

SAPCAS SENIOR STEERING COUNCIL ANALYSIS OF THE APPENDIX TO CAUCUS 3 REPORT

The SAPCAS Senior Steering Council has reviewed the appendix to the Caucus 3 report, and provides comments and recommendations in red *italics* below.

The suggestions outlined briefly below are primarily gleaned from the departmental strategic plans submitted to Dean Infante in the spring of 2000. They are augmented by some suggestions made directly to Caucus 3 members by faculty during our examination of these issues.

1. **Capital campaign issues.** In the forthcoming Capital Campaign, the College should put forth the strongest possible case for funding a number of major new initiatives. We ought at the bare minimum to press for funding for the following items:
 - 1.1. *Residential colleges.* One of the best ideas ever discussed on the campus for improving the tone of intellectual and social life, and for bringing faculty and students into more frequent contact. In the student affairs arena, this should be our highest priority for the Capital Campaign. *The SAPCAS Senior Steering Council endorsed Residential Colleges.*
 - 1.2. *New library building.* Also has to be a major priority for the College. While the Vanderbilt Library staff are doing a great job under trying conditions, the library's physical plant is simply no longer credible as part of a great university. No wonder the undergraduates don't want to go there! *The SAPCAS Senior Steering Council recommendations on the Library are covered under our analysis of the Caucus 4 report.*
 - 1.3. *New classroom and office building.* Although the College has been looking forward to renovating and occupying Buttrick when MRB-III is completed, this will only relieve current needs, and that barely. If any of the major SAP-CAS initiatives are funded, additional space will be needed, at least the size of Furman. *The SAPCAS Senior Steering Council recognizes that the College needs new study, classroom, and office space. While we do not view this as a strategic issue, it is absolutely critical to the ability of the College to provide the services expected of it. These needs should be recognized as possible targets for benefaction.*
 - 1.4. *Endowed chairs.* In the past, a sort of general call has been raised for more endowed chairs. It may be more useful to identify areas in which the creation of chairs would impart significant momentum to the College, especially to those interdisciplinary areas the College hopes to strengthen. *To be competitive with peer institutions, the College of Arts and Science is in need of additional endowed chairs, which nationally are evolving into a rank above Professor. This is particularly important as we try to improve the quality of our faculty, in that endowed chairs are essential instruments in recruiting and retaining senior faculty of the highest caliber. In the various interdisciplinary initiatives we have recommended, we identified a number of areas where endowed professorships would have particularly salubrious consequences. Core departments*

and programs would also benefit from endowed chairs. Our recommendation is that a vigorous effort be mounted to secure funding for these chairs.

- 1.5. *Endowment for the College.* For years, the College has lamented its dependence on tuition income. Higher priority must be allocated to breaking out of the cycle by effective and aggressive fund-raising. Recent experience in Vanderbilt’s School of Engineering shows that significant development is indeed possible here. *While the endowment of Vanderbilt University may be comparable to that of the other private universities with which we compete, the SAPCAS Steering Council recognizes that the endowment of the College of Arts and Science is woefully inadequate relative to comparable liberal arts colleges. We heartily endorse aggressive capital accumulation on behalf of the College of Arts and Science.*
- 1.6. *Fellowships for first-year graduate students.* There are sound scholarly and pedagogical reasons for trying to offer more service-free fellowships for first-year graduate students. It is one of the few ways for Vanderbilt to become instantly competitive with universities that are better than we are. *Elsewhere in our report, we emphasize the need for recruiting better graduate students. In departments where the fellowships for graduate students require service during the first year or two, service-free fellowships would place Vanderbilt in a more competitive position. In many departments, an increase in the number, size, type and duration of academic year and summer fellowships is important for building stronger programs. We endorse aggressive efforts to accomplish these objectives.*

2. Cross-cutting administrative issues. There is an urgent need to reexamine “the way things are done” in the College. Many departments expressed variations on the theme that restructuring governance is the key to productive innovation, efficiency and enhanced performance – and quite possibly to better financial health, provided that appropriate metrics and incentives for performance are developed and implemented.

