

Meet the Class of 1912

****You will need at least one computer with projection screen and Internet connection for this activity. For a more dynamic session, ask five students to bring their laptops so that smaller groups of students can work on different aspects of the topic simultaneously. Alternatively, for this session you can schedule the Electronic Classroom in the main library building by contacting Sue Erickson (2-0155) at least two days before the session, or reserve the Peabody Library Learning Commons by emailing peabodyref@vanderbilt.edu.**

Introduction:

The discussion module options offered below are an opportunity to reflect on academic life in the early 20th century. Much has changed in the world since the members of the Class of 1912 were students at Vanderbilt, but there are many parallels to academic life today.

Module Resources:

Exploring the World of the Class of 1912 (Optional Content)

This section provides additional background information about Vanderbilt and the student experience during the early 20th century with a particular focus on the period between 1908 and 1912 as told through photographs, poems, cartoons, and newspaper articles. Use the content available on the “Exploring the World of the Class of 1912” webpage, (http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/visions/class_exploring.html), to supplement your discussion module. Content is arranged thematically: Academic/Classroom; Dining/Dormitory Life; Campus Buildings; Social/Greek Life; Sports; Commencement. You may also use the content provided here to create your own discussion module.

Discussion Module Options:

Select one of the three options below for in depth discussion. We suggest that you break the class into small groups of 4-5 students at the beginning of the session. Each group will need a laptop. Once the small groups have had an opportunity to discuss the topic, the class can regroup and continue the discussion. This will be an opportunity for each group to share their opinions. Suggested discussion points are provided for each topic below.

Option 1

➤ Getting into Vanderbilt

Brief description: As part of the current admissions process every student must take the SAT or ACT. Members of the Class of 1912 shared a similar experience in that students were required to pass entrance exams in several subjects before being admitted to the University. This module provides an opportunity to explore changes in educational values and/or student curriculum over time. This is also an opportunity to discuss the value of educational testing as part of the admissions process.

Suggested Directions: Assign each group one of the subject exams that are available on the “Getting into Vanderbilt” webpage (http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/visions/class_getting_into_Vandy.html). Have the students attempt to answer 1-2 questions on the exam. The admissions requirements as recorded in the 1908-1909 Vanderbilt University Catalog are also available on the webpage and may be incorporated into the session as the instructor sees fit. **Select one or more of the discussion questions below for in depth discussion.**

Discussion Points:

- Think back to your experience with the SAT or ACT. How are the questions on the SAT or ACT similar to the entrance exam questions for the Class of 1912? How are they different? Which type of test would you prefer as part of your admissions process?
- Examinations in Latin and Greek were required for admission into the course in Arts, which led to a B.A. Students in the course of Science or Engineering could substitute other subject exams in place of Latin and/or Greek, but that would necessitate taking anywhere from two to four additional subject exams. There was a great deal of emphasis placed on Classical Languages as part of the curriculum of an educated person. What does it mean to be an educated person today?
- There was no standardized curriculum in secondary schools at this time. The quality of education and the classroom content varied from school to school. How did the rigorous entrance exams impact the possible pool of candidates for admission to Vanderbilt? Who had access to the type of secondary education that would lead to success on Vanderbilt’s entrance exams? Can you identify any groups of potential students that might have been impacted by such demanding entrance exams? Is this still an issue in education today?
- A number of colleges and universities, most recently Smith College and Wake Forest University, have moved to drop the SAT and ACT as an admissions requirement. Do these standardized tests provide any added

value to the admissions process? Should Vanderbilt join with these other colleges and universities and drop the SAT and ACT as an admissions requirement?

Option 2

➤ **Surviving the Freshman Experience in 1908 at Vanderbilt**

Brief description: One hundred years ago, freshman hazing by upperclassmen was common and even considered a tradition. In this module you'll read short articles that appeared in the *Hustler* concerning incidents in 1907 that set the stage for the class of 1912. There will also be an opportunity to review the current Vanderbilt policy on hazing, and watch a short clip from an old movie that describes a hazing incident. These will assist in engaging the students in a discussion on this timely and socially important issue.

