



Keivan G. Stassun, Senior Associate Dean, College of Arts and Science, 301 Kirkland Hall

DATE: November 6, 2015

TO: Chairs, DGSs, and graduate students in departments with carrels in Buttrick Hall

FROM: Keivan Stassun, Senior Associate Dean

SUBJECT: Planning for optimization of Buttrick space for graduate student and TA needs

Our communications earlier this semester about changes to the carrel reservations system for this year anticipated that we would be developing a longer-term plan for restructuring and optimizing the use of the Buttrick Hall space. After initial consultations with groups of graduate students in affected departments, as well as very helpful discussions with the Graduate Student Council (GSC), we now have the beginnings of a notional plan, and we seek here to invite broad input and feedback with the goal of finalizing a plan that we can implement next academic year. Because planning and contracting for any remodeling requires several months' lead time, we hope to have a final plan agreed upon by February. This memo summarizes our current thinking and provides details on opportunities for input over the coming months.

Following our earlier communications, a number of students and faculty, as well as the GSC, reached out with insightful and helpful information about graduate student needs. In addition, the GSC took the initiative to conduct a survey of graduate students regarding space and resources across campus. A number of ideas have emerged from these discussions that we believe have merit and are worth further discussion. Among them, we have particularly noted the continuing need for appropriate study/research spaces with secure storage, the need for TAs to have FERPA-compliant storage, the need for appropriate spaces for TA meetings, and the need to rethink the current carrel allotment system—such as with an online opt-in system.

Based on this feedback and ideas received so far, we have developed the following guiding principles and priorities, and the following start to a notional plan:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

First and foremost, we are committed to ensuring that graduate students have the resources they need to conduct their research and to fulfill their teaching responsibilities as effectively as possible, with the understanding that the needs of graduate students as researchers and as TAs are related but distinct.

In considering future uses for this space, we have the following guiding principles:

- Dissertating students need the necessary space, resources, and secure storage to carry out their work in an effective and timely manner.
- TAs need suitable space to meet with students, as well as FERPA-compliant storage.
- Graduate students need access to necessary technology such as printing and copying.
- A&S must comply with Provost's Office requirements that we use allotted spaces in optimal ways.

AN EMERGING NOTIONAL PLAN

Given these principles and the creative ideas provided so far, our notional plan now involves some remodeling of the 4th floor of Buttrick Hall, with reconfigured carrels and meeting spaces, primarily for use by dissertating students for study/research. We are considering a variety of options for the 3rd floor, but in any case additional spaces will be made available for TA meetings with students. The following criteria are regarded as must-haves:

- Study/research spaces (carrels) for dissertating students that are reservable on a semesterly or yearly basis, with locking storage
- An improved, transparent system for allotting these individual spaces
- Suitable meeting space for TAs with their students, and ensuring that it is easy for students to locate these TA meeting spaces
- FERPA-compliant locked storage for use by TAs
- Computing and printing resources

In addition, we will prioritize these additional criteria to the extent possible:

- Common areas
- Reservable spaces for pre-dissertators

OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE INPUT

We now seek to solicit broad input on the above ideas, and to hear other creative ideas, for ensuring that graduate students and TAs have the space they need to do their work. We plan to do this in several ways:

1. Dean Stassun and Amy Tan will hold a listening session for graduate student input on Friday, December 11 from 3:45 to 5:00pm in Stevenson 5211. All graduate students are invited, but if possible please RSVP at <http://tinyurl.com/buttrick> so that we may plan accordingly for the number of attendees.
2. Chairs/Directors, DGSs, and grad students may email Amy Tan (amy.gant.tan@vanderbilt.edu) with input on the above bullet points, who will compile comments to forward to Deans Stassun and Benton.
3. Chairs/Directors with questions and/or feedback will have opportunity to discuss them with Dean Benton at the previously scheduled meeting of chairs/directors on January 19.
4. DGSs with questions and/or feedback will have opportunity to discuss them with Deans Benton and Stassun at a meeting that will be scheduled for late January.