

illuminate



VANDERBILT
People, Culture and Belonging

Vol 2.4

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EDITOR'S REFLECTION

I still remember those summer nights on my family's farm—crickets singing, fireflies drifting, and me curled up by lamplight, lost in a book. Overhead, Polaris quietly held its place in the sky. It wasn't the brightest star, but it never wavered. While the world turned and seasons shifted, Polaris pointed true north. Even then, I understood: in the midst of movement, there's always a constant to guide you forward.

That same idea lives at the heart of our work here at Vanderbilt. The world around us is changing at warp speed—generative AI, evolving skills, new ways of working—and with it comes both challenge and incredible opportunity. To meet that future with clarity, we're launching Project Polaris, our new skills-based job architecture. Think of it as Google Maps for your career. You choose your destination, and Polaris offers turn-by-turn guidance—showing you where you are, where you could go, and how to navigate every twist and turn along the way.

At last month's Summit for Modern Conflict, Sam Altman reminded us that by year's end, AI agents will be more than helpers—they'll be collaborators. Staying ahead means building portable, future-ready skills, and Polaris is our toolkit for that work. It shows you where you are, charts where you can go, and lights up the path forward.

Our goal is bold: to define—and be—the great university of the 21st century. Those words aren't a slogan; they're the standard we set for ourselves. Renewal and motivated change begin with each of us owning our story. What's your next milestone? Which skills will carry you there? Polaris hands you the compass.

Up next are Talent Marketplace, Performance Management, and Staff Ventures—each a chance to lift one another up, to learn, to grow. These initiatives aren't just programs; they're invitations to shape your future—and ours—together.

We're in a pivotal moment of renewal. Keep pushing your boundaries, keep sharing your ideas, keep being the heart of this community—and above all, dare to grow. With Polaris lighting our way, the best is still ahead.

It's Our Moment.

Sydney Savion

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Celebrating the excellence of Vanderbilt staff.



Morgan Morris, Staff Engagement Coordinator, Administration

Morgan's commitment to fostering a sense of community and professional growth among colleagues is evident in everything she does. One of the many ways Morgan makes an impact is through her work with the Staff Engagement and Community Committee (SECC), where she helps plan events and initiatives. Morgan also provides essential oversight of the Graduate Assistantship Program. Through her leadership, she enhances the experience of graduate assistants and strengthens their engagement within Student Affairs. Morgan is deeply committed to supporting the professional growth of Student Affairs professionals. Morgan's superior organizational skills, attention to detail, and ability to bring teams together make her an invaluable asset to Student Affairs and Vanderbilt. Whether she is leading initiatives, planning events, or supporting professional development, she does so with passion and excellence.

Submit a nomination for a staff member or team for our Staff Spotlight



Did You Know?

VANDERBILT
Credit Union
PRESENTS

Member in May

Refer a friend!
to join **Vanderbilt Credit Union**

To participate in the CCU refer-a-friend program, you need to:

- Tell your fellow VU or VUMC teammate about the value you experience banking with the Credit Union.
- Tell them to use your name when they open their account with VCU.
- Once the account is open, we will let you know and put \$50.00 in your VCU Savings Account. The new member will receive \$25.25 into their VCU Savings Account.
- Limit one referral bonus per member referred. Offer subject to change or be withdrawn at any time.

Earn
\$50
for each
referral

Open your account now!



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PCB to launch Project Polaris, skills-based job architecture

A new era for Vanderbilt staff career growth begins

People, Culture and Belonging has announced the upcoming launch of the university's new skills-based job architecture, a framework that brings clarity and visibility to all career paths and expands opportunities for all staff at Vanderbilt.

Last year, [PCB announced](#) the start of this architecture, known as Project Polaris, and over the past five months has collaborated with more than 100 stakeholders across campus to thoughtfully design and validate this architecture. To date, all 789 staff roles have been mapped into the new structure.

How it Works

- Jobs are grouped into categories such as families, sub-families, growth streams, and growth levels, which makes a career journey easier to navigate.
- The architecture provides a consistent foundation for career development, helping staff to better understand where their roles fit and how they can grow within the university.
- Whether you're exploring future possibilities or deepening expertise in your current role, this system makes pathways clearer and more accessible.

