Vanderbilt University Spirit Program Guidelines

I. Introduction & Season Timeline
1. The Vanderbilt University spirit program guidelines is a detailed outline of the expectations and responsibilities of all spirit squad members, revised and approved by the spirit squad coordinator, coaching staff and athletic administrator.
2. Members are expected to attend and enthusiastically participate in all required activities and events.
3. Members must abide by the policies outlined in the program guidelines and are required to sign the program guidelines as a condition of participation in the Vanderbilt spirit program.
4. A signed copy of the program guidelines will be on file in the spirit coordinator’s office.
5. Inappropriate behavior not described explicitly within the program guidelines may be handled at the discretion of the spirit coordinator, coach, athletic administrator and/or athletic department.
6. All spirit squad members are committed to a full season, which begins immediately after tryouts and ends after the last event of the school year.
   a. This is traditionally after tryouts in May through April of the following year.
   b. The season starts with a mandatory training camp in August.
   c. If a spirit squad member quits/leaves mid-season due for any reason they must meet with athletics administrator, spirit coordinator and coach for approval to try out in the future.
   d. Exceptions may be made if member notifies coaches during tryouts if they plan to study abroad in Spring Semester.

II. Purpose
The Vanderbilt spirit squad program members shall dedicate themselves to the following:
1. Providing support for athletic teams during competitions;
2. Attending and enthusiastically participating in athletic, marketing and community events to improve fan morale and school spirit;
3. Developing and promoting loyalty to Vanderbilt University;
4. Developing, promoting, and improving the Vanderbilt spirit squad programs in such ways as to make the program recognized, respected, and treated as an athletic spirit program;
5. Participating in various Vanderbilt and community events to further the recognition and respect of Vanderbilt and its team members;
6. Participating in fundraising activities as appropriate to support the spirit squad programs;
7. Serve as an ambassador of the University and represent Vanderbilt and the athletic department in a positive manner at all times, in uniform and out of uniform.

III. Membership
Only current registered students of Vanderbilt University may become members of the spirit squad programs**
   • Opportunity for selection to the Vanderbilt spirit program shall not be denied to any person(s) because of sex, race, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or national origin if otherwise qualified.
**Alumni will be used on a case by case basis at the discretion of the spirit squad coordinator for Mr. Commodore Crew.
**Belmont/Lipscomb students are eligible for membership of the Vanderbilt dance team.
**IV. Eligibility/Requirements**

All spirit squad members must:

1. Be a fully registered student at the University and enrolled in 12 credit hours for undergraduate students, and 6 credit hours for graduate students.
   a. Seniors/graduate students who are enrolled in fewer than 12 or 6 credit hours are eligible on a case by case basis as determined by the spirit coordinator.
2. Maintain a 2.5 semester grade point average for both Fall and Spring.
   a. Students are required to send final grades at the end of fall semester and mid-year reports after first round of midterms during fall and spring semester.
   b. Students are expected to notify the spirit coordinator of any grade changes/dropped classes that might impact GPA.
3. Remain in good disciplinary and academic standing with the University.
4. Be able to complete all obligations of the program from May through April of the following year.
5. Must participate in exit interviews to be conducted by the spirit coordinator or designated coach before spring tryouts.
6. Turn in all equipment and cleaned uniforms at the end of the season.
   a. Any individual who fails to return uniforms by date assigned by spirit coordinator will be charged the full amount of the uniforms on their student account.
   b. Seniors must pay off the balance on their student account in order to graduate.
7. Any individual who fails to meet the criteria listed above or is in violation of program guidelines may be suspended or removed from the squad at the discretion of the spirit coordinator.
8. Any individual who quits prior to the end of the season is required to 1) participate in an exit interview with the coach, spirit coordinator & athletics administrator 2) return all uniforms in the condition they were distributed in.
   a. Any individual who quits mid-season must return their uniform within 1 week of their decision or their student account will be charged for the uniforms.

