

USAC Board of Trust Address

Lara Beth Lehman (University Library), acting president/president-elect

April 19th, 2013

Members of the Board of Trust, Vanderbilt Leaders, and distinguished guests, I am honored to have the opportunity to address you today on behalf of the University Staff Advisory Council.

As perhaps you know, the Staff Council represents all employees, outside of the Medical Center who are in non-faculty, non-union positions. We are made up of more than 90 individuals, chosen by 30 campus groups, from hourly workers to professionals, administrators, and technical specialists. More than 3,000 staff members are represented. Our mission as a council is to act as an advisory group both to the administration and staff on issues and policies; establish and maintain communication between staff and the administration on all levels; and serve and support the Vanderbilt community.

The primary motivation of the council is to focus our attention on improving the lives of staff members, whether it is through our role as a living, breathing suggestion box, communication between staff and administration, or service to the university - we keep this notion in the forefront of our efforts.

Staff Council has an established practice of polling university staff twice a year to determine if there are new issues of interest or concern for staff. From this practice, we heard several concerns regarding the lack of support for breastfeeding mothers working on campus. Our Staff Life committee in partnership with staff from the women's center and VandyMom's group addressed the needs of breastfeeding mothers in

the workforce at Vanderbilt as well as the provision of space for lactation rooms. After a review of current supports and an evaluation of our peer institutions, we made a recommendation to the Vanderbilt Administration and Human Resources to strengthen support for breastfeeding mothers. Faculty Senate also endorsed the recommendation and the Provost's Office began an initiative to investigate potential lactation spaces around campus.

As a result, proper lactation spaces are now available within a 10 minute walk from any office on campus; HR further enhanced the communication in place by updating their website, including a map of all lactation rooms and notices sent to parents returning to work. We are pleased with the immediate action and support of Vanderbilt administration on this important issue.

We take a great sense of pride in our service to the Vanderbilt community and obligation to serve to heart. On the anniversary of 9/11 this year, we delivered poster-sized thank you cards signed by members of the council to the five groups of first responders for Vanderbilt. We continued our tradition of making holiday cards for soldiers and mailed over 70 cards overseas to service men and women through the American Red Cross. Our most important service activities surround raising money for the Employee Hardship Fund. Through our Kroger card program and participation in the Guy Brown Toner Recycling Program, we have raised over \$1,000 this year for the Employee Hardship Fund. Staff Council is and always will be actively engaged in staff welfare.

There are so many ways we can share experiences and knowledge with one another. A couple of years ago, we started a new grassroots

program called Community Connections. Vanderbilt is an amazing place to work, filled with extraordinary people with talents and knowledge to share. Our goal is to bring Vanderbilt staff (both University & med. center) together - providing opportunities for personal enrichment, exploring common areas of interest, learning new skills and making connections across the University as a whole. Chief HR Officer Traci Nordberg recently addressed the council - encouraging staff to seek out learning opportunities on campus, during lunch or after work hours. We couldn't have been more pleased to hear that - The support of administration in our endeavors is very important.

We host our Community Connections programs during lunch time or after work and sessions are led by VU staff. Recent ones have included gardening, crafting, photography, car maintenance. We have also hosted a successful guided tour series that has included tours of the tunnel system, seasonal tree tours, Life Flight, the Fine Arts gallery, First Amendment Center, and library exhibits. More than 300 staff have participated in our Community Connections programs this year. A perk of working on a university campus is that there is learning and discovery happening all around us. Programming by staff, for staff is now contributing to that atmosphere.

I would like to see Staff Council continue to facilitate connections with employees in all levels and areas- I look forward to our continuing to build relationships and partnerships with Vanderbilt leaders, Med. Center Staff Council, health & wellness, and employee celebration. We are more than a campus with people inside offices and classrooms, we are a community. We are all connected by the common mission of making Vanderbilt the best it can be.

Thank you for honor of addressing you today on behalf of Staff Council and the work you are doing for Vanderbilt.