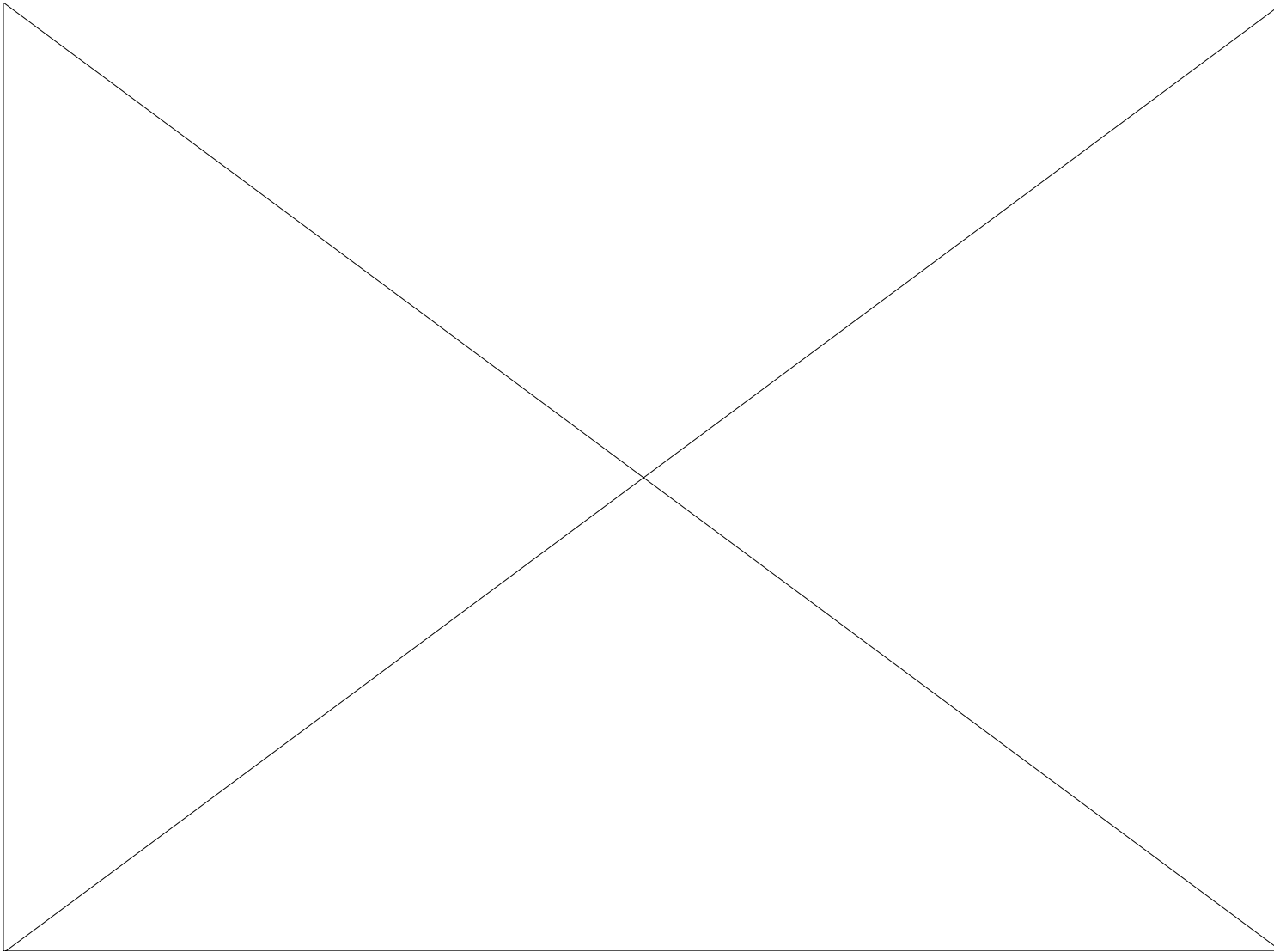
# Retention Rates of Individual Groups

**EXHIBIT 3: RETENTION RATE OF STUDENTS WITHIN EACH GROUP, 2006-2007 COHORTS**

		Uploaded	Registered and Logged In	Registered and Opted Out	Did not Register
2006	VSU Retention Rate	71.5%			
	Trailblazin' Retention Rate	69.6%	76.1%	81.3%	63.1%
2007	VSU Retention Rate	71.2%			
	Trailblazin' Retention Rate	70.4%	74.7%	83.0%	64.6%

