Peabody renovates to connect people and ideas.
High Standards

Special education was pioneered by Peabody College, and we continue to lead the field. Our graduates serve others with world-class knowledge and heartfelt commitment.

There is a reason that Vanderbilt, especially Peabody, is known as the ‘Gold Standard,’ because there is truly no place like it in the country. I feel honored to be a Commodore.

Sissy Peters
High Incidence Special Education, M.Ed. ’13
Program Manager
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Reading Clinic and Learning Assessment Clinic

Explore our 26 master’s and doctoral programs: vu.edu/explore-peabody
Strong Connection

The first phase of a $41 million, multibuilding construction project will unite the Home Ec and Mayborn buildings into a single structure, connecting a progressive past with a bright future.

Moving Higher Education Forward

A shift in dynamics, purpose and demographics is bringing change, once again, to publicly supported higher education.

Well Distinguished

Vanderbilt’s newest Distinguished Alumnus, H. Rodes Hart, BA’54, has been a stalwart Peabody leader and benefactor for 65 years.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Take a closer look at innovative research projects, recent findings and faculty honors.

Departments

From the Dean  2
Around the Mall  3
Peabody People  25, 29
Class Notes  30
In Memory  34
The sky threatened on a muggy afternoon in early September when about 150 of us gathered near the front steps of the Mayborn Building. I was hoping the bottom would not drop out, but the occasion was too important not to celebrate—and also long awaited. We were there to break ground on the first major renovations to the Mayborn and Home Economics buildings since they opened their doors to students in 1914, more than a century ago.

In this issue of The Peabody Reflector, I am excited to share our new vision for these historic structures—a vision that will see Mayborn and Home Ec revitalized to meet the needs of 21st-century learning, research and public engagement. Complementing the existing facilities will be a modern connector that will foster conversation and build community, while enabling access by people of all abilities to any floor of either building.

Educational access in the new century is the theme of another feature in this issue. Peabody’s faculty in higher education leadership and policy are deeply involved in the study of today’s postsecondary educational landscape. I am proud of this contingent of scholars, as well as our alumni who work in the field. They share a particular interest in understanding and overcoming barriers to college success and in enabling others to benefit from a system that is still one of America’s most enviable successes.

As usual, we also share some of our own successes, including the announcement of Rodes Hart as Vanderbilt’s Distinguished Alumnus. In the fall we celebrated 50 years of early childhood inclusive education at Peabody’s Susan Gray School, which continues to be a leader in modeling best practices and training future special educators and scholars. It is one of my personal favorite things about Peabody.

And you will find profiles, campus news and information of use in policy and practice.

As I write this, the Vanderbilt community is absorbing the news that Chancellor Zeppos will step down in August. He has been a powerful advocate for Peabody—including our new construction project—and his tenure has been marked by a vision of educational access and inclusion that are also historical Peabody values. We are grateful for his leadership.

Camilla Persson Benbow
Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development
Susan Gray School students participate in the Halloween Pumpkin Parade last October, trick-or-treating as they go from building to building at Peabody—an annual campus tradition.

Paws for safety: Meet Cpl. Lewis and community K-9 officer Jack

Shaneithia Lewis, a corporal with the Vanderbilt University Police Department, patrols her assigned zone each day with the mission of responding to calls; assisting students, faculty and staff; and keeping the campus safe. But she does so with a unique partner riding along.

Since September, Lewis has been partnered with Jack, a 2-year-old yellow Labrador retriever and the university’s first community K-9 officer. Unlike the K-9 Unit’s other three dogs, who are single-purpose explosive-detector canines performing bomb sweeps before large-scale university events, Jack is specifically trained to interact with people.

“He has ‘ask to pet’ on his vest,” Lewis notes. “When you see me, you can pet him.”

In addition to patrolling campus during her shifts, Lewis responds to invitations and seeks out opportunities for Jack to visit with community members. The goal is to provide comfort and affection to students, faculty and staff and aid in reducing anxieties in a variety of situations—such as during exam periods, stressful workdays, personal crises and more.

“Having Jack has allowed me to be more approachable,” says Cpl. Lewis. “It’s opened up more communication between me and the students, and I’m learning more from them.”
Peabody College is one of five Vanderbilt graduate schools selected to participate in the new Bass Military Scholars program. Starting this fall, the program will begin funding six scholarships annually at Vanderbilt for eligible active-duty military and veterans.

The program is funded by a $25 million gift from the Lee and Ramona Bass Foundation, providing financial aid and programming support at Peabody, the Owen Graduate School of Management, Vanderbilt Law School, Vanderbilt School of Medicine, and Vanderbilt School of Nursing. Once fully endowed, the Bass Military Scholars program is expected to support a cohort of 40 students annually among the five schools and colleges.

“Military veterans are among our country’s greatest resources, and Peabody offers national leadership in education and human development. The marriage of great talent and excellence in professional preparation will yield real benefits for society,” says Camilla P. Benbow, Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development.

“We are grateful to the Bass Foundation for making this possible.” says Gary H. Cheek, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant general with extensive experience mentoring and leading teams, and named director of the program in January and joined the university during the spring semester.

“This program not only will benefit veterans seeking advanced degrees, but will also allow them to impart their character, work ethic and mission focus into the rich and collaborative learning environment that exists at Vanderbilt. It is a classic win-win,” Cheek says. “I am deeply honored to lead this unique and important program, and look forward to working with faculty, students and administrators across the university to make Vanderbilt the premier destination for veterans—both officer and enlisted—seeking graduate and professional degrees.”

The program is designed to complement, not replace, other financial aid programs available to members of the military and veterans, including the Yellow Ribbon program.

Scholarship recipients across all five schools will meet regularly as a group. As they work toward completing their degrees, they will participate in service activities designed to foster military-civilian exchanges and mentorship opportunities within the broader Vanderbilt community.

This gift builds on the enduring commitment by Vanderbilt and the Lee and Ramona Bass Foundation to educate, support and celebrate military officers and veterans.

Blasingame makes most of student-athlete experience

Five-year team captain Khari Blasingame, BA’18, has made the most of his time on the Vanderbilt football team. The Huntsville, Alabama, standout arrived in Nashville as a linebacker in 2014 but switched to running back ahead of the 2016 season and has since thrived on offense, rushing for 596 yards during the past two seasons. Last fall he was part of a deep crop of rushers for the Commodores and accounted for 401 yards and five touchdowns, helping lead the team to the Academy Sports + Outdoors Texas Bowl in December.

But these stats reveal just a part of who Blasingame is. What he’s accomplished off the field is perhaps even more impressive.

Having graduated in May 2018 with a degree in medicine, health and society from Vanderbilt’s College of Arts and Science, Blasingame is currently working toward a master’s in leadership and organizational performance at Peabody. A four-time Dean’s List honoree, he was named to the College Sports Information Directors of America Academic All-District Team last summer and also nominated for the 2018 Allstate Good Works Team for his philanthropic efforts, including service as a mentor for first-year minority students at Vanderbilt through Project I Am. He was recipient of the Riley Scholarship for Peabody College.

