

**ADDRESS TO THE VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUST
by James E. Taylor, President
Staff Advisory Council
APRIL 25, 1998**

President Hall, Chancellor Wyatt, members of the Board, and other members of the University community, I bring greetings from the University Staff Advisory Council.

As President of the Council, I first thank Vanderbilt for giving me an opportunity to be of service to an institution that is committed to the highest quality of education, research, and health care. I represent nearly 70 elected representatives that, in turn, represent more than 3000 staff members of University Central. Not only is our service on the council voluntary, but that same voluntary spirit is shared within the Nashville community.

The purposes of the Council as stated in our bylaws are:

- To act as an advisory group to both the administration and staff on problems and policies that affect the University and the people it serves
- To establish and maintain communication between university staff and administration on all levels, and
- To establish and maintain effective communication among staff of the University.

Several avenues are used to facilitate communication between the Council and administration and among staff. Representatives of the Council serve on a number of University advisory committees, while members of the administration attend select Staff Council Executive Committee meetings to share information. E-mail, as well as the Councils' web site, is used to disseminate information to our constituents. Also, we invite representatives from the University and from outside organizations to make presentations at our regular monthly meetings. We have heard from the Benefits office, the Department of Security, the Treasurer's office, Traffic and Parking, Human Resource Services, Health 1-2-3 and Telecommunications. We look forward to Chancellor Wyatt's comments at our June meeting.

I am happy to report that, while staff are concerned about every aspect of the Vanderbilt community, parking was not the focal point during this Council year. The opening of Wesley Place and Terrace Place parking garages is

viewed as a positive response to the parking needs of the University. However, we are still concerned about the cost of parking, especially for our entry-level staff.

Recently, a number of changes that are favorable to staff have been announced. Past presidents of the Council have asked the University to take steps that would encourage greater participation in the University's retirement plan. Beginning in July, mandatory participation in the retirement plan not only increases the number of participants, but the results will be a better quality of life for staff at retirement. We ask that consideration be given to extending to retirees some benefits, such as access to health care coverage and discounts to athletic event.

While we applaud the efforts made by the University in the area of benefits, I will mention a few issues that remain major concerns of the people the Council represents. First, as mentioned by the past two Council presidents, is the need for a short-term disability plan. The lack of a short-term disability plan leaves our staff exposed to a tremendous financial risk. Under our current benefits plan, our long-term disability plan has a six-month wait period. It would take a staff member 11 years, without using a day, to accumulate enough sick time to bridge the gap for continuous income before long-term disability is effective, should one suffer a long term illness. I have appointed an ad hoc committee to study paid time off programs designed to help bridge this gap.

Secondly, added flexibility is needed in our staff tuition discount reimbursement program. A less restrictive policy for the payment of tuition reimbursement for non-job-related courses taken outside of Vanderbilt has a greater potential to enhance the value of staff to the University. In addition to the lack of a comprehensive evening program at Vanderbilt, many staff simply cannot afford the tuition. Thirdly, a competitive market salary program is encouraged so that, not only can Vanderbilt continue to attract high quality staff, but also it will be able to retain that staff.

Before I close, I wish to comment about the Staff/Faculty Hardship Fund. The fund provides assistance to staff and faculty who are in need of temporary financial aid arising from hardships such as illness, death in a family, loss of property and other emergency situations. The fund receives gifts from staff and faculty, the Medical Center and University Staff Councils, as well as the Vanderbilt Community Giving Campaign. Since July 1997, the fund has provided assistance to 29 staff members, disbursing almost \$6,500. Recently,

a Hardship Emergency Relief Effort has been established to assist staff and faculty who were affected by the tornado.

I submit to you that Vanderbilt has a committed staff dedicated to providing the highest quality of service to Vanderbilt and its community. So I ask, as you make decisions about Vanderbilt's future, that you consider the needs of staff who contribute to the University's success.