

CORRECTION

Correction: In Monday's issue of The Hustler, in the article headlined "ZTA recruitment set to occur this week" it was incorrectly claimed that the former Vanderbilt chapter of Delta Gamma had its charter revoked by the national organization, when in fact the chapter voluntarily voted to relinquish its charter.

Seminar taught in 'virtual classroom'

LAUREN KOENIG
STAFF REPORTER

Without ever leaving campus, Vanderbilt students can engage in a weekly seminar with top researchers and biology students across the country.

The upper-level biology course, entitled "Comparative Social Evolution," is a collaborative project put together by Vanderbilt's Dr. Patrick Abbot, Columbia University's Dr. Dustin Rubenstein, University of California, Berkeley's Dr. Eileen Lacy, and Arizona State University's Dr. Jennifer Fewell. These four instructors are part of an NSF-funded working group at the National Evolutionary Synthesis Center at Duke University.

While scheduling a convenient time for a course can often be a challenge, the professors involved in the seminar faced a more unusual concern — each participating school is located in a different time zone.

Abbot explained the origin of the professors' creative approach to designing the seminar.

"We were talking about how productive it would be to stay in touch and how we could collaborate more effectively if we use more than email. Out of this grew the idea of bringing our undergraduates together, either through some social networking site or Skype, and if we could be in our virtual classrooms together," he said.

The use of webcams and a software program similar to Skype allows for all four institutions to see and hear one another for two hours each week. Students from different universities may also have the opportunity to collaborate on projects with one another later in the semester.

Abbot explained that some of the main goals of the seminar are to address the "active nature of learning" and to "close a gap between a world of learning and research."

"The benefit for students is the opportunity to be exposed to the leading thinkers in a given field," said Abbot. "As you're discussing an idea or debating a topic presented by an expert at say, Berkeley, there's nothing that prevents us from asking that scholar. You can ask a question in real time."

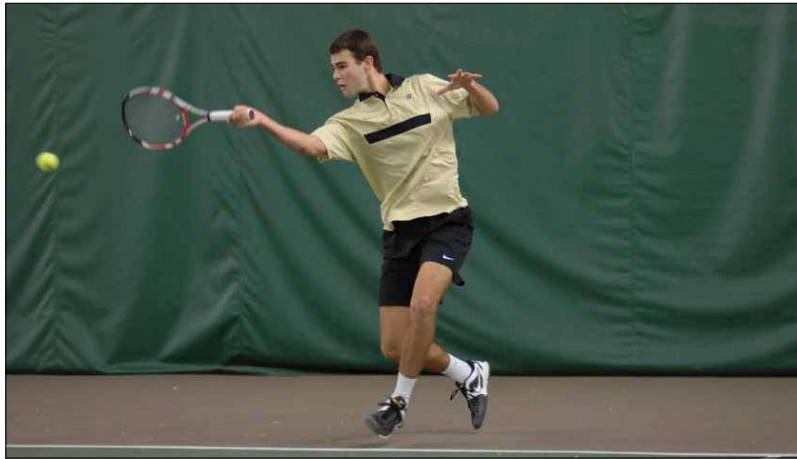
The eight Vanderbilt students in the seminar are close to evenly divided regarding their reasons for taking the class. While some enrolled in order to complete the major, others chose to take it because of their interest in the topic, or to better prepare for careers and graduate school.

"I have never taken a seminar before, but I can only guess that this course will provide a better learning experience because of the interactions with new students and professors," said senior Alexandra Hettena.

The benefits of the seminar don't apply only to students, however.

"It's also a good idea for the researchers," said Abbot. "It exposes them to wonderful Vanderbilt students." ★

Raiders blue after loss



Freshman Anton Kovrigin during the Vanderbilt-MTSU match Wednesday. The Commodores defeated MTSU 6-1.

BECK FRIEDMAN / THE VANDERBILT HUSTLER

Law school scholarships increasingly hard to obtain

GRACE AVILES
SENIOR PRODUCER

In the post-recession economy, the hardest part of law school isn't getting in — it's paying for it.

A New York Times article published last Spring revealed that many law school students who were offered scholarships in their first year were unable to maintain the scholarship, often paying full tuition their second and third years (if they remained enrolled at all).

Law school classes are often graded on a curve, so it would be mathematically impossible for, say, 60 percent of a first year class with scholarships to meet the criteria for renewal (often to be the top 50 percent of the class). Segal notes that law schools may be tempted to offer more scholarships than they plan on renewing in an effort to climb the U.S. News and World Report rankings.

While this is a phenomenon for potential law scholars to take careful note of, for those students lucky enough to be offered seats in Vanderbilt Law School's entering class, this is not something to be stressed. "We don't put stipulations or conditions on our scholarship offers, beyond that the student remain enrolled in the law school," Todd Morton, dean of admissions at VULS.

While internet chat rooms and boards geared towards prospective law students offer mixed advice about contacting a school to increase any scholarship offers (The U.S. News and World Report goes so far



DANIEL DUBOIS / KU MEDIA RELATIONS

as to advise "creating a bidding war over yourself"), Vanderbilt Law School does not revise its decisions on merit scholarships.

"Vanderbilt Law may have a little bit more money than other law schools, but it is still a finite amount," Morton said. "We look at our entering class and the funds we have available and make distributions we think will create the strongest class. We cannot negotiate with students for higher amounts as others schools might, because this would essentially mean taking money away from what we have offered someone else."

As for need-based aid, however, the law school has a more

flexible policy. "If a student's financial needs change, or they did not apply for need-based scholarships at the time scholarship decisions were made, we would encourage them to file the school's Need Access form, and would reevaluate at that time."

Ranked as the 16th Best Law School by U.S. News and World Report and 7th for "Best Career Prospects for Graduates" by the Princeton Review, Vanderbilt Law School boasts an entering class with a median GPA of 3.73 and a median LSAT score of 169 (the 97th percentile among test takers).

One tip Morton offers Vandy undergraduates to help their application stand out is to take

Many law students who begin school with merit scholarships find they cannot maintain their performance in the competitive environment.

advantage of the law school's optional interview process. "Vanderbilt is one of only two law schools in the country to offer alumni interviews to all of its applicants. It is optional, but highly recommended. Vandy undergraduates are in a particularly good position to take advantage of this opportunity being right in the area, and requests can usually be made from late August through the Dec. 1 deadline." ★

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