“You come to Vanderbilt for the combination of elite academics and athletics,” Blasingame says. “Your scholarship is an opportunity to compete in football and earn a world-class degree. Wherever you are, you always want to excel, on the field or in the classroom.”

In April, Blasingame was announced as this year’s male Arthur Ashe Jr. Sports Scholar by Diverse Issues in Higher Education magazine. The distinguished honor recognizes student athletes who excel in the classroom and are active in their communities and campuses.

Blasingame has managed to balance life as an SEC student-athlete with an eye toward his future. As part of Vanderbilt Athletics’ comprehensive internship program, he has held internships with Nashville General Hospital and MediCopy, a company that oversees secure delivery of health care information. One day he hopes to become CEO of a health care system, putting his all-encompassing Vanderbilt experience to good use.

“You learn the importance of having priorities and being disciplined,” he says of his time at the university. “It’s a marathon, not a sprint. At Vanderbilt you learn to persevere and keep working hard.”

Watch a video about Blasingame at vu.edu/khari
Three Peabody undergraduates will have the opportunity to study internationally after winning a fellowship and scholarships with a global focus.

Peabody senior Javan Latson, a human and organizational development major, has been awarded a Pickering Fellowship for 2019. Junior Mary E. Tezak, majoring in cognitive studies at Peabody and in history in the College of Arts and Science, has been named a Boren Scholarship recipient. Sam Stollenwerck, a Curb Scholar and senior studying economics in the College of Arts and Science, has been named a finalist for the Schwarzman Scholarship.

Funded by the U.S. Department of State, the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship Program prepares outstanding students for careers in the U.S. Foreign Service through financial support for graduate school, mentoring, and targeted professional development opportunities, including two internships. As a Pickering Fellow, Latson, who is from Ocala, Florida, will complete a graduate degree and both a domestic and overseas internship before serving as a U.S. diplomat. Through Vanderbilt’s Office of Active Citizenship and Service and as a recipient of a Nichols Humanitarian Fund award, he has participated in a global service program in Morocco, a six-week comprehensive service-learning experience that immersed him in Moroccan culture and society while serving with locally run organizations.

As a Boren Scholar, Tezak, who is from Denver, will study Arabic in Amman, Jordan, followed by an internship with the Public Affairs and Political and Economic sections at the U.S. Embassy in Cyprus. Tezak will return to Vanderbilt for her senior year and complete an honors thesis with the Department of History. She is a member of Project Bridges, an organization through which students teach English to Nashville-area refugees and immigrants. Tezak also has interned with Vanderbilt alumna and political science lecturer Samar Ali, BS’03, JD’06, on the American Muslims for Us All campaign, facilitating conversations about what it means to be an American in an increasingly polarized political climate.

The Schwarzman Scholarship funds a global affairs master’s program at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Stollenwerck, who is from Dallas, has spent his summers in the Asia-Pacific region studying the relationship between free-trade agreements and consumption of protein-rich foods. This research formed the basis of his presentation at this year’s Undergraduate Research Fair, sponsored by the Office of Immersion Resources, the Vanderbilt Undergraduate Summer Research Program and the Littlejohn family. Stollenwerck plans to attend law school after graduation.
School for Science and Math students place in national competition

Three members of the School for Science and Math at Vanderbilt’s senior class were named semifinalists in this year’s Regeneron Science Talent Search.

Two students attend Nashville’s Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet High School, and one is a student at Hume–Fogg Academic Magnet High School. All received $2,000 prizes, and matching awards will be sent to their high schools.

Julia An at MLK completed her project, “Identification and Characterization of Helicobacter Pylori Genes Regulating DNA Translocation and TLR9 Activation by the Cancer-Associated cag Type IV Secretion System,” with Dr. Richard Peek Jr., the Mina Cobb Wallace Professor of Immunology and director of the Division of Gastroenterology in the Department of Medicine.

Ella Halbert at Hume–Fogg completed her project, “Temperature and Infection Modulate Mosquito Cellular Immunity in an Age-Dependent Manner,” with Julian Hillyer, associate professor of biological sciences.

Samuel Lee at MLK completed his project, “Investigating Upregulated Genes Contributing to the Survival of H. pylori Under Host-Induced Oxidative Stress,” with Holly M. Algood, associate professor of medicine and of pathology, microbiology and immunology in the Department of Medicine.

The Regeneron Science Talent Search, founded and produced by the Society for Science and the Public, is a premier precollegiate science competition that began in 1942. This year 1,964 applications were received, and only 300 were selected as semifinalists, including four from Tennessee. In January, 40 finalists were invited to Washington, D.C., to compete for the top prize.

The School for Science and Math at Vanderbilt is a joint venture between Vanderbilt’s Peabody College and Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools and offers high school students an interdisciplinary, research-centered learning experience. SSMV students competing in this year’s competition are members of the program’s Class of 2019. This class of students will be the eighth to graduate from the program.
The Iris Café at the Peabody Library awaits students to populate its terrace as the weather warms. The Peabody Library will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2019 with a birthday party and other events. More information soon will be posted on the library’s website at vu.edu/peabody-library.
Featured on the cover of Paul Conkin’s history of Peabody College is a wide-angle, black-and-white photograph of a multitude assembled in front of two stately brick buildings adorned with classical columns. The group is bunched together and dressed as if going to church on a summer Sunday, with some of the women holding parasols to create small islands of shade.

In that summer of 1914, the students and faculty of George Peabody College for Teachers weren’t just posed in front of the two buildings, Home Economics and Industrial Arts (rechristened Mayborn Hall in the 1970s). They were gathered there because of them. The brand-new structures, where classes had begun after Memorial Day, were the first to be completed on Peabody’s relocated campus across 21st Avenue from Vanderbilt.

The school’s leadership was so intimately involved with the design of the buildings that board members “voted on the exact shade of bricks and were bitterly disappointed when the bricklayers at first used a slightly wider mortar than the plan stipulated,” according to Conkin, MA’53, PhD’57, Distinguished Professor of History, Emeritus.

Although the summer day captured in the photo has long since passed, the buildings have retained the same elegant exteriors since their doors first opened a few months shy of the Great War’s commencement in Europe. At the same time, however, the interior has not changed much.

**A visionary renovation of two iconic Peabody buildings links the college’s progressive past with a bright future**
since then, either. That has become a problem.
The facilities—originally designed to provide a progressive education in 1914—gradually became as outmoded as the concepts of home economics and industrial arts themselves. The hum of window-unit air conditioners and the clanking of steam radiators may have provided a shared experience for students who attended Peabody decades apart, but today they have become hallmarks of facilities acutely in need of upgrades.

In September, Peabody broke ground on the first phase of a $41 million, multibuilding construction project to renovate Mayborn Hall and the Home Economics Building. The two buildings will be united into a single structure, connected by a glimmering, 15,000-square-foot glass-and-steel enclosure that itself will provide new resources for the Peabody community.

Camilla P. Benbow, Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development, sees the connector not just as a bridge between buildings but one between Peabody’s past and future. “We are all becoming, all evolving,” Benbow says. “With that modern connector, we are honoring our past—which still influences us today—without being stuck in it. The environment it will create will allow all of us to connect, too.”

