



## **VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL**

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**Many Disciplines. One Community.**

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# MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dear Graduate School Community,

It is my privilege to introduce the 2024-2025 Annual Report, which reflects the Graduate School's continued commitment to advancing research and innovation, fostering scholarly excellence, and supporting the success of our graduate students.

This report highlights key initiatives, accomplishments, and data that demonstrate our collective impact over the past academic year. Through strengthened student support services, expanded opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, and continued commitment to doctoral student funding and financial aid, we remain focused on preparing scholars to be leaders in their fields and contribute meaningfully to society.

Thank you for your dedication to our mission and for the many ways you support graduate education.



C. André Christie-Mizell

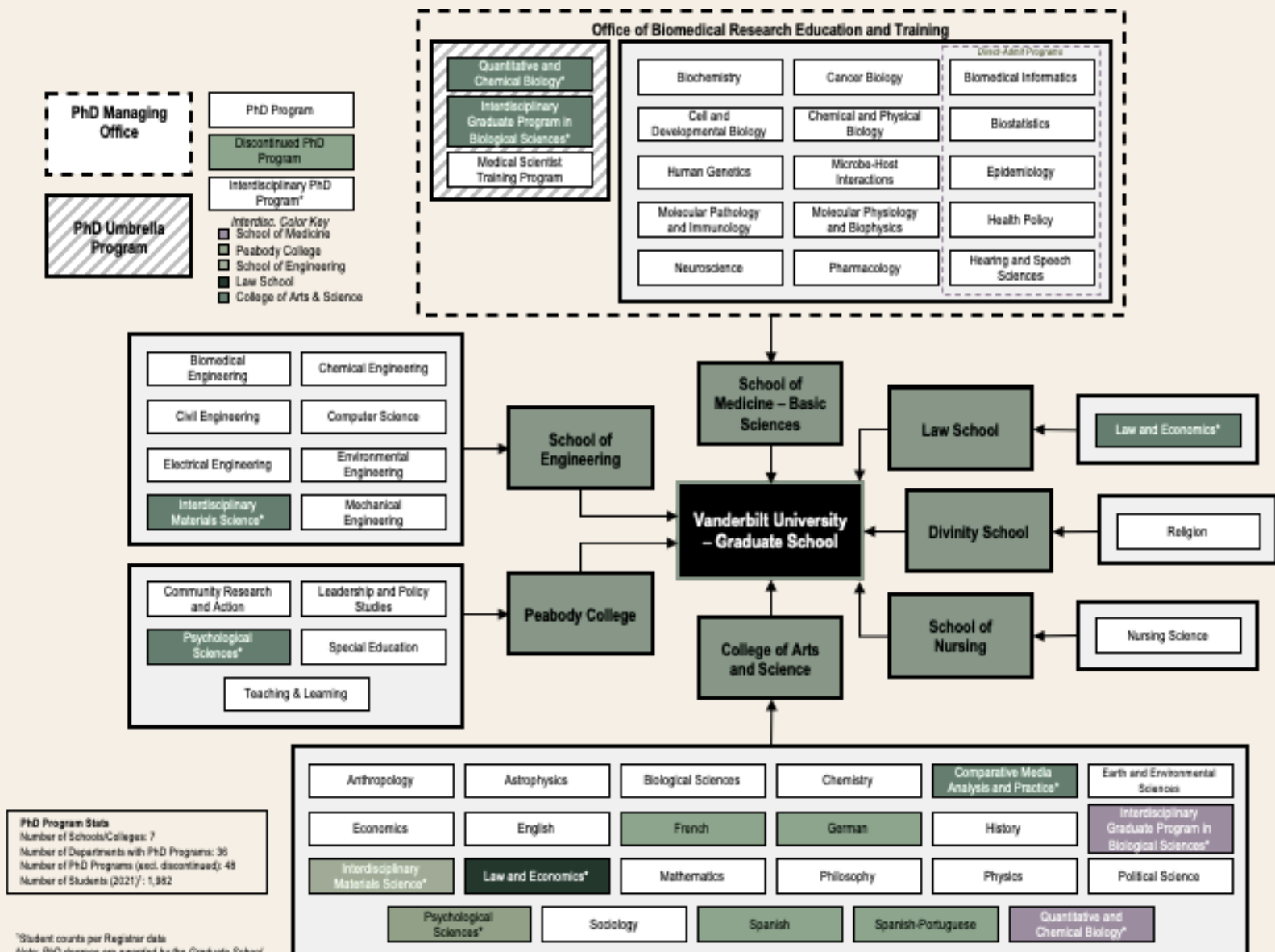
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School  
Director, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs



# THE ROLE OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

The Graduate School supports and provides programming for graduate students pursuing research degrees, faculty, and postdoctoral fellows across 7 different schools and 59 academic programs.

