

Student Life Committee  
Vanderbilt University Senate  
Report for Academic Year 2012-2013  
Chair: Steve Hyman, Medicine

**Committee members:**

Steve Hyman, Chair, Medicine (2013)  
Donald Brady, Medicine (2014)  
William Turner, Peabody (2013)  
Thomas Schwartz, A&S (2013)  
Adam Anderson, Engineering (2015)  
Celeste Hemingway, Medicine (2015)  
Houston Baker, A&S (2015)  
Robin Fountain, Blair (2015)  
Mark Schoenfield, A&S (2015)  
Rolanda Johnson, Nursing (2015)

**Charges for 2012-13:**

1. Honor System Report
  - a. Monitor the progress of the two major Task Forces requested in the 2012 report, develop strategies for tracking the progress of the other recommendations in the report (e.g., possibly reporting back to Senate and/or its Executive Committee, maintaining contact with the Provost's office as well as relevant student groups, etc.).
2. College Halls Project
  - a. Monitor progress and work with the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education to develop a status report.
3. Commons Review
  - a. Follow up on the questions generated by the committee and stay in contact with the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education regarding any upcoming review.
  - b. What is the effect of the Commons on the following aspects of undergraduate life: admissions, one-year retention rates, Greek life, mental health, the time it takes to declare a major?
  - c. The number of students involved in extracurricular activities, on academic or disciplinary probation, pursuing study abroad, and applying to professional schools?
  - d. Relationships between faculty and students, and the demands on faculty for extra service related to the Commons?
  - e. How effective is Visions for faculty and students? Are these results consistent with administrators' original intent?
4. Alcohol Task Force report

- a. Follow up on the recommendations of the Alcohol Task Force Report (2011-12) with respect to the responsibilities of the Dean of the Commons and Dean of Students.
- 5. Graduate Students
  - a. Develop and assess Student Life issues for graduate students including the Medical School and Professional Schools
- 6. Office of Religious Life
  - a. Assess the function and role of the Office of Religious Life (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/religiouslife/>)
  - b. Its relationships with student religious organizations and affiliated chaplain

## **Work Done**

At the year's start, the committee prioritized the charges according to the perceived level of importance. The following list is reorganized according to that process.

After receiving our charges, we were informed that other groups within the University were addressing several charges. Thus, we ended up with a significantly shorter list of things that needed to be done.

At around the time of our second meeting, the fatal shooting in Colorado occurred. James Holmes, a disturbed University of Colorado Graduate Student was responsible for perpetrating this tragedy. This event heightened our concerns for the physical and mental well-being of graduate students at Vanderbilt.

- 1. Honor System Report
  - a. We started the year planning a midyear follow-up on the Honor System Report. At midyear, meaningful progress would be unlikely since the report would have only been available a short time. Therefore we decided to defer follow-up until next academic year. Cynthia Cyrus presented the Honor System report recently and we will continue to follow up on the progress.
  - b. We also discussed the use/sale of non-prescribed Adderal and how it intersects with the Honor Code. A report on this subject was expected later in the year from Mary Yarborough. We decided to wait for that report. Also, based on the Honor System Report Recommendations 17, 18, 19, we may not have to recommend anything.
- 2. Alcohol Task Force
  - a. We began the year discussing ways to implement the recommendations of the AFT in 2012. As time progressed, we recognized this as such an important issue to University leadership that our committee might not have to do anything at all this year.

- b. Still we have concerns that Graduate Students may be underrepresented in any initiatives. (See below)
- 3. College Halls Project
  - a. Other groups are also largely handling this charge.
  - b. We were asked by Associate Provost Cyrus to provide a representative to the College Halls Role Definition Committee. We were unable to coordinate schedules to provide her with anyone.
  - c. This charge may need revisiting next year.
- 4. Commons Review
  - a. This was a particularly complex charge including such topics as:
    - i. Students:
      - 1. Admissions, one-year retention rates, Greek life, mental health, extracurricular activities, academic probation, disciplinary probation, studies abroad, and applying to professional schools.
    - ii. Faculty:
      - 1. Relationships between faculty/students, demands on faculty for extra service related to the Commons, are the faculty members doing what is supposed to be done?
    - iii. Visions
  - b. It appears that other groups are looking into this. If the Visions program is continued, it may need revisiting next year.
- 5. Graduate Student life
  - a. What the committee learned:
    - i. There is more of a conflict of interest for the graduate students with regards to advisors. There is more amorphous and there is no system for guidance like there is in medical residency programs. There is often someone without a conflict of interest to provide needed guidance. Undergraduates are better resourced than are graduate students to provide continuous support and advocates. We need to replicate this for grads.
  - b. Other inequalities for graduate students include
    - i. Parent involvement
    - ii. Instructor involvement
    - iii. Substance-free living options
    - iv. Care initiatives (Motivation Interview, ethanol screen, ethanol counselor, psych care)
    - v. Substance free events
    - vi. Intervention and treatment
    - vii. Education and awareness
    - viii. Health protection and recovery support
    - ix. Evaluation of a normative environment
  - c. Wellness
    - i. In a report by Cathy Fuchs (Director, Vanderbilt Psychological

Counseling Center)

1. Kids are treated for major psychiatric illness and thus make it to college. The age of onset of major psych illness is young adulthood. It may lead to poor performance in graduate school with poor decision-making and control and frequent alcohol & drug comorbidity.
    - a. Does the University need a broad assessment of graduate student needs? There was a task force for graduate education 3-4 years ago that may have been more focused on stipends and academics rather than mental health.
    - b. Do we need to look at the old data and then move it up to higher levels?
  - ii. See career development section (below)
  - iii. Although there are procedures that are in the process of development, Dr. Fuchs asked that the committee continue to monitor progress next year. In the meantime, she is contacting other institutions to see what they have done in times of crisis involving graduate students.
- d. Career development
- i. Professional development guidance is uneven throughout the university. Graduate schools are so decentralized it is hard to make it positive for everyone. Success in graduate school involves work-life balance, physical wellness, and being a responsible citizen
  - ii. Craig Anne Heflinger, Associate Dean for Graduate Education, Peabody presented VU GradLeaf (<https://my.vanderbilt.edu/gradleaf/>).
    1. Gradleaf contains multiple links for job searches, workshops, calendars, campus acronyms, personal support websites, and community researchers. Other information includes personal well-being items and learning to do job searches and interviews.
    2. The site may find use in all graduate disciplines as well as undergraduates who are preparing for graduate school. It can be used for newsletters and could be used on a smart phone.
      - a. Could it be distributed through the existing Anchor Link app?
    3. The greatest benefit is the efficient distribution of information.
  - iii. Serious consideration should be given to the institution of VU Gradleaf campus-wide.

**Possible topics for next year:**

1. David Williams follow up
  - a. We asked specific questions to him before his talk last year
    - i. Were the old questions answered?
    - ii. Are there new questions to be asked?
2. Campus safety
3. Continue with Graduate Student Wellness/Career Development
4. Honor Code – revisit Adferal problem and address the issue of how the Honor Code applies to graduate students
5. Office of Religious Life
  - e. Assess the function and role
    - i. (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/religiouslife/>)
    - ii. Relationships with
      1. Student religious organizations
      2. Affiliated chaplains.
    - iii. Non-discrimination in religious life
  - f. We decided that since the director was so new, it would be better to assess this situation next academic year