The English poet John Keats once wrote, “Nothing ever becomes real until it is experienced.”

Immersion Vanderbilt, the university’s latest initiative that encourages students to find their passion through a personalized experience, takes this philosophy to heart.

As one of the major initiatives to arise from the ten-year Academic Strategic Plan, Immersion Vanderbilt calls for all undergraduates to pursue independent projects that give them the opportunity to engage, question and forge change. Most of our students are already pursuing immersion opportunities that are often outside of their major. This program will enrich these experiences and ensure all students have the chance to do something that fuels their passions.

“Immersion Vanderbilt provides a deeper, more complete education by integrating classroom knowledge with experience,” said Provost Susan Wente. “Vanderbilt students already embrace and execute immersive learning experiences. Beginning in Fall 2018, they will do so with necessary support and receive deserved credit, participating in an experience designed to help themselves, their purpose and how they can make a difference in the world.”

The following questions and answers explain Immersion Vanderbilt and how it will work:

What qualifies as an immersion experience?
The four broad pathways that comprise Immersion Vanderbilt are:
• Civic and Professional: Students enter the for-profit or non-profit world through co-ops, internships, externships and service work.
• Creative Expression: Students engage in the artistic process by developing their own performance, exhibit, or artistic work to showcase to the community.
• International: Students travel to places around the globe to analyze culture, language, history or other areas of study.
• Research: Students pursue research alongside a faculty member in the humanities, social, physical or life sciences.

What kinds of support will be available to help students navigate this process?
The immersion network—a collection of offices, resources and liaisons—will support a student’s immersion program from beginning through completion. A faculty mentor will help students craft learning plans and choose experiences that have purpose and benefits. Advisory
Access and affordability
With 32,442 applications for the Class of 2020, Vanderbilt continues to attract a high number of very talented students for undergraduate admissions: “We admitted 10.7 percent of undergraduate applicants. It is by far the most diverse, qualified class that I’ve ever seen at Vanderbilt,” said Zeppos.

A significant contributor to the increasingly selective admissions process is Opportunity Vanderbilt, the university’s initiative to meet 100 percent of demonstrated need without loans for undergraduate students. Thanks to generous donors who have made gifts and pledges that exceed $255 million, the program has helped ensure that young people of every background can attend Vanderbilt, creating a dynamic learning community that benefits every student.

“The Vanderbilt brand is balance”
Students at Vanderbilt come together to form a vibrant community of individuals with many interests. Zeppos cited examples of Vanderbilt students who are passionate about music and choose to attend Blair rather than a conservatory, and engineering students who choose to study in a liberal arts setting. “The Vanderbilt brand is balance. We seek students who are talented in a range of areas with multiple interests,” he said.

New facilities to enhance the undergraduate experience
Zeppos said that campus improvements, from residential halls to academic facilities, are all tied to Vanderbilt’s educational philosophy.

“We consider time outside of the classroom as much as in the classroom,” said Zeppos. Living-learning communities, first introduced on a wide scale with The Martha Rivers Ingram Commons at Vanderbilt, offer undergraduates an engaged experience under the guidance of resident faculty members. The university extended residential communities to upperclass students with the opening of College Halls in 2014. Vanderbilt Barnard residential college, slated to open in the summer of 2018, will provide another living-learning option for sophomores, juniors and seniors.

The newly opened Wond’ry is another recent example of how Vanderbilt extends the learning experience beyond the classroom. The Wond’ry brings students and faculty together in a cross-disciplinary space to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. “It’s a phenomenal investment for all the students,” said Zeppos.

A steadfast commitment to safety
Zeppos closed with a reassuring message that campus safety and student wellbeing are essential for undergraduate students to flourish at Vanderbilt. “As important as academics are, I think taking care of your kids is the most important thing. In many ways, that is my biggest priority.”