Making connections, in fact, will be a theme that runs throughout the soon-to-be conjoined structure. The main corridors aren’t meant solely to facilitate foot traffic; they will contain sitting areas that invite people to linger, talk and share ideas. There will also be a café—a popular idea among students as plans were being designed—that promotes the kind of informal gatherings that weren’t possible in these buildings before.

“You don’t think great thoughts in isolation. You talk about them,” Benbow says. “We wanted to be sure that this renovation provides a sense of community, giving students physical spaces to gather and reflect on what they have just learned and experienced. If you’re a faculty member, you’re also still learning. You want to be together with your peers in spaces that foster dialogue and spark new ideas. So we built all of that in.”
In addition to a financial commitment from the university, the project was made possible by a gift from the New Orleans-based Lupin Foundation. “One of our areas of focus is higher education,” says health-care attorney Louis Lupin, a director of the foundation. “To be able to restore and put a modern touch on these two historic buildings is gratifying.”

When it opens in early 2020, the new complex will serve as the front door to the Peabody campus—a building that will welcome students and visitors from around the world. It will be home to the Department of Human and Organizational Development, the second largest undergraduate major at Vanderbilt. (HOD classes are currently being held in the old Sony Music building on 18th Avenue.) And for the first time, research areas for faculty and flexible project spaces will be provided.

Redesigned classroom space will accommodate advanced technology that engages students more directly as participants. Digital observation spaces will allow teacher interaction in ways not possible before, and there will be new event spaces and even a new makerspace to promote entrepreneurship and innovation. “We have faculty who are all about STEM education who need space to run their projects,” says Janet Walker Roberts, Peabody facilities manager. “They can see how students learn by using technology. The makerspace will support that activity and is also part of our orientation toward the larger community.”

Flexibility will be another hallmark of the new complex. Roberts explains the needs of the school 100 years ago were very different—and “it’s hard to anticipate what the needs will be 100 years from now,” she adds. Flexible spaces will help. At the request of professors, most classroom furnishings will be moveable and modular. New research spaces, which can be reserved as needed across departments and projects rather than permanently assigned, reflect the transdisciplinary nature of much of the scholarly work at Peabody today. “We just didn’t have spaces like that before,” Roberts says.

The project also will remediate Peabody’s long-standing barriers to accessibility—a situation Benbow says has defied Peabody’s commitment to breaking down walls to human fulfillment. The elevator in Mayborn malfunctioned frequently, and Home Economics offered only stairs. “One of our faculty members is in a wheelchair,” Benbow points out. “This was a big deal.” Now, a new elevator in the connector will take users reliably to any floor in the complex.

Paul Marshall, an architect with Vanderbilt’s Campus Planning and Construction, says the idea behind the renovation and construction was to build something that would neither attempt to replicate the style and materials of the two historic structures—a formidable challenge in his estimation—not to compete with them. Rather, the idea is “to let you see, touch and celebrate their architectural character and beauty,” he says. “From the inside, you’ll be able to go up to the third floor and put your hands on brick that no one has touched for 100 years.”
For a school whose history is closely tied with nature and agriculture, it’s only fitting that the Peabody project has an intense focus on green technology and sustainability. The effort goes far beyond energy efficiency. It involves a holistic approach to the well-being of the people who will use these facilities. “Sustainability,” Marshall says, “covers everything from the transportation plan to recycling to how to turn the lights on and off.”

The new complex also will be the first structure at Vanderbilt aimed at achieving Petal Certification under the Living Building Challenge—a green building and sustainable design for structures that, as Marshall puts it, “give more than they take.” This includes things such as the ways the buildings use water, energy and materials, as well as how they contribute to equity, aesthetics, and the health and happiness of their occupants. These performance areas are called “Petals” because, as Marshall explains, “a flower exists in harmony with its place and takes care of its waste on site.”

To meet Petal standards, the project will avoid using environmentally unfriendly “red list” materials and chemicals.
Moving Higher Education Forward

Peabody faculty members and alumni are helping align publicly supported higher education to meet 21st-century needs

BY WHITNEY WEEKS, BA’94
Throughout American history, shifts in publicly supported higher education often have reflected broader changes in the country itself. President Abraham Lincoln first signed legislation in 1862, amid the Civil War, granting federal land to states to help expand agricultural and mechanical studies. That support helped usher in Land Grant colleges and the vast economic and industrial expansion that followed a generation later.

Similarly, the GI Bill in the wake of World War II—and later, massive government research spending connected to the Cold War—spurred a “golden age” for American universities and industries extending well into the 1980s. That, in turn, gave rise to a widely educated and prosperous U.S. middle class.

Today, publicly supported higher education is once again changing. The college student of past eras is now anything but typical. An influx of older, more diverse Americans across a broad socioeconomic spectrum—many of them going to school while holding down full-time jobs—are among those most in pursuit of college degrees. At the same time that higher education demographics are shifting, states have curtailed their support for these institutions, leaving many students and their families responsible for a larger portion of postsecondary education costs than ever before.

Christopher Loss, Peabody associate professor of public policy and higher education, studies the history of education policy and describes the current state of higher education this way: “It is a 19th-century system relying on 20th-century policies to operate in the 21st century.” Nevertheless, Loss says, higher education has changed and adapted over time. “And we shouldn’t believe it won’t continue to do so.”

Some of the leading efforts to understand the changing nature of public higher education, and implement policies to address those shifts, are being directed by Peabody faculty and alumni.

From Civic Good to Economic Survival

Brent Evans, assistant professor of higher education and public policy, whose research focuses on factors related to college access and student success, points out that lawmakers once centered their attention on the public gains that could be realized by widening access to higher education. “The message was that college-educated people made better health care decisions, were more likely to vote, and were prepared to be better civic leaders,” Evans says. As such, funding state-supported higher education became a priority.

During the past several decades, however, state funding for higher education has been crowded out by more pressing needs. According to a report issued last fall by the Deloitte Center for Higher Education Excellence, spending for higher education accounted for about 9 percent of state budgets in 2014, down from 15 percent in 1990. Instead, states have significantly increased spending on Medicaid and the criminal justice system, the Deloitte report says.

Beyond simple funding allocations, however, attitudes about the role of publicly supported higher education have shifted, Evans points out. “Today’s message is definitely one geared more toward a private market return versus a benefit to the overall society.”

In part, that change has been driven by lawmakers themselves, who justify higher-education spending to attract employers in search of a skilled workforce. The increasingly career-focused nature of public higher education should not be dismissed, says Angela Boatman, assistant professor of higher education and public policy, whose work examines remedial education and college degree completion.

The current state of higher education “is a 19th-century system relying on 20th-century policies to operate in the 21st century.”

—Professor Christopher Loss
With a historically low unemployment rate for workers with a bachelor’s degree or higher—currently hovering around 2 percent—a postsecondary education offers protection in a rapidly moving economy. “A college degree provides graduates with the ability to be nimble and adaptive as society, the labor market and the economy change over time,” Boatman says.

