

BOT Speech - 4/18/19

Members of the Board of Trust, Vanderbilt Administrators and Distinguished Guests, I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you today. My name is Jenny Mandeville, and I work as a Strategic Projects Manager in the Division of Communications. I have been at Vanderbilt for twelve years, and have served on the University Staff Advisory Council, or USAC, for four, including this year as president of the council.

USAC is a group of more than 90 elected staff members from nearly two-dozen campus groups. Our members include hourly employees as well as salaried, and range from professionals to administrators, to technical specialists, representing more than 3,000 university staff members. USAC's role is to communicate information between the administration and the staff, to act as a sounding board for staff concerns, and to provide recommendations to the administration regarding these concerns, as well as serving in an advisory capacity on issues that affect staff at Vanderbilt.

Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to take a moment to thank Chancellor Zeppos for his leadership these last eleven years. Your consideration for staff has not gone unnoticed, and we in USAC are so appreciative of the time you've taken to speak with us over the course of your tenure.

Now, I would like to take a moment to share with you some of the highlights of this past council year. Our overarching goal has been to connect staff members with the resources and opportunities available to them as part of the Vanderbilt community, whether that is through professional development, seminars, speakers, or the pursuit of a degree.

We began our year by polling members of the staff community about issues of most significant concern to them.

Surprising no-one, many concerns arose around the upcoming changes to transit and parking at Vanderbilt, through the great work of the FutureVU initiative. The issue of transportation in Nashville is a thorny one, and the majority of the concerns were around the fact that living and working in the city presents a myriad of challenges. As a result, USAC has been working closely with Vice Chancellor Kopstain and his team to communicate what's coming, with several USAC members involved in the committees and groups being formed to spearhead the changes.

Another partnership between USAC and the administration that took place this year was the way we worked to support the move to the new healthcare plan. USAC members worked to make sure that information was shared with their constituents as soon as it became available, so staff members were able to prepare and plan for the change. Through our combined efforts, we were able to lessen the impact, and people were well-versed both in what to expect, as well as the benefits and scope of each type of plan. It is a testament to

this effort that we received minimal feedback regarding the new system once it was rolled out.

A third and final partnership I'd like to mention involves the newly formed staff steering committee on women's issues, developed by Vice Chancellors Page and Kopstain as a counterpart to the provost's steering committee. USAC is well-represented among the members, and we look forward to working with them and generating thoughtful feedback regarding the experience of women staff members here at Vanderbilt.

USAC members value service, and as such we have continued our support of the Employee Hardship Fund through the Kroger card program, which allows us to assist staff members who are facing a financial need. So far this year, we have raised nearly \$4,500 dollars, and we look forward to continued success.

Internally, USAC's CARE committee, which has worked tirelessly over the past few years to raise consciousness around the issue of civility and respect on campus, concluded that they had fulfilled their mission of promoting workplace civility, as many members of the senior leadership team now regularly refer to civility in their comments, and many areas of campus have adopted civility as part of their standard charge. We are all appreciative of their efforts.

Additionally, this year USAC has worked to revamp its communications strategy under the leadership of communications co-chairs Carlos Ruiz and Carjamen Scott. They have redesigned the newsletter, as well as the website, and have improved both our blog and our social media presence. Their goal has been to engage staff both with USAC and the campus community as a whole, reminding them of the wealth of opportunities available them, from employee appreciation events to all-campus offerings such as the Chancellor's Lecture Series.

That campus community is, at the end of the day, what binds us together. Cliche as it might be to say, when I speak to my colleagues and constituents across campus and ask them what it is they love about their jobs, the answer I receive most often is that they enjoy the people with whom they work. The culture among staff at Vanderbilt is one of mutual respect and support, which is the type of culture that many organizations aspire to, but few can claim.

In closing, I would like to once again thank you all for allowing me the opportunity to be here today. Vanderbilt is an exceptional and unique place to work, and the staff council looks forward to continuing to serve its role as a resource for years to come. Thank you very much for your time.