Source: VSU SRA Office, February 2009.





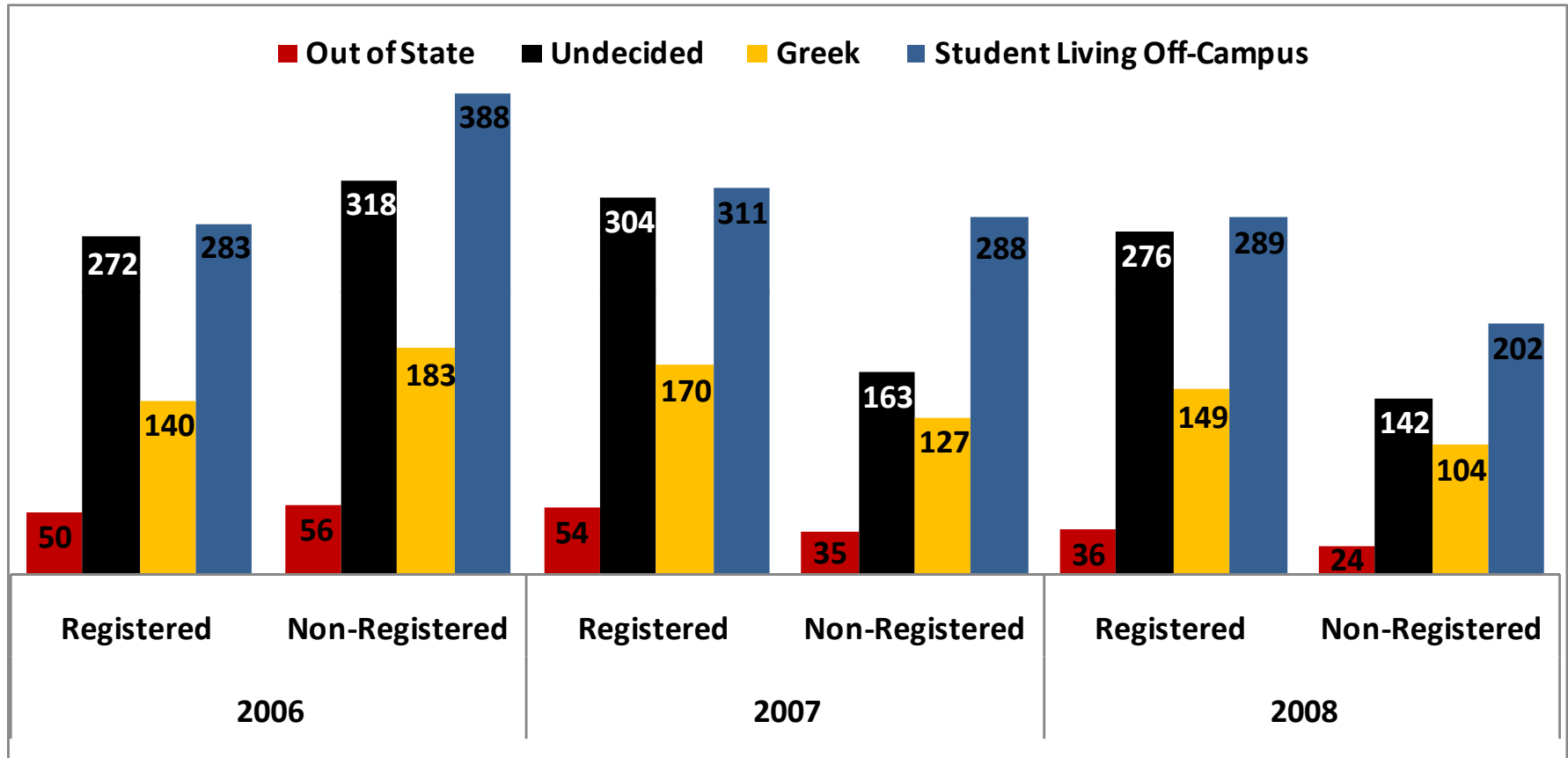
**Education Dynamics**<sup>SM</sup>  
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# A Closer Look