Pilot to begin in June, full rollout in July

A pilot involving nine divisions, schools, and colleges will begin in June, followed by a full university-wide rollout in July.

- Both phases will include **training for people leaders**, time for **managers to review role mappings**, **staff training**, and the delivery of **personalized placement statements** to employees by their managers.
- This phased approach allows testing and for PCB to refine its support while ensuring a consistent experience for all staff.

Introducing Talent Marketplace

Complementing this rollout is the beta launch of the Talent Marketplace (utilizing Oracle Grow), a new tool that empowers staff to assess their proficiency in key skills and explore learning opportunities directly connected to their roles.

PCB to launch Project Polaris, skills-based job architecture

The Talent Marketplace is built on the foundation of the job architecture, which **defines the core and technical skills associated with each role** and **outlines clear growth paths across the university**. Together, they create a powerful system for staff to take charge of their development, discover opportunities, and align their growth with the evolving needs of the university.

Project Polaris and the Talent Marketplace represent a transformative investment in the Vanderbilt staff community—one that supports growth, mobility, and a thriving, future-ready workforce.

The Full Picture: How to Grow Your Career at Vanderbilt

Illuminating Paths to Grow Your Career at Vanderbilt



Phase 1 (launching with the job architecture):

- The new Talent Marketplace (powered by Oracle Grow) is where staff can select skills to grow in or designate skills they are already proficient in.
- With the new skills-based architecture in place, staff will be able to see what skills their current job requires and what skills are required should they want to grow their career or change career paths.
- Staff members wanting to grow their career can select skills they are interested in growing in through the Talent Marketplace and suggested courses will be provided for those skills, in the [Digital Learning Marketplace](#) allowing staff to grow their skills to prepare for their career growth.

Phase 2

- Internal candidates will be able to see internal job postings and the skills needed and see if they are a match and apply right there for the job. Or see what skills they need to gain in order to apply.

Until the full rollout in July, more information can be found on the [Project Polaris website](#).

2025 SPRING STAFF ASSEMBLY

Congratulations to all the winners of the 2025 Spring Staff Assembly Awards.



FUTURES LEARNING HUB UPDATES

Futures Learning Hub June Tech Tuesday and Thrive Thursday Events

The Futures Learning Hub is back with fresh sessions designed to energize your skills, spark new ideas, and support your professional growth. Whether you're looking to sharpen your tech toolkit or fuel your personal development, we have something for everyone this month!

Each Tech Tuesday and Thrive Thursday sessions are **live, virtual, and interactive** — perfect for a quick boost of inspiration!

TAKEOFF TUESDAY

Register

Takeoff Tuesday - OneVU: Navigating the New SSO & MFA

When: 6/3/25 @ 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

About: As part of Cybersecurity's VTrust initiative, Vanderbilt University is transitioning from PING Single Sign-On (SSO) to **OneVU**, powered by **Okta**, as our new identity and access management platform. As part of your OneVU onboarding process, you will establish your Okta Verify MFA account. Join us in an open discussion about the features and functionality of our new and improved platform.

Emotional Intelligence: Understanding and Managing Emotions

When: 6/5/25 @ 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

About: This Thrive Thursday session will help you identify your emotions, understand what triggers them, and use that insight to your advantage. You'll learn practical strategies to stay calm in stressful moments, build stronger connections with coworkers, and make decisions that balance rational thought and emotional awareness. By the end, you'll walk away with simple techniques for managing your feelings.

THRIVE THURSDAY

Register

FUTURES LEARNING HUB UPDATES

Leading from Every Role: Empowering Yourself and Others

When: 7/17/25 @ 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

About: Leadership is not just for the corner office; attendees will leave this session with actionable steps to cultivate leadership from all levels. Co-elevation, a collaborative mindset that turns teams into partners in mutual success, emphasizing connection, vulnerability, and accountability, will be introduced as a vision of the new cornerstones of leadership.

