

Chancellor Gordon Gee's Spring Faculty Assembly Address

E. Gordon Gee, Chancellor, Vanderbilt University
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Student Life Center
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Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. And thank you, Craig Anne.

Craig Anne Heflinger will succeed Marshall Summar as secretary to the Faculty Senate in the next academic year. I want to thank Marshall Summar and outgoing Senate Chair Bob Thompson for their positive leadership over this past year. I eagerly anticipate working with Craig Anne and with John McCarthy, professor of German, who will succeed Bob Thompson in guiding the Senate's active involvement with Vanderbilt's life, and its open communication with administration.

And I would like personally to thank our opening talent: John Gore, who will make Vanderbilt's new Institute of Imaging Science one of the top research and educational centers of its kind in the world.

The spring is such a time to celebrate. I am glad that we keep the Spring Faculty Assembly as a seasonal observance, that we are able to honor careers in full flower and bloom. Every spring at this meeting, I am able to bestow distinction on those faculty members who have assisted Vanderbilt in its ever-renewing growth, who have trained that growth more closely with our university's truest goals and mission.

First, I am honored to grant the Madison Sarratt Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. This year gives me the pleasure of handing this award to Jo-Anne Bachorowski, associate professor of psychology.

Jo-Anne's teaching evaluations from abnormal psychology and clinical psychology regularly 'knock the top off the scale,' according to Randolph Blake, her department chair. Her students praise her for stimulating their interest in topics that can sometimes seem overwhelmingly complex.

Jo-Anne Bachorowski not only holds herself to a high standard in her own teaching, but she has committed herself to the university's teaching mission by becoming one of the rewriters of the Arts and Science curriculum and by publicly advocating for the new curriculum before it came up for a formal vote. Jo-Anne has served on the department of psychology's undergraduate curriculum committee, and has played a constructive role in crafting modifications to the major requirements in psychology. Her role as Director of Clinical Studies within Psychology involves duties that bear on the teaching of graduate as well as undergraduate students.

So in appreciation of her efforts to keep improving the quality of teaching at our university, both personally and structurally, Vanderbilt presents Jo-Anne Bachorowski with a pewter cup and a cheque for \$2,500. Thank you, Jo-Anne.

Now comes the Ingalls Award – the Ellen Gregg Ingalls Award for Excellence in Classroom Teaching. This year, Vanderbilt bestows the honor upon Kane Jennings, assistant professor of chemical engineering.

Professor Jennings has been working his way toward the Ingalls Award for some time, but a far shorter time than might be expected. In 2002, he won the School of Engineering's Award for Excellence in Teaching, after only five years at Vanderbilt.

Kane's students are known for freely offering to anyone who will listen their praise of his innovative

approaches to teaching, for his ability to understand and relate to them, for his exciting interactive lecturing style, for his level of preparedness and professionalism, and for how he inspires them in their own work.

He is a great supporter of undergraduate research and of the teaching components associated with it. Kane has helped to create a course, which introduces freshman engineers to the frontiers of chemical engineering, and has developed another course that enhances students' "molecular intuition." He encourages undergraduates to perform cutting-edge research in his laboratory. Two of his students, Tracy Holmes and Tom Niedringhaus, have won national awards for their research in the past academic year.

Kane's personal commitment to excellence in teaching and the influence he has had on the quality of teaching across this institution have increased every year he has been at Vanderbilt. So Vanderbilt honors him with this award: a pewter cup and a cheque for \$2,500. Thank you, Kane.

The next award I have the pleasure of granting is the Harvie Branscomb Distinguished Professor Award.

This year's Branscomb Distinguished Professor is Harold Moses, Hortense B. Ingram Professor of Molecular Oncology, professor of cancer biology, medicine, and pathology, and director emeritus of the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center. Dr. Moses is giving a seminar in Florida today, so cannot join us. But for his colleagues, and for those of you unfamiliar with the legend of Hal Moses, please allow me to say a few words in his honor.

It seems almost superfluous to give Hal Moses an award, or maybe the opposite: that even our giving him every award the university has power to bestow would not be honor enough. Dr. Moses was founding director of the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, and brought the Center to its current status as the only Comprehensive Cancer Center in Tennessee, a status it maintains annually.

