

October 30, 2006

The meeting held on September 8, 2006 on Life Sciences and Engineering was for us important and informative. We learned a great deal about the strategic opportunities ahead for us as well as the challenges we currently face. We are strongly of the view, based on the discussion at the meeting as well as the current strengths that we have at Vanderbilt, that we need to proceed to the next steps in charting our exciting future in this area. First, we have asked Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Education Dennis Hall and Associate Vice Chancellor for Research Jeff Balser to begin preliminary discussions on the nature, scope, and strategic design of a joint VUMC-VU building that would house what we would generally describe as our key efforts to bring engineering and technology together with the life sciences. We see this building as potentially housing an exciting and innovative program in biology, medicine, applied science, and engineering. We think it important that in discussing this new space we think broadly about engineering and its linkage in all respects to the life sciences. Hence, we have encouraged Dennis and Jeff to explore with the faculty strategic possibilities beyond just Biomedical Engineering. Second, we have also asked Dennis and Jeff to begin discussions about the nature of a new institutional structure or structures that would allow us include faculty in Departments, Centers or Institutes that would reflect the diverse interests and career paths of those in the School of Engineering and other applied areas *and* those in the School of Medicine. In short, we see our goal as allowing within one entity or multiple entities – be they Centers, Institutes, or Departments -- for the hiring, tenuring, and promotion of faculty using the procedures, standards, and expectations of *either* the School of Engineering or the School of Medicine. Central to this planning process and any ultimate investments will be for Vanderbilt to continue to pursue our “one University” strategy, and seek to identify across on our campus those areas where we are strong and can build unique and distinctive greatness in this important area.

Clearly much more work is ahead for us, including key issues of faculty recruiting, building exciting new graduate and undergraduate curricula and learning opportunities, and strategies that can come out of what promises to be an exciting new trans-institutional process.

Thanks for your participation. We look forward to making progress on these next steps and creating a world-class Life Sciences and Engineering program.

Best,

Harry Jacobson  
Vice-Chancellor for Health Affairs

and

Nicholas S. Zeppos  
Provost and Vice-Chancellor for  
Academic Affairs and Professor of Law