The Center for Student Wellbeing, which opened this fall, is a hub for wellness and prevention resources to help students develop and maintain positive mental and physical health practices that can help them thrive within the Vanderbilt community and beyond. He has also asked a committee of faculty, staff and students to be part of an ongoing, campuswide initiative to promote healthy help-seeking behavior and to create a culture of safety that eradicates the stigma of seeking support.

For more information on the Chancellor’s vision, visit vanderbilt.edu/chancellor.

Chancellor Zeppos shares highlights in Family Weekend address
Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos often refers to a quote from former Chancellor James Kirkland when describing his role at Vanderbilt: “In building a university, there is never an occasion for finishing touches. The task is always one of laying foundations.” This philosophy accurately describes Zeppos’ leadership style, which celebrates the university’s accomplishments while remaining focused on its future.

That approach was clear on Saturday, September 24, when Zeppos delivered a university update during the Family Weekend Conversation with the Chancellor program. He reinforced the financial strength of the university following the legal separation from Vanderbilt University Medical Center earlier this year. Then, Zeppos provided numerous examples of Vanderbilt’s educational philosophy at work—and the impact that a liberal arts education in the context of a research environment can have on students as well as our collective future. Here are several of the highlights:

Students work with David Owens, professor of the practice of management and innovation, in one of two maker spaces in the Wond’ry.
How has the concept of the “college career center” evolved during your career? Career centers started out as “placement offices” that matched students with local employers. They are now comprehensive centers providing career education through classes, workshops and programs; coaching and guidance through 1-on-1 and group sessions; job search preparation through mock interviews; social media training and resume/cover letter writing; and employer/networking connections worldwide.

What guidance do you give students who just can’t seem to find a field that interests them? My experience is that indecision tends to come from either a lack of information, a fear of failure (making the wrong decision), or a broad range of interests that are seemingly incompatible. I encourage students to pursue several paths at once, if needed, until they acquire enough knowledge to make a decision and to think creatively about combining those seemingly disparate interests. It’s OK to change their minds and try something else if their first decision doesn’t work.

How important is it to have a job before graduation? Some students choose to focus on their academic work and don’t begin the job search until after graduation. Others start the job search process freshman year. What works best is to start building experience and career knowledge throughout their college years so they can make better career decisions and be ready for the opportunities that arise—whether before or after graduation.

What role do internships play? Many employers hire directly from their internship programs, so internships can be a great way to acquire experience and ultimately a full-time job. Internships allow students to “test drive” a career before entering it, and help them understand the realities of the workplace.

What do you say to parents who don’t agree with their student’s choice of a major? Parents often fear that certain majors will be a disadvantage in the job market. Some majors do have a clearer path to a specific career, but our graduates do well with all their majors. Students who can understand and articulate the value of their major, acquire experience, and tell strong stories about their skills to potential employers will succeed regardless of major. Instead of asking what they are going to “do” with their major, ask what mindsets and skills they are learning from their major and what career fields might interest them.

Vanderbilt launches the Wond’ry at its new Innovation Pavilion

Vanderbilt University opened a new cross-disciplinary creative space called the Wond’ry this fall as part of the university’s effort to foster innovative, entrepreneurial thinking among its students and faculty. Located in the Innovation Pavilion adjacent to the new Engineering and Science Building, the Wond’ry is a three-story, 13,000-square-foot facility featuring flexible event spaces, meeting and conference rooms, and maker spaces outfitted with state-of-the-art equipment.

“Universities, at their very heart, have always served as catalysts of discovery—places where experts from many disciplines converge to learn, to teach and ultimately to create. The Wond’ry at the Innovation Pavilion builds upon that most basic instinct by fostering collaboration across Vanderbilt’s vibrant intellectual tapestry to explore new ways to benefit humanity in measures both small and large,” said Vanderbilt Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos.

The Wond’ry name draws on “wonder” and “foundry” and reflects its mission to be open and welcoming to all students—from engineers to artists to historians to scientists.

