

# The Campus

“All cultures include aspects of religious expression,



JIM HSIEH

## It Was a Dark and Sultry Night

ON A DESERTED TWO-LANE highway in the middle of a warm summer night, 15 undergraduate students stopped at a magical gas station. Lawnmower racers, bobbing blowup dolls, and an orchestra-conducting tiger met them inside. Their brief, bizarre visits began with a creative process that produced a 200-plus-page novel in Intermediate Fiction class, taught by Tony Earley.

Earley, assistant professor of English and best-selling author of *Jim the Boy*, decided that because several students in this class previously had taken one of his other writing courses, he would find a different approach to teaching young writers. His divergence came in the form of leading students to pen a serial novel. Each student wrote a chapter of the book.

For the first few meetings of class, each student pitched an idea. After all the presentations and several votes, one idea stood alone. Welcome to Booth's Grocery and the No Name Lounge, a mysterious oasis in the middle of the country. Each chapter's characters stop at the fictional gas station/nightclub during 15-minute intervals on the same night.

The winning creator, then-junior Ashley Foret, based the setting on actual places outside her hometown of Lake Charles, La. After revisions under Earley's guidance, each writer submitted a final copy of his or her chapter for a bound edition of the novel. Then-junior Eric Locko sketched a drawing of the fictional place for the cover. Earley compiled the final copy and published 16 books—one for every author and one for himself.

“I wrote more that semester than any semester in years,” says Earley. “I suspect that was largely inspired by Booth's.”

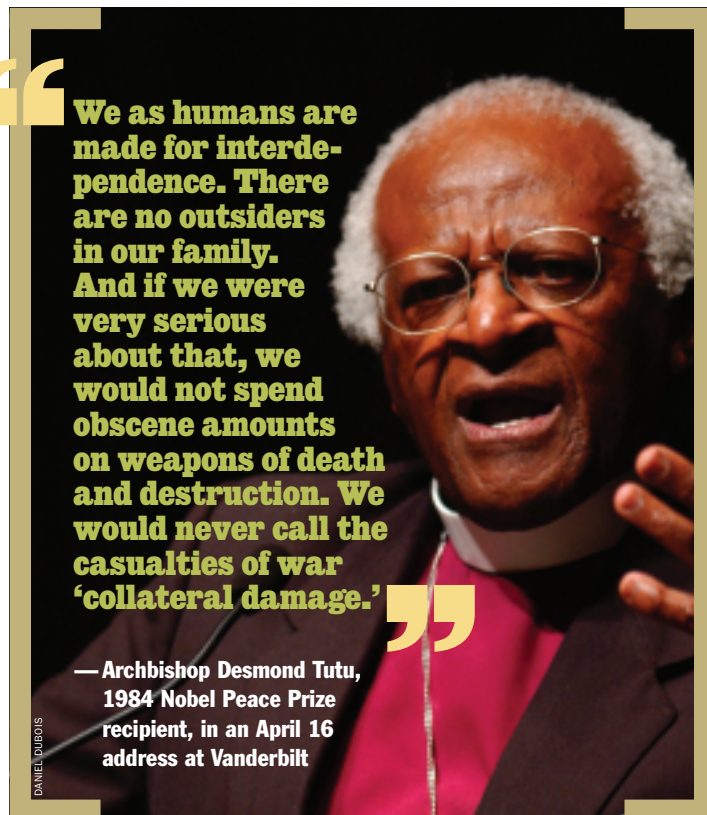
## A&S Adds Major in Jewish Studies

VANDERBILT'S STRENGTHS IN religion, culture, history and politics provide a broad base for the launch of a new undergraduate major in Jewish studies through the College of Arts and Science this fall.

“All cultures include aspects of religious expression, and faith communities often reflect the

cultures in which they develop,” says Richard McCarty, dean of the College of Arts and Science. “This expanded commitment to Jewish studies advances Vanderbilt's mission to equip our students with the tools they will need to appreciate the rich interrelationships between the religions, cultures and societies in which we live today.”

