Dean Carolyn Dever called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. in Wilson Hall 103. Approximately 50 faculty members were in attendance.

1. Update on the Kissam Quadrangle Reconstruction Project.

Provost Richard McCarty and Associate Provost Susan Barge presented an update on College Halls I and II, which would replace the Kissam residential halls on the northeast corner of Vanderbilt’s central campus. (The initial plans for College Halls I and II were presented to the A&S faculty at the April, 2008, A&S Faculty Meeting.)

Before presenting the plans for College Halls I and II, Provost McCarty discussed the recently-published National Research Council (NRC) evaluations. The evaluations are based on data collected in 2005 and, unlike previous evaluations, do not include an ordinal ranking of departments and programs. Nonetheless, interesting trends have emerged since the 1995 NRC rankings, he stated, using Vice Provost Dennis Hall’s improvised method to compare and interpret the 1995 and 2005 evaluations. The comparison reveals that the most improved A&S departments are Chemistry, English, Mathematics, Philosophy, Political Science, and Psychology. These objective data indicate, Provost McCarty continued, that the great combined efforts of the A&S Dean’s Office and A&S departments at recruiting and hiring excellent faculty members are paying off. The ranking and data also reveal that the highest rated A&S departments and programs are Chemistry, English, French, Mathematics, Neuroscience, Psychology, and Spanish and Portuguese, some of which are also among the most improved departments. These academic programs are continuing to recruit the best faculty members and graduate students.

Provost McCarty explained that the development of The Commons was complex and took almost ten years from its formal beginnings. It involved provostial and Board of Trust committees and engaged students, faculty members, staff members, and trustees. Since the opening of The Commons residential halls in fall 2008, The Commons has established a dynamic living/learning environment for first-year students from all four Vanderbilt undergraduate schools. Students living there develop a strong sense of community, of belonging to a class, and are mentored by a remarkable group of faculty heads of house, none of whom has resigned. Dean Wcislo is also doing a terrific job. There is a strong association, Provost McCarty continued, between the success of The Commons and the substantial increase in the number of undergraduate student applications and the decrease in the admittance rate over the past five years. The first-year class is more capable than ever, he said, as indicated by the dramatic rise in average SAT scores.
The College Halls I and II project, Provost McCarty explained, is part of an effort to bring the success of The Commons to this part of the Vanderbilt campus and to upperclass students. He stated that the six residential halls that comprise Kissam Quadrangle are in need of replacement. The Kissam halls are constrained by their 1950s design, are not retrofittable, and consist entirely of single rooms. In order to achieve the best design for a replacement for Kissam, Vanderbilt held a competition among architectural firms to plan the next phase of residential college halls. Goody Clancy, a Boston architectural firm, which has recently completed a residential project at the University of Chicago, won the competition. College Halls I and II will be in the collegiate gothic style and will each house 325 – 350 undergraduate students, 3 graduate students, and a faculty director. A full-scale dining facility will not be included. The buildings will be designed such that the main buildings, which include the residential rooms, will line the perimeter of West End Avenue and 21st Avenue South and will enclose a courtyard that faces Wilson Hall, Curry Field, and Kirkland Hall. A schematic design for College Halls I and II is expected by January 2011 and cost estimates by March 2011. Philanthropic fundraising for the project is well underway.

Before construction work begins for College Halls I and II, Provost McCarty explained, Alumni Hall will be renovated as a campus gathering spot for the northeast end of campus and as a space for support services for students, such as the Writing Studio. Alumni Hall is an underutilized 1920s vintage building that is not accessible to people with disabilities and has no central air conditioning. Its renovation will begin in May, 2012, and will take less than twelve months to complete. Funds for its renovation are already at hand, he said, and thus will not involve any debt-financing.

In response to questions from faculty members, Provost McCarty and Associate Provost Barge stated that the construction of College Halls I and II will involve little debt-financing. Most of its cost will come from fundraising and possibly from some internal sources. The renderings of College Halls I and II that were presented in 2008 were part of a feasibility study for the project and were intended only to determine the kind of project that is possible on that site. The new drawings are more complete and are based on student input and other practical concerns. The design of College Halls I and II is oriented toward upperclass students, unlike The Commons, which is more oriented toward first-year students. College Halls I and II and the renovated Alumni Hall will have some small meeting rooms and some 60-seat classrooms. The rooms will be designed to be as flexible as possible. There will be an opportunity for local businesses and perhaps even student entrepreneurs to open outlets in College Halls, but there are only a few commercial spaces planned for it. While College Halls I and II are being built, Vanderbilt will have to rely on other housing options, such as the Village at Vanderbilt complex, Scarritt-Bennett, and local apartments, in order to temporarily make up the loss of the 600 beds in the Kissam Quadrangle. Parking will also be temporarily affected, but most of it will be replaced by new parking spaces underneath College Halls I and II. The A&S faculty thanked Provost McCarty and Associate Provost Barge for their presentation.
2. Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Meeting of October 19, 2010.

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

3. Review of Faculty Council’s e-mail approval of new and revised courses.

Professor Eakin, Chair of Faculty Council, explained that Council did not meet in November due to a lack of significant business, but Council approved by e-mail fourteen pages of new and revised courses. Professor John Weymark asked for a rationale for the trend among departments to increase the number of credits for graduate courses from three to four. Professor Eakin responded that these graduate seminars meet for three hours per week and require a substantial amount of work outside of class. Therefore, it would be more appropriate, according to this rationale, for students to receive four credits instead of three. There were no other questions or comments.

4. Original Motion Calendar.

No issues were raised.

5. Good of the College.

Dean Dever announced that the A&S faculty voted, by e-mail ballot, to rescind the AXLE version of Vanderbilt Visions and its associated two credits from the AXLE curriculum. The tally was 190 to 13.

6. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn H. Anderson,
Secretary of the Faculty