

GSF: Summer aid process needs adjustments in first year

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According to Assistant Provost for International Affairs Joel Harrington, the process was set up in two parts — a financial need assessment and a written application which consisted of a two-page essay in which students explained how studying abroad would help them develop as global citizens and why they could not study abroad during the school year, a current transcript, resume, proposed budget and letter of recommendation.

A committee of faculty members from all four undergraduate colleges ranked the applicants based on their responses, combining these scores with the compiled scores

of financial need to determine the final allotment of scholarship awards.

"It was an extremely fair and rigorous process, and generous considering the financial pressures on the university. We're about the only institution offering a scholarship for the summer; there's nothing like it. The scholarship shows Vanderbilt's strong commitment to study abroad," Harrington said.

The selection process, however, did differ slightly from Smith's original plan. The student representatives and applicant interviews, key components of the original proposal for the program, were not included in the review

process for reasons of personal and financial privacy, as well as time constraints, explained Dawn Turton, executive director of the Vanderbilt International Office.

Turton said the response to the Global Summer Fellows program was both unexpected and overwhelming. She said they had anticipated 40 to 50 applicants, but instead received 119. The sheer number of applications was a major factor in the committee's decision to not conduct interviews.

"It just became impossible," Turton said. "Just reading over the applications along with four committee members was quite an involved process." The committee decided that

interviews would only be held if a tiebreaker were necessary to choose between students with identical financial need and evaluation scores, a situation that did not occur.

She also said the committee made the decision to not include student representatives in the application review process because of the sensitive nature of the financial need information and some answers to the essay questions.

"Some of the things students put in their applications were incredibly personal," Turton said. "We didn't anticipate that. I could not envision a situation where a student would have written these things and have felt comfortable having other

students read them. Some of them were very moving, to the point of tears. It was a judgment call (to not include students on the committee)."

Turton, Harrington and Smith all agreed that the process could be reassessed to better prepare for the program's second year. Turton said they especially need to be better prepared to handle the unexpected, like the overwhelming number of applications as well as guarding against overly personal responses to allow for student representation on the selections committee.

"Any feedback we get is good feedback because it's the first year of the program," Turton said.

Each also said they were proud to be able to fund a summer abroad for 38 students who otherwise would have been unable to go, an effort Harrington and Turton said is unique to Vanderbilt.

"(The development of Global Summer Fellows) is my proudest accomplishment I've had in student government. It's also something we need to reassess going forward — look at the model, look at how it's carried out, and then track those outcomes from this summer, and then make recommendations for how it should be carried out going forward," Smith said. ■

Hannah Twillman contributed reporting to this article.

VISAGE: Students unable to study abroad despite informal assurances of aid

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"We were kind of out of the loop when the decisions would be made, how much funding would be given, how many people were going to apply and what qualified an individual to receive the money," he said.

After not receiving an award from Global Summer Fellows, junior Nick Williams is still unsure whether or not he will be able to travel to South Africa with the rest of his group in June. He said he thought there would be an interview component to the application process, which he had relied on to explain his unique financial situation — he must fund his trip entirely on his own.

"I was banking on an interview to explain myself," he said. "I know I'm not 'need-based' but if I don't get funding, I'm not going, and I'm already in VISAGE."

Several VISAGE students, including Williams, said they had thought it was implied that because they were already part of the program, adequate funding would be procured to allow them to go on the trip.

"It was implied that if you had need, it would be met. Nothing was guaranteed, but finances were not discussed in detail. It didn't seem like it would be the issue it has become," said first-year student Meryem Dede, who is another one of the four who cannot go to South Africa due to the lack of funding.

Dede said she felt the students were not given a realistic idea of the funding available.

"VISAGE is an award-winning program, which is why it is sad to see the program fall through the way it did — it is heartbreaking. I feel like the financial aid process has been opaque, and it should have been clear from the start. The severe lack of funding that Vanderbilt has to offer was understated. I know there was nothing guaranteed, but it seemed implied. It did not seem like it would be the issue it has become," Dede said.

Professor of History Marshall Eakin is leading a VISAGE trip to Nicaragua this summer; two of the eight students on his site did not receive necessary funding and will therefore not be traveling with the group. He said he agrees funding is an issue for the VISAGE program, but the amount and availability of funding was clear from the beginning.

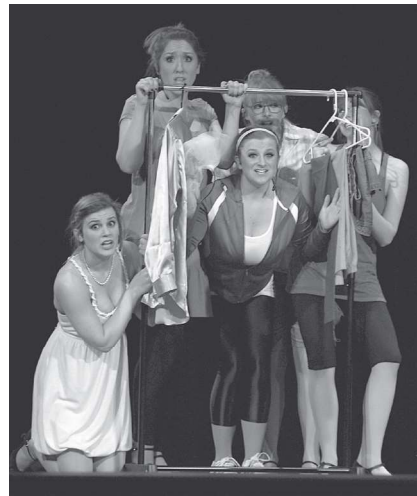
"I think part of the problem was the euphoria over having \$250,000 that was not there before, but nothing's guaranteed," Eakin said. "It may have felt like it was more of a sure thing than it was, and even though \$250,000 sounds like a lot, it only funds about 40 students."