While record numbers of students have enrolled in postsecondary institutions in recent years—although those numbers have cooled somewhat with the strong economy—just over half of those go on to complete a degree, often leaving students mired in debt and no better off than before, and sometimes even worse. Evans and Boatman point to two key issues impeding completion rates: financial access and inadequate academic preparation.

Research shows that people who complete a college degree typically pay off their loans, Evans says. For those who take on debt, but do not finish, the economic consequences tend to be far more negative, both for the individuals themselves and the economy as a whole. In the first quarter of 2018, for example, levels of U.S. student-loan debt hit a new high of $1.5 trillion, worrying lawmakers and others if a substantial portion of it cannot be repaid.

For Evans the bottom line is this: “Not everyone should borrow to go to college. We have to make sure people—future students—have an accurate assessment of whether or not they can afford to take out loans.”

Despite the potential debt risk, the availability of student loans has made more postsecondary educational opportunities possible for students. That doesn’t necessarily mean all students are academically ready for college, however. Boatman says it’s critical that states work to prepare students to be successful in their college-level courses beginning in high school, through high school-level interventions and better alignment of K–12 curricula and standards with higher education systems.

Boatman points to intervention programs like Tennessee’s Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program, which identifies students struggling with math in 11th grade and offers a remedial course during 12th grade designated to address these gaps in knowledge. Programs like this help reduce the need for college-level remediation, which often delays student progress and costs students, families and schools more money.

Boatman also notes that college students today are no longer a homogeneous group. Policy decisions have helped diversify college classes by gender, race and socioeconomic status. “We must ensure that the programs and policies we develop and implement not only help students to earn degrees, but also work intentionally to shrink gaps in opportunity and attainment by race and socioeconomic status,” she says. “Otherwise we’re perpetuating a failure in our education pipeline that we should not accept.”

Levels of U.S. student-loan debt have hit a new high of $1.5 trillion, worrying lawmakers and others if a substantial portion of it cannot be repaid.
a program called “Drive to 55,” an ecosystem focused on student achievement and employer needs. One area the state has focused on recently is helping Tennessee adults with some college experience to complete their degrees.

“Tennessee simply can’t reach its attainment of goals without reaching beyond traditional 18-year-old freshmen and also engaging with adult learners,” Krause says. “The national conversation building right now makes clear that the nontraditional students have actually become the typical students.”

Nearly 20 states now emulate Tennessee by providing programs that ensure free community college access to residents. One of the most recent is New Jersey, where the Community College Opportunity Grant Program launched in January 2019.

At the helm of that program implementation is Zakiya Smith Ellis, BS’06, who received the Vanderbilt Alumni Association’s 2017 Young Professional Achievement Award. A former education policy adviser in the Obama administration, Smith Ellis was named New Jersey’s secretary of higher education in 2018.

Under New Jersey’s Community College Opportunity Grant Program, students who earn less than $45,000 in annual income are eligible for support that covers tuition and fees. Unlike most college promise programs, New Jersey’s covers part-time students, many of whom are working adult learners.

“For years politicians and higher-education officials have said we’re going to make college more affordable. We have done some things, but not enough. It was time for us to embrace free community college as a radical solution,” Smith Ellis says. “Employers want to locate where there is a highly educated workforce. At 50 percent, our state has a higher share of college graduates per capita than any other state, but we need to do more to continue being attractive to employers and to make good opportunities available for our residents.”

Will efforts like those being tested in Tennessee, New Jersey, and in states across the country help make higher education more relevant for students, employers and local communities? Boatman says it’s always a challenge to match large-scale policies with the real-life ways people experience them.

“But understanding students’ actual lived experiences,” she says, “will help us design policies that meet real needs and make the most impact on people’s lives. There is no more important work we can do than that.”

Whitney Weeks, BA’94, is founder and principal of Whitney Works, a national boutique consulting firm. Formerly, she was an executive at both the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce and the Vanderbilt Center for Nashville Studies.

Zakiya Smith Ellis, BS’06, is New Jersey secretary of higher education. Her office recently launched a statewide initiative similar to Tennessee Promise, allowing state residents to attend community college tuition-free.

“Tennessee simply can’t reach its attainment of goals without reaching beyond traditional 18-year-old freshmen and also engaging with adult learners,” Krause says. “The national conversation building right now makes clear that the nontraditional students have actually become the typical students.”

—Mike Krause

Vanderbilt’s Bold Promise to Students

The impact of student-loan debt is a concern not only for public institutions, but for private as well. Ten years ago—just as the nation entered the Great Recession—Vanderbilt took a bold step in implementing Opportunity Vanderbilt, promising to meet the financial needs of every undergraduate by replacing student loans with grants and scholarships, and eliminating income limits to qualify for aid.

Since that time more than 10,000 Vanderbilt students have benefited from Opportunity Vanderbilt, ensuring that Vanderbilt’s world-class education is accessible to students regardless of their economic circumstances. Today more than 65 percent of all undergraduates receive financial assistance, and the number of students taking out need-based loans has dropped more than 70 percent.

Learn more about the impact of Opportunity Vanderbilt’s first decade at vu.edu/oppvu-ten.
Well Distinguished

H. Rodes Hart, BA’54, named 2018 Vanderbilt Distinguished Alumnus

BY MATT ANDERSON

The Vanderbilt Alumni Association has named H. Rodes Hart, BA’54, as recipient of the 2018 Vanderbilt University Distinguished Alumnus Award. The honor is the highest bestowed upon a member of the university’s alumni community.

An extraordinary leader and philanthropist, Hart has helped position the university’s impact on society through education and has contributed to Vanderbilt’s ascendance among the nation’s elite universities.

“For more than 30 years, Rodes Hart’s vision and philanthropy have propelled the university forward, dramatically impacting our ability to fulfill our mission of teaching, research and service,” Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos says. “We are deeply grateful for his leadership and congratulate him on this well-deserved recognition.”

“I have had the wonderful opportunity to get to know Rodes recently and am proud to call him both a mentor and a friend,” says Steven Madden, BS’91, member of the Vanderbilt Board of Trust. “He has remarkable vision, and the passion both he and Patricia have for giving back to Vanderbilt and the Nashville community is inspiring.”

Hart’s strong leadership helped steer the university through two historic transitions. As a member of the former George Peabody College for Teachers Board of Trust from 1967 to 1979, he played an integral role in the successful merger of Vanderbilt and Peabody College. He then served until 2011 on the Vanderbilt Board of Trust, for which he sat on its Audit, Budget, Investment, Public and Government Relations, Medical Center Board, Buildings and Grounds, and Executive committees.

From 2008 to 2011, he was chair of the highly successful Shape the Future Campaign, which raised a record $1.94 billion to further Vanderbilt’s missions of education and discovery.

Hart’s leadership is matched by his tremendous generosity. He has been a driving force behind Peabody’s service to society through education and human development. With a deep belief in the importance of a world-class faculty, he and his wife, Patricia Hart, BA’57, have endowed numerous faculty chairs, positioning Vanderbilt to attract and retain the best possible talent. They also have created scholarships that have helped the university recruit the most talented and diverse students. Peabody’s reputation as one of the nation’s premier colleges for preparing teachers and leaders is, in many ways, due to the Harts’ generosity and partnership.