## PLACING THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN CONTEXT



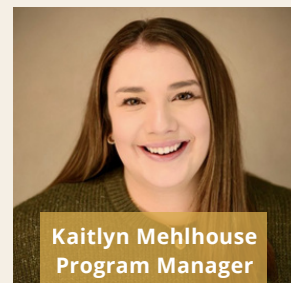
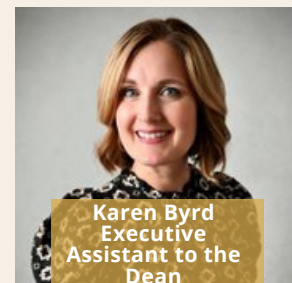
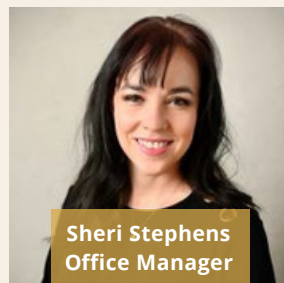
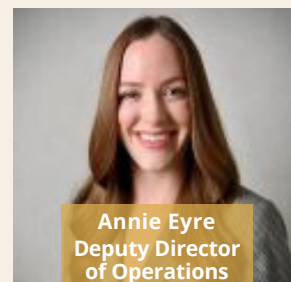
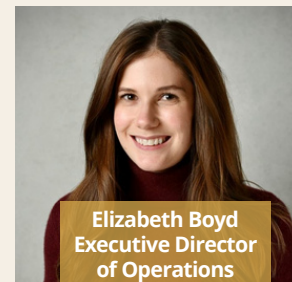


# GRADUATE SCHOOL UNITS

Graduate School staff play a key role in fostering collaboration among constituent groups, including the Graduate Faculty Council, Directors of Graduate Studies, and Associate Deans for Graduate Education. They oversee the development and implementation of all academic policies and guidelines, ensuring academic excellence throughout the graduate programs. Additionally, the leadership team advises on the implementation of the Enhanced Funding Model, strategically aligning resources to support graduate education and enrich the academic experience for students across all departments and programs. There are several units within the Graduate School.

## ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

The administration and operations team aids Vice Provost and Dean Christie-Mizell and all Graduate School divisions by ensuring operational excellence. Their responsibilities include human resource management, staff engagement, procurement, award administration, grants management, strategic planning, stakeholder meetings, logistics, and managing the Dean's schedule. They also serve as the main contact for Graduate School inquiries and visitors, providing access to helpful resources.

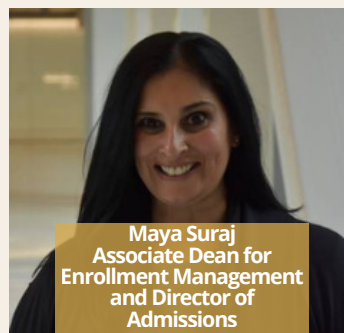




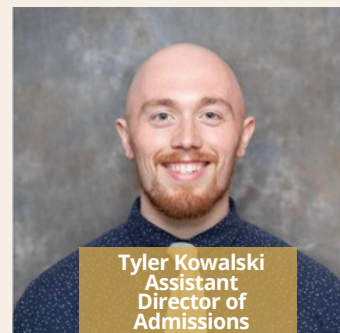
# THE GRADUATE SCHOOL UNITS

## ADMISSIONS

The Graduate Admissions and Enrollment (GAE) office at Vanderbilt University supports 59 graduate programs by focusing on recruitment, administrative support, and training initiatives. GAE aims to help programs attract the top 1% of global graduate students, collaborating with internal and external stakeholders for policy development and program support. Their efforts position Vanderbilt as a leader in graduate admissions.