Students can choose from courses in Hebrew and biblical studies, as well as classes taught by faculty from Law, Divinity, Peabody and Blair. They may also gain pre-professional expe-



**“We as humans are made for interdependence. There are no outsiders in our family. And if we were very serious about that, we would not spend obscene amounts on weapons of death and destruction. We would never call the casualties of war ‘collateral damage.’”**

— Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 1984 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, in an April 16 address at Vanderbilt

DANIEL DUBOIS

# Fall 2003

*and faith communities often reflect the cultures in which they develop.* ” —DEAN RICHARD MCCARTY

rience by serving as volunteer community leaders or teachers in sectarian schools.

Jack Sasson, the Mary Jane Werthan Professor of Jewish Studies and Hebrew Bible at Vanderbilt Divinity School and a professor of classics in the College of Arts and Science, serves as director of the program. Martina Urban of the Hebrew University and of Berlin's Institute for Jewish Studies has been hired as assistant professor of religious studies and Jewish studies.

## External Research Funding Reaches All-Time High

THE AMOUNT OF EXTERNAL funding Vanderbilt University researchers received last year from peer-reviewed contracts and grants jumped by a dramatic 31 percent to reach an all-time high of \$285.8 million.

In fiscal year 2002, extramural funding at Vanderbilt University Medical Center surged by 36 percent to a total of \$211.9 million, making it the third fastest-growing academic health center in the country in terms of funding from the federal National Institutes of Health.

“Generous increases in the budgets of the Public Health Service and National Institutes of Health provided by Congress

have made this possible,” says Lee Limbird, associate vice chancellor for research at VUMC. “At the same time, our faculty has been more aggressive in seeking out funding opportunities. We are currently averaging an amazing ratio of 1.5 grants per faculty member.”

At the same time, support for research on the rest of the campus increased by 21 percent to a record \$73.9 million.

Among the highlights for the year was the meteoritic rise of funding in psychology, which has nearly doubled, from \$3.1 million in FY 1999 to \$6.1 million last year. The School of Engineering has posted similar increases, rising from \$10.9 million in FY 1999 to \$19.3 million in FY 2002. Peabody College also had an exceptionally strong year, shooting up to \$19.4 million in FY 2002 from levels hovering around \$15 million.

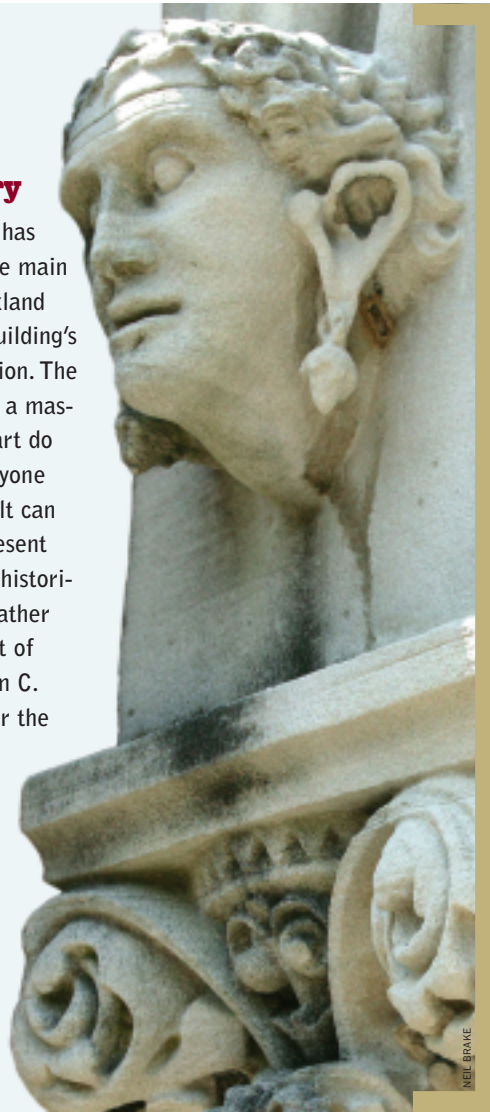
## Fisk, VUSN Join Forces to Offer B.S.N.

