First-Year Students Bring Diversity, High Scores

Vanderbilt’s 2006–07 enrollment of first-year students represents dramatic increases in quality, diversity and academic excellence, according to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions’ annual 10th-day enrollment report.

Applications were up 4 percent from the 2005-06 academic year, rising from 11,688 to 12,192. Of those who applied, 1,590—or 33.9 percent—were admitted, down from 35.2 percent last year, a testament to Vanderbilt’s increasing selectivity.

“We continue to be more selective and have a more robust pool as we make our decisions,” says Douglas L. Christiansen, associate provost for enrollment and dean of admissions.

More than 77 percent of Vanderbilt’s first-year students were in the top 10 percent of their graduating classes, representing an average GPA of 3.73 and an average SAT score of 1370.

“Our academic quality remains strong,” Christiansen says. “The entering class is the most prepared in Vanderbilt’s history. Twenty-five percent of the entering class scored above 1470 on the SAT, and that is remarkable.”

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—DOUGLAS L. CHRISTIANSEN, associate provost for enrollment and dean of admissions

A record number of underrepresented students—African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American—enrolled at Vanderbilt this year. In 2000 just 18.2 percent of the first-year class was made up of minority students. In 2006 that number has increased to 28.6 percent.

“It went from less than a fourth to almost a third of the entering class comprising minorities,” says Christiansen. “We are making a concerted effort to recruit underrepresented students.” Financial aid also has increased. This year 59.4 percent of new students are receiving financial aid from Vanderbilt. In 2000, 52.4 percent received aid.

“When you look at the whole undergraduate class, more students are receiving need-based aid than no aid at all,” Christiansen says. “That goes against the notion that Vanderbilt students all come from wealthy families. “Although we do have that, it’s important to know that if you are academically prepared and you can’t afford Vanderbilt, that shouldn’t be a deterrent.”

Of the 1,590 first-year students, 983 are enrolled in the College of Arts and Science, 313 in the School of Engineering, 236 in the Peabody College of education and human development, and 58 in the Blair School of Music. The first-year class comprises 840 women and 750 men.

Math and Science Whizzes to Study at VUMC

Vanderbilt University Medical Center will host a one-day-a-week science and math high school for the brightest public-school students in Nashville beginning next fall. A collaborative project of VUMC and Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, the science and math school will be funded by grants and other sources outside the public school budget.

Beginning next spring, students who are currently enrolled in eighth, 10th and 11th grades in Metro Nashville schools will be selected for the program based on grades, standardized test scores, teacher recommendations, interviews, written statements and original projects.

Next fall they will spend one day a week at Vanderbilt, attending classes, conducting laboratory research, and participating in discussions and videoconferences with scientists and other students across the world.

“The school will serve those students who excel in science and math and who enthusiastically seek an advanced curriculum that will challenge them to go beyond traditional instruction,” says Virginia Shepherd, director of the Vanderbilt Center for Science Outreach, which is designing and implementing the school.

Within one year a curriculum will be provided for all four high school grades. Up to 25 students will be enrolled in each grade. Students who enroll following completion of eighth grade will be required to commit to a four-year program that will include increasingly intensive academic-year and summer programs. Students also will be required to keep up with their studies in their home schools. “This won’t excuse them from required work in their regular classes,” Shepherd says. “These students will have to commit to extra time.”

Shepherd, professor of pathology and medicine and associate professor of biochemistry, says the project recognizes the need to improve math and science education so the United States can remain competitive in the global marketplace of technologies and ideas.

Web site: www.vanderbilt.edu/csso

Owen Students Learn Business Side of Transplants

For more than 15 years, Ed Zavala, administrator for the Vanderbilt Transplant Center, has been thinking about the benefits of a specialized education program for health-care management students interested in transplant administration. This fall his determination is finally paying off. A specialty program in transplant administration at the Vanderbilt Owen Graduate School of Management, established in conjunction with the Vanderbilt Transplant Center, is the first of its kind in the country.

Targeting second-year health-care M.B.A. students, the program will allow for in-depth training in clinical administration and the economic aspects of transplant. “Students will be able to do just about everything—oversee staffing, contract with managed care, Medicare reimbursement and compliance, profitability, regulatory compliance, and organ availability and allocation,” says Zavala, research assistant professor in the Department of Surgery at Vanderbilt for the past three years. “The role of the transplant administrator has evolved along with the complexity of organ transplantation. These students will be
Jullie May Reduce Alzheimer's Risk

In a large epidemiological study, researchers have found that people who drank three or more servings of fruit and vegetable juices per week had a 76 percent lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease than those who drank juice less than once per week. The study by Qi Dui, assistant professor of medicine, and colleagues appeared in the September issue of the American Journal of Medicine.

