Dean Lauren Benton called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. in Furman Hall 114.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Meeting of February 16, 2016.

There were no comments or questions, and the Minutes were approved.

2. Conversation with Padma Raghavan, Vice Provost for Research and Professor of Computer Science.

Vice Provost Padma Raghavan explained that she has been meeting faculty members in various disciplines to learn about their research priorities. She aims to build upon Vanderbilt’s excellent reputation by strategically allocating resources to support research. With effective and coordinated planning, Vanderbilt will be able to increase its share of research funding. Such tactical planning is necessary partly because the total amount of research funding is not increasing year to year. Total 2014 higher education research and development spending in the United States amounted to $68 billion, of which $25 billion was spent by the top thirty institutions, including Vanderbilt. Vice Provost Raghavan’s overall approach is to support and facilitate efforts toward research and scholarship in three ways: focusing on collaboration and partnerships across all Vanderbilt entities; facilitating multiplicative research returns; and seeking university, corporate, and non-profit partnerships. She outlined two paths by which Vanderbilt and A&S can increase their research efforts, both of which involve extensive and continuous consultations with faculty members: The first path is to streamline research operations while remaining compliant with government regulations and accrediting agencies. Streamlining includes instituting expedited and transparent processes for export control and for institutional research boards. The second path is to understand and facilitate the research priorities of A&S and then to line up funding streams for these priorities from existing ‘big opportunities’ such as the Brain Initiative, Big Data, inclusivity in STEM disciplines, NSF and Homeland Security projects, and large foundation initiatives. Another way to increase funding success rates, she continued, is to acknowledge that single PI (Principal Investigator) award rates have decreased while multiple PI and team science awards have risen. Consequently, team building efforts and proposal development support are critical.

In response to questions, Vice Provost Raghavan stated that she intends to develop a pre-award office to provide support for large research projects. The pre-award office could, for example, collect data that can be used to help support research proposals. Her office will also support interdisciplinary research whenever appropriate. Humanities research could be funded by foundations that are interested in the human condition, especially if a particular research project can be tied to or connected with a scientific project. Other
types of research, including seed funding opportunities and international research projects, will be investigated as well.

Dean Benton stated that Vice Provost Raghavan is seeking input from faculty members about how her office can help facilitate research projects. She urged faculty members to send their ideas to Vice Provost Raghavan.

The faculty thanked Vice Provost Raghavan for her information.

3. Review of the Minutes of the Faculty Council meeting of March 1, 2016, pending approval of the Faculty Council.

Professor Tiffiny Tung, Chair of the A&S Faculty Council, asked if there were any comments or questions about the Council Minutes or the Council-approved new and revised course descriptions; there were none.

4. Executive Motion Calendar.

A. From the Committee on Educational Programs: Proposed revision of the History major and minor. There were no comments or questions, and the faculty approved the proposed revision.

B. From the Committee on Graduate Education: Proposed revision of the German Ph.D. program. There were no comments or questions, and the faculty approved the proposed revision.

C. From the A&S Faculty Council: First reading of the proposed revision of the Rules and Procedures for Faculty Appointments, Renewals, Promotions and Tenure in the College of Arts and Science, Vanderbilt University. Professor Tung explained that the proposed revision of the A&S Rules and Procedures includes three key changes: First, to enable joint appointments such that faculty members may be appointed to two or more academic programs after their initial appointment to Vanderbilt; second, to replace the second and fourth year reviews of tenure-track faculty members with a third year review; and, third, to change some administrative language in the document. Regarding the first issue, last year Faculty Council and the A&S faculty approved a new type of faculty appointment, ‘secondary appointment with limited voting rights.’ The voting rights were limited insofar as faculty members holding this type of appointment cannot vote on personnel matters in the department or program in which they hold their secondary appointment. Faculty members holding joint appointments, on the other hand, have full voting rights in both academic programs. Joint appointments would formally recognize the intellectual work and service of faculty members who cross disciplinary boundaries. Both programs would have to approve the joint appointment.

Each type of change was discussed in turn: Several faculty members spoke in favor of enabling joint appointments. It would encourage and recognize interdisciplinary work, and it would allow faculty members who are primarily appointed to a small program to
more fully participate in an intellectual community. Further, many small interdisciplinary programs have advisory boards of faculty members from other academic programs who make personnel decisions regarding the interdisciplinary program, yet faculty members who are primarily appointed to an interdisciplinary program cannot vote on personnel matters of other departments.

Professor Tung stated that replacing the second and fourth year reviews of tenure-track faculty members with a third year review would streamline the tenure review process and better support tenure track faculty members. When this proposal was discussed by Faculty Council, several faculty members explained that the current second year review is too early and the current fourth review is too late to provide feedback when it would be most appropriate and useful. Faculty members agreed with this point, although one said that the second year review was valuable in that it helped him prepare early for the fourth year review and for the tenure review. In response to questions, Dean Benton stated that, if this proposal is approved by the faculty, the length of the tenure track would remain the same, and, after this change takes effect, all tenure track faculty members hired going forward will be reviewed in their third year (tenure-track faculty already at Vanderbilt will continue to be reviewed at second and fourth years). Further, even though tenure track faculty members would not be formally evaluated other than their third year review, departments and programs are expected to continuously provide feedback to their faculty members. Departments and programs will be asked to provide information to the dean’s office about their mentoring process. The new faculty rating system would also help in this regard.

Dean Benton explained that the proposed administrative language changes would support the new divisional dean structure of the A&S dean’s office announced earlier that day. A divisional dean structure is effective for academic planning, she said. There were no comments or questions about this type of change to the A&S Rules and Procedures.

Another opportunity to discuss these proposed changes will take place at the April A&S Faculty Meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday, April 19.

5. Original Motion Calendar.

Continuing discussion of the A&S Rules and Procedures beyond the specific proposed changes, Professor Zwiebel remarked that the Rules and Procedures includes little detail about teaching beyond course evaluations, especially in comparison to Peabody’s faculty review procedure. A&S should be looking more carefully at how faculty members teach their courses, including peer reviews and course grade distributions. Due diligence is needed in this regard, he said. Several faculty members supported his position and explained that the existing course evaluation form is not useful or indicative of teaching quality. It appears to measure popularity, instead of teaching excellence, and has not been revised in over twenty years. Student evaluations are also influenced by race, gender, and other factors. Yet, for some faculty members, especially non-tenure track faculty members, course evaluations are critical to their reappointment. Dean Benton explained that Vice Provost Cynthia Cyrus is heading a committee to investigate ways to
improve the course evaluation survey and the process of administering it. She explained further that A&S departments and programs currently are permitted to use additional approaches for assessing teaching quality in their faculty review process, such as peer observation; this kind of information is welcomed. Departments and programs, she noted, are doing an excellent job of encouraging tenure track faculty members to improve their teaching by using the services of the Center for Teaching. **Professor Zwiebel then moved that Faculty Council study and propose a method by which course grade distributions would be made publicly available. His motion was seconded and approved by the faculty.**

6. **Good of the College.**

Dean Benton reported that a formal announcement will be made shortly that Vanderbilt has been awarded a $1.5 million grant by the Mellon Foundation to establish a digital humanities center. The center will be operational in fall 2016, she said.

7. **Adjournment.**

The meeting adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert A. Driskill,
A&S Secretary of the Faculty