**V. Structure**

The Vanderbilt spirit squad program is comprised of:

1. Spirit coordinator who is responsible for all executive decision making and planning for Vanderbilt, cheerleading, dance and mascot programs.
2. Three assistant coaches (cheer & dance) who are responsible for managing their teams during practice and games. In the event the spirit coordinator is not present, administrative responsibilities and disciplinary action falls to the team’s assistant coach.
3. Cheer team (up to 25 members)
4. Dance team (up to 16 members)
5. Mascot program (up to 4 members)
6. Mic Man program (up to 3 members)

**VI. Stipend Program**

All Vanderbilt cheerleaders, dancers and mascots will receive a monthly stipend that will be distributed from Vanderbilt university finance department. All stipends will be distributed at the end of every month. The amount of each stipend is determined by number of years within the program. This stipend does not cover cost of tuition at Vanderbilt.

1. Stipends are awarded beginning September-April, with the exception of December.
   a. If football attends a bowl game; members in attendance will receive ½ of December stipend.
2. April stipends will be reduced due to significant decrease in mandatory events and appearances.
   a. All members must complete 3 events in the spring in order to receive their April stipend.
Vanderbilt Mic Men will receive a payment for each football and basketball game they attend. Payment varies for each sport.

**VII. Rules and Regulations**

**A. General**
1. Adhere to attendance and late policy as determined by the spirit coordinator and athletic administrator.
2. Spirit squad program members at Vanderbilt are expected to be exceptional individuals with the ability to ascertain right from wrong as well as be law abiding. This expectation is most important when it comes to drugs, alcoholic beverages, and nicotine. Members must behave appropriately and professionally in uniform and out of uniform.
3. All members must arrive on time to events in full hair and makeup with all uniform pieces (including poms).
4. No public displays of affection during scheduled events or during team travel is permitted.
5. No gum or jewelry (other than earrings that are provided) is allowed during scheduled events.
6. Cell phone usage is not permitted in public, unless approved prior with spirit coordinator for Vandy Spirit social media purposes.
7. All Spirit Squad members are expected to communicate directly to their coach, spirit coordinator or athletics administrator for any issues about scheduling, classes, etc. Correspondence with parents is not permitted, unless it details directly with safety or upcoming family events.
8. All members must take and pass Protection of Minors (POM) training and clear a background check to participate in various events during the season.
9. Any individual who fails to meet the criteria listed in the program guidelines may be suspended or removed from the team at the discretion of the spirit coordinator with approval from athletic administrator.

**B. Academics**
1. Members are required to maintain a 2.5 semester GPA to participate in the program.
2. Members must submit mid-year fall semester grades and their fall final grades to the spirit coordinator.
   a. Spirit coordinator will check in with students after the first midterm round in spring semester.
   b. In order to participate in tryouts for the upcoming season, individuals must have a 2.5 GPA for their spring semester.
3. Members will file a copy of their class schedule and syllabi with the spirit coordinator for both fall and spring semesters.
   a. Members must notify the spirit coordinator of any class schedule changes.
4. Any member who does not maintain academic eligibility will be placed on immediate suspension and will not receive their stipend until the next semester if they are eligible.
   a. Members are still considered ambassadors and role models and should maintain their integrity during suspension.

**C. Social Media**
1. Members must provide their Twitter handle, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat usernames on the member information form.
2. Due to their highly visible position as an ambassador, spirit squad members are subject to random checks of their social media accounts.
   a. Any member in violation of expectations and conduct will be asked to remove the post or photo immediately.
      i. Potential disciplinary action may be taken at the discretion of spirit coordinator.
3. Members should follow all of Vandy Spirit and athletics’ social media accounts.
4. Members must follow the “Social Media Do’s and Don’ts” document.

D. Tardy Policy
Excused tardies will be approved at the discretion of the spirit coordinator and coach(es).

- Reasonable excuses are generally limited to excuses including class, medical/family emergency.

