Dean Carolyn Dever called the meeting to order at 4:14 p.m. in Wilson Hall 103. Approximately 60 faculty members were in attendance.

The faculty applauded Professor Carolyn Dever on her appointment as Dean of the College of Arts and Science.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Meeting of October 28, 2008.

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

2. Review of the Minutes of the Faculty Council Meeting of December 2, 2008.

There were no comments or questions.

3. Executive Motion Calendar.

From the Committee on Educational Programs (CEP): Proposed revision of the Physics and Astronomy major. There were no comments or questions, and the faculty approved the revision of the Physics and Astronomy major.

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

Associate Dean Marc Hetherington presented the Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award to Gregg Horowitz, Associate Professor of Philosophy.

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

Dean Hetherington presented the Outstanding Graduate Mentoring Award to Jon Kaas, Distinguished Centennial Professor of Psychology.

6. Original Motion Calendar.

Professor Mode moved, and the faculty approved, a motion to thank the members of the Dean’s Search Committee for their hard work and fine result and to congratulate Professor Carolyn Dever as the new Dean of the College of Arts and Science. The faculty applauded Dean Dever. Professor Damon remarked that the Search Committee and A&S are fortunate that Professor Dever has agreed to serve as Dean.

7. Good of the College.

Professor Ellingham asked Dean Dever for an update on Vanderbilt’s financial affairs. Dean Dever stated that she discussed Vanderbilt’s finances with department chairs and program directors last week and she hoped that they have been disseminating the news. As she explained
to them, she is optimistic about the state of Vanderbilt’s finances in the long term, but in the short term Vanderbilt must be careful with cash flow. Consequently, she is asking faculty members, departments, and academic programs to conserve as much cash as possible, which means that faculty members should think carefully about whether a proposed purchase or expense is absolutely necessary to the core educational mission of the university. If a proposed expense is needed for our core mission, Dean Dever urged faculty members to carefully consider it, whereas if the proposed expense is merely desirable, then she urged faculty members to postpone it. Faculty hiring will continue this year as planned, she continued, with the exception that departments will be encouraged to bring only two candidates to Nashville for on-campus interviews. Until further notice, however, tenured faculty members will be reimbursed for only one conference trip per academic year, there are strict limitations on entertainment expenses, and no funds are available for graduate student recruitment. Dean Dever emphasized that everyone’s assistance is needed to effectively manage Vanderbilt’s cash flow predicament and help safeguard Vanderbilt’s core educational mission.

In response to questions from faculty members, Dean Dever stated that the monetary value of Vanderbilt’s endowment has declined over the past year, but not as much as at other universities. Further, Vanderbilt, whose operating budget is primarily tuition-driven, is better off than many other institutions, like Harvard, whose budget is primarily endowment-driven. Rumors of layoffs at Vanderbilt have been circulating, but they have not been verified. If A&S becomes aware of such layoffs, then we could initiate a discussion about whether faculty members would be willing to help prevent them by taking pay cuts or forego salary increases. Faculty members, departments, and academic programs should plan their finances conservatively for next academic year, 2009-2010. Research funds come from the same pool of money as short-term financial obligations, like salaries and discretionary spending, so faculty members should manage them carefully and take into account commitments that have already been made. If faculty members are wondering if some of their research funds can be rolled over to next year, then they should discuss this matter with Associate Dean Sharon Buchanan.

8. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marshall C. Eakin,
Secretary of the Faculty