

Dear Vanderbilt Community,

History has proven that great universities must never be content with the *status quo* but seek to push boundaries in order to evolve. This year, we have a special opportunity to engage the entire university community in educational innovation. It is time for Vanderbilt to identify a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) project, a critical part of our reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), a process which occurs once every ten years. I write now to solicit your ideas and advice in this important area.

The QEP constitutes a new and focused effort to enhance the student learning experience. Since SACSCOC expects the QEP to derive from campus strategic planning processes, Vanderbilt's QEP will focus on an aspect of Immersion Vanderbilt, a key component of our [Academic Strategic Plan](#).

The Immersion Vanderbilt initiative seeks to provide students with the mentoring and skills to identify, explore, and contribute to intellectual production in rigorous and creative ways. Immersion Vanderbilt enables students to become generators of knowledge – not just consumers.

Today the university has a foundation of programs, each encompassing student-driven research, scholarship, and/or creative expression. Examples include the School of Engineering's capstone project, Peabody's Human and Organizational Development internship, various departmental honors thesis programs, the Vanderbilt Undergraduate Summer Research Program, and research and learning oriented study abroad trips.

I am writing now to solicit the input of the entire university community – students, faculty, staff, alumni, and board members – to contribute additional program ideas that will add to our portfolio of Immersion Vanderbilt experiences. One of these program ideas will be selected as the University's official QEP, to be measured and assessed over the next five years. Though we may only select one program for use in the QEP, we strongly believe that every idea submitted during this process has the potential to find a home within Immersion Vanderbilt and impact student learning at the university.

Please communicate your ideas and pose any questions to us via the [QEP website](#). Initial suggestions need not be detailed proposals; just a few sentences describing the general idea will suffice. QEP suggestions will be gathered and reviewed beginning October 15, 2015.

Program ideas should center on an immersion experience that meets the following criteria:

- * Academically rigorous;
- * Conducted outside of or beyond the classroom;
- * Includes faculty guidance;
- * Yields a tangible, measurable product.

*Susan R. Wente, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs*

In addition, the program should be consistent with the goals of the [Academic Strategic Plan](#), be within the capacity of the university to implement and govern, and be accessible to all Vanderbilt University undergraduates, regardless of their major, minor, or undergraduate school.

Proposals will also be measured against SACSCOC criteria:

- * The QEP must be focused and directly related to student learning;
- * The QEP must have clear goals;
- * We must be able to assess the outcomes of the QEP and its effects on student learning.

[The QEP Selection Committee](#) plans to request more detailed proposals in several areas to facilitate campus conversations about the QEP in January and February. It will make a recommendation to the Chancellor's office following the review phase, and the selection of the QEP should be complete by March 2016.

I ask that over the next five weeks you take some time to think critically and creatively about ways the university can provide undergraduate students with the opportunity to pursue a passion, hone skills, and make a difference in the world. I thank you all for your efforts to improve our university, and look forward to the continued evolution of the Vanderbilt experience as advanced by the Immersion Vanderbilt QEP.

Sincerely,



Susan R. Wente, Ph.D.
Provost
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Professor, Cell and Developmental Biology