Practices, Events & Appearances
1. Members are expected to show up on time to scheduled events, practices and appearances.
2. Members who are running late to practices, events or appearances must notify the spirit coordinator and their coach before call time and practice time.
   - Please note that only reasonable excuses will be tolerated (e.g. oversleeping or forgetting would not be permissible).
3. At the start of practice time, members will begin running their warm ups and will continue to run until all members are present. If a member has already notified the spirit coordinator and coach about running late the team will not be affected by their tardiness.
   - All members who have notified spirit coordinator in advance of their tardiness must also notify the day of the practice/event so their team is not affected.
4. Unexcused excessive tardies will be managed in the following way:
   - First unexcused excessive tardy (>15 minutes) results in 50 burpees at the end of practice or event.
   - Second unexcused excessive tardy will result in 50 burpees for the entire team at the end of practice or event.
   - Three unexcused excessive tardies will result in one unexcused absence.
     - Subsequent tardies after 3 will result in a meeting with the spirit coordinator and athletics administrator to determine further disciplinary action, suspension or removal.

Games
1. Members are expected to show up on time and game day ready to scheduled games.
2. The only excusable reasons for missing or being late to games are class, family emergencies and illnesses.
   - Members who are ill are asked to sit in and support during the game, if their condition permits them to do so (e.g: sprained ankle, non-contagious illness).
     - Members are still expected to follow our appearance guidelines.
   - Academic excuses are for class only; this does not include review sessions or office hours.
     - Members should speak to Coach E about individual academic concerns/ conflicts to find appropriate solutions.
3. Members who are running late to a game must notify the spirit coordinator and/or coach.
   - Members who arrive late without prior notification will participate in additional conditioning after the game. (see tardy policy above).
   - All members who have notified spirit coordinator in advance of their tardiness must also notify the day of the game so their team is not affected.
4. Excessive tardies for games will be managed in the same manner as practices, events and appearances (see above).

E. Attendance Policy
Practices, events, appearances & games
1. Excused absences are generally limited to class, family emergency and illness.
a. Any potential absence should be discussed well in advance with the spirit coordinator to determine if it will be excused or not.
   i. Excused absences are up to the discretion of the spirit coordinator.
2. Unexcused absences will be managed in the following way:
   a. First unexcused absence results in 50 burpees at the end of the next practice.
   b. Second unexcused absence will result in the following:
      i. 50 burpees at the following practice;
         1. Football season: removal from any travel opportunity for football (cheer) or benched from in-game performance at designated game (dance).
         2. Basketball season: required to cheer/dance an additional game outside of the regularly scheduled games.
   c. Three unexcused absences will result in a stipend deduction (half a month’s stipend) and a meeting with the spirit coordinator, coach and athletic administrator about additional consequences or removal from the team.
5. Any member who plans to take an unexcused absence must notify the spirit coordinator at least 1 week in advance. Spirit coordinator will use their discretion to determine if notification was received in a timely manner.
   a. Members who fail to give advanced notice will receive 2 unexcused absences (see above penalty).
6. Sorority recruitment typically runs during the first weekend of Spring Semester; only members who are rushing will be excused from any basketball games that conflict with recruitment.
   a. Current sorority members will not be excused from basketball games due to recruitment events.

F. Conduct
1. Members are expected to conduct themselves with dignity in and out of practices, school and on the weekends.
2. Members must respect their coaches, fellow team members, Vanderbilt administration and peers.
   a. No cursing or disrespectful behavior will be tolerated.
   b. Inappropriate behavior may result in suspension or removal from squad.
   c. Intra-program conflicts will be handled by the spirit coordinator, coaches and athletic administrator.
3. While in uniform, members must adhere to the following policy:
   a. No derogatory behavior (ie: cursing, fighting, etc.)
   b. No public displays of affection with a significant other.
4. Due to their highly visible position as an ambassador, spirit squad members must conduct themselves appropriately and respectfully on all social media platforms