“As the epicenter for innovation and entrepreneurship at the university, the Wond’ry brings together the incredible creativity and discovery that happens every day across the university,” said Robert Grajewski, the Evans Family Executive Director of the Wond’ry.

“Though we have only been open since the fall, students are already flocking to the Wond’ry, demonstrating their excitement for this kind of creative outlet.”

One such student is Jude Cohen, Class of 2017, who served as an intern for the Wond’ry this past summer and is currently one of the center’s student ambassadors. In both these roles, Cohen has participated in the launch of the Wond’ry, which included the development of its mission, vision, programming and market plan. “The Wond’ry offers one of the only spaces on campus that is truly trans-disciplinary. The possibility to collaborate with students in different fields is invaluable and really challenges us to think creatively, learn experientially and explore new opportunities.”

Working across campus with partners in industry and in the community, the Wond’ry will advance four key programs:

• The Innovation Garage pairs cross-disciplinary teams of students and faculty with a corporate sponsor to explore disruptive and innovative ideas related to topics of mutual interest.

• Pre-Flight is a multi-week program for undergraduates, graduate and professional students to evaluate whether a business idea is viable and to understand what it will require to launch and run a start-up.

• Social Entrepreneurship brings multi-disciplinary student teams together to tackle important societal issues—from public transportation to health care access to green technology—ultimately helping students grow as innovators who have the skills to improve their communities.

• The Wond’ry will host a multitude of events to foster an innovative culture at Vanderbilt and beyond, including art and music exhibits, speaker series, hackathons and business plan competitions.

To learn more or to view a full calendar of Wond’ry events, please visit www.thewondry.com.
The excitement of Giving Day also helped provide the final push in crossing the mark on the 2016 Parent Challenge. Through this challenge, 3,122 parents made gifts totaling more than $15.4 million. In surpassing the challenge goal of 3,000 gifts, our Vanderbilt parent community secured an additional $100,000 gift toward need-based scholarship support from an anonymous parent couple.

WHY PARENT GIVING MATTERS

As a Vanderbilt parent, your annual gift of any amount helps fuel the positive momentum Vanderbilt is experiencing. Thanks to these gifts, we are:

- providing innovative living and learning communities to enhance the undergraduate residential experience
- creating world-class research facilities such as the Wond’ry and the Engineering and Science Building
- assisting with student financial aid, helping maintain Vanderbilt’s need-blind admissions policy and ongoing commitment to meet 100 percent of a family’s demonstrated need
- securing funds that can be used immediately toward laboratory and classroom equipment, library acquisitions, renowned guest lectures, special programs and seminars

You help Vanderbilt provide excellence in every aspect of your student’s experience. Thank you for extending your investment in your child’s education by making an annual gift.

To give online, please go to vu.edu/parentgiving.

THANK YOU!

SULLIVAN AND STEELE NAMED PLC CHAIRS

When it comes to volunteering at their children’s schools, Teri Steele and Eric Sullivan are old pros. From Teri’s stint as head of the PTA when their children were younger to Eric’s 10 years spent as chairman of the board of their kids’ school, they’ve done it all. Now they’re continuing that involvement by serving as chairs of the Parents Leadership Committee.

The couple has two children at Vanderbilt. Their son Sully is a senior in the College of Arts and Science and daughter Maeve is a first-year student there as well.

“Volunteering is how we’ve enjoyed parenting,” says Eric. “As the chairman of the board of a private school, I really came to understand the need to raise money to be competitive and viable. Even wealthy institution with big endowments need money to compete for faculty and to build facilities that will attract the best educators and the top students and administrators.”

Carrying on their tradition of volunteering was an easy decision for the couple.

“As we’ve learned more and more about the university over the past few years and learned more about the mission and values, we’ve continued to be impressed and inspired,” says Teri. “There’s such thoughtfulness and purpose behind all the decisions that are made—everything they’re doing is to make our kids better people.”

Eric and Teri would like to encourage all parents to learn more about the Parents Leadership Committee and other volunteer opportunities.