Suggested Directions: Read these three selections from the *Hustler*: November 28, 1907 (describes the events that led up to the Freshmen-Sophomore battle that disrupted campus); December 5, 1907 (Chancellor Kirkland's response to the Freshmen-Sophomore incident); October 8, 1908 (Chancellor Kirkland addresses the new crop of Freshmen regarding hazing). These resources are all available on the "Surviving Your Freshman Year at Vanderbilt" webpage (http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/visions/class_surviving.html). Additional content that you may wish to incorporate into the session are the current Vanderbilt policy on hazing and a 3 ½ minute clip from the film *Penrod and Sam* (1931). The film clip describes a hazing incident that was perpetrated as part of an "initiation" rite. **Select one or more of the discussion questions below to discuss in depth.**

Discussion Points:

- In 1908, Chancellor Kirkland addressed the 1907 Freshman-Sophomore hazing incident at chapel. What was it that prompted the Chancellor to address the student body? When did the hazing stop being "all in good fun" and become serious? Would this Freshman-Sophomore incident be considered hazing in today's world? How does it compare with hazing incidents you've heard about in the recent past?
- By 1908, all incoming freshmen were required to sign a pledge "promising to abstain from every form of rushing or hazing." Are incoming first year students required to sign a similar pledge? How would you feel about being required to sign a pledge against hazing? What advantages, if any, would there be in requiring all students to sign a pledge?
- The articles and the film excerpt that you just watched express a specific point of view regarding hazing. How does this point of view compare with the point of view expressed in the current University and Fraternity hazing policies? Excerpts from the current University and Fraternity hazing policies are available on the "Surviving Your Freshman Year at Vanderbilt" webpage.

Option 3

➤ Women at Vanderbilt

Brief description: Women have always had a presence on Vanderbilt's campus. In fact, at least one woman attended Vanderbilt classes every year from 1875 on in an unofficial capacity. It was not until the period between 1892 and 1901, that women gained full legal equality at Vanderbilt except with respect to access to dorms. Women remained a small minority on campus in those early years, but they definitely had an impact. Explore the female experience at Vanderbilt through the story of alumna Stella Scott Vaughn. Accompanying Stella's story are selected images and poems from the Commodores yearbooks of the period as well as a timeline of important events in women's history at Vanderbilt and beyond that may be used to supplement your discussion.

Suggested Directions: Read the case study, Stella Scott Vaughn – a Vanderbilt Pioneer, available on the “Women at Vanderbilt” webpage (http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/visions/class_women.html). A timeline “Women at Vanderbilt and Beyond” and a selection of photos and student created cartoons and poems accompany the case study of Stella Vaughn and the instructor may incorporate these resources as they see fit. **Select one or more of the discussion questions below to discuss in depth.**

Discussion Points:

- Stella Vaughn was a pioneer in several ways for women at Vanderbilt. How do you think she influenced campus life for the Class of 1912?
- Discuss the post-graduate opportunities for women in 1912 compared to those of today.
- Sororities were an important part of campus life from the early days of the University. How is sorority life in 2009 similar to sorority life for the Class of 1912? How is it different?
- Today women make up almost 60% of college students in the U.S., but back in 1912 women were a small minority of the student body on Vanderbilt's campus. How would this male/female ratio affect campus life?
- What types of gender discrimination might the women of the Class of 1912 have been subjected to? Do today's female students experience the same types of gender discrimination at Vanderbilt?

Suggested closing statement:

Many of the images and texts we looked at today came from items housed in Vanderbilt University Special Collections & University Archives. Special Collections has many resources that detail the history of Vanderbilt and student life and organizations including University memorabilia, photographs, student yearbooks and newspapers, and the personal papers of former students and faculty. If you'd like to learn more about the history of Vanderbilt or if you're just curious, come down and visit Vanderbilt University Special Collections and University Archives located on the second floor of the General Library Building. Just stop by the reference desk at the Central Library for directions.