

**Appendix X**  
**Vanderbilt University**  
**QEP Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan**

***For: Building a Bridge to the Commons: Vanderbilt Visions and Student Learning at a Research University***

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**Mission Statement:** Vanderbilt Visions is a first-year experience aimed at acculturating incoming students to a highly selective research university and The Commons, a new living and learning community of faculty, students, and educational professionals. In this context, acculturation is best understood as the ongoing process through which students are integrated into the university community and thereby come to embrace its appropriate norms. Of central importance to the success of this experience is the formation of durable student-to-student and student-to-faculty networks that empower individual students to maximize their academic potential during their undergraduate years. In this way, we expect students to become intentional learners and faculty and student VUceptors to become more engaged as facilitators of a greater learning community.

Vanderbilt Visions and The Commons seek to increase the engagement of first-year students in educationally purposive activities – those which form the academic, cognitive, social, and attitudinal attributes of successful citizens of today’s global society. The programming and structure of this experience were developed to facilitate productive interaction between students and faculty, enhance the quality and incidence of student learning experiences, foster increased formation of students’ social learning relationships, and instill the basic values of civic engagement, scholarship and leadership. Student acculturation to this highly selective research institution will be measured across four specific domains: 1) Academic Acculturation, 2) Cognitive Acculturation, 3) Social Acculturation, and 4) Values Acculturation.

**Research Design:** Vanderbilt Visions is a required 6-month, first-year experience for all incoming students that began in fall 2006. Beginning in fall 2008, the first-year freshmen will also live in The Commons. A multi-method time-lag study will commence with the fall 2007 incoming freshmen and seniors (the year before The Commons). Both the 2007 and 2008 freshmen cohorts will be followed for four years and compared to pre-Visions freshmen cohorts and the 2007 seniors on the four domains of acculturation: Academic, Cognitive, Social, and Values. We will be focusing primarily on student learning outcomes; however, in order to account for their contribution to the greater learning community, Vanderbilt Visions faculty and student VUceptor outcomes will be measured as well. Thus, VUceptors of 2007 and 2008 will be surveyed and interviewed over time regarding their level of engagement with the greater learning community. We have four general hypotheses that we will test in the first five-year cycle of this assessment:

**General Hypothesis #1:**

We expect to see increases in the rate and extent of adoption of the acculturation domains in the 2007 cohort and even greater increases for the 2008 cohort compared to pre-Visions cohorts. We expect to find particular gains in each acculturation domain (see domains below).

**General Hypothesis #2:**

We expect that levels of acculturation will be significantly higher for the seniors of the 2007 and 2008 freshmen cohorts than the seniors who graduated in 2007.

**General Hypothesis #3:**

We expect that those who had higher levels of engagement with Vanderbilt Visions programming will have higher rates of acculturation than those less engaged.

**General Hypothesis #4:**

We expect that Vanderbilt Visions faculty and student VUceptors will increasingly engage students in the greater learning community, i.e., outside the classroom as well as within their courses. We expect this effect to be greater among VUceptors who participate as VUceptors in multiple years.

**Methodology:**

A wide variety of methodologies will be employed from straight-forward growth rates to sophisticated statistical analyses. Our data sources will include a) face-to-face interviews, b) student academic records, c) student activity records, and d) self-reported survey data. We will be controlling for student and faculty backgrounds in all statistical analyses; this will be especially important for the faculty analyses because of the significant differences in status and role within the university. The methodologies and data sources are described in more detail below.

**Reporting:**

Yearly reports of the measures listed below will be provided by the QEP Subcommittee on Assessment to the QEP Executive Committee as well as the Vanderbilt Visions Executive Committee.