Under Hal's stewardship, the Center: recruited 100 new faculty members; multiplied its NCI funding six fold; brought in more than \$180 million in its Imagine-a-World-Without-Cancer campaign; and secured special relationships with such philanthropic interests as Frances Preston and the TJ Martell Foundation.

And beyond solidifying the strength of VICC locally, Dr. Moses has ensured that Vanderbilt's ability to serve the human community extends well beyond our campus. The relationship Dr. Moses cultivated with Meharry Medical College was a major springboard for the Meharry-Vanderbilt Alliance. The Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center's participation in the Southern Community Cohort Study, begun with Hal's instigation, will allow much insight not only into cancer, but also into other major illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease.

Hal is currently president of the Association of American Cancer Institutes, and serves as chair or member of scientific advisory committees for 13 different cancer centers across the country. He is past-president of the American Association for Cancer Research. He is currently the honorary chair of the coalition developing Tennessee's first Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan. And to ensure an educational resource for students for whom a college education may be out of range financially, he serves as a trustee for his alma mater, Berea College.

What Hal Moses has done with his life as a doctor is the best tribute to the power of a philosophy of service. We are so fortunate to have him continuing as an advisor and senior scientist at the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center. His contributions as a scientist, teacher, mentor and intellectual leader have greatly improved Vanderbilt and will benefit society for generations. He is a credit to us.

Fourth, let me bestow the distinction of the Alexander Heard Distinguished Professor upon Kathryn

Edwards, professor of pediatric infectious diseases and vice chair of clinical research in the department of pediatrics.

Dr. Edwards' scholarship focuses on the safety and immunogenicity of vaccines, and the study of vaccine-preventable diseases in children. She is an expert on pertussis, and on the immunogenicity and reactogenicity of acellular and whole-cell pertussis vaccines. Her work in 1986 showing that the acellular vaccine for pertussis was safer than the whole-cell vaccine changed the vaccination strategy for all the children in this country.

Dr. Edwards has contributed greatly to the prevention of pneumococcal infections, particularly through her participation in the original randomized control trial in children of the conjugated pneumococcal vaccine. The work of this trial was central to the FDA's decision to license the heptavalent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, which in young children has led to a 90 percent reduction in pneumococcal meningitis and bacteremia.

Kathryn Edwards has also worked extensively on smallpox vaccination, performing and publishing a critical trial demonstrating immunogenicity and reactogenicity of undiluted and diluted smallpox vaccine. The results of this trial broadened understanding of poxvirus vaccination, and increased our capacity to defend human life against smallpox.

Dr. Edwards' work has been instrumental to the definition and discovery of new syndromes. During the smallpox vaccination trial, Dr. Edwards and her colleagues observed in their patients a previously undescribed dermatologic manifestation related to the vaccine. Kathryn's careful observation of her patients has led to the discovery of yet another childhood clinical syndrome, PFAPA, which is characterized by periodic fever, aphthous stomatitis, pharyngitis, and cervical adenitis.

Kathryn Edwards devotes herself to improving the health of children not only through her own research and clinical attention, but also by enabling the work of others. At Vanderbilt, she established the Pediatric Clinical Research Office to facilitate clinical research for all members of her department.

She is a founding member and board member of the Cumberland Pediatric Foundation, whose mission is to improve the quality and efficacy and lower the cost of pediatric-healthcare services in the Cumberland region.

This year, the university is proud to give to Kathryn Edwards the Heard Award's silver tray and cheque for \$2,500. Dr. Edwards works tirelessly to defend children against disease through her scholarship and service to humankind. For that, we all thank you, Kathryn.

Finally, I have the privilege of honoring Gary Jensen with the title of Joe B. Wyatt Distinguished University Professor. Gary is professor of sociology and religious studies and chair of the department of sociology. The honor he receives this afternoon brings with it a silver tray, and the amount of \$2500.

The list of Professor Jensen's specializations is always a thrill to recite: his research focuses on problems of gender, justice, law, social control, criminology, delinquency and deviance. He is an expert on witch crazes. His most recent work, *The Path of the Devil: The Story of a university Chancellor* – actually a study of early modern witch-hunts, will be published this coming fall.