- 2.1. *Student quality and diversity.* The students at Vanderbilt are notably pre-professional rather than academic in orientation. Several department chairs mention the need to emphasize intellectual, as well as ethnic and economic, diversity. *We recognize the problem, made addressing it one of our Criteria, and endorse efforts to solve it.*
- 2.2. *Micromanagement.* The College has prospered financially in part because of unrelenting attention to budget and management issues at the departmental level. While micromanagement was probably necessary twenty-five years ago, it now is a hindrance to both departments and the College. Time to change! The elements of this change should include transitions to:
 - 2.2.1 Department-based business planning. Departments should be managed on the basis of business plans that are appropriate to their size, needs, and strategic plans. These plans should be developed in consultation with the Dean of the College, with appropriate provisions for real delegation of stewardship and accountability. *See 2.2.2.*
 - 2.2.2 Department-centered decision making. The College is virtually ungovernable under the present micromanagement scheme, which violates every management canon of span of control. Within the framework of the departmental business plans, departments could implement many routine items now requiring College

approval. *The questions of administrative micromanagement involve more than just the College of Arts and Science. It seems undeniable that a host of decisions made at the administrative level should in fact be made at the departmental level. We recognize the problem, and encourage an appropriate decentralization of responsibility and decision-making with a corresponding increase in accountability.*

- 2.2.3 New approaches to sustaining interdisciplinary programs. Several of the program directors note that they cannot offer needed courses because faculty have moved on, leaving the future of the programs in jeopardy. In a department-based management plan, department chairs could simply agree and execute such innovations. Will this in fact work? *We are concerned about the potential conflict between departments and interdisciplinary programs, such as requests for departments to teach courses in support of interdisciplinary programs, the appointment, promotion, and tenure of faculty involved in interdisciplinary programs, and the contention for budgetary authority and indirect cost allocation for these endeavors. We recommend that College ask the Provost to establish a task force of senior faculty to study the impact of interdisciplinary programs on the curriculum and scheduling, the promotion and tenure process, and financial management in the various schools.*
- 2.3. *Appointments, promotion and tenure.* The departmental plans allude to some of these difficulties, but most of the following ideas were suggested to Caucus 3 during its review of the earlier plans.
- 2.3.1 Managing the search process. Appointments in Department X often have consequences for Department Y. Search committees should be appointed with due consideration. [Similar logic applies in the sciences to the Schools of Engineering and Medicine as well.] The College has recently encouraged this. *See 2.2.3 above.*
- 2.3.2 The first year. New faculty need to have special consideration both for their first-year teaching assignments and for developing a long-range plan for effective teaching, as well as for getting a jump start on scholarship and grant support. Departments should manage this responsibility within the framework of their instructional plans. *Yep.*
- 2.3.3 Retention and promotion. The departmental standards for tenure and promotion should be formalized as rapidly as possible. Standards for meeting the teaching criteria for tenure are much in need of revision; the continuing reliance on student ratings as the sole measure of value added to instructional activity is counterproductive. The CAPT Report may have to undergo minor revisions to take this into account. *We encourage the Dean and the Provost to complete their review of departmental implementation of College regulations regarding tenure and promotion.*
- 2.3.4 Appointments, tenure and promotion in an interdisciplinary environment. It is proverbial wisdom that junior faculty cannot be tenured for interdisciplinary scholarship. Or is it only for “interdepartmental” or “interschool” scholarship? If we are moving toward a more interdisciplinary environment for graduate

work, are changes needed in the way we evaluate interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching for tenure? *See 2.2.3 above.*

- 2.3.5 The Role of the PTRC. During the CAPT study, numerous improvements were made in department and college/school procedures for tenure and promotion. However, the role and procedures of the PTRC was not well defined, with the result that it is now viewed by junior faculty as a kind of “Star Chamber.” Appropriate procedures and constraints on the PTRC to remedy both the reality and the (mis)perception need to be developed and promulgated. *The Administration should be made aware of these concerns.*
- 2.4. *Flexibility in teaching assignments and formats.* In a decentralized management scheme, departments have the greatest stake in managing their teaching mission effectively. Chairs need the flexibility to define, in consultation with the College, what the teaching mission of the department is, and then to manage it independently.
- 2.4.1 Department-based management of teaching. Departments should develop plans to discharge their teaching obligations under the oversight of directors of undergraduate and graduate study, and with due regard to the scholarly activities of the faculty. *See 2.2.2 above.*
- 2.4.2 Team teaching. Team teaching can be regulated most effectively at the Department level; the College should not feel obligated to provide a “one-size-fits-all” policy for teaching credits in team-taught courses. In principle, department chairs should be able to agree on a course-by-course basis. *See 2.2.2 above.*
- 2.4.3 Modular or unconventional course formats. The growth of interdisciplinary graduate programs poses special challenges to the conventional scheduling of graduate courses. Undergraduate courses – such as those providing advanced learning experiences – can also benefit from flexibility in teaching format, including “half semester,” “May-mester” and intensive short-course formats. *See 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 above.*
- 2.5. *Instructional and research staff.* High-quality staff free faculty to do things that faculty do best, and are more effective than faculty at many tasks central to research and scholarship. These needs vary from department to department. *We recognize that there is a high level of dissatisfaction with the policies and performance of the Division of Human Resources at Vanderbilt. Some of the issues raised below go beyond considerations of administrative competence, thus indicating a need for a systematic review and repair of the Division and other units implicated in the items below. Furthermore, Vanderbilt must recognize the costs of competing in both the local and national markets for administrative, clerical and research staff. The points raised in the following list are worthy of detailed study and prompt action.*
- 2.5.1 College vs departmental administrative services. The College should investigate the trade-offs between providing centralized services – such as financial analysis and student evaluation data – and letting individual departments manage these functions.
- 2.5.2 Staff development. Many departments need administrative services that cannot be met by the staff categories authorized by the College. Personnel policies should favor the hiring and retention of staff members capable of running con-

