

## TODAY'S HEADLINES

### **NEW** Top graduates honored with Founder's Medals

by Amy Wolf

Top scholars from Vanderbilt's undergraduate and professional schools were honored with Founder's Medals during Commencement on May 11.



Photo by Neil Brake

Since 1877, a gold medal has been awarded to the student graduating at the top of his or her class from each of Vanderbilt's schools. These gold medals are called Founder's Medals in honor of university patron Cornelius Vanderbilt, who made a specific contribution to endow the awards in their first year.

Top graduates from each school were awarded the 2007 Founder's Medals. They are (l-r) Christopher Randolph, College of Arts and Science; Peter Cain, Blair School of Music; Michael Roach, School of Engineering; Courtney Miller, Peabody College; Frances Robin Riley, School of Nursing; Bana Shomali, Owen Graduate School of Management; Melanie Trexler, divinity school; Cory Kandestin, law school; and Kristina Collins, School of Medicine.

Chancellor Gordon Gee presented the Founder's Medals to the following students:

**Peter Laurence Cain**, Davidson, N.C., Founder's Medalist for Blair School of Music, graduated with a bachelor of music in clarinet. Cain served as principal clarinet of the Vanderbilt Orchestra and Wind Ensemble and performed with several other groups including the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and the Huntsville Symphony. In his first year, the Blair faculty awarded Cain the Margaret Branscomb Prize in recognition of "the musical and personal qualities that best exemplify the spirit and standards of the school." Last year he received the most prestigious honor bestowed on a student at Blair, the Theodore Presser Award, which honors one junior showing musical and academic excellence. While at Vanderbilt Cain also volunteered his time tutoring, giving clarinet lessons to underprivileged children, and building homes for Habitat for Humanity.

**Kristina Marie Collins**, Peoria, Ariz., Founder's Medalist for the School of Medicine, graduated with a doctor of medicine, specializing in dermatology. Collins earned a bachelor of science degree from Arizona State University, graduating summa cum laude with a double major in microbiology/bacteriology and political science. One of Collins' greatest accomplishments while at Vanderbilt was co-founding a highly successful student-run free clinic in Nashville called the Shade Tree Family Clinic. Collins used a variety of skills to help organize everything from funding to patient care. Along with earning high grades and being inducted into the Alpha

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## CALENDAR

3/12-5/11 - 'God Breathes' exhibit on display at BCC

4/4-5/30 - Walking Club steps out

5/14 - Postal rates increase, standards change

5/15 - Music historian to speak at VU's Curb Center

5/16 - Health Plus observes National Employee Health and Fitness Day

5/16 - Summer Academy applications due

5/16 - 'Lunch and Learn' session on tuition benefit

5/19-20 - 21st Avenue to close for construction of new pedestrian bridge

5/21 - Violist to be featured at Blair chamber music performance

5/23 - Free skin cancer screening for employees

5/23, 25, 29 - Open forums for new eProcurement features

6/4-8 - Blair offering new summer course



The University Calendar is the best way to find out what's happening around campus. To promote an event, go to <http://calendar.vanderbilt.edu> and click the "Submit Your Event" link. To listen to podcasts of selected events, visit VUCast: Vanderbilt's News Network at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/news>.

Omega Alpha honor society as a junior, Collins created a video conferencing series for young girls focusing on body image, self-esteem, media influences and eating disorders. Her program will be made into a video to help girls in Nashville and around the country. Collins will complete a transitional year at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine in Chattanooga and then serve a residency in dermatology at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

**Cory Dean Kandestin**, Montreal, Founder's Medalist for the law school. Kandestin graduated with a doctor of jurisprudence and was at the top of his class in the law and business program. Before attending Vanderbilt, he earned a bachelor of arts from McGill University with a major in history. While at Vanderbilt, Kandestin was a member of the Law Review and the Moot Court Board, and he received the Lightfoot, Franklin and White Award for best appellate brief. He is fluent in French and Hebrew. Kandestin plans to join a Wilmington, Del., law firm following graduation.

**Courtney Cordell Miller**, Austin, Texas, Founder's Medalist for Peabody College, graduated with a bachelor of science in human and organizational development. During her time at Vanderbilt, Miller received numerous academic honors, including the Nora C. Chaffin Scholarship, given to one undergraduate who displays service to the university through student government, religious, literary and scholastic activities. She was a leader within the Gamma Beta Phi honor society, the Mortar Board leadership society, the Athenians Junior Honorary and the Order of Omega, a Greek honor society. Miller also tutored children through Vanderbuddies and developed and ran a family game night for senior citizens at Villa Maria Manor. Miller plans to attend the University of Virginia School of Law in the fall.