THE TENNESSEE BOARD OF Nursing has approved a plan by Vanderbilt University School of Nursing and Fisk University, a historically African-American private institution in Nashville, to expand their current relationship and offer courses to meet requirements of a bachelor of science degree in nursing to be awarded by Fisk.

## {Details}

### Stone Sentry

This stone head has presided over the main entrance to Kirkland Hall since the building's 1870s construction. The female face and a masculine counterpart do not, as far as anyone now at Vanderbilt can determine, represent mythological or historical figures but rather were simply part of architect William C. Smith's vision for the Victorian Gothic structure.



Students will complete a specified liberal arts curriculum at Fisk and the VUSN pre-specialty curriculum to earn a B.S.N. degree from Fisk. Fisk will administer the program, and VUSN's Linda Norman, senior associate dean for aca-

demics, will coordinate Vanderbilt's courses and the Fisk curriculum.

“This relationship provides a nursing program to an institution with a high percentage of minority students,” says Norman. “It's cost-effec-

**{Inquiring Minds}****Drink Water, Stay Conscious**

Vanderbilt University Medical Center scientists and a team of German researchers say you may be able to prevent fainting episodes by consuming 16 ounces of water before activities that precipitate fainting, such as donating blood. Both groups studied healthy people without a history of fainting to follow up earlier research performed at VUMC. That research found that drinking water reduced the likelihood of fainting in people with malfunctioning autonomic nervous systems.

An estimated 150,000 people a year faint or experience near-fainting after blood donations; many never give blood again. "We wondered if water might help prevent fainting in healthy people who donated blood," explains Dr. David Robertson, the Elton Yates Professor of Medicine, Pharmacology and Neurology, and director of the Vanderbilt Clinical Research Center.

Researchers found drinking water tended to lower the heart rate while lying down, and improved the force and flow of blood both when horizontal and upright.

**New Therapy Helps Cancer Patients Swallow, Breathe**

Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center is offering a technique that uses a light-activated drug to help restore the ability to swallow in patients whose esophagus is blocked by cancer. Photodynamic therapy (PDT) uses an injectable drug called porfimer sodium (Photofrin) that is taken up preferentially in tumor cells. A laser adjusted to a specific frequency of light is used to activate the drug, which then kills much of the tumor within about 48 hours. "Esophageal cancer is one of the deadliest cancers, and many patients die not because of metastatic disease but because they can no longer swallow," says Dr. Matthew Ninan, assistant professor of cardiac and thoracic surgery. "We were looking for a palliative method to open the esophagus and allow these patients to eat and keep up their strength." Vanderbilt-Ingram will also use the technique to improve breathing in patients with lung cancer whose tumors obstruct their airways. The technique has been around since the 1970s, but previous iterations of the instrumentation have been cumbersome. Improvements in technology have made using PDT much more practical.

**Tea Found to Lower Cholesterol**

A clinical trial testing a theaflavin-enriched green tea extract is the first human study to find that a tea product lowers cholesterol. The study included 240 men and women with high cholesterol levels in China. The results, reported in the June 23 issue of *Archives of Internal Medicine*, amazed lead

author Dr. David J. Maron, associate professor of medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. "We saw a 16 percent reduction in low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol," says Maron. In the past, experiments in animals have demonstrated that green tea, black tea, and flavonoids derived from tea lower cholesterol. However, previous tea-drinking experiments in humans, as well as those experiments involving the administration of green tea extract, failed to show any effects on cholesterol.



**Linda Norman, senior associate dean for academics at VUSN (left) and Cathy Martin, associate provost of Fisk University, at the historically African-American institution**

author of Fisk University. It prevents them from incurring the expense of providing classrooms and skills labs, or employing a department of nursing faculty." Norman will serve jointly as director of nursing at Fisk during the first five years of the program.