“We all get bombarded from many different directions with great causes that are asking for money,” says Eric. “This is the chance to put money into something that’s already wonderful and help it become even more amazing, and that’s Vanderbilt. You get to do something that is good for your kids and good for the world.”

Teri seconded Eric’s thoughts. “I know there are lots of parents interested in being involved and who are eager to help in many ways. Joining the PLC has an immediate impact and it has the potential to have a lasting impact for years and years to come.”

Learn more about the PLC and other parent volunteer opportunities at vanderbilt.edu/families.

What is the PLC?

The Parents Leadership Committee (PLC) is composed of parent donors who provide important support to parent fundraising efforts. Committee members act as advocates for Vanderbilt University in their home communities, as mentors and connectors to other parents, and as generous donors by making leadership annual gifts to the university in the following ranges:

- Cornelius Vanderbilt—gifts of $25,000 or more
- Dean’s List—gifts of $10,000 to $24,999
- Benefactor—gifts of $5,000 to $9,999

We remain grateful for the vital support the Parents Leadership Committee continues to grow. Additionally, any gift to Vanderbilt—whether unrestricted or endowed—is counted in our overall parent giving program.
Our community of parent volunteers provides meaningful support for Vanderbilt. You bring parents together in your community as Care Package Party hosts, offer a reassuring greeting on Move-in Day, share valuable career advice during Family Weekend, and provide the perfect welcome to the university as hosts for Summer Send-off Parties. Thank you for sharing your time—together you make our university better.

2016 CARE PACKAGE PARTY HOSTS

Spring parties
Kathy and Gary Bardad
Laura and Jeff Friedman
Susan Howatt and Paul Holparn
Lynn and Ronnie Jacob
Kitty and Bruce Konkle
Danielle and David Lerner
Laura and Steven Paden
Gisela and Steve Paul
Fran and Bob Rosenblatt
Amy and Mitch Smith
Colleen and Kenneth Worley

Fall parties
Cindy and William Burroway
Elizabeth and Clark Collinder
Michelle and Richard Cappellano
Shiela and Bruce Catananzare
Hilary and William Cooper
Dana Hall
Patrice and Lloyd Hartfield
Aggie and Kevin Landry
Jodi Miller
Laura and Steven Paden
Maureen and Frank Perez
Wendy and Steve Perlin
Laura and William Rice
Nancy and Peter Saparstone
Jennifer and Victor Tabbush
Rebecca and Donald Ufford

FAMILY WEEKEND 2016 VOLUNTEERS

Mingfang Ao
Ellen and Gordon Charlop
Timothy Clark
Barbara Gill
Diane and Dick Gullet
Patrice and Lloyd Hartfield
Carmelle Hanson
Jim and Teresa Hillman
Kitty and Bruce Konkle
Steve Murphy
Uzo Nkem-Mmekam
Barbara Orlando
Debra and Rich Paikoff
Ceilie and Mike Puno
Detang Shi and Huizhen Liu
Patty and Tod Smith
Paige and Jeff Smitten
Mariana Snell
Jacque Stark
Kathy and Ivan Valcarenghi
Felix Velasquez
Karacosa Watkins
Colleen Worley
Chenhua Yang
Bruce and Carla Phillips
Mike and Cecilie Puno
Barbara Rose
Kavin and Lynn Rose
Detang Shi and Huizhen Liu
Scott and Andrea Speer
David and Barbara Verzella
Eric and Lisa Weltman
Robert Wilder and Kar Pritchard
Lorena Wilson

