

*Office of the Dean of The Ingram Commons*

To: Provost Susan Wentz  
From: Vanessa Beasley, dean of The Martha Rivers Ingram Commons, and Chair of the Residential College System Programmatic Vision Committee (Members: Frank Dobson, Natalee Erb, Alyssa Hasty, Sarah Igo, Christopher Loss, Traci Ray, Nilanjan Sarkar)  
Re: Programmatic vision and related recommendations  
Date: March 23, 2018

In November, 2017, you appointed the Residential College System Programmatic Vision Committee (hereafter committee) and named me as chair. You charged the committee with developing a programmatic vision for Vanderbilt University's expanding residential college system, a core initiative of the Academic Strategic Plan. The committee included faculty and staff from across the Vanderbilt community. We met regularly between December, 2017, and February, 2018, dividing our time among the following action areas:

- a. Learning more about the current residential colleges at Vanderbilt
- b. Identifying strengths and weaknesses of the current system
- c. Researching best practices
- d. Developing a programmatic vision unique to Vanderbilt

This memorandum represents the product of our efforts. It is divided into four parts: programmatic vision, benefits of this vision, recommended administrative structure, and future opportunities.

## **I. Programmatic vision**

We offer the following as the philosophy and purpose of the residential college experience at Vanderbilt:

*Residential colleges shall create an intentional, mutually-beneficial educational experience for Vanderbilt students, faculty and staff. Residential colleges will promote the development of intellect, community, personal well-being, self-discovery, and cultural awareness.*

Building upon the learning objectives and programmatic purposes of The Ingram Commons as the central site of Vanderbilt's distinctive first-year experience, the residential colleges for sophomores, juniors, and seniors will be designed to help students:

- (1) Master a course of study that will prepare them for professional, community, and civic affairs while cultivating a capacity for lifelong learning
- (2) Interact with others outside of their primary peer groups with civility, curiosity, and respect
- (3) Exercise mature judgments and habits for healthy living
- (4) Align their values and commitments with their daily lives
- (5) Engage with the diverse communities of Vanderbilt, Nashville, and the world

The following chart summarizes the aims of the residential college experience across the entire span of a Vanderbilt undergraduate's education.

## The Residential College Experience at Vanderbilt University (Rev. March 2018)

*Over the course of the undergraduate experience, the residential college communities will help students:*

		FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR	FOURTH YEAR
<b>INTELLECT</b>	Goal	<i>Acquire an appreciation for intellectual discovery and creativity outside the bounds of the formal academic curriculum, which contributes to academic engagement and success.</i>	<i>Master a course of study that will prepare them for professional, community, and civic affairs while cultivating a capacity for lifelong learning.</i>		
	Issues faced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying when they need help and asking for it</li> <li>Fear of faculty</li> <li>Conversation and study skills</li> <li>Identifying path</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying academic and career goals</li> <li>Immersion ideas</li> <li>Engaging with faculty on an academic project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin Immersion project</li> <li>Prepare for career</li> <li>Evaluate areas for cross-collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-efficacy</li> <li>Post-grad plans (job or study)</li> <li>Ability to solve problems (social change agent)</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	Goal	<i>Engage actively in building healthy communities on their floors, in their houses, in their Visions groups, on The Ingram Commons, and within the university.</i>	<i>Interact with others outside of their primary peer groups with civility, curiosity, and respect.</i>		
	Issues faced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finding a place in the community/friends</li> <li>Interpersonal skills development</li> <li>Sharing space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-proximal friendships</li> <li>Volunteering</li> <li>Recognition of all community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community v. individual responsibility</li> <li>Examine personal impact on peers</li> <li>Hold multiple roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-term networking practices</li> <li>How to sustain relationships</li> </ul>
<b>PERSONAL WELL-BEING</b>	Goal	<i>Understand and learn to utilize the skills necessary for healthy physical, psychological, and sexual well-being.</i>	<i>Exercise mature judgments and habits for healthy living.</i>		
	Issues faced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent living skills</li> <li>Coping mechanisms</li> <li>Defining healthy relationships</li> <li>Under-preparedness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on "balance"</li> <li>Time management</li> <li>Well-being help on location</li> <li>Actively seeking resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural norming on healthy practices</li> <li>Learn and practice self-advocacy</li> <li>Healthy boundaries in multiple areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to find resources beyond college</li> <li>Financial literacy</li> <li>Personal problem-solving</li> </ul>
<b>SELF-DISCOVERY</b>	Goal	<i>Clarify their own ethical, spiritual, and civic personal values through self-discovery.</i>	<i>Align their values and commitments with their daily lives.</i>		
	Issues faced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal identity</li> <li>Family/peer pressure</li> <li>National landscape</li> <li>What is integrity?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balance personal values/societal context</li> <li>Identify passions to seek involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Career and vocational dialogue</li> <li>Local civic engagement</li> <li>Leadership skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Career or academic path</li> <li>Life's goals</li> <li>Self-assessment</li> <li>Civic obligation</li> </ul>
<b>CULTURAL AWARENESS</b>	Goal	<i>Explore, live, and celebrate the diverse community of The Ingram Commons.</i>	<i>Engage with the diverse communities of Vanderbilt, Nashville, and the world.</i>		
	Issues faced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear</li> <li>Cultural background</li> <li>Overcome ignorance</li> <li>Learn to listen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand diversity of the world</li> <li>Communication skills</li> <li>Skills for interacting with diverse groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combat personal biases</li> <li>Social justice</li> <li>Conflict management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empathy</li> <li>Plan for ongoing education</li> <li>Cross-cultural communication</li> </ul>

## **II. Benefits of programmatic vision and goals**

The goals listed above will provide the following benefits:

- A. The goals will set guidelines and expectations for residential faculty, staff, and student leaders within each college as they design opportunities and programs for students who live in their communities. Residential faculty could, for example, be asked to create at least one college-wide program for each goal and encouraged to utilize campus partners as appropriate, e.g., the Office of Immersion Resources, the Career Center, or Inclusion Initiatives and Cultural Competence (IICC). The program goals underscore the centrality of the residential college system as a primary location for bringing university-wide initiatives to students “where they live.”
- B. The goals will serve as the basis for an assessment system that can be used across the residential college system, providing evidence of its achievements as well as areas for improvement over time. Since the opening of The Ingram Commons in 2008, we have developed a strong sense of the difference residential colleges have made for our first-year students. Collectively, the residential colleges should be positioned to gauge the benefits of the system across the four-year undergraduate experience and offer a robust, data-driven sense of its hallmarks.
- C. The goals will create an increased sense of consistency and community throughout the entire system. Students have different needs after their first year in college: some are developmental and others are particular to the Vanderbilt program (e.g., preparing for and beginning an immersive experience). Nevertheless, these five goals provide pillars of the student experience that can be shared and modified across the residential college system, fostering awareness of our common project of building knowledge, skills, and capacities.

## **III. Recommended administrative structure**

To support these goals and provide consistency across the residential colleges, we are recommending one centralized administrative structure to lead, direct, and support the entire system. A centralized structure would result in:

- A. budgetary efficiencies and goal-based allocations
- B. greater teamwork and timely communication among and between all of the relevant faculty, staff, and related campus partners
- C. coordinated logistical support for event planning
- D. reduction of over-programming and/or competing events held simultaneously

## **IV. Future opportunities**

In addition to the programmatic vision and concrete goals we have listed above, we close by registering our hope that new opportunities will develop as the residential college system continues to grow. These might include, but ought not be limited to, strengthening intellectual linkages between graduate and undergraduate students; facilitating visiting speakers’ and scholars’ exchanges with Vanderbilt undergraduates; and bringing members of the Nashville community to campus and vice versa. As the residential college system expands, we should continue to build new paths to discovery and learning outside of the classroom.