

Investing in Graduate Education and Research

A Vision for Deploying a \$300 Million Endowment

Ad-Hoc Committee Report – May 2017

As one of the nation's leading research institutions, Vanderbilt is committed to investing in graduate education and research. As federal budgets for research have been slashed across all disciplines, many of Vanderbilt's peer institutions are tightening the purse strings. Rather than following this path, Vanderbilt will step forward to protect and cultivate discovery and learning with significant investments in both graduate education and research making use of a \$300M endowment that will be deployed over the next several years.

The following report outlines key overarching priorities for investment as identified through a collaborative, campus-wide process that followed Chancellor Zeppos's announcement of the endowment at the 2016 Fall Faculty Assembly. Following that announcement, Provost Wente developed an inclusive and broad-based process for arriving at these key overarching priorities. Provost Wente asked the deans of each school/college to launch a faculty-based process within their units to develop priorities for consideration, resulting in nine independent sets of recommendations. Additional input was also gathered from two important graduate education stakeholder groups: the Graduate Faculty Council and the [Graduate Student Council](#). Based on careful review of the input gathered, our [ad hoc committee](#) assessed the recommended priorities with five guiding principles:

Guiding Principles for Investments in Graduate Education and Research

1. Provide immediate and long-range returns on research and advanced training;
2. Offer cross-university benefits to the widest possible range of stakeholders;
3. Incorporate accountability metrics;
4. Permit schools/colleges with flexibility to undertake school/college-specific initiatives; and, finally,
5. Strengthen the goals of the Academic Strategic Plan as well as the University's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

With these principles in mind, the committee identified four general thematic categories for priority investment. These categories would enable inclusive, broad-based actions focused on building excellence.

Four Key Areas for Investment in Graduate Education and Research

1. **New Russell G. Hamilton Graduate Ph.D. Scholarships**

- The Graduate School would award these tuition scholarships, funded from the revenue of the endowment, to select doctoral programs on a competitive basis.
- In the ETOB (every-tub-on-its-bottom) budget model, tuition scholarships would be a "multiplier" allowing the receiving school/college to strategically deploy the resulting revenue to further

Graduate Education & Research Endowment Committee

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- Sharon Weiss, Chancellor Faculty Fellow, professor of Electrical Engineering, School of Engineering

enhance graduate education and research in manners that are most appropriate to their given strategic plans.

- To further leverage these funds, for each scholarship awarded, the receiving school/college would provide a matching contribution of \$10,000. The resulting pool of funds could be deployed in a competitive manner to enhance the recruiting of the best and brightest domestic and international students, and with a strong emphasis on building diversity across all demographic areas. These funds might be used for fellowships focused on service-free years and based on documented productivity and scholarly accomplishments, and might support student travel, research and scholarly activities.
- Funds and fellowships should incentivize our students to compete for prestigious external fellowships, again creating a multiplying effect in how these funds are deployed and the resulting impact.

2. Russell G. Hamilton Graduate Leadership Development Institute

- The Graduate Leadership Development Institute would be structured to enhance the quality of the graduate educational experience and provide professional leadership training and further career development support.
- The institute also might focus on interdisciplinary team building activities with an emphasis on social, community and global engagement, as well as host a competitive graduate TIPS program to support innovative research and scholarship initiatives by the students.

3. Launch and Sustain Global Engagement and Interdisciplinary/Trans-Institutional Research

- One of Vanderbilt's great strengths is the unique opportunity for trans-institutional endeavors that connect the various facets of our campus and that serve to train our graduate students well for success working between and across traditional disciplinary borders. Endowment funds could be used to codify these efforts around an institute that would serve as the central site for the administration of future long-term TIPS funding.
- The institute could also serve to advance international research/scholarship efforts, informed by the work currently underway by the International Strategy working group. This might include hosting, for example, an international and domestic visiting scholar program to cultivate exchange, as well as symposia featuring world-class scholars focused on disciplinary and interdisciplinary topics that propel Vanderbilt's reputation as an international leader for forums of open dialogue and debate.

4. A Fundraising Initiative to Create New Endowed Chairs and Faculty Fellows

- We must continue to expand the number of endowed chairs and the new and highly successful Chancellor Faculty Fellows program. These direct investments in the faculty are critical for recruiting and retention of academic excellence and support innovation and creativity.
- To leverage our fundraising efforts and partnerships with the schools/colleges, we propose a program that would provide a 1:1 match from this endowment for each external donor-raised commitment, effectively doubling the proposed investment.

Accountability and Outcomes: Each area of investment should have an accountability plan with tangible goals and timelines. The Graduate School, in conjunction with VIRG and the PSI group, would embark on a series of projects to better measure outcomes in the graduate education arena, with the Offices of Research focusing on discovery research and scholarship advances across the university.