G. Athletic Events
Cheerleaders, dancers and mascots:
1. Attend all scheduled home athletic events for any team designated by spirit coordinator, including pre-season games and spring game, conference games and tournaments during thanksgiving, winter and spring break.
   a. Cheerleading & dance team will split into two squads (black & gold) to cover WBB and MBB non-conference basketball games.
      i. If a member is unable to attend one of their scheduled basketball games it is their responsibility to find a replacement (cheer: must find someone who can fill in their stunt position) and notify the spirit coordinator of the change via email (member who is covering game must also be included in the email).
         1. Notification should be received far enough in advance to make necessary formation and stunt group changes.
         2. This opportunity does not cover full team games.
3. Members are responsible for coordinating whether they are switching games or having someone cover their game.
   ii. Should a member not find a replacement the attendance policy goes into effect.

b. All men’s SEC games are full team games.
   i. Excused absences are generally limited to class, family emergency and illness.

c. Thanksgiving Break Games
   i. All members are required to cheer at any basketball game that falls on the Sunday after the first football game of Thanksgiving break.
   ii. Education day (WBB) takes place during Thanksgiving Break, typically M or T. Any member who would like to stay and cheer the game will receive $45 stipend per diem and a free unexcused absence from a practice or full team basketball game.
   iii. While the date of Education Day is TBD, game time will be early afternoon.
   iv. Members are expected to be flexible with any date changes due to schedule release.

2. Attend away football games, bowl game and men’s and women’s NCAA & SEC basketball tournaments.
   a. All squad members are required to travel to their designated SEC tournament (see Travel section).

3. Must arrive at all games, appearances and events by the designated call time in full hair and makeup with all required uniform pieces.
   a. The tardy/attendance policy stands during games, both home and away.
   b. If any piece of the uniform is missing, that member will be asked to go get their uniform pieces and will receive a 50 burpee punishment, similar to the tardy policy.
      i. If the member is unable to obtain their uniform piece, they will sit out of the event unless it is a uniform piece that the team does not need to wear (weather permitting).

4. Participate fully (except when ill or injured) in all calendar events beginning from the time of selection until the end of the academic season. Injured/ill members must attend games and performances dressed in official warm-up sweats and remain with the team, unless physically unable to do so, or other arrangements are made and approved with the spirit coordinator or coach.
   a. Member must still follow game day appearance guidelines (see below).

H. Practices
Members are expected to attend and fully participate in all practices throughout the summer and school year in order to completely master all squad material.

1. The practice schedule will be determined at the beginning of each semester by the spirit coordinator and coach (practices may increase prior to major performances and are mandatory).
2. Members must be present for scheduled practices and games during Thanksgiving break in November, winter break in December/January as well as spring break in March/April as instructed.
3. The spirit coordinator must be informed and approve of any and all absences, both anticipated and unplanned. In the event a member must miss a practice for an excused reason, it is the member’s responsibility to learn routines/practice material prior to the next practice, as well as contact the spirit coordinator and coach to keep updated on squad information.
4. Sick or injured team members are excused from participating fully in practice, but are expected to attend and contribute as an active member unless other arrangements are made in advance with the spirit coordinator.
5. Team members who miss or do not participate in practice pertaining to a specific game or performance may not be allowed to perform unless absence is approved and alternative arrangements made. Any team member unable to perform up to the expectation and level of the squad will not be allowed to perform.
6. Members are required to come to practice knowing all material and choreography.
7. Members must function as integral members of the squad and must be willing to abide with decisions made by the team, coach, or captain.

I. **Appearances/Outside Events**
The spirit program is a highly visible and requested group at Vanderbilt University. The program participates in many non-athletic events at Vanderbilt and in the greater Nashville area. All members are expected to participate in events throughout the season.

1. **Members are required to attend a minimum of 3 appearances/events** per semester, event availability permitting.
   a. Please note that most members will participate in more than 5 appearances due to the high demand.
2. Members should volunteer for events they are available for.
3. A tally is kept on file with how many events each squad member signs up for. Attendance at these events are considered for future selections (travel and tryouts).
4. Since there is a high demand for the spirit squad at events, members will be assigned to unfilled events based off of their availability and the number of events they have participated in.
5. Members who are unable to attend events must find a replacement and notify the spirit coordinator.
   a. If a squad member fails to find a replacement this will be considered an unexcused absence (see absence policy).

