VCSU seeing unprecedented growth

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Valley City State University president Steve Shirley held an audience at VCSU’s Vangstad Auditorium on Monday afternoon to deliver the annual “State of the University” address.

The university had a lot to brag about this year, including an all-time record enrollment of 1,384 students and earning U.S. News’ recognition as the No. 1 public regional college in the Midwest.

VCSU has experienced four straight years of growth.

“What these growth numbers tell is that the secret is out,” Shirley said.

“It truly has been a historic year in the 120-plus year history of Valley City State University.”

The university is in its second year of a five-year strategic plan entitled “VCSU 2015.” The four goals of the plan include providing high quality, innovative education, increasing enrollment, incorporating fiscal strategies that support the plan and improving campus facilities.

“As we fulfill these goals we will ultimately be more successful in delivering a high-quality, first class education to our students,” said Shirley, adding that it will take the dedication of the staff, faculty and community to keep VCSU’s momentum strong.

VCSU has also had some hurdles to leap this year. In the spring, $10.3 million in funding for a capital improvement project on the Rhoades Science Center was held up in the State Senate Appropriations committee, prompting a caravan of local support to travel to Bismarck for Shirley’s plea to the committee that funding be reinstated.
“This was very important. The support from the community doesn’t happen with every institution,” Sen. Larry Robinson, D-Valley City, said after the committee meeting on March 0. “The Valley City community has always been there, so we really appreciate this in a big way. Folks noticed that today, all these folks coming in from Valley City.”

Robinson, a 1971 graduate of VCSU, has also served as the executive director of the Valley City State University Foundation since 1996.

Another challenge, spring flooding, required the help of VCSU students to sandbag several areas of the city as the spring semester was winding down earlier this year.

The community involvement of the university did not end when the flood waters receded. This fall, the freshman class boarded six buses to harvest 28 tons of squash for the Great Plains Food Bank. The farm’s owner, Rev. Dan Faust, praised the efforts of the students in a Sept. 27 interview with the Times-Record.

“I had no idea when I was planting that we would be having this efficient organization to help with harvesting,” he said. “If I’d known that I would have planted several times as much.”

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