**EXHIBIT 4: NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITHIN SUBSET GROUPS, 2006-2008 COHORTS**



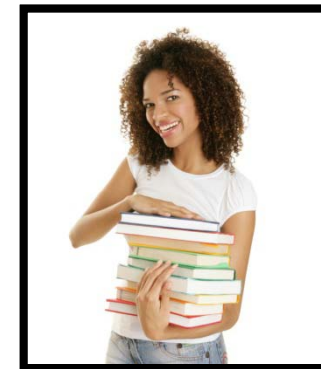
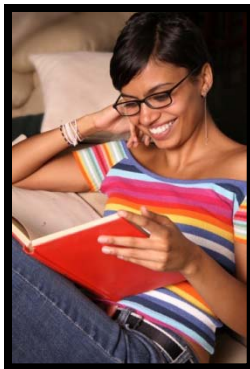
Source: VSU SRA Office, February 2009.

# A Closer Look

**EXHIBIT 5: HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF REGISTERED STUDENTS WITHIN SUBSET GROUPS BY GENDER, ETHNICITY, HS GPA, SAT SCORE AND COLLEGE GPA, 2006-2008 COHORTS**

Registered								
	Out of State		Undecided		Greek		Off Campus	
Gender	57.1%	<i>Female</i>	59.5%	<i>Female</i>	66.7%	<i>Female</i>	56.6%	<i>Female</i>
Ethnicity	54.3%	<i>White</i>	75.2%	<i>White</i>	99.2%	<i>White</i>	71.6%	<i>White</i>
HS GPA	34.9%	<i>2.50-2.99</i>	33.9%	<i>3.00-3.49</i>	34.8%	<i>3.00-3.49</i>	33.5%	<i>3.00-3.49</i>
SAT	67.5%	<i>900-1099</i>	67.4%	<i>900-1099</i>	72.1%	<i>900-1099</i>	64.5%	<i>900-1099</i>
GPA	30.8%	<i>3.00-3.49</i>	30.2%	<i>3.00-3.49</i>	31.7%	<i>3.00-3.49</i>	29.4%	<i>3.00-3.49</i>

Source: VSU SRA Office, February 2009.



# A Closer Look

**EXHIBIT 6: HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF NONREGISTERED STUDENTS WITHIN SUBSET GROUPS BY GENDER, ETHNICITY, HS GPA, SAT SCORE AND COLLEGE GPA, 2006-2008 COHORTS**

Nonregistered								
	Out of State		Undecided		Greek		Off Campus	
Gender	53.0%	Male	55.7%	Male	51.4%	Female	53.3%	Male
Ethnicity	62.6%	White	76.7%	White	93.7%	White	79.2%	White
HS GPA	37.3%	2.50-2.99	33.8%	2.50-2.99	36.8%	2.50-2.99	32.0%	3.00-3.49
SAT	60.3%	900-1099	65.6%	900-1099	73.3%	900-1099	68.1%	900-1099
GPA	27.5%	0.00-2.00	25.3%	3.00-3.49	28.6%	3.00-3.49	22.9%	0.00-2.00

Source: VSU SRA Office, February 2009.



