

Remarks to the Board of Trust Compensation Committee

From Andy Richter, University Staff Advisory Council President: 2005-2006
June 6, 2006

Members of the Board of Trust, Vanderbilt Administrators and Distinguished Guests, I appreciate your dedication to excellence in each of your roles at Vanderbilt University. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the University Central Staff. Vanderbilt University is a renowned American university with many strengths and weaknesses. It has already achieved a very high level of success, but it has much unrealized potential to achieve even greater success.

I have enjoyed my role as University Staff Advisory Council President this year. Like most leadership roles, I have had some successes and some challenges. My comments today represent not only the wisdom I've gained from this year as President, but also my nineteen years as an employee of Vanderbilt University. I have three main ideas I want to share with you, 1) issues we addressed this past year, 2) issues to be addressed in the near future, and 3) some comments about the need for good leadership.

First, I will report on the issues the Staff Council has addressed this year. Our Child Care Committee investigated the current situation regarding the University's Child Care program. They discovered that major enhancements to the program were already underway. While the enhancements will not allow *all* faculty and staff members to enroll their children in this program, we were pleased to learn that a significant increase in capacity is planned.

Our Personal Identity Protection and Management Joint-Council Committee reported on the need to better protect the personal information of everyone affiliated with the University. In particular, Social Security Numbers are being used out of convenience rather than necessity in far too many places around the University, leaving all of us quite vulnerable to identity theft and fraud. A joint recommendation from both Staff Councils is forthcoming.

Our Communications Committee examined and implemented ways to better communicate both within the Council as well as to market our Council more effectively to the Vanderbilt community.

Our Bylaws Committee has recommended significant improvements to our Council Bylaws. The final vote will be taken at next week's Council meeting. I fully support their recommendation.

Our Council meetings this year included presentations from Vice-Chancellor Lauren Brisky, Benefits Director Jane Bruce, Chancellor Gordon Gee (twice), Chief Information Security Officer Mark Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer Kevin Myatt, Medical Center Staff Advisory Council President Lisa Ellis, SGA President Kate Morgan, Allan Sterbinsky regarding the Community Staff Survey, Associate Provost for Residential Colleges Susan Barge, Marilyn Holmes from Health Plus, Senior Deputy General Counsel John Callison and Deputy General Counsel Julia Morris, as well as a plethora of reports from Council members who serve on

University-level committees. And next week we are eagerly anticipating a presentation on how staff add value to the University from Provost Nick Zeppos.

To summarize, we learned a great deal about the University this year, and we, the Staff Advisory Council, contributed a significant amount to the University's mission.

Secondly, I will suggest some other issues that may need to be addressed soon.

Many members of the Vanderbilt community are calling for additional retirement benefits for faculty and staff. I do not know how offering these additional employee benefits would help the University, but this issue should be investigated if for no other reason than to be able to explain to employees why the University chooses not to offer these particular benefits. Perhaps all that is needed is for someone, not necessarily the University, to organize retirees into a united group who could then negotiate good retirement benefits such as reduced health insurance premiums.

And lastly, leadership takes many forms and is critical to the destiny of any organization. Vanderbilt must continually evaluate and enhance its leadership team to ensure that the University remains current and relevant moving forward.

In this context, it is vitally important that members of our Vanderbilt community begin or continue to develop a sense of ownership in the University. Vanderbilt University needs to be a place where *all* employees have a strong sense of ownership. This sense of ownership would yield highly desirable characteristics for an organization, such as personal integrity, trustworthiness, respect for others, positive peer pressure, and appropriate behavior both on personal and professional levels.

How can we accomplish this sense of ownership?

We can begin by developing hiring practices consistent with our community values. This may mean that our recruitment efforts of faculty and staff should focus on overall value to the institution including not only things such as research overhead or particular skill sets but also a demonstration of values consistent with our community.

We must also devise new ways to help existing employees develop this sense of ownership. We need to empower employees by delegating authority and responsibility to them and then holding them accountable to meet the agreed upon goals.

Moving forward a good test of ownership is how well our current leaders are training the next generation of leadership. If we continue to have to go outside the University to hire leaders, then we may need to consider ways to improve our internal leadership development strategies.

It is up to the University's current leadership to follow through on these ideas and to improve our community as a whole. I encourage all leaders to step up and meet this challenge.

For the University to achieve its mission, it must first face the reality of where it is, a grounded University that is vibrant in culture and eager to change, and where it wants to be, a top-ranked

University in the world. It must continuously rededicate itself to upholding all that is good and right in our world. And it must acquire the willingness to address its problem areas in a functional and useful way. Good leadership and good *followship* will enable the University to not only achieve its mission but also to realize its potential.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I am always at your service and ready to help Vanderbilt University achieve ever greater levels of success.