

April 2019



**Dear Arts and Science community,**

In speaking with undergraduate students, I am struck by two things. First, how certain they are about their career paths. Freshmen often say with conviction that they are pre-med, or pre-law, or that they are going to double major in Chemistry and Anthropology, with a minor in History of Art. Second, that their career will be linear and follow a pretty predictable path. However, as the head of Vanderbilt's Career Center, Kate Brooks, says, there is no such thing as a career ladder—it is much more of a *lattice*.

With these two points in mind, I have one piece of advice for all A&S students: explore. Spend your years at Vanderbilt taking courses in subjects that you love, certainly, but also explore areas that you know nothing about but find intriguing. *Pursue your passion, not just a career.* By pursuing your passion, you will find a career that is rewarding and that will allow you to make a difference.

I make this claim because one thing is certain: the best laid plans *will* change. Interests will shift. Careers will take unexpected (and exciting) twists and turns, as new opportunities present themselves. Today's college students will have, on average, 29 jobs over their lifetimes. With a world-class liberal arts education, A&S graduates will be prepared to take advantage of those opportunities to carve out a satisfying career, and, thus, life.

These observations are strongly reinforced by A&S alumni, who have taken diverse career paths. There is the Philosophy major who is now a partner at a private equity firm. The Economics major who now works for Teach for America. The English major working in Corporate Innovation for Estée Lauder. The German major in Leadership Development at British Telecom. And the Sociology major who is now a professional football player for the Jacksonville Jaguars. The examples go on and on. I'm sure that many of them had a vision for where their major would take them, and almost none of them could have predicted where they would end up.

Simply put: a liberal arts education is the best way to prepare today's students to succeed—no matter what career path they want to pursue. At the College of Arts and Science, we proudly teach our students to think creatively, question analytically, explore deeply, and write well. With such skills, they are able to tackle today's most pressing problems from different perspectives, giving them an edge in the marketplace. I hope that desire to explore continues long after they leave Vanderbilt, allowing them to find their passion and create a path to a meaningful life.

My best,



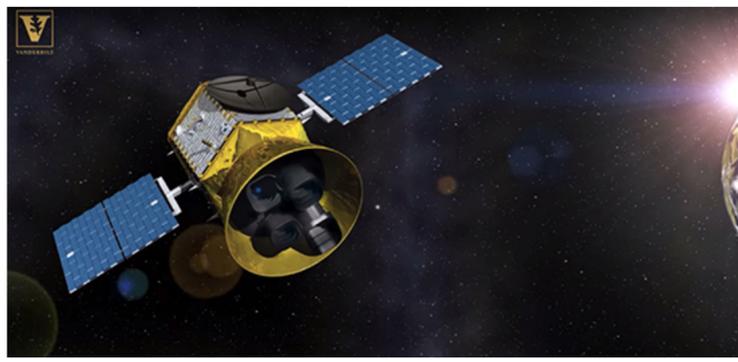
**John G. Geer**  
Dean of the College of Arts and Science  
Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of Political Science

**Featured Stories**



**[A&S junior awarded prestigious Udall Scholarship](#)**

**Andrew Harwell**, a double major in environmental sociology and ecology, evolution and organismal biology, has been awarded a prestigious Udall Scholarship for his dedication to environmental conservation efforts locally and globally.



**[NASA's TESS mission to discover new worlds will use a map developed at Vanderbilt](#)**

**Keivan Stassun**, Stevenson Professor of Physics and Astronomy, serves as a deputy principal investigator on NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) mission, tasked with identifying the most promising stars for TESS to target.



**[Indicators of despair rising among Gen X-ers entering middle age](#)**

New research led by **Lauren Gaydos**, assistant professor of Medicine, Health and Society and Public Policy Studies, shows indicators of despair are rising among Americans approaching middle age regardless of race, education, and gender.



**[Vanderbilt history professor awarded Guggenheim Fellowship](#)**

**Lauren Benton**, the Nelson O. Tyrone Jr. Professor of History and professor of law, was selected as one of 168 scholars, artists, and writers from a group of almost 3,000 applicants in the foundation's 95th competition.



**[A Scientific Mind and a Heart for Women's Issues: Ananya Sharma, BA'19](#)**

A&S double major **Ananya Sharma**, BA '19, lets go of worries and allows the music to move her as she performs with Vanderbilt Lakshya, a colorful Bollywood-style fusion dance team.

**In the News**

**The Washington Post:** [Why Cathedrals are vulnerable to burning quickly and take a long time to rebuild](#) (Kevin Murphy, professor of the history of art, quoted)

**Scientific American:** [Shocking secrets of the electric eel](#) (Kenneth Catania, Stevenson Professor of Biological Sciences, authored)

**The Washington Post:** [In India, the world's largest election has started. Keep an eye on these 5 things](#) (Tariq Thachil, associate professor of political science, authored)

**Huffington Post:** [A half-century before #MeToo, female artists confronted sexual assaults through their work](#) (Vivien Fryd, professor of the history of art, authored)

**United Press International:** [Stalagmite to help predict droughts, floods in India](#) (Elli Ronay, doctoral student in earth and environmental sciences, quoted)

**Rolling Stone:** [Tim McGraw to release 'Songs of America' book with historian Jon Meacham](#) (Jon Meacham, the Carolyn T. and Robert M. Rogers Chair and Distinguished Visiting Professor of Political Science, book featured)

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