“From recruiting top faculty to increasing educational opportunities for children, Rodes’ leadership and philanthropy have helped Vanderbilt shape education on a national and international level, and many lives have been improved,” says Madden. “He inspires me to build on his legacy as we look toward the university’s bright future.”

The Harts are also stalwarts in the Nashville community. Their passion for the arts and numerous nonprofit organizations is visible throughout the city and has contributed significantly to its enhanced national reputation.

Hart was CEO of Franklin Industries for 51 years before selling the company in 2006. He is now principal of HSD Holdings. The Harts live in Brentwood, Tennessee, and have three children: Rodes Jr., BA’83; Kevin and Patti. They also have 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Matt Anderson is director of alumni communications in Vanderbilt’s Office of Development and Alumni Relations Communications.

“Rodes Hart’s vision and philanthropy have propelled the university forward, dramatically impacting our ability to fulfill our mission of teaching, research and service.”

— Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos

Left to right: Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos, Hart, Peabody Dean Camilla Benbow, and Vanderbilt Trustee Steven Madden Sr., BS’91

Hart (standing, far right) with members of Peabody College’s Board of Trust in the late 1960s
Vanderbilt Peabody College’s mission is to enhance the human condition, with a particular focus on children’s learning and development. Working across a breadth of social science disciplines, the college’s faculty successfully addresses pressing social problems in local, national and international contexts. Peabody is further defined by its engagement with educators, organizational leaders and policymakers, and by its commitment to translating discoveries into practice—ideas into action.

Read more at vu.edu/ideasinaction
Findings

Immigrant children in ‘tender age shelters’ at risk for psychological difficulties

Separating immigrant children from their parents is very likely to lead to negative effects on emotional and mental health, according to an invited paper in *The Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology* by Kathryn L. Humphreys, BS'05, assistant professor of psychology and human development.

“Recent changes in the U.S. immigration system have resulted in a large number of children removed from their parents, drawing increased scrutiny to this abhorrent practice,” Humphreys says. “Exposing children to such high levels of stress puts them at an elevated risk for psychopathology in the future, including depression and anxiety, aggressive behaviors, attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorder, attachment disorders, language deficits and social difficulties.”

The youngest of these children, who have been detained in so-called “tender age” shelters, may be the most vulnerable to the stress of separation, according to Humphreys’ recent study published by *Developmental Science*. She finds that children who experienced stressful or traumatic experiences in their earliest years—birth to age 5—were found to have reduced hippocampal volume when they reached adolescence. Reduced HV is associated with memory issues, learning difficulties and depression.

“Many members of the lay public, public officials and even scientists perpetrate a pernicious belief that if children cannot remember something, it does not affect them. Our research shows this could not be further from the truth,” Humphreys says.

Learn more at vu.edu/tender-age-shelters

Online remediation got students to college math sooner, but didn’t improve their achievement

More than a third of community college entrants nationally are required to take remedial courses, which can delay their progress toward completing a degree. The state of Tennessee sought to resolve this challenge by developing an online remedial math course that students could begin taking during their senior year in high school.

Peabody’s Angela Boatman, assistant professor of public policy and higher education, working with researchers at Harvard University’s Center for Education Policy Research, conducted an evaluation of Tennessee’s Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program.

They found that although SAILS successfully eliminated students’ delay in entering college-level courses, the program did not improve students’ math achievement nor boost their likelihood of passing college math. The program did, however, have a positive effect on credit accumulation by the end of students’ second year in college. Also significant, SAILS improved students’ perception of the usefulness and enjoyment of math.

Learn more at vu.edu/sails-report
Principals and districts benefit when principal supervisors focus on mentoring

A recent report details five key components that can reshape the role of principal supervisors to help them become more effective instructional leaders. “A New Role Emerges for Principal Supervisors: Evidence from Six Districts in the Principal Supervisor Initiative” showcases the implementation efforts of six large, urban school districts. Each district changed the job descriptions and restructured central offices so that principal supervisors could step away from operational, administrative and compliance tasks to coach, mentor and advise principals.

“Executive coaching is prevalent in high-performing organizations, but it’s not typically done in school districts,” says lead investigator Ellen Goldring, Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy. “After three years we saw substantial change in all districts. They came up with efficient and effective ways to position supervisors so they could fill the coaching and supporting gap.”

The report presents the results of the first of three studies under The Wallace Foundation’s Principal Supervisor Initiative, a four-year, $24 million effort undertaken by Vanderbilt and contracted by Mathematica Policy Research.

Learn more at vu.edu/supported-principals

Racial isolation affects teachers of color in Tennessee

A new brief from the Tennessee Education Research Alliance finds that teachers of color are more likely to transfer schools than white teachers, especially when they are racially isolated.

Jason A. Grissom, associate professor of public policy and education, together with Vanderbilt doctoral students Brendan Bartanen and Ashley Jones, examined patterns of turnover among black and white teachers in Tennessee using school data from the 2011–12 to 2015–16 school years.

The researchers looked at a number of school and environmental characteristics that could account for the turnover differences observed between the two groups. Chief among them, they found that black teachers leave their schools at greater rates when the composition of the schools’ staff is less diverse. In addition, the race of the principal is associated with retaining teachers of color.

“Our findings show important nuances in turnover differences among black and white teachers that can point us toward some useful strategies for increasing teacher diversity in Tennessee,” Grissom says.

This brief is the first in a new series TERA will be releasing about educator diversity in Tennessee.

Download the TERA brief at vu.edu/labor-market

Effective principals see lower turnover of high-performing teachers

Principals with higher performance ratings are much more likely to retain higher-performing teachers and move out low performers, according to a study by Jason A. Grissom, associate professor of public policy and education and faculty director of the Tennessee Education Research Alliance. The study was published in the American Educational Research Journal.

Grissom and doctoral candidate Brendan Bartanen evaluated data from Tennessee, which collects multiple measures of principal and teacher performance.

“We find that under highly rated principals, teachers who score higher on multiple performance measures are more likely to stay than [those who work] under lower-rated principals,” says Grissom. “By contrast, teachers who receive the lowest classroom observation scores leave at substantially higher rates under an effective principal, regardless of whether they have high or low value-added scores.”

The researchers found that the principals relied on their formal observations of teachers when making strategic retention decisions, and used informal means, such as “counseling out,” to remove the low performers.

Learn more at vu.edu/lower-turnover
Investigations

KidTalk begins clinical trial

Researchers in the Vanderbilt KidTalk Lab and two other universities are conducting a clinical trial of an intervention for young children with language delays in a study funded by the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. The $6.3 million award will span five years, and the project will enroll 108 children and their caregivers across the sites.

“We are evaluating the effects of Enhanced Milieu Teaching-Sentence Focus,” says Ann Kaiser, principal investigator of the Vanderbilt KidTalk study site and Susan W. Gray Professor of Education and Human Development. “This is an early language intervention carried out by parents and therapists during play and everyday home activities.”

The intervention spans the critical period in development from 30 to 46 months when children are rapidly expanding their vocabulary and transitioning into using sentences.

