2013-2014 Strategic Planning for Vanderbilt University

Faculty Town Hall Meetings
I, February 27, 2014
II, March 11, 2014
III, March 24, 2014
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What will be the process for completing the full draft of the Strategic Plan?

A: The Executive Committee, representing all ten colleges and schools, is ultimately responsible for gathering feedback, refining concepts, and, then, completing the draft. The Executive Summary offers an important synopsis of the current tentative thinking behind each of the four themes. The Town Hall process and meetings during March and April, along with other exchanges with key stakeholders, are intended to gather reactions to the ideas developed so far. The goal for the final document will be to provide a statement about the values and visions for Vanderbilt’s future that support the proposed initiatives. The strategic plan will not focus on implementation plans for these ideas.

Q: How are Trans-Institutional Programs defined in this draft plan?

A: For the purposes of our strategic planning process, a trans-institutional program (TIP) is operationally defined as a cross-campus initiative involving transformative partnerships that create new and valuable knowledge by interweaving relevant perspectives, features, methods, and information from two or more disciplines; thus, both “interdisciplinary” and “multidisciplinary” approaches. For example, the Vanderbilt Institute for Chemical Biology is a trans-institutional center that leverages faculty strengths in the College of Arts and Science and the School of Medicine. All academic fields within our ten colleges and schools, including the arts and humanities, are included in our goal to create and enrich TIPs at Vanderbilt.

Q: How can this strategic plan develop initiatives that can advance and extend the ideals behind One Vanderbilt?

A: There is no doubt that there are cultural differences amongst, and even within, our schools and colleges. The initiatives launched from the 2002 Strategic Plan made great progress over the past decade in forging collaborations and enabling common goals across campus. The Strategic Planning committees have given significant thought into how to take this further. The proposals in the new plan are designed to foster more interactions across our many colleges and further enrich One Vanderbilt.

Q: Where is graduate education and what new initiatives will directly address enhancing our graduate education efforts?

A: Graduate education is a fundamental component of our educational mission. As such, initiatives impacting graduate education are evident in each of the four focus areas of the plan. We refer to this as a “cross-theme” thread. For example, graduate education may be enhanced by cross-school course access (Trans-Institutional Programs), new Ph.D. programs (Health Care Solutions), educational technology training (Education Technologies) and expanded residential colleges’ experiences at Vanderbilt.
(Undergraduate Residential Experience). Such cross-theme threads will be highlighted in the Strategic Plan document.

We all seek to find new and impactful ways to recruit outstanding graduate students to Vanderbilt. This will include new curricular efforts, new graduate programs, and for example, potential ways to integrate graduate students into the residential experience.

Q: *Opportunity Vanderbilt is great, but affordability is only part of the problem. How do we continue to promote access and equality?*

A: The commitment to access and equality is fundamental to Vanderbilt and to our future. Opportunity Vanderbilt is central to that mission. The Strategic Plan will, for example, leverage Opportunity Vanderbilt to further address these critical social issues in conjunction with Vanderbilt’s culture of civility, creativity and collaboration. The vision is to provide a welcoming environment for all students, and through the residential colleges as well as academic and non-academic programs, build social and intellectual connections amongst our increasingly diverse university citizens.

Q: *Where is our commitment to infrastructure as external funding declines?*

A: Your faculty colleagues on the Executive Committee, Steering Committees and Academic Planning Groups agree that appropriate infrastructure must permeate all four focus areas of the draft strategic plan. We seek to invest in new ideas and re-invest in existing programs that require additional support. There is a recommendation, for example, that new and renovated space must not only be technologically advanced, but also facilitate interaction between students and faculty.

Q: *Where is the emphasis on global engagement and international presence?*

A: Global engagement is another foundational “cross-theme” thread running through the four focus areas of the plan. We, for example, seek higher levels of success in recruiting outstanding international faculty and students, and continuing to raise Vanderbilt’s international profile. This is a theme that cuts across all aspects of the university and will be central to the future of Vanderbilt. The Executive Committee welcomes detailed recommendations to strengthen the global threads that weave through the four foundational themes. Faculty feedback from this and other meetings will help shape the expansion of many concepts, including the value of global engagement and international learning opportunities.

Q: *How does the plan balance the needs for implementation, development and research of education technologies?*

A: The initiatives for Education Technology have been much-discussed and propose strategies by which we will ensure that our educational mission has access to cutting-edge technology. In addition, the Executive and Steering Committees endorsed approaches to fully leverage Vanderbilt’s unique position in developing technologies and researching the effectiveness of such technology. Overall, the goals are broad based and encompass implementation and use of education technology that is supported by robust research and targeted development.
Q: As faculty, will we be unrelenting and unapologetic in our quest for excellence in every aspect of this strategic plan?

A: Yes, agreed!

Q: Vanderbilt’s sense of community is also evident in the many ways it contributes to improved health and education beyond our campus borders. Will this strategic plan provide a unique opportunity to reinforce our commitment to the Nashville community and leverage the benefits of our local influence?

A: Yes, it will. This is a question that has been asked at a number of key points and will find its ways into the final plan.

Q: What about metrics? How will these initiatives be measured?

A: Measures of accountability and stewardship is another cross-theme thread. They will be addressed in future implementation phases where specific ideas related to the principles outlined in the strategic plan will be thoughtfully vetted with respect to funding sources, incentives, evaluation and renewal. An example of such stewardship is the call for a TIPs Council that will have representation across all 10 colleges and schools and be responsible for evaluating proposals for possible interdisciplinary research and teaching collaborations.