THRIVE
THURSDAY



Register

Why Join

Skill Building: Gain valuable skills to help you excel in your current role or unlock new opportunities.

Community: Connect with colleagues across the university who share a passion for growth and learning.

Accessibility: Each session is designed for a wide range of experience levels and interests.

Mark Your Calendar

Don't miss the chance to spark new ideas and elevate your personal and professional journey this March. Keep an eye on the Futures Learning Hubs schedule and join us for the next round of Tech Tuesday and Thrive Thursday events. If you need assistance registering, [please review our job aid](#).

FUTURES LEARNING HUB UPDATES

Complete a learning course through Futures Learning Hub

At Vanderbilt University, we value professional growth and continuous learning. We want to reward you for your hard work of expanding your skills through Digital Learning Marketplace.

You don't need to **take a specific course** to be eligible for the swag box drawing. Feel free to choose any Digital Learning Marketplace course that aligns with your professional goals! Winners will be announced at Curious Bar the last Wednesday of March, April and May.

Here's How You Can Enter:

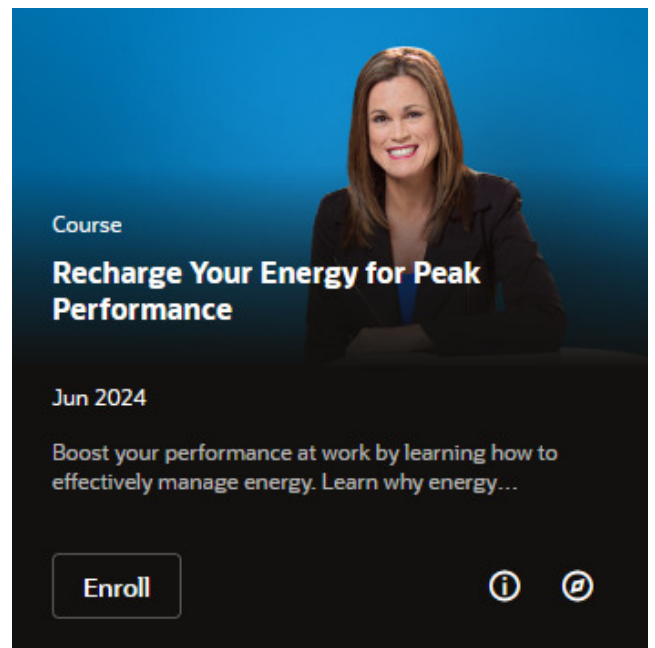
1. **Log In:** Access the Learning Hub.
2. **Learn:** Complete at least one course of your choice.
3. **Win:** You are automatically entered to our drawing to receive a Vanderbilt Swag Box valued up to \$75!

Course of the Month - May 2025

Recharge Your Energy for Peak Performance

What you'll learn

In this course, learn how to boost your productivity by managing your energy more effectively. Instructor Heidi Hanna kicks off the course by discussing why energy management is crucial to your professional success, as well as how to craft an energy investment strategy for growth and sustainability.



Register for the Course of the Month

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Practice Gratitude with Lyra

Practicing gratitude is a simple yet powerful way to enhance our mental wellbeing. Taking a few minutes each day to jot down things we're thankful for help shift our focus toward what's going well, fostering a positive outlook and a deeper sense of appreciation.

Lyra

Tips for Effective Journaling:

- Be specific in your writing
- Tap into how you're feeling
- Aim for variety
- Write often
- Be present



Start your journey with [Lyra's gratitude journal](#) and experience the benefits it can bring.

Financial Offerings

Taking control of your finances empowers you to make informed decisions, reduce stress, and achieve your goals. By budgeting, saving, and investing wisely, you can build a secure and prosperous future. You can start by enrolling in a Fidelity workshop.

Investing for Beginners

Thursday, June 5 2025, at 9AM CT

In this workshop, you'll explore the fundamentals of investing, including key terms, concepts, and various investing styles.

[Register here.](#)

Make the Most of Your Retirement Savings

Tuesday, June 24 2025, at 3PM CT

This workshop will help you understand the importance of saving as much as possible for retirement, how much to save, different account types to save for retirement and ways to preserve and grow your savings to last throughout your lifetime.

