

Melinda K. Dalgarn, Ed.D.



November 18, 2005

Mr. Alvin G. Hooten, Chair, Advisory Search Committee

SUBJECT: Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (VCSA)

Dear Mr. Hooten:

I read with interest the position announcement for the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the University of Tennessee at Martin. I believe my education and experience are uniquely well suited to the position.

I have an undergraduate degree from Lewis and Clark College and earned both masters and doctoral degrees at George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University. I have been involved in higher education for twenty-five years and, having lived on campus for over two decades, have been an active participant in virtually every aspect of campus life from pre-orientation to alumni affairs.

In January of 2003 I formed my own company, College Survival Guides, LLC. I spent nearly two years researching, writing and producing a thirteen chapter educational, interactive CD entitled *Smart Start A survival guide for first year college students (and their parents too)*. I am pleased to report that it has been endorsed by the National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition, Casey Family Programs, and College Parents of America. It is being used on both the high school and college levels. During the past year, I have written a series of articles aimed at helping parents understand what I have come to call the "rhythm of college life."

I put my research and writing aside in August of 2004 when I received a call from members of the Board of Directors at the Center for Academic Integrity at Duke University. They asked me to serve as interim Executive Director while they concluded their national search. I agreed to do so for the fall semester. During my tenure there I helped host an international conference, developed a position description for and hired a part-time staff assistant, chaired a subcommittee that proposed a policy on consulting fees, hired two student staff members, and laid the foundation for a summer internship program. It was a tremendously rewarding semester but it served to reinforce my desire to return to a position that affords me the opportunity to work more directly with students.

I spent a year as the first Vice President for Student Affairs at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. I truly enjoyed interacting with students, meeting with faculty and tackling challenges with the hard-working and dedicated staff within the Division of Student Affairs. I am very proud of what was accomplished during my tenure there. Seventeen new people were hired to fill vacant positions or positions new to the Division. A Wellness Program that includes twelve one-credit courses was developed for students. Campus Life assumed responsibility for all orientation programs as well as campus-wide programs and the reservation of extracurricular events. Five vacancies within the Office of Residential and Judicial Affairs were filled, and we were on schedule and under budget in the opening of a \$40 million dollar, 230,000 square foot University Center. In addition, efforts were made to further define and refine a Student Affairs program on Mercer's Atlanta campus. Despite all that was accomplished, I came to realize that my "fit" at Mercer was not what it needed to be in order for me to do my best work and achieve the goals I had envisioned.

Prior to my time at Mercer, I spent twenty-two years at Vanderbilt University where I continually assumed

increased responsibility. I began my career there as an Assistant Director responsible for a residential complex housing 750 freshman men and women. When I left, I served as Associate Dean of Student Affairs with a budget of nearly 7 million dollars and a staff that numbered 50 full-time, 30 part-time and 300 student employees.

While at Vanderbilt, I had responsibility for residence life, the housing assignment process, off-campus housing, residential government, student activities, new student orientation, leadership development, parent programs, campus recreation, international student services, intercultural affairs, late night weekend programming, summer conferences, the Child Care Center, and then, the student center which included a performing arts series, films, concerts, visual and studio arts, the dance program, and a restaurant and late night coffeehouse. I worked closely with virtually every department and had positive relationships with faculty and staff in both the undergraduate and graduate schools and colleges.

The opportunities I have had to grow personally and professionally have been tremendous. As a youngster, my family owned and operated an orchard and resort on an Indian reservation in Montana. I helped maintain a 15 acre cherry orchard and seven lakeside cottages. I worked in a nearby cherry packing plant while in high school and put myself through college by working as a waitress in an Alaskan cannery for five summers. The value of a strong work ethic was instilled in me at a relatively young age and the experience of working with diverse populations was extremely valuable.

Professional highlights include: *creating* programs that brought faculty into the residence halls; *improving* recreational opportunities for the campus community; *developing* a parents program; *co-chairing* the 11 million dollar renovation and expansion of Sarratt Student Center; and *establishing* the first employer-sponsored, accredited child care center in the state of Tennessee.

Although I have thoroughly enjoyed the research, writing and production of educational CDs, I have sorely missed the camaraderie of group work. I enjoy the challenges and rewards that come with building relationships, creative problem solving, and teamwork. I look forward to returning to an environment that offers opportunities for increased interaction with others.

I am proactive, patient, and persistent. High energy, open communication, collaboration, honesty, positive reinforcement, public recognition of success, high expectations and a sense of humor characterize my management style. As a leader, I believe it is my responsibility to provide colleagues with the tools they need to succeed. This includes financial support, but more importantly, staff should be appropriately challenged, valued, motivated, and rewarded. A team-like atmosphere prevails in an environment of mutual respect that is supportive and enjoyable.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Melinda K. Dalgarn, Ed.D.

***Philosophy of Student Affairs***  
Melinda K. Dalgarn, Ed.D.

It should be the mission of every institution to produce competent leaders of conscience and compassion. As educators, we must empower students to become ethical, self-disciplined, thoughtful citizens by providing them with opportunities to participate in meaningful dialogue. As role models, we must lead by example as we make decisions based on sound judgment, thorough analysis, and respect for diverse opinions.