ferences, managing Web pages, handling mid-level computing tasks, helping with proposals and similar tasks requiring more than routine secretarial training.

2.5.3 Staff salaries. Several departments mentioned the problem of competitiveness in salaries and benefits. This is particularly pressing as we compete for higher-quality staff with more capacity in information technology. Both job descriptions and salary levels need to be re-evaluated.

2.5.4 Long-range funding for staff. Presently, instructional staff are budgeted against expected tuition income. There is no analog in the College for research staff, leaving research equipment in which the College has invested millions of dollars to be maintained by graduate students and research associates who are temporary and who often do not have the requisite specialized expertise. An appropriate mechanism for supporting these facilities from combinations of user fees and indirect costs is needed.

2.6. *Career Center*. Several departments mentioned the inadequacy of the Career Center in really helping graduates locate first jobs. *We concur with the perception that the Career Center is inadequate and recommend that a qualitative and cost-benefit analysis be conducted to determine whether the funds used to support the Career Center might be better invested elsewhere.*

3. Information technology and research infrastructure. Although the College appeared a decade and a half ago to be in the forefront of this area (e.g., in the “Mathematica across the Curriculum” initiative), we now seem to lag well behind our peers and need to examine our commitment to continual improvements in our management of information technology.

3.1. *Support for information infrastructure and facilities*. An investment-oriented strategy is clearly needed to bring our IT infrastructure up to the appropriate level, particularly in departmental and College offices.

3.1.1 Computerizing College administration. Nothing shows our IT weakness more clearly than the fact that the College still operates with a largely paper administrative system. We need to put *all* routine administrative functions – including student evaluations, minutes of College meetings and course enrollment information – on the Web, eliminate paper distributions from the CAS, and provide all data for Departmental analysis in downloadable electronic form. *This is a University-Central issue more than just a College One. We agree fully that Vanderbilt is behind many other universities in this regard. We recommend that University Central should move quickly to bring our information technology infrastructure into the 21st century. This may require a significant financial investment, accompanied by a change in culture.*

3.1.2 Acquiring up-to-date scheduling software. OASIS was designed a long time ago and is no longer adequate. It is inflexible and provides little feedback in electronic form to faculty and administrative staff. The College should move more aggressively to get a 21st century software package for these functions. *We agree wholeheartedly. See 3.1.1 above.*

3.1.3 Pushing for a paperless University. At long last, some grants accounting information is being made available over the Internet to researchers. The College

should take an aggressive stance with respect to computerizing all University-related administrative functions, including purchase requisitions, personnel action forms, and property accounting functions. *See 3.1.1 above. We agree, but recognize that with regard to Human Resource Services (Personnel), a significant decrease in the error rate is required lest errors get propagated more widely and rapidly.*

