



Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour  
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;  
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth  
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth  
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,  
And smale foweles maken melodye,  
That slepen al the nyght with open ye  
(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages),  
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,  
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,  
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;  
And specially from every shires ende  
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,  
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,  
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

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The late Senior Vice-Chancellor Rob Roy Purdy used to say that there are two kinds of people in this world: those who can recite the first eighteen lines of the General Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* . . . and everybody else.

I open my remarks this morning with what may be the most beautiful eighteen lines of iambic pentameter in the English language for two reasons.

I hope that the first will become evident in the course of this presentation. The second is that, if I say nothing else of value this morning, you will have heard at least one worthwhile thing.

During the course of this academic year, the University Staff Advisory Council has been on a sort of pilgrimage of its own (although some might call it wandering in the wilderness) in that we have tried to take a step back from the issues that normally vie for our attention to look at the "big picture" by pondering the following question:

## The Big Picture:

What would it look like  
if staff were full partners  
with faculty and students  
in the educational enterprise?

Or, as Chancellor Gee put it,



Chancellor Gee:

“How do we integrate staff  
into the educational process?”

Now, it has occurred to more than one individual to wonder why someone would ask such a question in the first place.

In my view, the reason lies in why staff members choose to work at Vanderbilt, and in the kinds of folks who make the choice to work here.

So, what are some of the reasons that folks work here?

## Why do staff choose to work at Vanderbilt?

- It's a job!
- The Benefits
- Job Security/Employment Stability
- Like working at an educational institution
- Like being in an academic environment

[Between first 3 and last 2]

But almost everyone will include as part of an answer something along the lines of

So then, who is choosing to work here?

Allow me to introduce you to the staff:

In the early years, most staff filled service roles.



This individual is identified as William, a cook.  
In the photo archives, pictures of staff from the early years of the University are almost invariably of African American men.

As time passed, needs changed.



This is a campus police officer about 1922. It is unclear whether he is protecting the campus from the surrounding city, or protecting the neighbors from the shenanigans of students.





Moving forward, we see a group of librarians from about 1925. Librarians may be the first of a type of staff member, who, for the sake of discussion here today,

I will call "learned," that is, in order to carry out their responsibilities, they required specialized knowledge or learning

The number of this kind of staff member begins to grow as the institution grows.





THIS IS A 1930 GROUP AT PEABODY.

One imagines that they are librarians or alumni office staff or something of that ilk. At any rate, if they are not learned they are at least skilled.

After WWII, with the implementation of the GI Bill, staffing needs grow yet again.



THIS IS THE PLACEMENT OFFICE IN 1947.



THIS IS THE STUDENT LIFE STAFF ABOUT 1970.



AND THIS IS THE PUBLICATIONS STAFF IN 1975.

(The scary thing about the last two photos is that I'm old enough to remember most of these folks when they all looked like that!)

So who is working here today?

(*Other* than some of the same folks from the 1970's photos.)

We still need folks to do some cooking,



Dining Services

and stocking shelves, and marketing in the sense of getting students to buy into dining programs





“The Card” Office

and since this is the electronic age, we have to have folks administer all those student purchases "on the Card."



Vanderbilt Police

WE STILL HAVE A POLICE FORCE.  
(This is part of the day shift.)





Office of Traffic & Parking

However since the days of the horseless carriage have long passed, we also need folks who manage the parking supply.  
This photo is somewhat misleading in that the parking lot is largely empty. (Sorry, Nim.)



General Library Building Staff, Jean & Alexander Heard Library

Of course, we still have librarians.  
(This is some of the staff in the General Library Building.)

These are *learned* people.



Accounting

WE NEED ACCOUNTANTS



Contracts & Grants Accounting

AND MORE ACCOUNTANTS





Campus Planning & Construction

and ARCHITECTS,  
and lawyers (although I don't have any pictures of lawyers)

*These* are learned people.



Environmental Health & Safety

We have folks keeping us safe from toxins and infectious agents and things that go bump in the night



## Management Information Systems

We have computer programmers writing code so that students and faculty and staff can do more and more of their work on line.





### Information Technology Services

We have computer programmers and network engineers writing code and installing hardware so that we have infrastructure to support all the online applications that the other programmers are creating.

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These are *learned* people of both sexes and every hue with a wide range of interests and abilities. And there are hundreds of others like them whose roles I haven't time to mention.

It's been said that half of us came to Nashville with a song in our respective hearts and a gleam in our respective eyes, and when things didn't work out in the music business, we all got real jobs.

Whether that's true or not, a bunch of us are in a band, or a choir, or a community theatre, or a book club, or a writers group, or a film society. These are *very* bright, and *very* creative people.

These are folks you run into at the symphony, or the Frist, or the ballet, or Cheekwood, or The Rep, or the Opera, or a foreign film at Sarratt or the Belcourt, or at a speech by Desmond Tutu, or a performance by Tibetan monks in Ingram Hall at Blair.

These are people who read *books*, and sometimes *write* them, and some of these people teach courses at Vanderbilt and elsewhere.

They are filled with intellectual curiosity. These people are not just "*human* resources;" these people are *intellectual* resources.

## The Challenge:

To leverage the skills and interests of staff  
to the benefit of “intellectual vitality”  
and the “spirit of inquiry”

The challenge for the University, especially as we move to Residential Colleges, is to find a way to leverage the skills and interests of staff to the benefit of "intellectual vitality" and the "spirit of inquiry" that are at the core of our institutional values.



The ability to recite the first 18 lines of the general prologue of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, either reflects a facility for memorization—which I assure you is *not* the deal, in *my* case—or, it reflects a love of language, a love of literature, a love of learning. The love of learning can also be manifest by knowing the periodic table of elements, or speaking a foreign language,

or by working in a university environment where these sorts of things are going on simultaneously.

How do we take advantage of this love of learning?

How do we integrate staff into the educational process?

What would **Vanderbilt** look like if staff were full partners with faculty and students in the educational enterprise?

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