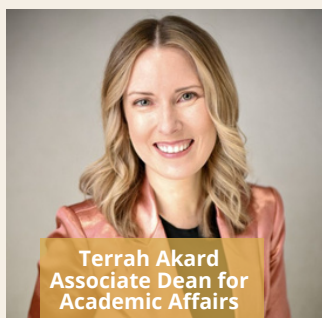
**Maya Suraj**  
Associate Dean for  
Enrollment Management  
and Director of  
Admissions



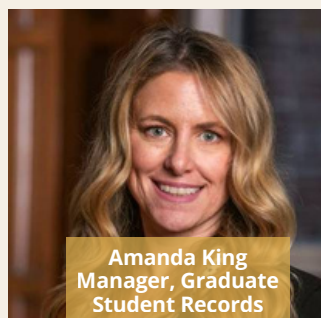
**Tyler Kowalski**  
Assistant  
Director of  
Admissions

## ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

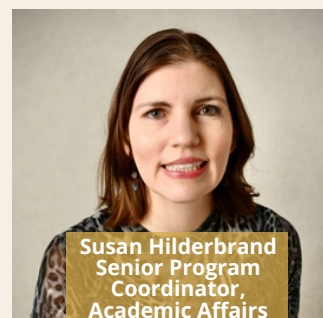
Academic Affairs oversees the academic regulations of the Graduate School, including graduate degree requirements and Degree Audit, graduate student records, and formatting and submitting theses and dissertations.



**Terrah Akard**  
Associate Dean for  
Academic Affairs



**Amanda King**  
Manager, Graduate  
Student Records



**Susan Hilderbrand**  
Senior Program  
Coordinator,  
Academic Affairs



# THE GRADUATE SCHOOL UNITS

## GRADUATE & POSTDOC ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The Graduate and Postdoc Academic Success (GPAS) office provides tailored and responsive programming to support graduate students, postdocs, faculty, and departments. GPAS offers individual consulting appointments, informative workshops, and accountability writing sessions through the Write On! program. GPAS also facilitates a weekly co-working Space for graduate students and postdocs.



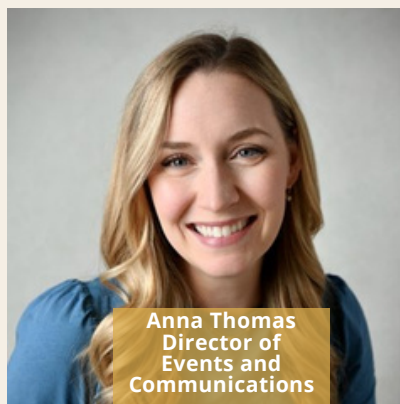
**Stacey Satchell**  
Director of  
Graduate and  
Postdoc Success



**Nick Hyer**  
Program Manager of  
Graduate and  
Postdoc Success

## EVENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

The events and communications team partners with campus groups to provide resources and information to graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. They organize events like Friday Fuel, the Career Colloquium, and Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week to foster community and ensure students feel informed and connected to the Graduate School and Vanderbilt communities.



**Anna Thomas**  
Director of  
Events and  
Communications



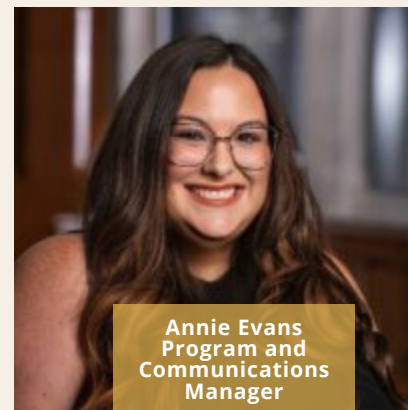
**Kara Jones**  
Project and  
Social Media  
Coordinator



# THE GRADUATE SCHOOL UNITS

## OFFICE OF POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS (OPA)

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) at Vanderbilt supports approximately 500 postdoctoral fellows as they gain experience and contribute to innovative research and education at the university. The OPA manages programs, liaises with university offices, and collaborates with the Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association to provide postdoctoral trainees with mentoring and career development in various fields, including science and business.