# A Closer Look

**EXHIBIT 6: RETENTION RATE OF REGISTERED AND NONREGISTERED STUDENTS WITHIN SUBSET GROUPS, 2006-2007 COHORTS**

		Out-of-State		Undecided		Greek Member		Off-Campus Students	
		Registered	Non-Registered	Registered	Non-Registered	Registered	Non-Registered	Registered	Non-Registered
2006	VSU Retention Rate	71.5%							
	Trailblazin' Retention Rate	74.0%	42.9%	79.4%	64.8%	90.7%	82.0%	74.9%	57.2%
	Number Retained	37	24	216	206	127	150	212	222
2007	VSU Retention Rate	71.2%							
	Trailblazin' Retention Rate	74.1%	57.1%	78.6%	67.5%	88.2%	79.5%	67.8%	63.2%
	Number Retained	40	20	239	110	150	101	211	182

Source: VSU SRA Office, February 2009.



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## *Senior Administrator's Analysis and View*



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# Senior Administrator's Analysis and View

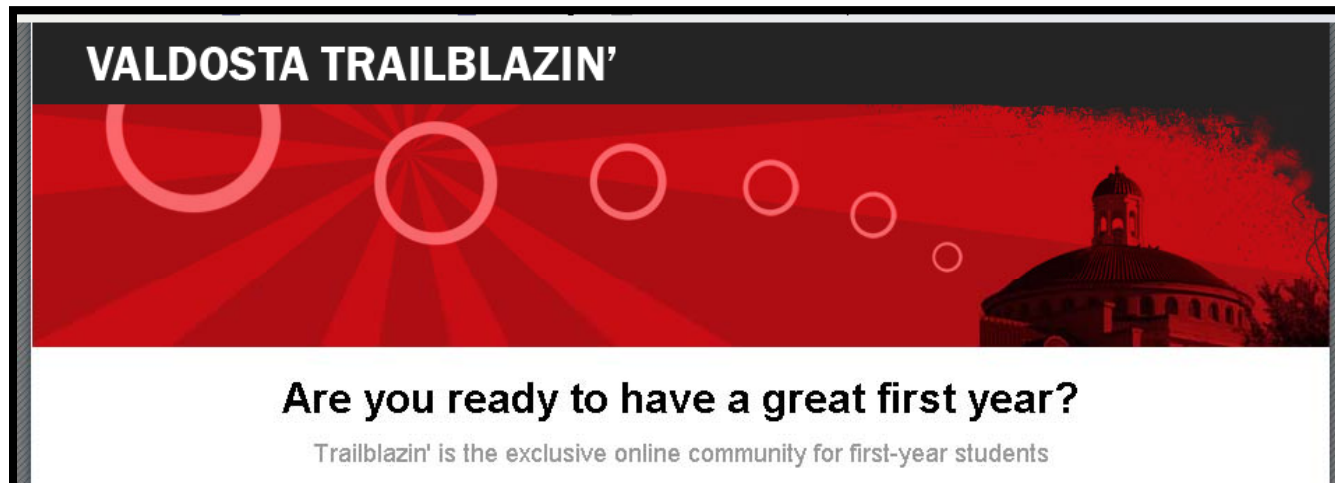
## ▶ Key Items for Improving Retention

- Develop connections with cohort after orientation and before returning to campus for fall semester.
- Early engagement in the first semester.
- Availability of trained and enthusiastic peer mentors.
- Early alert warning systems for at-risk students.
- A sense of “fit” or connection with the institution and its resources.