2016 SUMMER SEND-OFF PARTY HOSTS

Michael and Suzanne Ainslie
Bob and Elizabeth Baker
Brandon and Melissa Barnes
Mark and Sandra Bennett
Gary and Liz Carnahan
Peel and Susan Chronister
Rob and Poppy Clements
Scott and Lorie Cox
John Doppeler and Kirsten Hanson
Ben and Jeanne Downs
Brad and Stefanie Eber
Preston and Laura Farrior
Chad and Dawn Gwin
Moe and Papi Chu
David and Edie Johnson
Ewout and Markus Leevens
Mark and Patricia Mays
Charlie and Kristin Mills
Donal and Diana Mulligan
Stephen and Jami Nachtsheim
Donal and Diana Mulligan
Mark and Patricia Mays
Charles and Kristen Mills
Donal and Diana Mulligan
Stephen and Jami Nachtsheim
Doug and Gwen Parker
Ray and Kristin Pittman
Jack and Monique Shavel
Mark and Flora Stallion
Lloyd and Mary Margaret Stamy
George and Patti White
Michael and Pamela Wilson
Peter and Martha Wilson

Parents and Family Programs Volunteer opportunities

- Host a regional Vanderbilt parent reception
- Help host and/or organize parent events in your region during the school year.
- Host a regional Care Package Party
- Help host and/or organize an event for parents to assemble care packages to send their students around exam time.
- Host a Summer Send-off Party in collaboration with Vanderbilt Alumni Relations
- Help host and/or organize Summer Send-off Parties for new students and their parents or guardians. Guests also include local alumni, current students and parents.
- On-campus events
  - Welcome new Vanderbilt parents, answer questions, pass out brochures, and assist families of first-year students during Move-in Day or work the registration table during Family Weekend.
  - Admissions recruitment events
    - Help Vanderbilt admissions counselors in your area at college fairs and programs, pass out brochures and materials, and answer questions from prospective students and their families.
- Host a Vanderbilt international student over the holidays
  - Host Vanderbilt international students in your home during Thanksgiving and/or winter break. Many of our international students remain on campus during the holidays, and they would welcome the opportunity to experience American holiday traditions.
- Career networking events for Vanderbilt students
  - Provide career advice during the Family Weekend Career Conversations networking event held in the fall. There are also various opportunities for your company to participate in recruiting events on campus.
- Serve as a study abroad parent mentor
  - If your student has studied abroad in a Vanderbilt program, you can share your knowledge and experience with other parents as a parent ambassador for the Global Education Office (GEO).

How to volunteer
You may sign up for any of the above volunteer opportunities at vanderbilt.edu/families/volunteer.
The Office of the Dean of Students has been reorganized and will be expanded to better support Vanderbilt’s rapidly changing student body. Led by Associate Dean Frank Dobson, the Office of Social Justice and Identity (SJAI) will offer events, activities and trainings that both celebrate diversity and serve to educate Vanderbilt students on pertinent issues of social justice, identity and advocacy.

“The past decade, the composition of Vanderbilt’s student body has become more diverse in every aspect. Opportunity Vanderbilt has allowed us to recruit the very best students from across the nation and around the world. As a result, we are now a stronger, smarter and more culturally, racially, ethnically, economically and geographically diverse university,” Zeppos said. “We have a duty to ensure that our student services reflect the needs of all of our students, and these changes and new support resources represent an important investment in doing so.”

SJAI was created through a reorganization of existing Dean of Students departments. It comprises the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center, Inclusion Initiatives and Cultural Competence, the LGBTQI+ Center, the Margaret Cuninggim Women’s Center, the Office of the University Chaplain and Religious Life, Transition Programs (which serves first-generation and transfer students), and International Student and Scholar Services.

“Our students have engaged with us meaningfully and repeatedly over the past year on areas that they have identified as needing more resources and support,” Dobson said. “We believe this new organization, and the additional resources that will be dedicated to it, are an important investment in our students’ success and demonstrate our commitment to ensuring all students are welcomed, respected and have the opportunity to grow and succeed.”

SJAI staff members also will serve a number of student organizations as advisers, meeting with student leaders on a regular basis, attending their organizational events and serving as mentors. The reorganization will result in eight new positions supporting diversity and inclusion programming and services, as well as Greek Life, over the next two years.