J. **Uniforms & Appearance**
All uniforms/items purchased by the University are the property of the University. Certain uniform items will be returned at the end of the year by a date specified by spirit coordinator. Any member who does not return uniform by specified date will have their student account charged for the cost of the uniforms. This includes but is not limited to: shell, skirt, jersey top, dresses, gold top, etc. Shoes will not be returned. All uniforms must be approved by the spirit coordinator and coach. The spirit coordinator and coach will decide on the style and make of all uniforms. Members may not alter their uniforms.

The correct uniform attire consists of the following:
- Uniforms must be clean and pressed and fit properly.
- Team members must wear the correct color of briefs and undergarments under their uniform.
- Members must wear the same designated socks (white, no show) and shoes.
- Jackets/sweats will be worn with uniform to all performances events.
- Team members must use official poms and bags.
  - Bags must be placed on the sidelines or in warm up spaces in a neat and orderly fashion with the logo facing out.
- No alterations may be made to the uniform without approval from the spirit coordinator and coach.
- Uniforms, shoes, jackets and sweats will be worn for performances and/or events only. These items are not for personal use.

Hair and make-up are considered part of the uniform. Everyone must wear the appropriate amount of make-up during performances. Members must wear presentable/attractive hairstyles that still allow for physical movement and performance. It is each squad member’s responsibility to maintain the proper appearance standards for all functions unless otherwise instructed.

1. No watches, hair ties, rings, or jewelry may be worn during performances/games. This includes belly button rings and tongue studs. No visible tattoos.
   a. With the exception of issued earrings for female squad members.
2. Clear nail polish or a French manicure may be worn during the season.
a. Any members who have a different color on their nails will be asked to remove it on site.

3. There will be no smoking, drinking, eating, or chewing gum while in uniform. At all times squad members are representatives of the University and should conduct themselves accordingly.

4. Members must refer to our appearance information that has makeup brands squad member should use.

5. If any part of the uniform is missing at an event, or team member is not performance ready (appearance), this will be considered an unexcused absence (see game attendance policy).

VIII. Travel

1. Travel to away games will be in accordance with budget restrictions and in accordance with the SEC conference, NCAA, and University rules and regulations.
   a. Each season, teams will rotate between men’s and women’s SEC tournaments. All squad members are required to travel to their respective tournaments.
   b. Once travel parties are determined by the spirit coordinator and coaching staff no changes will be made unless approved in advance.
   c. 2018-2019 season tournaments
      i. Cheerleading: Men’s SEC
      ii. Dance team: Women’s SEC

2. NCAA travel parties will be selected based off of availability, interest, number of years in the program, year in school and stunt group orchestration (cheer).

3. The squad, or a portion thereof, will travel as a team and return as a team, except in special cases that have been approved in advance by the spirit coordinator.

4. Final authority of all decisions made while traveling shall rest with the spirit coordinator.

5. Members will be selected to travel by the spirit coordinator, coaches and/or athletics administrator. Travel opportunities will be determined by 1) even distribution of trips for each team member; 2) consideration of years on squad; 3) consideration of attendance records; 4) stunt group orchestration.

6. On all official travel, members must travel to and from the event with the squad, stay at the squad hotel, participate fully in pre and post-game events, and maintain contact with the spirit coordinator and/or coach throughout the trip.

7. The athletic department will be responsible for payments of transportation, lodging, and allocated food expenses for the approved travel party.

8. Traveling as a Vanderbilt spirit squad member is a privilege. While traveling, all members must dress respectfully at all times during trips and conduct themselves in a professional manner.
   a. Please see Travel Guidelines

9. Must always comply with policies and procedures set by the Vanderbilt University student handbook.

10. Post-season travel is a privilege. Team members who have completed all the above requirements are eligible to travel post-season. Spirit coordinator and coach(es) will make travel selections.