# BY THE NUMBERS

## 2,496

Total Enrolled Students

## 2,044

Ph.D. Students

## 452

Master's Students



**Multiple Disciplines**  
**59 Academic Programs**

**49** Ph.D. Programs

**10** Master's Programs



**Funding**

## \$75,000

Financial Aid  
package per  
doctoral student

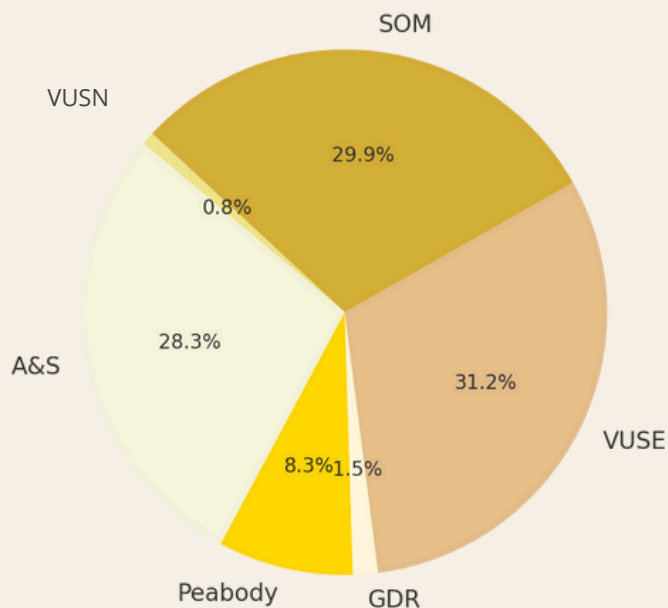
## 5 years

Years of  
guaranteed funding  
for doctoral  
students

## Only 4.7%

PhD graduates who  
took out loans  
(federal or private)

## Student Distribution by School



**Achievements**

## Top 25

Private  
universities for  
research and  
innovation by the  
National Science  
Foundation

## 93

Students with  
National Science  
Foundation Graduate  
Research Fellowships

# ENHANCED FUNDING MODEL

The Enhanced Funding and Support Model for Doctoral Education was launched in May 2022 and represents a \$5 million annual investment in graduate education.

## Graduate School Milestone Supplements

**\$2,000**

Launching Student Success Stipend

**\$500**

Candidacy Student Success Supplement

**\$200**

Celebrating Student Success Regalia Supplement

## Graduate School Doctoral Awards

Vanderbilt Discovery Doctoral Fellowship

Premier fellowship to recruit the top candidates to Vanderbilt

Provost Pathbreaking Discovery Award

\$2500 awards to recognize doctoral students who exhibit exceptional academic excellence

Vanderbilt Awards for Doctoral Discovery

Funding to assist students in attending conferences, visiting labs for training, and doing fieldwork

## Graduate School Investments In Doctoral Education



Amplifying External Grants Award funded by Discovery Vanderbilt

- Bridge funding gaps between external fellowships, training grants, and base stipends



Discovery Vanderbilt Interdisciplinary Incentive

- Funds to support interdisciplinary research with students as PIs
- 44 students awarded to date



# DOCTORAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY

All 3<sup>rd</sup> year Ph.D. students were surveyed between December 2023 and January 2024.

## 80% Satisfaction

Majority of students are satisfied with being a doctoral student and reported their program is meeting or exceeding their expectations.

## 80% Program of Study

Most students would select the same field of study and Vanderbilt again.

## 75% Faculty

Students were very or somewhat satisfied with the relationship between faculty and doctoral students and the quality of doctoral-level teaching by faculty.

## 90% Expectations

Students indicated clear understanding of the formal research expectations/requirements to complete their program.

## 89% Professional Development

Most students report presenting research at professional/academic conferences.

## 89% Adviser Support

Majority of students believe their adviser supports them in any career path.

## 90% Relationships

Most students indicate having fulfilling relationships at Vanderbilt.

## 80% Safe and Accepted

Many students reported feeling safe, accepted by others, and cared about by someone in the Vanderbilt community.

## International Students Survey Report



*\* the data reported below is from the 2024 annual International Student and Scholar Services Survey*

**94%** Good personal well-being

**91%** Feel connected to the Vanderbilt community

# CAREER OUTCOMES

The survey sample comprised 288 employed graduates from the Graduate School Class of 2023.

## Industries of Employment

### Academia

141 49%

### Government

111 38.5%

### For-Profit

20 7%

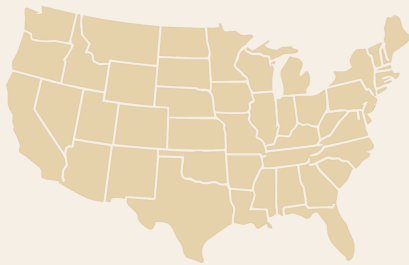
### Non-Profit

16 5.5%

## Positions within Academia

62% of the class of 2023 working in academia are employed at R1 Institutions.

