



September 2020 Newsletter

Next Steps at Vanderbilt Events

*All events will be virtual until further notice.

Online Information Sessions

Please join us for an Online Information Session! During this virtual event, prospective students, parents, and guests will learn about classes, internships, social opportunities, and more. Once you register for a Online Information Session, you will be sent a link to join. Please come with questions as you will be able to type your questions into the chat box.

2020 Online Information Session Dates:

Monday, October 5, 2020 (5:00 - 6:30 p.m)

Thursday, November 12, 2020 (2:30 - 4:00 p.m.)

Virtual College Nights

During our Virtual College Night, prospective students and parents will learn about the different aspects of our program from staff, alumni, and current students. First we will have a panel of speakers answering questions about their experience with Next Steps.

Then guests will have the opportunity to ask questions to representatives from all aspects of the program (social, academic, career, residential, financial aid, etc.) through the use of breakout rooms. Once registered for a Virtual College Night, you will be sent a link to join.

2020 Virtual College Night Dates:

Thursday, September 24, 2020 (5:00 - 6:30)

Thursday, November 5, 2020 (5:00 - 6:30)

[Click here to register for an event](#)



Rising to the Occasion – Next Steps Fall 2020 Program of Study

Tammy Day, Director

It is no secret that universities across the country are working hard to continue offering meaningful, higher education to their student bodies while keeping the students and faculty safe during the pandemic. The Next Steps at Vanderbilt inclusive higher education program has found a way to meet the need. 33 students with intellectual disabilities are enrolled this academic year to complete a mostly, virtual program of study. The students, mentors, staff, and faculty are using Zoom to offer engaging class sessions, weekly group learning workshops that cover a multitude of interests, group social activities like karaoke and workouts, and one-on-one support sessions.

Not only are the students continuing their academic studies, but they also continue to be deeply immersed in career development, skill building activities with supports. The freshmen will have virtual industry tours that cover 16 career domains that are designed to inform their exploration of future employment areas. The other students are working with assistance to investigate career competencies and to participate in remote internships. We are very pleased to note that about half of our upper classmen are able to continue their career development through in-person internships in the Nashville community with placements at Barnes and Nobles, The Dog Spot, the Department of Education, the Nashville Metro Circuit Court Clerk's Office, and more. We are very thankful for our community partners.

As always, our most important supporters, collaborators, and friends are the Vanderbilt students that become Next Steps' Ambassadors. These students are also answering the call to join us as peer mentors in strong numbers. We are on track to break our record for the highest number of volunteers ever. It is easy to understand how important these connections become to the students on both sides of these collaborations. We are again seeing that when opportunity and high expectations align, people rise to the occasion.

Welcome, Class of 2024!



F'Nesha Buford



Orion Crawford



Lucy Dean



Grace Dodd



Matthew Gang



Annabel Hines





Philip Porter



Rachel Sarubbi



Play Ball!

John Cayton, Director of Campus Life and Student Supports

Two years ago as a freshman, JR Harrison (Class of 2022) made the Vanderbilt Club Baseball team after trying out as a pitcher. This was no surprise – he throws faster than 80 mph. This was a huge deal – he was the first student enrolled in Next Steps to make a club sport team at Vanderbilt. Students, staff, Ambassadors and his new teammates all celebrated the accomplishment. After competing with his new teammates throughout that first semester, he found out he was ineligible in the league they play in (NCBA). This wasn't out of ill will – there just hasn't been a JR before to raise the issue.

After nearly two years of JR exercising his patience, members of NCBA officially became valued partners of students like JR and programs like Next Steps. On August 1, they voted to update their rules to allow students enrolled in IHE programs to compete for a spot on their school's team. And, if they have the skills to make the team like JR did, they will be able to compete against other NCBA teams across the country. Just like any other college student.

Look out, everyone. JR has some work to do.

Alumni Update

Steven Greiner, Alumni Coordinator and Recruitment Assistant

Charles Feddeman graduated from Next Steps at Vanderbilt in 2020. He is now an assistant teacher at the Acorn School at Vanderbilt University. Charles works alongside the teacher and helps out with lots of activities. His favorite activity to help with is recess. When Charles isn't working as a teacher's assistant, he likes to devote his time to helping out at Plant for a Change. Plant for a Change is the first for-profit plant business in Nashville co-managed by team members with disabilities. The business is committed to cultivating native habitats by educating the public on the value of gardening for wildlife and sustaining greener neighborhoods.



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