As a consummate interdisciplinarian, Gary has regularly committed his varied strengths and expertise to the mindful evolution of our university. In 1995, he developed the first program budget for the African-American studies program and expanded the roster of sociology courses available in that program. He was a major source of support for the development of Vanderbilt's women's studies program. The

modifications to the Task Force on Public Policy Studies, undertaken while Gary was chair, increased its cross-department functions and cross-school appeal. He served on the first Task Force for Service Learning at Vanderbilt, teaching the first formally recognized service learning course in the College of Arts and Science.

His field seminar on justice and corrections has drawn strong undergraduate participation from students in both Arts and Science and Peabody College. Three of his undergraduate courses are cross-listed with other programs. He has served on PhD Committees in economics, history and political science.

He is an avid champion of students' intellectual development. In his 16 years at Vanderbilt, Professor Jensen has chaired fifteen dissertations to completion, including projects on racial environments and prison violence and on the determinants of rape processing.

Gary Jensen's record of publication and disciplinary participation is as rich and innovative as his service at our university. He has published precedent-setting articles on public beliefs about punishment and their effect on delinquent behavior; on the influence of perceived risk on self-reports of delinquency; on the effect of family characteristics on delinquent behavior; on gender differences and variations in delinquency; on the influence of television on crime; on the effect of prohibition on murder and alcohol use; and on the sociological explanation of homicide variations for the 20th Century.

The Opportunity Development Center has presented him with its award for Outstanding Contributions to Affirmative Action and Human Rights.

He has also received the Mary Jane Werthan Award for his contributions to the progress of women at Vanderbilt University.

I am pleased beyond measure to present the Joe B. Wyatt Award to Gary Jensen. No faculty member could deserve it more. Congratulations, Gary.

Ladies and gentlemen, we assemble in the spring for several reasons, to honor your accomplishments chief among them. But this Assembly also allows us a last moment of communication before the academic year closes, and we all scatter to four directions. This year's speech will be light and fleet – I promise – the better to let you back out into the spring, but it does deal with questions of great importance to our university's future: how to maintain the remarkable momentum we have accumulated; and how to create structures and practices that can adapt to and contain safely, over time, the changes in our university's culture.

We continue to build on the strengths of this extraordinary and productive faculty body, employing mindful strategy both in our hiring new professors and in maintaining our ability to make critical investments in recruitment and retention.

Over the past five years, we have concentrated on shaping a faculty body of high quality and strong productivity that it is also collegial and collaborative. We want to create an environment where all ranks of faculty have incentive to collaborate with, guide, and mentor their colleagues in transinstitutional efforts. We concentrate on that creation and refinement for a singular goal and aim.

Vanderbilt aims at creating a "horizontal university" composed of centers and institutes that uses the strengths of our schools and departments, a new paradigm for an institution.

To this end, we must continue to evolve our procedures and structures so that scholars are able to migrate and grow intellectually, less confined by the vertical structure of the traditional academic

department.

We examine our progress constantly to find what impediments we can eliminate from our current organization that could slow our growth to pre-eminence. Hiring, as evidenced by the number of people in this room, has not proven to be a problem; in the last three academic years, we have made significant joint appointments between departments and between departments and other interdisciplinary centers, and hired forty new faculty members to Academic Venture Capital Funded Centers.

Our ability to make joint tenure-track appointments, as we have with Steve Tepper, associate director of the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy, and assistant professor of sociology – as we have with Donna Webb, just hired as an assistant professor of biological sciences in a joint funding and recruitment effort with the Kennedy Center – that ability encourages us to look for yet more ways to facilitate intellectual and disciplinary flexibility.

But if hiring itself does not limit us, where might we unnecessarily restrict our faculty from achieving their full growth and success and maturity? Do our non-traditional intentions ever clash with our post-ETOB economic model? If department-specific grants, clinical money, soft money, tuition revenues, only allow so much room to move, then what other sources of funding will allow greater freedom of what, how, and where scholars can study?

We must adjust our academic reward structures, economic models, and disciplinary boundaries so that they facilitate ways for scholars to research, discover, and teach across the university. We must make ourselves “post-post-ETOB,” not only in our structures but also in our thinking, in what we conceive of as possible to do. The generic noun “faculty” represents in fact, at this institution, a vast and complex mixture of investigators, researchers, and teachers, all with different requirements for support. We so obviously need processes that can accommodate these differences that can ensure both pre- and post-tenure scholars the freedom to expand beyond the horizons in their thinking and their work.