## Top Locations for 2023 Graduates



1. Nashville, Tennessee
2. Los Angeles, California
3. Boston, Massachusetts
4. New York, New York
5. Houston, Texas
6. Chicago, Illinois
7. Baltimore, Maryland
8. Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina
9. Washington, D.C.
10. Seattle, Washington

Median Salary - Graduating Class of 2023

**\$100,000**

Average Salary - Graduating Class of 2023

**\$102,028**



# INTERNAL FUNDING

**Vanderbilt University offers various financial awards, stipends, fellowships, and assistantships to attract top doctoral students, with significant variation across programs.**

## Lacy Fischer Interdisciplinary Research Award

The Lacy-Fischer grants support collaborative research across disciplines, encouraging innovative projects that aid in data collection and funding proposals with teams of at least two graduate students from different fields. These competitive \$7,500 grants enable teams to seed the collection of preliminary data, add substantively to a project or area in which the student is already engaged, and provide other information that can help develop a strong external grant proposal.

- 2024: awarded to 11 projects involving 25 investigators
- 2025: awarded to 11 projects involving 26 investigators



### 2025 Recipients:

- Dr. Bharat Bhuva, Yueming Yan
- Suyash Deshmukh, Dr. Jesse Spencer-Smith, Dr. Karan Jani, Dr. Chayan Chatterjee
- Reilly Fankhauser, Zachary Ewell
- Junyi Ji, Austin Coursey, Alex Richardson
- Amanda Muise, Dr. Rebeca Gamez-Djovic
- Cameron Pattison, Hayoung Seo
- Sarah Sowell, Rishabh Shah, Audrey Harris,
- Madison Veliky, Audrey Harris, Sarah Li
- Xia Wang, Ziyang An, Yuhang Zhang
- Emma Webb, Chris Jurich
- Soren Emerson, Bruno Hidalgo Monroy Lerma, Anas Reda, Ghassan Sebastian Peter Makhoul



# ENDOWED AWARDS

The Graduate School offers several endowed awards, established by donors, which recognize outstanding students in various disciplines with scholarships.

## Endowed Scholarships and Awards

Over the past three academic years, the Graduate School distributed over \$185,000 through endowed awards. These awards underscore the Graduate School's commitment to supporting academic achievement and research excellence across disciplines through targeted funding and strategic investment in student success.

- **Edward Ferguson, Jr. Graduate Award** - Research Excellence
- **Ethel M. Wilson Scholarship** - Vanderbilt Scholars
- **Family S Graduate Scholarship** - Autism Research
- **John Cheek Scholarship** - East Asian Studies
- **Lai Sulin Scholarship** - Cancer Research
- **Louise A. Taylor Scholarship** - Humanities
- **Malcolm, Catherine and F. Stanley Jones Scholarship** - Religion
- **Richard Bennett/Dorothy Danforth Compton Prize** - Science & Engineering
- **Sidney P. Colowick Scholarship** - Vanderbilt Scholars
- **Smriti Bardhan, Ph.D. Scholarship** - Life Sciences
- **Tarkington Family Scholarship** - Archaeology



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Graduate School Honors Banquet celebrated the exceptional achievements of graduate students and faculty in research, leadership, and mentorship. The event recognized individuals who exemplify high standards of academic inquiry, innovation, and service.

These honorees reflect the depth of talent, curiosity, and commitment across our programs. We are proud to celebrate their achievements and the example they set for future scholars.

## Outstanding Doctoral Student Awards

- **Samantha Pegg**, Psychology and Human Development – Published in top journals with over 1,100 citations, her work addresses key gaps in motivation research.
- **Kevin McCarty**, Biochemistry – Awarded an NSF scholarship in his first year, a rare achievement in the field.
- **Abigail Fabiano**, Biomedical Engineering – Pioneering cancer treatments with multiple publications in leading journals.

## Leadership and Innovation Awards

- **Juliann Burkett**, Molecular Physiology and Biophysics – Honored for her leadership in advancing Type 1 diabetes research and advocacy.
- **Justin Jones**, History – Recognized for his innovative use of AI to digitize 18th-century documents in the Slave Societies Digital Archive.

## Graduate Student Mentoring Awards

- **Dr. Maria Hadjifrangiskou** – Microbiology & Immunology
- **Dr. David E. Lewis** – Political Science
- **Dr. Kelly Holley-Bockelmann** – Physics and Astronomy





# KEY PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

The Graduate School supports the holistic development of graduate students, focusing on academic progress, career preparation, personal well-being, and community. In the 2024–2025 academic year, several strategic programs were introduced and expanded to reflect this commitment.