Scientists have suspected that high intakes of antioxidant vitamins might provide some protection against Alzheimer's disease, but recent studies have not supported this hypothesis. Dui began to suspect that another class of antioxidant chemicals, known as polyphenols, could play a role. Polyphenols are non-vitamin antioxidants common in the diet and particularly abundant in fruits and vegetables. The study was led by Qi Dui, assistant professor of medicine, and colleagues.

Researchers Map GI Disorders' Effect on Magnetic Fields

A team of Vanderbilt researchers has won the 2006 Nightingale Prize from the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine for its work on understanding the stomach signal from the small bowel signal in a patient with gastrointestinal disease. The goal is to develop a diagnostic tool that can help doctors identify patients with gastrointestinal disorders.

Vanderbilt also was ranked the No. 26 university in North America, up from No. 53 last year, and the No. 9 university in the world for academic staff-to-student ratio. As of the fall 2005 semester, Vanderbilt had a 9-to-1 ratio of students to faculty. The top 10 universities in the world as cited by The Times of London are, in order, Harvard University, Cambridge University, Oxford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Yale University, Stanford University, California Institute of Technology, University of California-Berkeley, Imperial College London, and Princeton University.

The produce stand is an example of the growing popularity among top students. Schools that made the list were selected based on admissions statistics as well as reviews with administrators, students, faculty, and alumni. For the fourth straight year, Vanderbilt ranked among the top 20 national universities in U.S. News & World Report magazine's annual "Best Colleges" rankings. Vanderbilt ranked 18th among national universities and was again recognized for its value, academic diversity, and service-learning programs. Moreover, despite a recent tightening of the federal research budget, Vanderbilt University Medical Center has maintained its position among the nation's top medical schools for National Institutes of Health funding for the fiscal year 2005. VUMC ranked No. 15 out of 123 medical schools in the United States, according to the agency's most recent figures. VUMC received 586 awards totaling $244.2 million, an increase from $226.8 million in 2004.

Research by Vanderbilt mathematicians is also getting increased recognition via one of the top industry standards—the frequency of which published papers are cited in major mathematics journals. According to a recent analysis by Essential Science Indicators, Vanderbilt ranks in the top 1 percent in terms of journal citations. The number of citations a paper receives is generally considered an indication of its quality and importance.

An Oasis in the Nutritional Desert

Sandwiched between North Nashville's gas stations and fast-food restaurants, an organic produce stand piled high with fruits and vegetables gave residents of three nearby neighborhoods the chance to buy healthy, affordable foods available in these neighborhoods. The three neighborhoods, along with several other areas in Nashville, are what

Inquiring Minds

The Downside of Community College Credits

Just 14 percent of students who start out at a community college with the goal of transferring and getting a four-year degree actually meet that goal. William Doyle, assistant professor of higher education, reached that conclusion after studying U.S. Department of Education statistics.

Doyle, who summarized his findings in July for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, says that 79 percent of community-college students planned to get a four-year degree and 66 percent of that group had transferred to a four-year institution within six years. Whether those students in fact earned a bachelor's degree, however, appears to be linked to how many credits transferred to the four-year school. The odds of graduating diminished the longer a student is enrolled.

able to spend an entire academic year learning the essential aspects of the job.”

Zavada, along with Jon Lehman, associate dean of the Owen Graduate School of Management, will lead a small group of students in the first year of the program. “This is a very real opportunity for these students,” Lehman says. “We have the transplant center here, the specialized health-care M.B.A., and a group of people with the ability to take the concept and run with it.”

“Our students will be well grounded in many aspects in transplant administration and will be able to go into a transplant center and be immediately productive,” Zavada says. “Many places train transplant surgeons and physicians, but no programs exist for administrators.”

The Owen transplant administration program joins two other transplant training programs: the transplant pharmacy residency program and the transplant nurse practitioner program, which is offered in conjunction with the Vanderbilt University School of Nursing.