How liberated faculty members are to teach and do research across the university, how they choose to invest their time intellectually, turns out to have much to do with the manner in which we choose to invest in them.

So, at an institutional level, we seek to discern how to value how faculty spend their time in a more consistent way, to conceive of our reward structures differently, in order that talent does not funnel out of our university, but rather disseminates over and across. As all things are interconnected, such investments in the creativity of our faculty will also prove to have inestimable benefits to the health of our graduate programs. It is necessary for us to negotiate the time for faculty to work in ways that make real Vanderbilt’s strategic priorities for itself, and to reward their contribution to the whole. New mechanisms, new models, will allow faculty to move freely outside of their departments, to fulfill their departmental obligations while also supporting Vanderbilt’s goals for itself.

To begin with, we can take as an example the model of the appointment to university-professorship. A faculty member who bears the title of university professor is free to work in multiple schools and colleges, as does John Gore, our opening talent – whose university professorship includes faculty appointments in biomedical engineering, physics, astronomy and in the Medical Center. Faculty hired as university professors are intended to work throughout the entire university. What can we learn from that model that we can apply across all of Vanderbilt? Can we centralize Vanderbilt’s resources to create university fellowships that will allow a similar flexibility? Could we give block grants to individual departments as incentive for them to increase the mobility of their faculty? What sort of intellectual passports do faculty members need to make each of them in effect and consequence a university professor?

And then, once we create such mobility, the university will no longer seem like a series of isolated silos, but more like a web, with radiating strands of collegial co-operation and partnership clustering at anchor points like knots in a net.

Dealing with the issues of reward, which arise that new configuration, will be a challenge and a pleasure. Our joint appointments are already forcing us to develop new models for pre-tenure and post-tenure review. In the process of institutionalizing these models, we will address fundamental questions of how to recognize a diversity of faculty achievement in a changing environment.

The education of our undergraduates forces us to another fundamental question of the relationships between and among disciplines. Cleavages between professional education and undergraduate education are beneath our vision for ourselves, and widen between colleges and schools the gullies and gaps, which we are seeking to suture shut. Vanderbilt's goal is not to be an intellectual polytechnic, but a true university.

We find an arena for the transcendence of disciplines in our mentoring of undergraduate research, in our encouraging their increasing ventures into the professions.

The issue of faculty engagement with the experience of undergraduates is a profound one. Undergraduate education is the very heart of this university, as it is with all great universities, which are not so known because they have a great school of law, or a fine medical school, but because of their undergraduate programs. And unlike Tom Wolfe, who was with us on Monday, I am not quite ready to give up my faith in our undergraduates – and how could I.

The quality of the students applying to Vanderbilt this year made us able to become one of the most selective institutions in the country. And our freshman retention passed the ninety-five per cent benchmark for the first time ever. Students are committing themselves to us, and sticking with that commitment. To ignore the potential they offer us would be a grave oversight.

Our faith in the capacity of our undergraduates is driving the astonishing success of our ENGAGE Program, the most comprehensive program of its kind for pre-admitting high-achieving undergraduate students into graduate and professional programs. This year, those programs at Vanderbilt reviewed applications from the almost 500 students who applied to ENGAGE.

Our professional schools should not only radiate outward toward the larger community, but also spoke inward, toward our undergraduate population, toward the center point of our own community's heart. The goal of re-integrating professional education with the intellectual life of the university requires a deep participation in undergraduate life.

As our undergraduates begin to focus increasingly on their graduate training, so Vanderbilt's professional schools are also seeking engagement with our undergraduates. Owen Graduate School of Management has found one way, but an exemplary way to apply its considerable powers toward undergraduate education, through its "Accelerator" program, which it launches this summer. Accelerator will expose undergraduates to management education. Owen will, through that means, address itself to Vanderbilt's very center.

Our community's belief in our undergraduates is of utmost primacy in the renewal of our life as an institution. Through the eyes of each incoming class, we can begin to see what is possible, what we have made possible, what they will take simply for granted. Eventually, first-year students will see upon their arrival only one university, one great network of exchange that clusters and gathers at transinstitutional centers and departments. They will not even know that there ever were any boundaries to be busted

through, since they, and their professors, will always have had such access to an array of disciplines.