[Register here.](#)

To register to attend a financial education webinar, log into your [Fidelity NetBenefits®](#) account. If you encounter any issues, please call Fidelity's service center at 800-343-0860 for assistance. If you need to register for the first time, select "Register as a new user".

UPCOMING EVENTS AND LAUNCHES

Vanderbilt Lacrosse Middle School Camp

Attention Vanderbilt employees! Give your rising 5th–8th grader an unforgettable summer experience at the Vanderbilt Lacrosse Middle School Camp, running June 23–25, 2025, from 9 AM to 1 PM. Led by Vanderbilt's coaching staff, Vandy employees will receive an exclusive 15% discount. Whether your child is new to lacrosse or looking to refine their game, this camp offers high-level coaching and a great on-campus experience. New to lacrosse? Equipment is provided but feel free to bring your own. Sign ups are open through Friday, June 20.

Register today by emailing Lisa Gracey at lisa.gracey@vanderbilt.edu.



VUIT Learning Collective

Planning a summer getaway? While you're packing sunscreen and booking flights, don't forget to protect your digital life, too. This advanced guide is designed for tech-savvy travelers who want to stay safe online while exploring the world. [Register here](#) for Sun, Sand, and Cybersecurity: An Advanced Guide for Summer Travelers.

Join PCB Campus Tours!

Join People, Culture, and Belonging for an enriching tour of Vanderbilt University beautiful campus! During this 1-hour walk, you'll learn about the unique landscape that enhances its natural beauty. The walk will start at Rand patio (across from Old Central). Laura Barker, assistant grounds manager, will be our tour guide.



Tuesday, June 17
9:00AM
Starting: Rand Patio
[Sign Up](#)

Tuesday, June 10
9:00AM
Starting: Rand Patio
[Sign Up](#)

FINDING AND KEEPING THE MOTIVATION TO CHANGE

Originally Published on LyraHealth.com

One of life's greatest challenges is getting and staying motivated. Perhaps you want to exercise on a regular basis, eat healthier, make a doctor appointment you've been putting off, get to bed earlier, or spend more quality time with your family. Even when you know you want to make such a change, time can slip past – first a week, then a month, then another month, before you realize that the situation remains the same.

You may become self-critical, believe it's your fault for being "lazy," and tell yourself you need to "just do it." Since self-criticism is the antithesis of long-term motivation, you'll likely find yourself back at square one. The recipe for sustained, long-term motivation and success is to tune in to what is truly important to you, set clear goals aligned with your values, and reinforce each step you take toward them.

Values set the stage for motivation

Motivation is ignited when your goals align with your core values – what is most important to you – rather than what others think you should do or what you believe a “good” person would do. Your core values are not based on judgments or others' opinions. Knowing what is truly important to you and constructing goals based on those values helps set you up for success.

Think about what's most important to you right now in your life – without judgment or thoughts of what you “should” want. Some examples might be family, social activities, romance, career advancement, or adventure. The key to identifying values that will inspire motivation is to be truthful about what excites you. [Click here for a useful exercise to help you articulate your values.](#)

When you're honest with yourself about your current values, and you develop goals to help move toward them, it stimulates motivation. Imagine trying to eat healthier because someone else thinks you should. How unmotivating! It is extraordinarily difficult to sustain any change based on someone else wanting it for you. Now, imagine you decide that you want to feel great in your body. Maybe you want to be pain-free, more active with your family, or less sluggish in the afternoons. You decide that eating healthier would feel fantastic and set out to change some of your eating behaviors to support this value.

When your goals are connected to what matters to you, you're more likely to stick with hard decisions because you know they're leading you toward where you want to be. Instead of saying “no” to dessert because you think you should, you say “no” because you're motivated to get and stay healthy. Having your value-based goals crystallized in your mind makes this decision easier. And the more you make decisions in line with your values, the more likely you are to do the same at the next opportunity.