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Methods and Procedures	Results	Improvements Based on Assessment Results and Further Action Planned
<b>*NOTE: Since there are overlapping influences between forms of acculturation, our indices in these categories bear some duplication.</b>			
<p><b>Academic Acculturation:</b> Participation in collaborative or shared learning groups enable students to develop durable networks that can engage them in more meaningful and normative ways in the academic life of the institution.</p> <p>Research Question: Does participation in Vanderbilt Visions increase the frequency and intensity of academic integration, participation and appropriate norms?</p> <p>If academic acculturation is taking place, we expect Vanderbilt Visions participants to establish academically-oriented networks earlier and more intensely and we also expect a decrease in negative academic behaviors.</p> <p>Student Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Engagement in a broad array of educationally purposive activities</li> <li>b) Frequency of academic collaboration among peers outside of Vanderbilt Visions</li> <li>c) Attendance in Vanderbilt Visions programming</li> <li>d) Number of grade and absence deficiencies</li> <li>e) Number of academic integrity violations</li> </ul> <p>Faculty and student VUceptor Engagement Measures:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) We will track participation over time in self-initiated extra-curricular academic opportunities (e.g., study abroad, living learning communities for upperclassmen) and co-curricular activities (e.g., Great Performances at Vanderbilt).</li> <li>b) The frequency of collaborative efforts, such as formal and informal study groups will be analyzed over time using self-report annual survey data.</li> <li>c) A statistical analysis of gains in acculturation based on attendance in Visions programming will be conducted on a yearly basis. In this analysis, we will control for cohort composition and SES background.</li> <li>d) A statistical analysis of gains in acculturation based on grade/absence deficiencies between Visions and pre-Visions cohorts and between satisfied and unsatisfied Visions participants will be conducted on a yearly basis; again, we will control for cohort composition and SES background.</li> <li>e) A statistical analysis of gains in acculturation based on academic integrity violations</li> </ul>	<p>We expect all measures to increase between pre-Visions cohorts, the 2007 cohort and the 2008 cohort, respectively . Projected goals will be set once data have been collected as a baseline. We expect that to occur in fall 2007.</p>	<p>TBD</p>

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<p>f) Involvement in mentoring students during and after Vanderbilt Visions</p>	<p>between Visions cohorts and pre-Visions cohorts and between satisfied and unsatisfied Visions participants, controlling for cohort composition and SES background, will be conducted on a yearly basis.</p> <p>f) A randomly selected subset of faculty and student VUceptors in 2007 (50 each) will be asked to complete a Visions-focused interview (VF) for two years. They will be interviewed in March of the academic year in which they participated in Visions and again the following year. The interviews will be based on a structured format, allowing answers to be rated on a formulated rubric. The interview questions and rubric ratings will address perceived levels and changes in mentoring undergraduates. Vanderbilt staff with interviewing skills will be trained to conduct the interviews and code the responses. The results will be compared over time.</p>		

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<p><b>Cognitive Acculturation:</b> ‘Learning about learning’ is best cultivated in a context where research processes are at the epicenter of the learning. Largely as a function of proximity to professors and graduate scholars who are engaged in the activities of knowledge generation, students will come to embrace the products of those endeavors.</p> <p>Research Question: Does participation in Vanderbilt Visions increase students’ exposure to and learning about the research processes inside and outside the classroom?</p> <p>Student Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Frequency and depth of research participation</li> <li>b) The number of students who can identify one or more scholars (e.g., faculty, graduate students, staff, visiting scholars, lecturers, etc.) who have had impact on their critical thinking, intellectual curiosity or world view</li> </ul> <p>Faculty and student VUceptor Engagement Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) Participation in role modeling learning about learning</li> <li>d) The number of undergraduate research projects supervised (faculty only)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Participation in undergraduate research summer programs and internships will be tracked pre- and post-Visions participation, annually thereafter. Submissions to the Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research Journal will be tracked pre- and post-Visions, annually thereafter. Utilization rates of the Writing Studio will be tracked pre- and post-Visions, annually thereafter. Courses which contain a research component and bachelor honors’ theses will be identified and enrollments tracked relative to pre-Visions levels. Also, students will be asked to report research participation on the spring benchmark and year-to-year changes will be assessed.</li> <li>b) Students will be asked to identify scholars, both course instructors and scholars encountered outside of class, who had a significant impact on their critical thinking, intellectual curiosity or world view during the spring benchmark. Frequencies will be</li> </ul>	See #1	TBD