We can keep this future in mind when we regard the transformations to our landscape and skyline. Every new addition to our university's physical structure transforms the figure we cut not only in the minds of incoming students, but also the figure we cut in our own minds, as though we had been given an extra limb, or an extra sense, and our potential expanded as we learned how to use it.

Physically altering a landscape is practically a declaration of mission. The way we plan our campus announces our intentions. I cannot wait for you to see what our renovations and transformations of Buttrick Hall declare about what we want to be. Buttrick Hall is much more than just a construction project; it is a symbolic reckoning of where we want to go.

But, beyond or beneath metaphor – please allow me to say that Buttrick is an excellent building – an absolutely state-of-the-art hive for the humanities. The building itself makes one's thoughts vault upward, with huge porthole windows on the top floor, and a four-story atrium caged with soaring Gothic arches made of tube steel.

Buttrick will open in August in time for the next academic year, and will house faculty and facilities for seven different transinstitutional centers. It will be home to the Learning Resource Center and to "mentor rooms" for graduate teaching fellows. Buttrick adds theatres and auditoriums, seminar rooms, terraces for having receptions, and twenty full classrooms to the space currently available at the university. Trust that it will be a busy building indeed.

We reconstruct Buttrick according to the same philosophical approach we have learned from the success of MRBIII as an interdisciplinary center; and which informs our transformation into the system of College Halls, of which Freshman Commons is but the first phase. We seek in every decision to liberate our students and faculty from the social and intellectual silos to which handed-down habit may have confined them.

Humans who share space as colleagues and neighbors, every interaction no longer artificially ordered by or limited to the subject matter of a meeting, become more and more likely to combine their ideas in creative and unexpected ways. There is a great importance to the shape of a space, to what it allows you to do, and how it allows you to think. We are wise to invest in space, which mixes formal and informal interactions among scholars, and sets transinstitutional work as a priority, as where people live, rather than as a meeting to which they travel always knowing that they will return to their home base afterwards. We are going to make the mixture home base.

A university should be a university, a one-ness of route and goal and intention. Somehow, over time and disuse, that idea has come to seem very radical. But, as with all things that return to their root, it makes perfect sense. In alignment with sense, then, our practice becomes figuring out ways to create that university, and committing ourselves to the methods that we find.

We should be as willing to invest in our community as we are to invest in recruitment and in research.

We can create new habits. We can train ourselves to think of what we are as a constantly emerging university. In fifty years, we will be such a unified entity, one transinstitutional university, based on the seeds we have already planted and are planting now, on the clearing we are doing to make our evolution possible.

When Buttrick Hall opens its doors, you will see the first intimations of what Vanderbilt will become over the decades. You will perceive a glimmer of what is to come, what is encoded now and is steadily unfurling

itself. The decisions we make over even the next five years will enable that growth, will pull from its path any obstacles or impediments, structural, or in our own thinking, that could choke it off or prevent its bloom.

The natural growth that occurs on our campus every spring, the persistent and urgent flowering of new life, is change. Universities, – whether they are aware of it or not – are in the habit of changing. Disciplines we take for granted now – such as molecular biology, which did not even exist on this campus 40 years ago – we now do not even see as exceptional or new because they are so part of our language and landscape. But they were once innovations.

In a strange way, part of a university's identity is the transformation of our identity. Because new knowledge simply is. New people are. And how can a university help but to change, with every infusion of new faculty, with every new incoming class? How can change not happen?

And beyond that: how can we ever know how good we could be if we do not change ourselves and keep growing? How are we to find all of the possibilities of the universe that are available to us? How can we ever make them available to us, if we do not configure ourselves in new ways?

Unlike some of my peers, unlike some other university presidents, I am not obsessed with differentiating among people, or trying to limit what they are capable of. I think, and I believe this as strongly as anything I say today, that the business of a university is to see that everyone succeeds. What good end can come from dividing people against one another and even against themselves, when they should be united for a common cause?

My business for our common cause, for the coming year, is just this: to continue to nudge and goad us to think about our current structures so that the individuals who will join us as colleagues in the future, and especially the individuals who are already in this room, will be valued as they should be by the practices of this vibrant university.

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