- **Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week (GPSAW)** celebrates the contributions of graduate and professional students at Vanderbilt. Events like the Career Closet provide free work-ready attire for interviews and internships, with enhanced accessibility this year through a partnership with Commodore Closet.
- **The Write On! program**, created from student feedback, supports graduate students and postdocs in writing through workshops and peer accountability, promoting academic success and professional growth.
- **The Graduate and Postdoc Academic Success (GPAS)** office, with the **Office of Postdoctoral Affairs**, launched Effective Mentoring Strategies for Postdocs, a workshop series aimed to enhance mentoring skills, provide practical tools for managing mentoring relationships, and strengthen mentorship culture on campus.

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**The Vanderbilt-Fisk Postdoctoral Fellowship** enhances the research and teaching capabilities of recent Vanderbilt PhD graduates through dual support. Fellows conduct mentored research at Vanderbilt and teach at Fisk University, promoting academic excellence and community engagement.

## 2023–2025 Fellows:

- Dr. Velia Garcia (mentors: Dr. Jennifer Gaddy, Dr. Steven Damo)
- Dr. Meagan Rainock (mentors: Dr. Jonathan Metzl, Dr. Shirley Brown)
- Dr. Anne Taylor (mentors: Dr. Danny Winder, Dr. Brian Nelms)

## 2024–2026 Fellow:

- Dr. Jessica Power (mentors: Dr. Jane Landers, Dr. Patrick Rasico)





# CAMPUS PARTNERS: GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT NETWORK (GDN)

**The Graduate Development Network is a collaboration of campus partners that provides information and resources to all graduate students. The GDN meets regularly and discusses support for students.**

## **GDN Partner Offices:**

- Career Center
- International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)
- Student Care Network
- Vanderbilt University Counseling Center (UCC)
- Center for Student Wellbeing (CSW)
- Writing Studio
- University Libraries
- Student Affairs
- Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center (BCC)
- BRET Office of Career Development ASPIRE Program
- Center for Spiritual and Religious Life
- Graduate Student Council
- English Language Center
- Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center
- Peabody Office of Student Engagement and Well-Being
- Project SAFE
- Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities
- Peabody Career Services
- LGBTQI Life, KC Potter Center







# ALUMNI IMPACT

**Generous contributions from our alumni and friends play a vital role in the ongoing success of the Graduate School at Vanderbilt University. Donations of any amount collectively contribute to our essential mission of preparing the next generation of leaders across various fields.**

## The Importance of Scholarships and Fellowships

Scholarships and fellowships play a crucial role in enhancing graduate student research, fostering personal growth, and ensuring professional achievements. Philanthropic support provides our students with essential opportunities to produce high-quality academic work, explore innovative approaches, and uncover new perspectives. Ultimately, this research leads to breakthroughs that can influence not just a single discipline, but also our wider global community.

As we pave the way for our future, we are actively seeking philanthropic support to capitalize on opportunities that will enhance our accomplishments, bolster our reputation, and broaden our impact. This includes initiatives like developing a national conference to showcase innovative scholarship, foster networking among thought leaders, and provide support for progressive research agendas and mentoring programs.

Alumni contributions help us fulfill our commitment to scholarly excellence, to recruiting and retaining top talent, and to building a thriving community at Vanderbilt for every student.



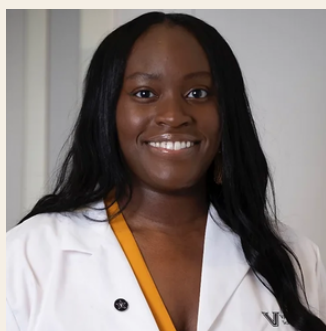


# ALUMNI IMPACT

Alumni support empowers students to address societal challenges, create innovative solutions, and become visionary leaders. Graduate School students value community achievement alongside individual success, embodying a spirit of collective excellence that distinguishes them.

## Student Impact Spotlight

Our graduate students are emerging as leaders across disciplines and making meaningful contributions to society because of alumni gifts.



**Creea Shannon** (Biomedical Informatics) uses computational models to explore health disparities and inspires the next generation through her children's book, *STEM Inspires Me!*, which shows young readers how science shapes everyday life.

**Kayla Anderson** (Community Research and Action) co-facilitates the Nashville Youth Design Team, a paid year-round internship program that engages high school students in design thinking and research methods to address community challenges.



**José Zepeda** (Pharmacology) studies the brain's ability to rewire itself after exposure to stimulants while pursuing his passion for poetry centered on Mexican-American identity. His research contributes to fundamental work toward cures for neurological disorders.