Sawney said the university sent mixed messages about the accessibility of study abroad programs.

"They really push study abroad really hard and then you can't go if you can't afford it," he said.

Hayley Karlan contributed reporting to this article.

Original Cast is 'Good and Crazy People'



OLIVER WOLFE / The Vanderbilt Hustler

Vanderbilt's premiere Broadway group The Original Cast performs its show, "Good and Crazy People" April 10 and 11 at the Belcourt Theater, performing songs from "Legally Blonde the Musical," "Les Miserables," "Company" and "Grease."

Fraternity presidents vote for IFC change

by HANNAHTWILLMAN
News Editor

In one night of voting, the presidents of the Interfraternity Council fraternities adopted many of the tenets of the proposal submitted by the Delta Force nearly two weeks ago.

The task force of 10 IFC men had, after months of research and planning, proposed several changes to the recruitment process and other aspects of fraternity life.

The main theme of the proposed changes was a focus on encouraging different types of recruitment, including more alcohol-free rush events and a focus on community service. The most notable changes are the move to a formal recruitment process during the first week after winter break, no longer allowing first-year students to winter semi-formals and \$5,000 penalties for violations.

Nearly all of the aspects of the proposal were accepted by the presidents, with the exception of the \$5,000 fine for recruitment during finals, according to junior Jesse DeOms, the chair of the Delta Force and president of Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity.

Director of Greek Life Kristin Torrey said a couple other facets of the proposal were voted on as a concept and therefore will need to have some small amendments made to them, such as the Greek Legacy Fund and the publicity proposal.

Both DeOms and Torrey said they were pleased with the outcome of the vote on the task force's proposal. DeOms said he was impressed with the presidents' reactions.

"It was very clear that the presidents took it very seriously. They clearly took the time to understand all the proposals that were made," he said. "I'm glad everyone is on the same page, that's what we were working for."

Torrey said she believes the vote was a positive change for both the IFC and Greek communities.

"This is a good example of students making the right steps to create change for themselves on their own terms before the changes need to be made for them. I think that showed great courage in ending some traditions that have gone on here for a long time," Torrey said. "It was a vote of commitment to one another that they will do their best to hold themselves and their organizations accountable to the agreement they made as men in that room."

DeOms recognized that the acceptance of the proposal is only the first step in a longer process.

"It doesn't really stop here. Everything we talked about is going to take a lot of work to implement and be sure it's done right," he said. ■

Vanderbilt 'Tweets' financial aid advice

by LAUREN KOENIG
Senior Reporter

Users of social networking sites often forge the most unexpected connections with old friends and acquaintances. An even more unlikely connection was made between a university and a fictional character when Vanderbilt directly communicated on Twitter with Lyla Garrity, a character on NBC's TV show "Friday Night Lights."

The character's Twitter blog, a marketing ploy for the weekly show, allows fans to leave comments for Garrity and keep tabs on her life.

Garrity, currently a senior on the show about small-town life in Texas, dreams of attending Vanderbilt University. After her father loses her college savings in a bad investment, it seems Lyla has no option but to attend a more affordable state school.

Melanie Moran, associate director of Vanderbilt News Service, is the creator of Vanderbilt's Twitter account. She was watching the show on March 20 when she learned of Lyla's dilemma. Shortly afterward, Moran noticed that "LylaGarrity" was a frequent visitor to Vanderbilt's own Twitter account.

"I started using Twitter a little over a year ago after learning about its use for keeping up with breaking news," Moran said. "I created the Vanderbilt Twitter presence soon after to enable Twitter users interested in Vanderbilt to easily keep up with the university and to find new ways to interact with our various audiences."

Even though Garrity is not a real prospective student, Moran figured it would be interesting to alert Garrity of her financial options.

"I saw it as a good opportunity to share

information about our new expanded aid policy. It was an easy and fun way to get the word out about Vanderbilt to a niche audience," Moran said.

"Be sure to see Vanderbilt's new Expanded Financial Aid program — more help, no need-based loans," Moran wrote to Garrity on Vanderbilt's Twitter feed.

Garrity responded, "Thank you! The Financial Aid program looks exactly like what I need right now."

Moran, who watches Friday Night Lights occasionally, views the exchange as a kind of experiment.

"It's possible that some FNL fans who might not have been overly familiar with Vanderbilt might explore the university a little further. But, overall, I think it is just an entertaining twist to hear the university discussed in yet another popular medium," she said. ■

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