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Methods and Procedures	Results	Improvements Based on Assessment Results and Further Action Planned
	<p>analyzed annually. A randomly selected subset of students (225 per cohort) from the 2007 and 2008 cohorts will be asked to complete annual Visions-focused interviews (VF) for four years. The interviews will be based on a structured format allowing answers to be rated on a formulated rubric. The interview questions and rubric ratings will address perceived levels and changes in cognitive development using a validated instrument. Vanderbilt staff with interviewing skills will be trained to conduct the interviews and code the responses. The results will be compared annually.</p> <p>c) The VF interviews will include structured questions and rubric ratings that address perceived levels and changes in role modeling learning about learning. Vanderbilt staff with interviewing skills will be trained to conduct the interviews and code the responses. The results will be compared overtime.</p> <p>d) Faculty VUceptors will be asked to report on the number of undergraduate research projects supervised each year in the past five years during the two VF interviews.</p>		

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<p><b>Social Acculturation:</b> The interconnected social systems – ones that include students, faculty, administrators, and other constituents– offer a variety of possible ways in which members of these communities learn from one another through informal modes.</p> <p>Research Question: Does participation in Vanderbilt Visions increase the frequency and intensity of social learning relationships?</p> <p>Student Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Levels of formal and informal learning collaboration</li> <li>b) Participation in social relationship building activities</li> <li>c) The number, diversity and complexity of social relationships among students, students and staff, and students and faculty</li> <li>d) Frequency of day-to-day interactions between students and faculty outside of the classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The frequency of collaborative efforts, such as formal and informal study groups will be analyzed over time using self-report annual survey data.</li> <li>b) Participation rates in a wide range of student activities will be tracked from institutional data sources and compared to pre-Visions levels.</li> <li>c) A statistical analysis of student-to-student, student-to-staff, and student-to-faculty self-reported interactions will be used to assess the social dynamics within the Visions freshmen cohorts of 2007 and 2008; follow-up data collection will continue annually for four years. We will also analyze students' self-report of the number, diversity, and complexity of their social relationships.</li> <li>d) Students' self-reported interactions with faculty outside the classroom will be analyzed</li> </ul>	See #1	TBD

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<p>Faculty and student VUceptor Engagement Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e) Use of specific strategies to foster collaborative learning</li> <li>f) Awareness of campus and student life issues; use of that awareness in class discussions (in Vanderbilt Visions and beyond)</li> <li>g) Frequency of faculty VUceptors engaging students outside the classroom</li> </ul>	<p>over time using annual survey data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e) VUceptors' self-report of strategies used to foster collaborative learning will be analyzed over time using survey and interview data.</li> <li>f) VUceptors' self-report of awareness of campus and student life will be analyzed over time using survey and interview data.</li> <li>g) A statistical analysis of VUceptor-to-student self-reported interactions will be used to assess the social dynamics of the Visions experience for both the students in and facilitators of the program.</li> </ul>		

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<p><b>Values Acculturation:</b> Acquiring the norms, values, attitudes and ethics necessary for constructing healthy civil societies and democratic political systems can be intensified even further in living/learning communities than in traditional university milieu.</p> <p>Research Questions: Does participation in Vanderbilt Visions increase the frequency and breadth of involvement in civic and altruistic activities? Does participation in Vanderbilt Visions increase the acquisition of open-minded, tolerant attitudes and awareness of social issues?</p> <p>Student Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Rates of student service and volunteerism</li> <li>b) Levels of openness to diversity and challenge</li> <li>c) Levels of altruism, social conscience and civic responsibility</li> </ul> <p>Faculty and student VUceptor Engagement Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d) Participation in advising students on community outreach and service</li> <li>e) Involvement in service learning</li> <li>f) Use of specific strategies to foster, respect and dialogue within diverse groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Participation rates in a wide range of ‘optional’ student-service activities, such as Alternative Spring Break will be tracked and compared to pre-Visions levels.</li> <li>b) Students’ self-rating of perceived tolerance and openness to challenge are assessed annually with a well-validated instrument (Pascarella and Terenzini).</li> <li>c) Students selected for the VF interviews will also be asked a set of structured questions about values (e.g., social consciousness, civic responsibility, altruism). The interviewers will code their responses based on a rubric, with results of the interviews compared annually.</li> <li>d) VUceptors’ self-report of advising students on community outreach and service will be analyzed over time using annual survey data.</li> <li>e) Using university records, we will analyze over time pre- and post-Visions faculty and VUceptors’ involvement in service learning activities.</li> <li>f) VUceptors’ self-report of fostering respect and dialogue within diverse groups will be analyzed over time using annual survey data.</li> </ul>	See #1	TBD