April 25, 2012

Report of the College Admissions Committee, 2012-2013
Gerald Stubbs, Chair

The Admissions Committee of the College of Arts and Science serves as liaison between the Dean and faculty of the College of Arts and Science and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. The committee has particular responsibility for the selection of candidates to be offered Honors scholarships.

The committee consisted of six faculty members and six previous honor scholarship winners from our current undergraduates – William J. Booth, Political Science; Laura Carpenter, Sociology; Bruce Hughes, Mathematics; Lorraine Lopez, English; David Petrain, Classical Studies; Gerald Stubbs, Biological Science, Chair; Jennifer Grasch; Helen Li; Tara Ramaswamy; John Tauscher; Robert Tauscher; and Michelle Wang. Committee members read and ranked the top one hundred twenty applications selected by the OUA from the pool of prospective students who sought admission to the College and completed the application for honors scholarships. The committee was divided into groups of three, and each committee member read and ranked thirty files. This year, for the first time, reading was online. Committee members attended a training session early in February, and met for orientation on February 18.

After reading the files, the committee met on February 28 and selected candidates to receive scholarship offers. Seventy of the one hundred and twenty prospective students ranked by the committee received scholarship offers from the College, with a goal of 30 acceptances.

On March 4 candidates were notified by a letter from Dean of Admissions/Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Doug Christiansen that they had been offered Cornelius Vanderbilt Scholarships. On March 5 follow-up e-mails and letters were sent from Associate Dean Russell McIntire on behalf of the College. During the spring semester approximately fifty of these candidates visited campus, where they met with Dean McIntire and previous honors scholarship winners. Many have been in additional contact with Dean McIntire by e-mail and phone. At the date of this report twenty students have accepted our scholarship offer, and we expect to reach our goal. Those who have declined so far have chosen to attend outstanding universities including Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Candidates have until May 1 to accept offers.

The online reading process was a bit slow and difficult this year, but it has the potential to make the Honors scholarship selection process much easier, and is expected to improve rapidly. Perhaps improvements might come from considering the ways in which national journals and grant organizations make manuscripts and grant applications available to reviewers.

The committee noted the great increase in the size of the pool of outstanding applicants in recent years. While the very best students are probably not better than in the past (because we have for many years attracted at least a few of the nation’s top high school graduates), it is gratifying to see how many more of these students are now applying to Vanderbilt.