FINDING AND KEEPING THE MOTIVATION TO CHANGE

Originally Published on [LyraHealth.com](https://www.lyrahealth.com)

Reinforcement keeps you motivated

Another critical factor in cultivating motivation is reinforcement – anything that increases the likelihood a behavior will occur more frequently. Reinforcement is an effective way to achieve lasting change, and it can come in many forms. After taking a step toward your goals, try congratulating yourself (“Good job!” or “I did it!”), enjoy a favorite treat, draw a smiley face on your to-do list next to the task you accomplished, or stop and notice the feeling of pride.

To discover what is reinforcing for you, you can try some of the suggestions above or come up with your own and see if you start engaging in your desired behaviors (e.g., making healthy eating choices) more frequently. Successful reinforcers increase motivation, and you will notice yourself move forward more consistently. If you do not see this success, change up the reinforcers until you discover what works best for you.

Set realistic expectations

It’s important to realize that progress does not happen in a straight line. Even when you reinforce a behavior, it’s impossible to go from overeating at every meal to a healthy-eating lifestyle immediately, with no relapse. Change doesn’t work like that.

Change is messy. We’re hardwired to slip back into old, ineffective behaviors that have been reinforced again and again over time. Even when you don’t want to, it’s easy to fall into old routines like overeating, watching TV all day, or going back to that “I’ll do it tomorrow” mentality. It takes time for the reinforcement of new, more adaptive behaviors to take hold and override the old.

Learn to anticipate this tendency and give yourself a break when it happens instead of punishing yourself, and you’ll be able to view “failure” as an opportunity. In fact, you can reinforce yourself for noticing that you’ve engaged in behaviors you’re trying to change and then focus your attention on what small step you can take to course-adjust and move in the direction you want.

Practice, practice, practice!

Getting the hang of reinforcement and motivation takes practice. By identifying what you are already doing that’s working, or taking very small steps forward, and then rewarding those actions, you will begin to build that muscle. Punishment (e.g., criticizing yourself) extinguishes motivation; setting goals in line with your values and reinforcing steps taken toward them ignites and maintains motivation.

Here is a practice that will help you with building this muscle:

Start by noticing your breathing. Simply notice that you are inhaling and exhaling. Pay attention to where in your physical body you feel your breath.

Take three to five breaths this way, and when your mind wanders away or zones out, gently bring your attention back. You can think of each breath like a weightlifting rep, or an exercise to build your ability to put your attention where you want it.

Now, using this idea of placing the mind where you want it to be in the moment, recall one thing you did over the past 24 hours that was a step toward your goal. Unless you achieved a massive goal in the past day, this exercise requires you to let go of judgments and notice little ways in which you were effective.

If you were tired and you got up on time, that's an accomplishment. If you felt depressed and didn't want to get out of bed but you took a shower, perhaps that was effective. Don't dismiss anything for not being "good" enough or "big" enough.

When you have that behavior in mind, reinforce it. You can reinforce with encouraging self-talk, such as saying, "Good job," or "I did it," or "Nice!" Or simply notice that the task was accomplished and is part of a growing pattern of new behavior. Remember, if your mind wanders or starts telling you that it wasn't good enough, your practice is to gently bring your focus back to what you did well and reinforce it.

You may also reinforce your behavior through soothing touch. Try placing your hands over your heart center, or one hand over the other hand, or gently cup your face with both hands. This is touch that feels loving and sweet. Again, when your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to what you did well and reinforce it.

This practice may increase your motivation in a way that is sustainable and reliable. Get in the habit of finding one thing every day that you did that's consistent with your values and turn your mind toward noticing what you accomplished and reinforcing it. Remember that when your mind goes toward judgments about you or your behavior not measuring up, it will extinguish your motivation and ability to move forward. It's not wrong. This is just what minds do; they wander, and they come up with judgments. Your task is to calmly notice when this happens and bring your attention back to reinforcing your accomplishment. Practice, practice, practice this and you will notice that your motivation grows and your ability to take more steps toward your goals increases.

connect with us



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110 21st Ave S Suite 1000
Baker Building



pcb@vanderbilt.edu



Curious Bar
Check website for location



Virtual Curious Bar
2nd and 4th Wednesdays

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