X. Captains

The coaches will select captains for each team prior to the season, based off of demonstrated ability and leadership. Captains are responsible for team communication and shall serve as the contact person and authorized decision maker if the coach or spirit coordinator is not at any given event.

XI. Discipline and Dismissal Procedures

Vanderbilt spirit squad members are expected to comply with all policies and procedures listed in the program guidelines as well as abide by any additional disciplinary structures implemented by the spirit coordinator and/or coach.
members will be subject to disciplinary action and/or dismissal proceedings for excessive absences, tardiness, unsatisfactory performance, and failure to comply with the guidelines set forth and overall personal conduct issues.

XII. Safety and Health
1. Prior to and after all practice sessions and proceeding game activities, the team will participate in appropriate warm-up and cool-down exercises.
2. Members will participate in strength and flexibility conditioning, and participate in regular aerobic activity.
3. Members will practice healthy eating habits and maintain a high level of physical fitness throughout the season so as to not hinder the skill level of the team.
4. Drug use is forbidden. Any team member using illegal drugs will immediately be dismissed from the squad.
5. Any injury or illness shall be reported to the spirit coordinator immediately and appropriate medical documentation should be provided.
6. Personal insurance is required for all team members.
7. Any injury suffered during practices, games, or other official functions that result in professional medical attention will be at the expense of the individual.
8. If an injury or illness incapacitates a team member, they are not permitted to return to participate in squad activities until they provide written clearance from a doctor.
9. If a doctor recommends that a squad member no longer participate due to an injury or health problem, or if a chronic illness or injury causes a squad member to miss games and practices repeatedly, or interferes with the performance of the team, the spirit squad coordinator, in consultation with the athletics advisor may remove the squad member.
10. Cheerleaders ONLY: Due to the increased concern for safety all cheerleaders must recognize that participation involves a higher risk of danger and personal injury. All cheerleaders are educated and trained in proper safety and technique to reduce risk. It is the responsibility of every cheerleader to practice safe tumbling, stunting and pyramid skills. Cheerleaders who put themselves or their teammates at risk will be subject to dismissal.
   a. All cheerleaders are required to take a concussion baseline test upon initial entry to the program and every other year after through the Vanderbilt Medical Center.
   i. All cheerleaders are required to take concussion education course and sign off on concussion agreements.

XIII. Tryouts
Anyone wishing to try out for the Vanderbilt spirit program shall:
1. Attend the mandatory tryout clinic;
2. Have a 2.5 semester grade point average on all college work or be a new student approved for regular admission.
3. Only with special permission of the spirit coordinator and the athletics administrator can one try out for the program after they have been removed or left the squad during the season.
4. The Vanderbilt spirit program is an important and time-consuming activity.
   a. Athletes who have other serious commitments (outside of academics) of their time; such as children, a spouse, a 20hr or more work week are strongly encouraged to discuss their commitment with the spirit coordinator before trying out for the squad.
5. Complete and turn in all required documents listed on our tryout page including the Vanderbilt athletic liability and waiver form. Must have a valid physical examination within one year from the date of tryouts.
6. Note that current spirit squad members must tryout annually to re-qualify for a position on the squad.
7. Students who are planning to study abroad during fall or spring semester are not encouraged to try out.
XIV. Changes to Program Guidelines

The spirit coordinator and/or the athletics administrator may make changes to these guidelines during the year. Any changes will be provided in writing to all members of each squad prior to implementation.

Adopted 8/8/15
Revised 4/16/18

Vanderbilt University Spirit Program Guidelines

I have read and understood the Vanderbilt University spirit program guidelines. I agree to uphold these responsibilities and expectations as a member of the program for the entire calendar season. I understand the disciplinary actions and/or dismissal proceedings as a result of any violation of the program guidelines or expectations set forth by the spirit coordinator, coaches or athletic administrator.

X ______________________________
Signature Date

______________________________
Print Name

______________________________
Team Affiliation