Dean Richard McCarty called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. in Wilson Hall 103. Approximately 80 faculty members were in attendance.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Meeting of November 13, 2007.

There were no comments or questions, and the Minutes were approved.

2. Review of the Minutes of the Faculty Council Meeting of November 27, 2007.

There were no comments or questions.

3. Presentation of the Outstanding Graduate Mentoring Award in the College of Arts & Science.

Associate Dean Holly McCammon presented the Outstanding Graduate Mentoring Award to Edward Friedman, the Chancellor’s Professor of Spanish.

4. Presentation of the Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award in the College of Arts & Science.

Dean McCammon presented the Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award to Leah Marcus, the Edwin Mims Professor of English.

5. Executive Motion Calendar.

(A) From the Committee on Graduate Education (CGE):

   i. Proposed Parental Leave for Graduate Students policy. Associate Dean Sweeney stated that he had concerns about the time limitation clause in the last sentence of the proposed policy and about granting a parental leave entitlement to graduate students. The clause, he noted, would allow a graduate student to take a leave of absence in the spring semester if his or her baby were born or adopted the previous July. A&S makes a large investment in its faculty, he argued, and hence it is justified to grant a parental leave entitlement to faculty, but this is not the case for graduate students. Where does one draw the line, he asked, for granting such an entitlement? Professor Bess, Chair of the A&S Faculty Council, replied that Council members decided to adopt the language of the Faculty Manual regarding the time limit clause in the parental leave policy for faculty. This language, he continued, would permit graduate students to take a leave of absence soon after, but not necessarily immediately after, a birth or adoption, which gives some flexibility to graduate students for when they can take a parental leave, but does place a time limit on when a graduate student can take a parental leave of absence.

Professor Campbell stated that she was in favor of the proposed policy. She argued that some of our peer institutions grant parental leaves for graduate students, that many of our own departments grant such leaves informally, and that Vanderbilt could use such a policy as a recruiting tool for graduate students who are in their child-bearing years. Dean McCammon supported Professor Campbell’s points—she stated that this policy would formalize a practice by
many of our departments. The proposed policy, she continued, would require a graduate student to give three months notice to his or her department, which is sufficient time for a Chair or DGS to arrange the temporary transfer of the graduate student’s workload. She also estimated that fewer than ten graduate students per year would ask for parental leave, based on an informal poll of departments. Professor Campbell pointed out, further, that the Faculty had a similar discussion about fifteen years ago when A&S granted parental leaves for faculty members. Subsequent experience has demonstrated, she said, that permitting parental leave is not burdensome. Professor Stassun stated that he was in favor of the proposed policy; to approve this policy would place Vanderbilt in the vanguard of our peer institutions, and it would raise the profile of our graduate program. Professor Nwankwo stated that she was opposed to the proposed policy, because it does not allow graduate students to take a leave of absence for other reasons or needs besides parental ones. Faculty then approved the Parental Leave for Graduate Students policy, with two faculty members opposing.

ii. Proposed African American and Diaspora Studies graduate certificate program. Professor Campbell pointed out that, in the list of approved courses, Sociology 331 should be titled “Survey Seminar on Inequalities and Movements,” not “Survey Analysis on Inequalities and Movements.” There were no other comments or questions, and the Faculty approved the African American and Diaspora Studies graduate certificate program.

(B) From the Faculty Council:
A motion to support The Commons: “The Faculty of the College of Arts and Science note that The Commons, the first stage of Vanderbilt’s plan to transform its undergraduate student residences into College Halls, will open to the Class of 2012 on August 16, 2008. The Arts and Science Faculty believe that The Commons will offer valuable opportunities for faculty and their students to engage each other in new ways, both as scholars and more broadly as citizens of our university community. The faculty of the College of Arts and Science strongly support this initiative and look forward to participation in Commons activities as scholars, teachers, and mentors of undergraduates. It is the policy of the College of Arts and Science to encourage and facilitate active engagement by its faculty in the many events, courses, and ongoing projects undertaken under the auspices of The Commons in coming years.”

There were no comments or questions, and the Faculty approved the motion to support The Commons, with one faculty member opposing.

6. Original Motion Calendar.

No issues were raised.

7. Good of the College.

Dean McCarty stated that he had had a conversation recently with Doug Christiansen, Associate Provost for Enrollment, about next year’s class of incoming first-year students. In that conversation, Dean McCarty reported, Mr. Christiansen noted that the quality of this year’s Early Decision I admission group is about the same as last year’s total freshman class, which was very high (the quality of the Early Decision I group is usually not as high as the total freshman class). Dean McCarty said that Vanderbilt will probably receive more than 15,000 applications this year, which is a large increase from last year, and that this high demand for admission is partly
driven by the prospect of the opening of The Commons next year and by the high quality of our faculty. He thanked all faculty members for their hard work, and, on that note, invited everyone to the annual Holiday Party.

8. **Adjournment.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m. for the annual College of Arts & Science Holiday Party for faculty and staff.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marshall C. Eakin,  
Secretary of the Faculty