VU Ranks Among World’s Best

Vanderbilt moved up 61 places to No. 53 in the 2006 World University Rankings by The Times of London, the most comprehensive and respected worldwide ranking of universities. The rankings were released Oct. 6. Vanderbilt, which was ranked No. 114 last year, was the sole university from Tennessee to make the list.

The Times represents peer-reviewed scores in graduate school rankings, reviews of academic papers, and percentage of international students and faculty. But Vanderbilt also has performed well recently in a number of other rankings. Kaplan/Newsweek, publisher of The How to Get into College guide, has selected Vanderbilt as one of the “New Ivies” for the 2007 edition of the guide. The “New Ivies” list was created this year to recognize the growing reputation and heightened selectivity that academically outstanding schools have achieved in light of growing popularity among top students. Schools that made the list were selected based on admissions statistics as well as reviews with administrators, students, faculty and alumni.

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Virtual Vanderbilt

The Alumni Association has ramped up its Web site to better connect alumni, parents and friends. Check out the redesigned site to find Vanderbilt Chapter events in your area, network for your career, search the Dore2Dore online directory, take advantage of alumni discounts and more. All comments are welcome as the Alumni Association works to be a more valuable resource for the Vanderbilt community.
organizers call “food deserts”—areas without ready access to nutritious food.

“There are places where you can buy chips, beer, cigarettes and soda,” Freedman says. “If there are fruits and vegetables at those stores, they’re often poor quality and they’re very expensive.”

The produce stand offered residents a chance to purchase organic or locally grown produce in their own neighborhood. Produce came from the Nashville Farmer’s Market, a co-op, as well as from local farms. Delvin Farms in Williamson County provided organic fruits and vegetables to the produce stand at no cost. Says owner Cindy Delvin, “We could sell this produce other places, but we felt this was such an important endeavor that we couldn’t take money for it.”

With ongoing support from the community, organizers hope to continue the RiverWest Produce Stand and branch out into other areas of Nashville in need of better access to healthy food.

“There’s tangible evidence that something good is happening here,” Freedman says.

Ladies of the Club Hang Up Their Dribbles

The venerable Vanderbilt Garden Club for Campus Beautification — the organization that helped grow a campus lush with magnolias, manicured lawns, and carefully tended flowerbeds and shrubbery — is dissolving after nearly 80 years of service. In recent years a sizable crew of full-time grounds workers has made the need for a garden club less compelling, but the group has played an important role in Vanderbilt’s history. In the decades after Vanderbilt’s 1873 founding on 75 acres of farmland, campus aesthetics were not a priority. Timber was cut from campus grounds and sold to supplement the university’s income from tuition, according to The Real Dirt: A History of the Vanderbilt Garden Club for Campus Beautification. Because money was scarce in the years after the Civil War, early administrators deferred maintenance on grounds and building upkeep. In 1927, Mary Henderson, the appearance of the campus. The Garden Club’s efforts gained a champion in Margaret Branscomb, wife of Harvie Branscomb, Vanderbilt’s fourth chancellor. She was the force behind one of the most significant tree-planting projects ever attempted by the university. In 1954 she proposed planting magnolia trees along West End and 21st avenues to create a natural barrier between campus and the city streets beyond.

By 1959 two-thirds of the then-campus’ periphery was lined with magnolias. Around the time Vanderbilt was designated a National Arboretum in 1988, the design of Vanderbilt’s grounds falls under the auspices of Associate Vice Chancellor for Campus Planning Judson Newbern, who is assisted by Pam Sevy, the university landscape architect. “The women in the club have taught me a lot about Vanderbilt’s history, and their love and desire to improve the campus landscape has certainly rubbed off on me,” says Sevy. Today’s grounds maintenance shop comprises 45 employees, including an irrigation specialist, two tree-maintenance specialists and two horticulturalists. And the Garden Club is closing its roll book.

When I was asked about the Vanderbilt Garden Club,” Hogge remarks, “I say ... it is a group of fine, crusty old ladies—and I certainly am included in that—who have affected the appearance of this campus over the last 80 years.”

Kirkland, wife of Vanderbilt’s second chancellor, James Kirkland, founded a group of wives of faculty members and trustees. “It was originally a very boisterous invitation group of ladies who wore gloves and hats and had tea,” says Sharon Hogge, president of the Garden Club from 1996 to 1998, who compiled and edited The Real Dirt. From its inception, however, the focus was on improving the campus, particularly the grounds. The campus