March 28, 2009

To:  Kassian Kovalcheck, Chair, A&S Faculty Council  
From:  Kathy L. Gaca, Chair of CASP  
Re:  Recommendations from the CASP meeting of March 16, 2009.  Present at the meeting were CASP members David Cliffel, Mark Ellingham, Kathy Gaca, Elizabeth Lunbeck, and Nancy Reisman.  William Fowler was absent.  Also in attendance were Associate Dean John Sloop and A&S Dean’s Office staff person Michael Muise.

Topic 1:  Delaying AXLE Vanderbilt Visions

CASP was asked to consider the AXLE Implementation Committee’s proposal to delay the implementation of the AXLE version of Vanderbilt Visions for two more years.  The AXLE version of Vanderbilt Visions was approved by the A&S faculty in February 2004 as part of the AXLE curriculum.  The A&S faculty delayed the implementation of the AXLE version of Vanderbilt Visions in April 2006 in order for it to be reconsidered in light of the development of The Commons and its version of Visions.

CASP unanimously supports delaying the implementation of the two one-hour pass/fail AXLE Vanderbilt Visions courses for two more years, but with a strong proviso that there be no further delay thereafter.  CASP thinks this position is advisable for the following reasons:

—The AXLE Curriculum as a whole is scheduled to undergo a comprehensive review next year by an A&S faculty committee.  Next year would thus be an ideal time for A&S to revisit the proposed role and function of AXLE Vanderbilt Visions.

—The Commons version of Vanderbilt Visions, which is not a part of AXLE, has already been instated and in some respects seems to be trying to accomplish some of the original goals of AXLE Visions.  Nonetheless, the Commons Visions program is not academic and at present seems mainly to focus on acculturating first-year students socially and culturally rather than broadening their horizons academically or stimulating them intellectually.  By contrast, the proposed but delayed version of AXLE Visions had a primary goal of broadening the students’ academic range of interests, stimulating their intellect, and encouraging them to develop their research skills.

—A delay of another two years is reasonable on economic grounds.  Implementing the two one-hour pass/fail AXLE courses now would add another significant cost to Vanderbilt’s budget.
—After two years, however, CASP strongly recommends that A&S should make a definite
decision about whether to implement, modify and implement, or rescind the AXLE Vanderbilt
Visions, for these courses are a planned part of the AXLE curriculum and should not remain in
limbo.