

Good afternoon. Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to address you today on behalf of USAC, or the University Staff Advisory Council, and council President Michael Pring, who was unable to attend today's meeting.

This year, USAC has focused on what it means to be an employee here at Vanderbilt – the community we're a part of, the colleagues we connect with, and our commitment to the mission of the institution we serve. Working for Vanderbilt is unlike working anywhere else – our work directly contributes to the dissemination of knowledge and ideas into the world, through the students who spend four years with us. It is important, therefore, for employees, to feel connected to the larger institution, and for the values of these individual employees to align with Vanderbilt's values.

Vanderbilt values diversity – this has been made clear through the actions and efforts of our administration over the past few years. I have spoken to so many people who spontaneously name Vanderbilt's diversity efforts as a reason they are proud to work here. USAC is undertaking efforts to be inclusive and ensure that every member of the Vanderbilt community is represented. As such, this year we have taken on the task of rewriting our bylaws to include 5 at-large membership positions to ensure that every voice can be heard.

Vanderbilt also values knowledge, and the pursuit of this knowledge is something valued by so many staff members. Ensuring that employees have access to the resources necessary to thrive and improve in their jobs is very important to me, personally. The world is changing rapidly, and Vanderbilt must keep up not only intellectually but professionally, as an employer of choice.

Serving on USAC gives staff members the chance to participate in a volunteer organization with ample leadership opportunities. In addition, USAC does its part to disseminate knowledge of classes and development opportunities to the Vanderbilt staff members we represent.

Finally, Vanderbilt staff members value service, and we strive to make sure that staff members can see the through line from the work they do every day to the larger vision of the University. By creating opportunities for staff to see how their work impacts Vanderbilt, USAC hopes to foster that culture of service and selflessness.

Vanderbilt staff members see one another as part of a community. We want to take care of our own, and make sure that even those who retire after a long career here remain a part of that community. As such, this year USAC has submitted recommendations for improving the retirement plan to the administration. These recommendations include options for community-building, as well as improved methods of keeping retired staff connected to campus.

This is an exciting time for Vanderbilt – those of us who work here see it every day, from the construction on West End, to the launch of new majors and programs within our respective schools and departments. As staff members, we are proud of the work we do, but more than that, we are proud of the place where we do it. Thank you very much, and I appreciate you giving me time to speak to you this afternoon.