“Based on previous research, we know that toddlers who are delayed in both producing and understanding language are at high risk for persistent developmental language disorders,” says Kaiser, who also is a professor of special education. “We expect that this longer-term intervention focusing on early sentence development will be more effective than community-based early intervention in closing the gap between children with early language delays and their typically developing peers.”

Learn more at vu.edu/kidtalk-trial

Vanderbilt earns $6.6 million in special education training grants

Members of Peabody College’s Department of Special Education recently have received five grants totaling $6.6 million from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs. The new OSEP training grants will focus on preparing master’s and doctoral students to work with children with disabilities. The grants are:

1. **Project BASE**, which will train intervention specialists and school counselors to work as a team to design and carry out effective practices for students with disabilities who have high-intensity needs.

2. **Interdisciplinary, Evidence-Based Approaches to Educating Students with Severe Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs**, which will train master’s candidates in the nature, causes and outcomes of various severe disability conditions and in evidence-based interventions to improve the outcomes for students with autism or severe disabilities.

3. **Preparing Leaders in Special Education to Meet the Intensive Needs of Students with Complex Learning Disabilities**, which will train future faculty who can prepare special educators in assessments and interventions for children with complex learning disabilities.

4. **Junior Colleague Approach for Preparing Leaders to Improve Social and Behavioral Outcomes for Young Children with Disabilities**, which will prepare doctoral students as researchers, scholars and higher education leaders in early childhood special education and early intervention.

5. **DBI by Design: A Design Thinking Approach to Enhance Educators’ Use of Data-Based Individualization to Improve Literacy Skills of Students with Intellectual Disability**, which will establish a model demonstration project in four school districts to improve academic outcomes of students with intellectual disability by providing ongoing professional development and coaching.

Learn more at vu.edu/training-grants
**Novel reading curriculum funded**

The Spencer Foundation has awarded a $1 million grant to Vanderbilt language and literacy researchers who are developing teaching methods for teachers of immigrant students. Recipients of the Lyle Spencer Research Award are Robert Jiménez, professor of language, literacy and culture; and Emily Phillips Galloway, assistant professor of literacy education.

The new grant supports their research project TRANSLATE (Teaching Reading And New Strategic Language Approach To Emergent Bilinguals). Through TRANSLATE they are developing a unique instructional approach for teachers that leverages the students’ first language to comprehend English language texts more effectively.

“In the past, students learning English have been discouraged from using their primary language when speaking, reading and writing in English,” Jiménez says. “TRANSLATE encourages, recruits and strategically deploys students’ non-English language resources for the purpose of reading, thinking about and comprehending English language texts.”

Preliminary findings show that the TRANSLATE method improves reading comprehension in emergent bilinguals and fosters metalinguistic understandings and awareness.

Learn more at vu.edu/project-translate

**New research hub to evaluate impact of opioids, needs of immigrant children**

Experts from Peabody College and from the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine’s Department of Health Policy are joining efforts to establish a Policies for Action Research Hub to better understand and develop recommendations to address the needs of some of Tennessee’s most vulnerable children, including children in immigrant families and children with prenatal exposure to opioids.

Co-principal investigators Melinda Buntin, Mike Curb Professor and chair of the Department of Health Policy at VUSM, and Carolyn Heinrich, Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Public Policy and Education at Peabody, will lead the hub.

A $1.25 million, 2.5-year grant from P4A, a signature research program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, will fund the hub. The Urban Institute, based in Washington, D.C., administers the P4A program.

“Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt University Medical Center have a history of collaborative investigations that generate actionable evidence, and our goal is to illuminate levers for policy and program action that can be activated to improve health and education outcomes among children most at risk in our state,” says Heinrich.

The P4A Research Hub at Vanderbilt will focus initially on two projects: investigating the long-term effects of early opioid exposure in children and determining how children of immigrants are accessing critical health, education and social services.

Learn more at vu.edu/p4a-hub

**Also Noted**

Laurie Cutting, Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Special Education, has been honored with a $3 million National Institutes of Health MERIT Award from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The grant will support her investigation of how the neural networks associated with reading, math and executive function interact to predict academic outcomes and response to educational interventions.

Erin Barton, PhD’07, associate professor of special education, has received a grant from the Caplan Foundation to support the development of a curriculum for children with disabilities who struggle to interact and engage socially through play.

Nicole Joseph, assistant professor of mathematics education, has received a National Science Foundation grant for collaborative research. The grant will support a workshop that brings together thought leaders to examine the successful trajectories of black girls and women in mathematics and computing.

Autumn J. Kujawa, assistant professor of psychology and human development, has received a NARSAD Young Investigator Grant from the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation. The goal of the YI program is to help researchers launch careers in neuroscience and psychiatry.
Notes and Honors

H. Richard Milner IV, Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Teaching and Learning, delivered the American Educational Research Association’s 2018 Brown Lecture in Education Research. The lecture took place in October in Washington, D.C., and was titled “Disrupting Punitive Practices and Policies: Rac(e)ing Back to Teaching, Teacher Preparation, and Brown.” Milner rejoined the Peabody faculty in the fall after teaching for several years at the University of Pittsburgh.

The Annual Brown Lecture in Education Research features the important role of research in advancing understanding of equality and equity in education. The lecturership was inaugurated in 2004 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, in which the U.S. Supreme Court took into account scientific research in issuing its landmark ruling. Each year AERA selects a distinguished scholar notable for producing significant research related to equality in education to give a public lecture in Washington.

The lecture was streamed live. The Peabody Office of Professional and Graduate Education held a watch party in the Wyatt Center for students to view Milner’s address.

Watch Milner’s lecture online at vu.edu/milner-brown

Anjali Forber-Pratt, assistant professor of human and organizational development and special education, delivers the keynote address and leads a breakout session about disability identity and social justice in January at The Broad Center, a national nonprofit in Los Angeles that provides leadership development in public education. More than 300 superintendents and district leaders from major U.S. school systems were in attendance. Forber-Pratt, who is also an elite wheelchair racer, discussed the Paralympic movement at Vanderbilt’s McGugin Center in October. Her talk was part of the Vanderbilt Sports and Society Initiative’s new series, “A World of Possibilities: Examining the Olympics from Diverse Angles.”
Amy Booth, professor of psychology and human development; James R. Booth, Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Educational Neuroscience; and Kristopher J. Preacher, professor of psychology, have been named fellows of the Association for Psychological Science. Fellow status is awarded to APS members who have made sustained outstanding contributions to the science of psychology in the areas of research, teaching, service and application. Candidates are considered only after 10 years of postdoctoral contribution. The three new fellows were announced in December. They join 11 current or emeritus Peabody psychologists who are fellows, along with 12 more from other Vanderbilt schools and colleges.

Other Faculty Honors

Sandra Barnes, professor of human and organizational development, has been awarded the 2019 Cox-Johnson-Frazier Award by the American Sociological Association. The award is given to an individual or individuals for their work in the intellectual traditions of Oliver Cox, Charles S. Johnson and E. Franklin Frazier, three African American scholars. She will be formally recognized during the ASA annual banquet in August in New York.

