Background
At the request of Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Digital Learning Cynthia Cyrus, Cindy Funk (Director of the Center for Student Professional Development) convened a group of faculty and staff to help create a shared vision for the College Halls – the university’s newest living/learning facility opened in August 2014.

The Creative Planning Group included faculty from the four colleges/schools: Dr. Thomas Withrow (VUSE), Dr. Victoria Davis (Peabody), Dr. Gina Frieden (Peabody), Dr. Bettina Warnke (A&S, Ingram Commons), Dr. Elizabeth Meadows (A&S, Curb Center), Mitchell Korn (Blair) and key administrators: Matthew Sinclair (College Halls Area Coordinator), Traci Ray (Associate Director of Living Learning Communities), G.L. Black (Director, Student Accountability, Community Standards, and Academic Integrity), Mark Forrester (University Chaplain), and Cindy Funk (Center for Student Professional Development).

Process
Meg Arnold, Associate Director of the Center for Student Professional Development, facilitated four meetings totaling 13 hours with the goal of creating a shared definition of “engaged living and learning community” and a vision of what this might look like within the College Halls. The Creative Planning Group first articulated ideals for the halls, including the four affirmations that students make upon admission to the College Halls community, with the emphasis on being a good student-citizen of VU promoting the values espoused by our Community Creed (Scholarship, Honesty, Civility, Accountability, Caring, Discovery, Celebration); advancing the cause of diversity and valuing human difference; and participation in civic, social, and intellectual life.

The group was divided into two groups to develop a working definition of engaged community. Group 1 described the experience of living in the community with words like holistic, comprehensive, needs-based, mission and purpose-driven, facilitated, reflective, resulting in active citizenship and lifelong learning sustainable within the College Halls and the community at large. The definition that emerged in Group 2 described the experience of living in the community a little differently, using keywords like student-citizen, safe, inclusive, spotlighting skills, passions, sustained interaction, collaboration, creative development of community, service to greater community, students as agents of change and producers of knowledge, connection among Vanderbilt, Nashville, and global communities, and opportunities for developing civic, intellectual, social, and spiritual community.
Themes were identified from the two groups’ definitions and the following working definition was developed. The group agreed that this needed to be a working definition so students will be able to make it their own as the College Hall communities are established over the 2014-15 academic year and beyond.

**Engaged Community Definition (Working)**

Warren and Moore Colleges are home to a group of individuals with diverse interests, expertise, and experiences, who live, learn, and work together to create an environment that fosters and facilitates the intersection of self, mission, and passion applied to real-world practice.

Students will have the opportunity to define and build a lasting community that values and supports thinking, learning, and acting at the individual, local, and global levels.

**Shared Vision**

Once the group had agreed to a working definition, it moved forward with suggestions for an evolving, shared “vision map” for the College Halls that would help support building the living/learning communities over the next year or two. The group’s meetings had identified numerous experiences, resources, and competencies that would be important to integrate into this informal vision map. In addition, the group identified five key activities:

1) Trans-disciplinary teams to work on needs-based projects
2) Authentic, facilitated dialogue
3) Inside out/outside in cultural orientation
4) Student-led governance structure
5) Reflection
The group envisioned learning will occur through projects, events/experiences, and facility space.

1) Projects: community, needs-based, student-led governance structure, multi-media approach
2) Events/Experiences: arts, inside out/inside in cultural impact
3) Space: fostering dialogue, reflection, creativity, choice

Creating the Road Map
The group had identified a number of experiences for students that develop them individually, as contributors in their local (College Halls) community, and as engaged citizens of the world. Members of the group agreed that the next step was to involve the Faculty Directors of Warren and Moore Colleges, and the group agreed that it will be important for the individuals most responsible for building the College Halls community – the Faculty Directors – to affirm features of the shared vision as they move forward in their own further development of common vision strategies.

Final Steps of Group
The group recommended that Cindy, Matthew, Cynthia Cyrus, Doug Fisher (Faculty Director, Warren College), and Jim Lovensheimer (Faculty Director, Moore College) meet and review the work of the Creative Planning Group. That meeting took place on June 27, 2014.

Faculty Directors Jim and Doug expressed gratitude for the extensive developmental work of the Creative Planning Group, and everyone agreed that the Faculty Directors would determine actions that may grow from the group’s findings. Subsequently, the Faculty Directors stated that they, working with the Halls’ graduate fellows, will integrate the Creative Planning Group’s ideas into their planning for realizing a shared, continuing vision for living and learning at VU’s new College Halls.

Their responsibilities now discharged, it is important to note that all the members of the Creative Planning Group articulated their interest in continuing to contribute to developing and supporting the College Halls’ shared vision.