

To: The Members of the CEECH Working Group
From: Vice Provost Cynthia J. Cyrus
Date: 16 September 2015
Re: Response to Co-Curricular Engagement External to the College Halls Report of 22 April 2015

Dear CEECH Colleagues:

Since the CEECH report on “Co-Curricular Engagement External to the College Halls” was submitted in Spring 2015, much has transpired. I have reviewed your report and its recommendations both with the Resident Faculty group and subsequently with Office of Housing and Residential Education (OHARE) staff – with side conversations to the leaders of the Vanderbilt Student Government (VSG) and to Vanessa Beasley as the new Dean of the Commons. I then shared the report and recommendations with Provost Susan Wentz, and reviewed with her some of our constraints of budget and time. We take quite seriously your idea of the saturation point for programming, and agree that targeted programs are the best approach.

I am delighted to tell you that we have selected four of your recommendations to work on in the 2015-16 academic year, recommendations that I believe directly support and advance the undergraduate residential experience pillar of the strategic plan:

1. Co-curricular Fellows Program: These programs should capitalize on student interests and initiatives and provide incentives to participate, such as a certificate of accomplishment or other recognition. The idea is to develop learning communities that are not building-based that can bring students and faculty together to consider topics of interest (e.g. world politics, environmental sustainability, STEM success, food studies, etc.). Such programs should have trans-institutional appeal. This initiative is being coordinated by OHARE.

2. Co-curricular Supper Clubs: This proposal can be advanced by partnering with a VSG program that allows students to check out dining cards and take faculty to dinner. Dean of Students staff who advise VSG – Clayton Arrington and Courtney Salters – can help VSG develop themes for such dinner events and track participation as well as student-faculty response and satisfaction. VSG reports that they are enthusiastic about the opportunity to build out this program.

3. Extending Connections to First Year Houses: The new Dean of the Commons, Vanessa Beasley, is in an ideal position to explore with the Faculty Heads of House the possibility of fostering connections between upperclass students and their first-year houses; she and I have already talked about reaching out to Development and Alumni Relations to provide context with last year's Senior Class Gift process, which emphasized house affiliation.

4. Short-Term Faculty-in-Residence: As a pilot project over the next two academic years, OHARE is considering an apartment configuration for short-term occupation by faculty in Branscomb Quadrangle to facilitate engagement between faculty and students. (This idea emerged during discussion

of the CEECH report by the Resident Faculty and echoes ideas of the OHARE staff; it amplifies on the idea of hall affiliation for faculty that you cited on page 5 of the report, but has taken a slightly different form here.) Faculty will be involved in a series of activities and events designed to engage students within a particular residence hall, but open to all students on campus. (Options at Carmichael Towers and Highland Quad might also be considered if this program proves to be a success.)

In addition to piloting these programs, all four recommendations will be part of the assessment process by the Dean of Students office to determine their impact, long-term success, and financial viability.

I want to thank you again for your service on the CEECH Committee, and for considering so carefully those things that make our College Halls system successful and how those practices might impact campus more generally.

Yours,

Cynthia J. Cyrus

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