Laurie Cutting, Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Special Education, received a 2018 Leadership Award from Women in Cognitive Science. The award recognizes initiatives that individuals have taken, beyond their own students and labs, to benefit women in cognitive science more broadly.

David K. Dickinson, Margaret Cowan Professor of Teacher Education, has co-authored with Ann B. Morse Connecting Through Talk: Nurturing Children's Development with Language (2019, Brookes Publishing).

Vicki S. Harris, assistant clinical professor of psychology and human development, recently was recognized for 25 years of service to Vanderbilt.

Brian L. Heuser, MTS’00, EdD’07, associate professor of the practice of leadership, policy and organizations, won Vanderbilt’s 2018 Thomas Jefferson Award for distinguished service in the councils and government of the university.

Blair Lloyd, MS’11, PhD’13, assistant professor of special education, received the 2019 E.G. “Ted” Carr Initial Researcher Award from the Association for Positive Behavior Support. The award recognizes outstanding research by an early career scholar.

Brenda L. McKenzie, senior lecturer of higher education, was elected to a three-year term on the directorate board of the ACPA: College Student Educators International’s Commission for Professional Preparation.

Gavin Price, assistant professor of psychology, received the 2018 Early Career Award from the International Mind, Brain and Education Society.

Victoria J. Risko, professor of language, literacy and culture, emerita, was named Distinguished Alumna by the West Virginia University College of Education. She also was inducted into the college’s Hall of Fame.

Marybeth Shinn, Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Human, Organizational and Community Development, was a co-recipient of the 2018 Raymond Vernon Memorial Award, recognizing the best paper published in the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management during the publication year. Doctoral student Scott Brown was among several co-authors who shared the award.

Adela Soliz, assistant professor of public policy and higher education, was named one of 10 finalists for the 2019 William T. Grant Scholars Program, designed to support promising early career researchers.

Peabody researchers regularly contribute to The Conversation, an independent, not-for-profit media outlet that uses content sourced from academics and researchers. The research-based stories are often republished by large media outlets.

“Why I use Harry Potter to teach a college course on child development”

Georgene L. Troseth, associate professor of psychology, writes about her use of the Harry Potter books as a tool for engaging undergraduates in learning about the psychology of child development.

Read the story at vu.edu/troseth-potter

“How T.M. Landry College Prep failed black families”

In this opinion piece, H. Richard Milner IV, Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Teaching and Learning, looks at the plight of black families whose students are chronically underserved by their schools and whose talents too often go unrecognized.

Read the full article at vu.edu/milner-landry

A version of Milner’s Conversation piece also was published in the Winter 2019 issue of Vanderbilt Magazine at vu.edu/milner-vmag
Thought Leaders

Peabody faculty members frequently contribute ideas to public discourse. Here is a selection from media mentions and appearances in recent months:

**Inc.**
Camilla P. Benbow, Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development, and David Lubinski, professor of psychology and human development, on their Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth

**The Chronicle of Higher Education**
Angela Boatman, assistant professor of public policy and higher education, co-authored a commentary with Harvard’s Thomas Kane on an innovative approach to community college math remediation

**Washington Post**
Erik Carter, MEd’98, PhD’04, Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Special Education, on inclusion of children with disabilities in faith communities

**The Atlantic**
William R. Doyle, associate professor of higher education, on how North Carolina’s subsidized tuition may lure dropouts back to college

**Education Dive**
Brent J. Evans, assistant professor of public policy and higher education, on the benefits of Advanced Placement course credits

**Houston Chronicle**
Lisa K. Fazio, assistant professor of psychology, on discerning truth from lies

**Forbes**
Anjali Forber-Pratt, assistant professor of human and organizational development and special education, on careers and leadership for women

**Diverse: Issues in Higher Education**
Donna Y. Ford, Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Special Education, was profiled for her advocacy

**National Public Radio**
Judy Garber, Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Psychology and Human Development, on teen depression and parent mental health

**Education Week**
Jason Grissom, associate professor of public policy and education, on how principals can retain good teachers

**U.S. News & World Report**
Carolyn Heinrich, Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Public Policy and Education, on her new center to study the needs of children in immigrant families

**Chalkbeat**
Gary T. Henry, Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Public Policy and Education, on Tennessee’s latest school turnaround efforts

**Reuters**
Yolanda J. McDonald, assistant professor of human and organizational development, on drinking-water violations in impoverished counties

Recent books by Peabody Faculty

**Methods for Teaching in Early Education**, First Edition (2019, Routledge) by Jennifer Ledford, PhD’12, assistant professor of special education; Justin D. Lane; and Erin E. Barton, PhD’07, associate professor of special education

A comprehensive textbook offering a thorough introduction to early childhood teaching methods, this volume offers a particular focus on inclusive practices. Aligned with both NAEYC standards and CEC’s Division for Early Childhood recommended practices, the text explores various early childhood teaching principles and strategies, providing useful guidance for identifying and choosing among approaches. Covering topics from child-directed strategies to working with professionals in early childhood, the authors provide extensive support to prepare teachers for classroom planning and instruction.


Providing an analysis of what is known about turning around failing schools in the United States, the book starts with an in-depth examination of the barriers that hinder action on turnaround work and analyzes the reasons why some schools that find themselves in serious academic trouble fail in their efforts to turn themselves around. Covered in this volume are critical explanations for failed turnaround efforts, such as failure to attend to issues of sustainability and the misuse of test data. The volume concludes by examining what can be done to overcome problems that cause failure for turnaround schools and reviews ideas in the core technology of schooling: curriculum, instruction and assessment.
When Nyree Ramsey visited New Orleans in 1995, three words came to mind: “This is home.”

“I loved the culture, the food, the sense of community—all things intergenerational,” she says. “My father was a musician, an immigrant from Jamaica, and my mom comes from a close-knit artistic family in New York. I understand that sense of family and community.”

It’s an ethos that Ramsey hopes to nurture as cultural innovation district director for the Claiborne Corridor Project, an attempt to rejuvenate New Orleans’ Seventh Ward and Tremé neighborhoods, which, more than a half-century ago, were bulldozed to make way for the elevated I-10 expressway. Construction uprooted more than 300 thriving African American businesses, inviting blight along a two-mile stretch of Claiborne Avenue, home to the city’s historically black neighborhoods. The 25-block Claiborne Corridor Project aims to lay out the welcome mat for those who left decades ago, and for those forcibly relocated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

“My job is to get the project up and running, helping the city and all our partners identify resources to make that happen,” says Ramsey, who served previously as the city’s first black director of arts and tourism under former Mayor Ray Nagin. At Vanderbilt she was a Posse Scholar. “We’re having multiple conversations and engagements with the community to capture their design ideas.”

Fellow Peabody alumna Asali DeVan Ecclesiastes—the two met on campus in 1993—is Ramsey’s colleague in this work. Ecclesiastes helped relaunch the concept of a marketplace under the interstate while working in Mayor Mitch Landrieu’s administration as Claiborne Corridor program manager for the Network for Economic Opportunity.

“Nyree and I were excited about working together on this project,” says Ecclesiastes. “When the opportunity came up to work together, we were very excited.”