Existing classroom, laboratory and clinical facilities for VUSN's pre-specialty nursing curriculum will be used for students admitted under the new plan.

Six part-time clinical faculty positions will be added to accommodate the students. Fisk will hire one full-time faculty member to provide advisement services and teach three nursing courses at Fisk.

VUSN Dean Colleen Conway-Welch says the partnership is groundbreaking in nursing academics. "To the best of my knowledge, this is a first. No other school of nursing has worked out these arrangements," she says.



**Hot Property** Fans left over from Vanderbilt Commencement exercises help members of the 101st Airborne fight the heat while stationed in Iraq. Vanderbilt business manager and financial planner Josie Merrell sent the fans to her husband, Tim Merrell, who, along with other members of B Troop, 2-17 Cavalry, have been living in barracks without electricity or running water. Temperatures at the former Iraqi airbase frequently soar to 120 degrees or higher.



### **An Eye for Detail**

Four-year-old Carmen Canedo takes a close look at a “pregnant plant,” a succulent in the genus *Kalanchoe* that reproduces by dropping plantlets from the edges of its leaves. She was one of 15 children from the Vanderbilt Child Care Center’s Shooting Stars preschool class who recently visited the Department of Biological Sciences greenhouses atop the Stevenson Center.

## Virtual Vanderbilt

<http://www.vanderbilttravelclinic.com/>

Want to find out how to avoid Montezuma's revenge or minimize jet lag? The Vanderbilt International Travel Clinic, part of the Division of Infectious Diseases, is dedicated to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases international travelers may encounter. On the clinic's Web site, you can check to see if your immunizations for overseas travel need updating, and glean tips for travel geared toward international adoption, mission trips or corporate trips. You'll also find information about drugs used for a variety of maladies travelers may fall prey to, and link to other useful sites such as those for the Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. State Department's current travel warnings.



## Kennedy Center Co-sponsors Camp for Youth with Down Syndrome

FOR TEENAGERS WITH DOWN syndrome and their parents, summertime presents special challenges. Not only is the number of organized activities for older children limited, but helping children with Down syndrome retain what they learned the previous school

year over the summer is especially important.

This summer for the second year, a four-week academic enrichment camp has given adolescents and young adults with Down syndrome the chance to build on individual strengths in reading, math and social awareness. Explorers Unlimited, sponsored jointly by the Down Syndrome Association of Middle Tennessee and

Vanderbilt University's John F. Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development, is one of the first camps of its kind in the United States.

Classes took place across the street from the Vanderbilt campus at the University School of Nashville, with weekly art activities at the downtown Frist Center for the Visual Arts. Community and Vanderbilt experts talked to the campers about such subjects as fire safety, hygiene and sexuality. Field trips helped them gain experience in important life skills like using public transportation. Explorers Unlimited also included such traditional camp activities as swimming and line dancing.

## Robot Extends Benefits of Endoscopic Surgery

VANDERBILT'S FIRST ROBOTIC surgical procedure was performed in May when Dr. Joseph A. Smith Jr., the William L. Bray Professor and Chair of Urologic Surgery, used VUMC's new \$1 million-plus Da Vinci Surgical System to perform a radical prostatectomy.

Robotic systems offer the

surgeon more control and freedom of movement. Endoscopic surgery, a less-invasive alternative to traditional open surgery, uses small incisions, or ports, for inserting an optical device (endoscope) and surgical instruments. Viewing the operating field through a video monitor, the surgeon manipulates instruments with mechanical extensions. Endoscopic surgery reduces blood loss and postoperative pain and allows for a quicker recovery. But it's an awkward way to work, involving large arm movements and requiring the surgeon to transpose his movements as he manipulates instruments in a visual field where up is down and left is right.

The Da Vinci robot uses three arms, one for the endoscope and two for surgical instruments, each entering the patient through its own port. "It's very intuitive," says Smith. Hand movements mimic those of open surgery.