# Senior Administrator's Analysis and View

**Trailblazin' offers  
all of the  
above.....**



# Senior Administrator's Analysis and View

- ▶ Students interact continuously during June – August
  - Features
  - Profiles
  - Community
  - Discussions
  - Goals
  - Contests



# Senior Administrator's Analysis and View

- ▶ Trailblazin' connects students to the community
  - Student Services
  - Cultural Arts
  - Student Organizations
  - Restaurants and Shopping



# Senior Administrator's Analysis and View



**VSU's own Purpose Network is  
....restricted, secure,  
informative, and timely**



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# Senior Administrator's Analysis and View



**Individualized alert  
responses directly from  
VSU**



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**Welcome back!** A quick question and we'll send you on your way:

**I have thought about transferring to another institution.**

- Strongly Agree**
- Agree**
- Neutral**
- Disagree**
- Strongly Disagree**

Note: These questions help us improve our services for students, and may be seen by staff members in Student Life. Personal information is kept confidential. [Click here](#) if you'd rather not answer this question.

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## Valentine's Day With Valdosta

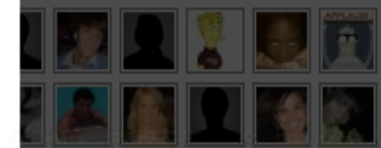
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[10 Common Errors in First-Year Papers](#)

[Getting the Most From Your Advisor](#)

# Example of Response from Student Advisor

"I have thought about transferring to another institution."

**Alexandria answered:**

Strongly Agree

---

## From Text

Trailblazin

The "From Text" appears in email preview panes.

## E-mail Subject

Thinking of transferring

## Response

Hi Alexandria, My name is Monique and I answer Trailblazin survey questions. In a recent survey I see that you answered that you have thought about transferring from Valdosta State. Why is that? Here at VSU we want to make sure all of your concerns and needs are being met! So if you have any questions or need help with anything to make your college experience here a good one, please just let me know. Have a good semester!

## Signature

Trailblazin Advisor JM Murphy



# Example of Response from Student Advisor

"I enjoy the social atmosphere at Valdosta State University."

**Qiana answered:**

Disagree

---

## From Text

Trailblazin

The "From Text" appears in email preview panes.

## E-mail Subject

social atmosphere

## Response

Hi Qiana, My name is Monique and I answer survey questions for Trailblazin. In a recent survey I see that you answered as being dissatisfied with the social atmosphere on campus. If you are not involved in a club or organization, you should join!! Most of the time they offer things to do on the weekends. Also, keep a look out for signs around campus, displaying weekend activities! Also, volunteering whether it is through VSU or the community is always a great way to have a rewarding weekend. If you have any concerns or need some more ideas please let me know! -Monique

## Signature

jmmurphy@valdosta.edu JM Murphy

# Take Action: Examples from Plan for Responses to Alerts

- ▶ If a student responds in the “negative” to 3 or more survey questions, the student is contacted with the goal of scheduling an in-person meeting
- ▶ Students who answer negatively to survey questions are cross-referenced with students who were retained into their sophomore year to determine any statistical patterns in how students answered survey questions in order to better predict attrition



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# Action Plans for Specific Audiences

## ▶ **Out of state students**

- Trailblazin' advisors contact out of state students via Trailblazin' site, driving them to the content that was developed to better transition this population on the site

## ▶ **Undecided**

- Trailblazin' hosts a social event targeting undecided students and focused on top 6 largest declared undergraduate majors of VSU students: Education, Psychology, Nursing, Biology, Business and Criminal Justice. At the event pamphlets will be handed out about each major, the requirements, and career possibilities.

## ▶ **Off-campus**

- Trailblazin' hosts a social at an off campus location (e.g., pizza restaurant or a smoothie place) driving students to register for the site. Incentivize with free food and free T-shirt giveaway if possible.



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# Senior Administrator's Analysis and View

**Return on Investment –  
benefits clearly  
outweigh costs!**



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# THANK YOU... QUESTIONS & COMMENTS?

For more information, or to download the white paper “University Purpose Networks” please visit:

<http://sharing.educationdynamics.com>

Or email [retention@educationdynamics.com](mailto:retention@educationdynamics.com)

[www.valdosta.edu/sra](http://www.valdosta.edu/sra)



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