The project has received an $820,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration, along with matching funds from several foundations. Construction of a public market is scheduled to start this year.

Where more than 300 live oak trees once grew, concrete freeway pillars now stand. But they’ve been painted with images of jazz icon Louis Armstrong and civil rights crusader Alice Thompson—and much more is to come.

“This is an equitable development project that will achieve sustainable growth in an area that has been traditionally underdeveloped and systematically disinvested,” Ecclesiastes says. “We are building the capacity of residents to take advantage of economic opportunity in their own backyards, and working to develop opportunities beyond the borders of state and country. New Orleans has always been an international gem.”

“This is going to be transformative,” adds Ramsey. “People are returning home to something better than it was when they left.”

—ANDREW FAUGHT
The Susan Gray School: 50 years of national leadership in inclusive early childhood education

From the very beginning, when ground was broken in 1966 for the John F. Kennedy Center at George Peabody College for Teachers, alumna and psychology professor Susan Gray, MA’39, PhD’41, had argued for a model demonstration school. The Experimental School, as it was originally called, would consist of eight classrooms in the building then known as the Mental Retardation Laboratory. It opened in 1968.

Gray knew that a research-oriented, on-campus school was necessary for the continued success of Peabody’s work in human development, psychology and special education. Her Early Training Project, which was the model for the national Head Start program—and other Peabody research centered on early childhood and special education—needed controlled conditions for investigations and a place where in-service training could be accomplished.

Early on, within these eight classrooms the first research took place that introduced typically developing children to classrooms that included children with developmental delays, bringing inclusive education to a nationally recognized educational program. The Toddler Research and Intervention Project demonstrated that children with developmental delays benefit from being educated with their typically developing peers, and vice versa.

Started at a time when children with disabilities were considered uneducable and institutionalized, the school, renamed for Susan Gray in 1986, has proved that working with these children as soon as possible after birth can lead to successful, contributing citizens with a good quality of life. From training parents to work with their infants and toddlers to providing prekindergarten classrooms where students with a variety of backgrounds and abilities are educated together, the Susan Gray School continues to be a special place where researchers can document and improve practices to help all children learn.

Here we celebrate the Susan Gray School’s 50th anniversary with a collection of photographs taken through the years. Archival photos were provided courtesy of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, with special thanks to Jan Rosemergy, Michelle Wyatt and Kylie Mucilli, and by Vanderbilt University Special Collections and University Archives. Specific photographers are noted where possible.
The Bright Start cognitive curriculum—developed by H. Carl Haywood, emeritus professor of psychology and director of the Kennedy Center from 1971 to 1983—originated at the Susan Gray School. A research-based early intervention program now used nationally and internationally, it was designed to increase learning in children most at risk for school failure. Photo from the 1980s.

Peabody undergraduate and graduate students studying early childhood education, special education, cognitive studies and neuroscience volunteer in classrooms and conduct research in many areas. Susan Gray Fellow Lexi Schulenburg (BS’16, MEd’18), shown here in 2017, completed her master’s thesis on methods of Enhanced Milieu Teaching strategies. EMT is a naturalistic language intervention that uses play as an opportunity for adults to model expressive language for children.

The Susan Gray School’s concept of “no barriers” between typically developing children and children with developmental disabilities is exemplified by these playground friends in 2013.
Peabody student Kelly Finan, center, concerned about a lack of access to playground equipment for students with disabilities, raised money to make the Susan Gray School playground more accessible. The Finan Family Playground was dedicated in 2008.

The Toddler Research and Intervention Project developed by Diane Bricker, PhD'70, devised and evaluated aspects of educational intervention with children ages 1–4 who had moderate to severe developmental problems. Photo from the 1970s.

Former Vanderbilt Chancellor Joe B. Wyatt (left) and Peabody College Dean Willis Hawley (standing) honor Susan Gray for her life's work with the naming of the Susan Gray School for Children in 1986.
Shaiza Rizavi, BS’91 Transformative Lens

The new Rizavi–Friedland Chair will attract and retain star faculty leaders

Shaiza Rizavi has been named recipient of Peabody College’s 2019 Distinguished Alumna Award. She is to receive the honor during Peabody’s Commencement exercises May 10.

For Shaiza Rizavi, a money manager and managing member of the New York-based brokerage firm Gilder Gagnon Howe & Co., making a financial gift to Peabody is a matter of creating space for flexibility, choice and freedom.

“So much of what I learned there, I’ve carried through my life,” says Rizavi. “I came to understand the power of different perspectives, which solidified what is important to me now. Because of the opportunities afforded to me by incredibly dedicated and passionate professors, I found a path that led me to find true meaning in serving various communities.”

A human and organizational development major at Peabody, Rizavi remembers sitting with Robert Innes, professor of human and organizational development, emeritus, flipping through the binder of job opportunities he had compiled for students, taking the time to guide her through choices and ultimately toward a path that matched her interests.

“I had a strong sense of confidence about pursuing those opportunities because of the professors I had at Peabody,” she says.

During her internship, Rizavi supported Bill Shulman, the former public defender in Nashville, on a death penalty case. That experience led her to work as an investigator on homicide cases for the Public Defender Service in Washington, D.C., under attorneys David Reiser and Joanne Wallace. After working in Southeast Asia, Rizavi moved to New York to pursue her MBA. After graduation she began her career at Gilder Gagnon Howe as a growth equity investor, finding stocks with disruptive, innovative approaches that, when well executed, change people’s lives while building capital.

“The tools I learned while at Peabody provided a critical foundation,” she says. “I took my experience and adapted it to a new field, in a new role.”

So expansive was her time as an undergraduate that Rizavi and her husband, Jonathan Friedland, have endowed the Rizavi–Friedland Chair at Peabody, one of 21 chairs created through the university-wide Chancellor’s Chair Challenge last year, in which Vanderbilt pledged to match donor commitments of $1 million or more. These endowed chairs will allow the university to better recruit and retain faculty members engaged in transformational scholarship.

“Endowing a chair allows both the university and the professor to do what they think is best for the students and institution, and gives the professor the freedom to innovate without the worry and distraction of seeking funding,” Rizavi says.

“The more comfortable a professor is in taking risk and exploring innovation, the more tolerant the culture will be for discovery, and that has a ripple effect on how students approach creative research. Our hope is that our gift will help create a new generation of leaders who incubate ideas with a mindset that is unconfined.”

—ANDREW FAUGHT
The story doesn’t end here.

You can connect with Peabody anytime. Visit us online for up-to-the-minute campus news, alumni updates, photos, videos and more. Join the conversation. Comment, post, tweet or share a story of your own.
For Don, MEd'89, EdD'92, and Roberta Miller, MLS'64, EdD'92, calculating an investment in Vanderbilt was simple: “We liked the idea of helping Peabody because it was so important to us.” By establishing several charitable gift annuities with Vanderbilt, the Miller legacy will ensure world-class teaching and training for future generations of educators.

For information about helping plan Vanderbilt’s future, visit vu.edu/leaveyourlegacy or call (888) 758-1999.