Sitting across the room from the patient and using his feet to manipulate the endoscope, Smith looks through a hooded display at a three-dimensional view of the operating field, magnified 15 times. His middle fingers and thumbs are wired so that their movements are relayed to the surgical instruments, minus the normal tremor hands produce.

To help drive development of new robot applications, Vanderbilt surgeons are working with experts in the School of Engineering to create new instrumentation and to integrate radiological images alongside the robot's view into the operating field.

In addition to applications in urologic and neurologic sur-



Explorers Unlimited campers learn life skills by making purchases at Nashville's Farmer's Market.



DAVID GLASCOV

**Pictured with divinity student William Young at the entrance to the University of Havana, Fernando Segovia recalls that many students were killed in the late 1950s in retaliation for their guerrilla acts against Batista's brutal regime.**

gery, the robot is expected to be used in general surgery, cardiac, thoracic, vascular, obstetric/gynecologic and surgical oncology procedures.

### Return of the Native

FORTY-THREE YEARS AFTER fleeing Cuba with his family, Fernando Segovia made his first visit back in June. The professor of New Testament and early Christianity led a 19-person study trip sponsored by Vanderbilt Divinity School.

Returning to scenes of his childhood, Segovia was greeted warmly by old acquaintances. After Castro came to power, Segovia told students, Cubans without the means to leave “had little faith in the religious institutions that had primarily served the middle classes. ... They were ignoring the poor and nonwhites.” Now, the Vanderbilt group found, the church is beginning to reemerge as an important social institution.

### Vanderbilt Magazine Receives National Awards



The Council for Advancement and Support of Education has honored *Vanderbilt Magazine* with two Gold Awards in its national Circle of Excellence program, which recognizes excellence in communications, alumni relations and development. *Vanderbilt Magazine* received awards in the categories of Periodical Publishing Improvement and Visual Design in Print.

### {Top Picks}

#### Animated Characters as Teachers



DAVID CRENSHAW

A Vanderbilt engineer has earned one of the National Science Foundation's most prestigious awards for his high-tech exploration of an old maxim: The best way to learn a subject is to teach it.

Robert E. Bodenheimer, assistant professor of computer science, received the NSF's Faculty Early CAREER Development Award to develop a program that reinforces and tests what a student has just learned by requiring the student to teach the same material to an animated character. The national award, given to selected junior faculty for exceptionally promising research, includes nearly \$425,000 over five years.

Bodenheimer's research involves developing animated characters called “teachable agents” to aid children in understanding and applying scientific and mathematical concepts. After children learn new scientific and mathematical concepts, they are asked to teach them to the animated agent. The character then attempts to apply what the student has taught it to solve some problems.

#### Experts Scrutinize Reproductive Technologies

Dr. Arnold Strauss, medical director at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital and the James C. Overall Professor and Chairman of Pediatrics for VUMC, is one of five members chosen to serve on the Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) Children's Health Panel.

More than 1 million children worldwide have been born using high-level assisted reproductive technologies, like in-vitro fertilization. A few studies suggest a small but significant increase in the risk of cancer, genetic diseases and birth defects among these children.

The panel will assess risks of assisted reproductive technologies, evaluate studies involving children born using ART, determine if current scientific data is conflicting or inconclusive, and will make recommendations for future research.



NEIL BRAKE



NEIL BRAKE

#### Ingram Scholar Honored

Shortly before his May graduation from Vanderbilt, Rusty Phillips received Nashville's Mary Catherine Strobel Award for Youth Volunteer of the Year and was also recognized by the *Tennessean* newspaper for his work as a student. While at Vanderbilt, Phillips founded VSMAC (Vanderbilt Students Meeting for the Awareness of Cancer) and, with other students, launched a National Marrow Donor Drive, which in its first two years registered 1,142 potential bone-marrow donors in the community.

An Ingram Scholar, Phillips had been volunteering since he was a teenager at children's hospitals and for Habitat for Humanity and other service projects. Since graduating he is working as a patient advocate for Atlanta Blood Center.