**Christopher S. Randolph Jr.**, Jacksonville, Ala., Founder's Medalist for the College of Arts and Science, graduated with a bachelor of arts in political science. Political Science Professor John Geer called Randolph his "best student in 20 years of teaching." At Vanderbilt, Randolph combined his math skills with his political expertise to successfully complete multiple research studies involving different aspects of politics. Randolph wrote a paper with Geer on candidates' television advertisements that he presented at the 2007 Southern Political Science Association Conference. He also served as the teaching assistant for former Congressman Harold Ford Jr. during the spring 2007 semester. Randolph was awarded the 2007 Alexander Heard Award in political science and the Maria Leonard Alpha Lambda Delta Senior Book Award. He was a member of seven honor societies, including Phi Beta Kappa, Mortar Board and the Pi Sigma Alpha Political Science Honor Society. He participated on the Vanderbilt Speakers Committee, the InterHall residential life government and Collegiate Leadership Vanderbilt. Randolph plans to attend the University of Virginia School of Law in the fall.

**Frances Robin Riley**, Ganado, Ariz., Founder's Medalist for the School of Nursing, graduated with a master of science in nursing. Riley started her professional career in the business world, spending more than 30 years in marketing at IBM and then in real estate. After three decades in business, Riley went back to school to become a nurse. She was inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, was celebrated for her cross-campus efforts to raise awareness of dental health issues, and used her medical expertise on a medical mission trip to El Salvador. Riley is now working as a family nurse practitioner on the Navajo reservation in Northeastern Arizona, where she is helping the estimated 25,000 Native Americans there at a main clinic and two remote outpatient clinics. Riley has created a standardized form to be used by all doctors and nurses on the reservation to provide greater consistency in care.

**Michael Charles Roach**, Independence, Mo., Founder's Medalist for the

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School of Engineering, graduated with a bachelor of engineering in chemical engineering with a concentration in biotechnology. Roach received the Paul Harrawood Honor Scholarship and has worked on several important research projects while at Vanderbilt. He worked with the Department of Chemical Engineering to model enzyme kinetics. He also did research in the Barry Baker Lab for Head and Neck Cancer to characterize oncogene and protein expression in patients and tumor-derived cell lines. Part of his findings will be published in the International Journal of Radiation Oncology, Biology and Physics. Roach helped recruit high school students through AmbassaDores and mentored incoming freshmen through V Squared. He also built concrete canoes with the American Society for Civil Engineers and chemically powered cars with the American Institute for Chemical Engineers. Roach plans to start medical school at Washington University in St. Louis in the fall.

**Bana Basel Yacuob Shomali**, Amman, Jordan, Founder's Medalist for the Owen Graduate School of Management, graduated with a master of business administration. Shomali earned a bachelor of arts in economics from the University of Jordan, where she received a full scholarship. She spent her early childhood in Kuwait. When her family was forced to leave Kuwait during the first Gulf War, they lost their savings and their home but built a new life in Jordan. Shomali earned a Fulbright Scholarship to attend Vanderbilt, where she concentrated her studies in general management. She was co-recipient of the Bruce D. Henderson Scholarship for highest honors in the first year of the MBA program and was part of the winning team for the Global Innovation Challenge case competition during her first year. Shomali also took an active role in Project Pyramid, a student-run group and academic class that uses the philosophy of investing in the poor through micro-finance started by Nobel Peace Prize winner and Vanderbilt graduate Muhammad Yunus. Shomali traveled to India over spring break where she learned firsthand about the value of investing in the poor. After graduation, Shomali will work for a global management consulting firm in Dubai.

**Melanie Elizabeth Trexler**, Richmond, Ky., Founder's Medalist for the divinity school, graduated with a master of divinity. Trexler entered Vanderbilt Divinity School after graduating from Furman University with a bachelor of arts in religion and political science. Trexler said the 9/11 tragedy inspired her to study these fields. She was awarded a full-tuition Legacy Scholarship and earned her master's with the honors thesis "Engaging Osama Bin Laden." She expanded her knowledge of the Middle East by learning Arabic. Trexler received the W. Kendrick Grobel Award for outstanding achievement in biblical studies. Trexler's work has gone beyond the classroom. She traveled to the Mexican border to conduct field work on the plight of immigrants, and she has helped inmates at the Riverbend Maximum Security Institution. Trexler also served as a teaching assistant in biblical studies at Belmont University. She has been awarded a full-tuition scholarship to Georgetown University, where she will pursue a doctorate in religious pluralism.

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