- 3.1.4 Centralized research support. In the sciences, certain centralized services should be provided on a recharge basis for analytical and shop services. Business plans for these facilities probably need to be approved at the Provost's level (presumably by the Associate Provost for Research) to avoid waste and duplication of effort and facilities. Computer support is particularly lacking! *See the analysis of the Caucus 4 report.*
 - 3.1.5 Instructional laboratory facilities. Departments should be challenged to demonstrate that the instructional laboratories (in all disciplines, not just science!) keep pace with facilities available at our peer institutions. This could be done, for example, by asking faculty when they travel to give seminars, take a look at the status of instructional facilities and report back. This also should be a frequent agenda item for the University's development staff. *Yep.*
 - 3.1.6 Faculty use of information technology. The College has been developing more and more electronically equipped classrooms. A surprising number of faculty still do not make use of these resources. We need to find out why. Is it that we naturally are hospitable to Luddites? Or do faculty need more help and opportunities to learn to use these resources effectively? *We agree that faculty need to be encouraged to utilize information technology, but, as we will discuss in our review of the Caucus 4 report, there needs to be a larger University commitment to supporting the academic information infrastructure.*
- 3.2. *New IT resources for the College.* Catching up in information technology will require investments in some new resources, many of which can probably be funded through grant or in-kind contributions.
- 3.2.1 Digital media center. Such a center would provide expert resources to faculty from all departments for development of instructional materials. Financing for such a center – e.g., backcharging to departments—will be a ticklish issue here. *See the analysis of the Caucus 4 report.*
 - 3.2.2 Digital services center. This center would be available to faculty and staff for handling routine service requests. The tradeoffs between such a center and departmental-level capacity for handling information or digital services will have to be studied carefully. *See the analysis of the Caucus 4 report.*
 - 3.2.3 Automating University functions. Many aspects of procurement, property accounting, general ledger functions and other research-related administrative functions remain manual or semi-manual, leading to mistakes and extra work

for faculty and staff. The College should press for upgrades of administrative systems in University Central. *We agree wholeheartedly. See 3.1.1 above.*

3.2.4 Web-site development. Most of the work involved in Web site development for departments, courses and scholarly enterprises is now being done by faculty and students. This is not usually an effective use of faculty time. A modest investment in staff would have a huge payoff in enhancing Vanderbilt's appearance on the Web. *See the analysis of the Caucus 4 report.*

4. Clever but inexpensive initiatives. Many things that would enhance the scholarly reputation of the College and its faculty are not all that expensive. Nevertheless, they require some budgeting and, in some cases, restructuring of programs.

4.1. *Research stipends for students.* Undergraduate and graduate research fellowships for the Robert Penn Warren Center and other College centers would be an important and relatively inexpensive way to signal the partnership between faculty and students in the scholarship that informs the life of a university college. *We have already addressed this.*

4.2. *Scholarship policies.* Reserving a few Honors scholarships for top performers *after* the freshman year could aid in retention of our best students when they have shown that they in fact can do exceedingly well. One way to do this is to earmark funds offered to incoming freshmen but not used (because they go somewhere else) for a competition for sophomore scholarships. *There is no mechanism in the College of Arts and Science to award first-time merit-based financial aid to students after matriculation. This is an excellent suggestion worthy of immediate implementation.*

4.3. *Admissions policies.* More targeted admissions searches are needed to change the mix of student interests, generate a more differentiated and diverse student body, and search for specific talents and experience. [In plain text, fewer pre-professional students?] *We agree with the need for a more diverse student body, and believe that adjustments to the recruiting and admission policies may be one way to accomplish this.*

4.4. *Web sharing of faculty expertise.* Development of a Vanderbilt intranet-based, searchable interdisciplinary clearinghouse research and teaching interests (a different kind of "faculty registry") would make it easier to develop intra-University collaborations. This is in principle already possible by searching the Web, but requires that faculty all have up-to-date Web *résumés*. *Yes.*

4.5. *Web sharing of specialized facilities.* Creation of a Web-based, searchable index to Vanderbilt research facilities and service capabilities that can be searched from both inside and outside the University. This could be particularly useful in generating external support for specialized analytical or research facilities. *Yes.*

4.6. *Encourage grantsmanship in humanities.* While grant awards in the humanities tend to be small, more entrepreneurial activity in this sphere can be encouraged and rewarded. Sponsored Research could be asked to help identify funding sources and programs. The SR search capability for faculty research interests is a big help here. *We agree that the College or the University should provide specialized staff support for pursuing grant opportunities in the arts and humanities.*

- 4.7. *More intellectual outreach to Nashville.* Student docents at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, faculty speakers for the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce, more faculty interaction with the local entrepreneurial community, developing more flexible mechanisms for initiating collaborations with local industry, Web-based and paper information on specialized Vanderbilt expertise, ... The list is endless. *Yes, yes, yes...*