My interest in higher education is deeply rooted in my undergraduate experience at a small, private liberal arts institution. That commitment has been reinforced during the twenty-five years I have spent fully engaged in the lives of students at Vanderbilt and Mercer Universities. I am a strong proponent of *residential education*, *community development*, and a *collaborative spirit*. I believe those are the fundamental components of a liberal arts education. They are the mortar I have used to develop my philosophy of Student Affairs.

*Residential education* is the activity, the learning, the experiences that occur outside the formal classroom. For students, it's learning to live with those from different backgrounds. It's learning to care for one's self and others. It's establishing values, setting goals, defining priorities and managing time and money. For faculty and staff, it's the opportunity to interact with students informally. It's engaging in discussions in the residence halls, working side-by-side during community service projects, advising student organizations, and serving as friends, mentors, confidants, and role models.

*Community development* is the sense of belonging that characterizes liberal arts institutions. From the student perspective, community development suggests ready access, thoughtful conversations, and campus traditions. It includes opportunities to interact with senior-level administrators, participate in research projects with renowned faculty and staff, and assume leadership positions both on campus and off. For staff and faculty, it means having a voice in the development of campus policies and procedures, being actively engaged in strategic planning, and being encouraged to pursue opportunities for personal and professional growth. Community development is about the relationships that form as a result of this kind of camaraderie.

*Collaborative spirit* is working together to define goals and objectives, solve problems, and address community concerns. For all members of the campus community, collaborative spirit can best be described as the dedication, commitment, and passion that one has for the institution. It is the result of open communication, thoughtful cooperation, and healthy compromise. It is based on an attitude of mutual respect.

I find it extremely energizing to immerse myself in the life of a liberal arts institution...its people, its programs, its problems, and its plan. Having lived on campus during my entire professional career, I am committed to building relationships with students, staff, faculty, administrators, parents, members of the Board, alumni, and community leaders. I enjoy creative problem solving in an environment characterized by cooperation, collaboration, and compromise. I am a team player who recognizes and values the contributions of ALL team members. We each have a role to play...we're all contributing members of the same team. That's the environment I believe is most conducive to students' growth and development and it's the experience they deserve at a student-centered, service-oriented liberal arts institution.



## MELINDA K. DALGARN, Ed.D.

### EDUCATION

Ed.D. in School Administration, "A Study of Surplus School Building Disposition for Community Purposes," George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, December 1982.

M.S. in Education Administration, George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, December 1980.

B.S. in Elementary Education and Psychology, Lewis and Clark College, Portland, OR, March 1975.

### HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

**College Survival Guides, LLC, Kingston Springs, TN**

**President**

**January 2003 - present**

Wrote two interactive, educational CDs, *Smart Start* and *Living in the 'Burbs*, aimed at assisting students and their parents as they transition through collegiate passages. Developed a series of articles entitled **See Them Soar**, designed to acquaint parents with "the rhythm of college life."

**Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, Durham, NC**

**Interim Executive Director**

**August 2004 - December 2004**

Aided in planning and hosting an international conference, developed a template for evaluative conference summaries, wrote a position description for and hired a part-time staff assistant, chaired a subcommittee that proposed a policy on consulting fees, hired two student staff members, and helped develop a summer internship program.

**Mercer University, Macon, GA**

**November 2001 - December 2002**

**Vice President for Student Affairs**

Provided leadership and support on both the Macon and Cecil B. Day campuses in the areas of Residential and Judicial Affairs, Campus Life, Wellness, Campus Recreation, Counseling and Psychological Services, Greek Life, Career Services, the TRIO Program (Upward Bound, Student Support Services and the Equal Opportunity Center) and Student Health. Supervised eight direct reports, 45 full-time professional staff and 120 student staff. Managed a \$10 million budget.

- Served on the President's Executive Group
- Served on the following University Committees: Undergraduate Council, Board of Appropriations (chair), Publications Board (chair), University Center (chair), Student Affairs Leadership Team (chair), Health Services, SACS Assessment, Retention, Campus Construction and the University Space Committee
- Oversaw \$40 million project for new 230,000 square foot University Center to include a 3,500 seat convocation center, varsity athletics, and campus recreation facilities
- Hired 17 new people to fill vacant and/or newly-created positions
- Instrumental in the development of a student Wellness Program that included 12 one-credit courses offered through the College of Liberal Arts



- Organized a 9-month orientation program in collaboration with Admissions, Advancement, Campus Life, First Year Experience, and undergraduate schools
- Provided one-stop shop reservation program for all academic and extracurricular activities

**Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN**  
***Associate Dean of Student Affairs, 1994 – 2001***

**1979 - 2001**

- Supervised Offices of Student Activities, Campus Recreation, International Student and Scholar Services, English for Internationals, and the Parents and Family Office. Assumed responsibility for 60,000 square foot Sarratt Student Center in 1997. From 1997 on, supervised six Deans/Directors, 50 full-time staff, 30 part-time employees and 300 student staff. Managed total budget of \$6.5 million. (*Responsibility for Student Activities and related programs transferred to newly created Dean of Students Office in fall of 1998.*)
- Oversaw summer and fall orientation programs for all new undergraduate students
- Served on committees including Calendar Committee, Retention Committee, Campus Security Committee, Student Health Committee, and Sarratt Student Center Renovation Committee
- Oversaw numerous campus-wide events including Homecoming, Accolade, Freshman Family Weekend, Parents Weekend, and the Kudos Award Ceremony
- Served as managing editor of the *OverVU*, an eight page newsletter distributed to parents five times each year
- Assisted with the design and development of \$11.5 million facility renovation
- Oversaw concerts, performing arts, studio arts, visual arts, films, the Vanderbilt Dance Group, a restaurant, and all University schedules and reservations

***Assistant Dean and Associate Director of Housing, Office of Residential and Judicial Affairs, 1985 – 1994***

Administered all aspects of housing 5000 undergraduates required to live on campus. Provided residential programming opportunities for faculty, staff, and students. Managed three staff members and served as resource to six full-time live-in professionals.

- Orchestrated the random selection process housing 3500 upper-class students
- Interviewed students requesting exceptions to residential requirement; corresponded with parents and medical personnel as necessary
- Chaired the Freshmen Experience Committee composed of undergraduate deans, faculty, staff, and students
- Served as managing editor of the *OverVU*
- Designed and developed educational programs that brought faculty, deans, and graduate students into the residence halls
- Advised the InterResidence Hall Association, representing 5100 residential students
- Administered the accredited, employer operated Child Care Center with a capacity of 100

***Associate Director, Office of Residential and Judicial Affairs, 1981 - 1985***

- Directed the summer conference and institute program
- Directed the Off-Campus Housing Referral Program
- Advised the InterResidence Hall Association
- Founded and administered the Vanderbilt Child Care Center
- Participated in the selection process for and training of 110 resident advisers
- Assisted in the development of residential programming
- Revised housing applications, brochures, handbooks, advertisements, and catalogues
- Organized and coordinated the national search for full-time residential staff

***Assistant Director, Office of Residential and Judicial Affairs, 1979 - 1981***

- Served as administrative official in a residence hall housing 750 freshman men and women; provided 24/7 coverage
- Directed and supervised student staff of 14
- Coordinated efforts of the residential government
- Originated the weekly publication of the RA Times sent to members of the residential staff and select University administrators
- Maintained the Off-Campus Housing Referral Program
- Coordinated the housing, dining service, and facility usage for 35 summer conferences

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

*Adjunct assistant professor, George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University, 1989 – 1990*

Seminar designed for master's candidates teaching as interns in Metropolitan Nashville

*Figure skating instructor, Metropolitan Board of Parks and Recreation, Nashville, TN, 1985-1995 and 1997-2001*

Taught basic skills, freestyle, and ice dance

*Elementary teacher, Bellevue School District 405, Bellevue, WA, 1976 – 1979*

*Teacher, Pacific Science Center, Seattle, WA, February – June, 1976*

*Substitute teacher, Bellevue School District 405, Bellevue, WA, 1975 - 1976*

**PUBLICATIONS**

Dalgarn, M., See Them Soar, a series of articles for parents of first year college students, Quarterly publications.

Dalgarn, M., Nashville Parent, "As Your Teen Leaves for College," pages 66-67, July 2004.

Dalgarn, M., "Smart Start – a survival guide for first year college students (and their parents too)," 2004.

Dalgarn, M., Talking Stick, "Success Has Three Cs – Communication, Cooperation, and Collaboration," pages 18 and 22, Vol. 21, No. 7, June 2004.

Dalgarn, M., "Living in the 'Burbs – a survival guide for students living off-campus," 2004.

Dalgarn and Flader, Talking Stick, "Living in the 'Burbs," page 26-27, Vol. 20, No. 7, June 2003.

Dalgarn, M., NIRSA Journal, "The Role of the Campus Recreation Center in Creating a Community," Spring Vol. 25, No. 1, April 2001.

Originator and managing editor of the *OverVU*, a newsletter sent to parents of Vanderbilt undergraduates. Contributed 44 articles between October of 1985 and June of 1999.

Dalgarn, Talking Stick, "Living /Learning Lodges Offer Unique Opportunities," Vol. 9, No. 7, April 1992.

**PRESENTATIONS,  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND RELATED EXPERIENCE**

Leadership Cheatham County, TN, August 2005 - present

College Parents of America, Panel of Experts, Fall 2004 – present

The Oxford Round Table – Student Affairs, St. Antony's College, Oxford University, Oxford, England, July 10 – 15, 2005.

Lewis and Clark College Alumni Board, Portland, Oregon, 1998-2004

2001 Fulbright Seminar for U.S. Administrators in International Education, Germany, May 2001

NASPA's 20th Richard Steven's Institute, Taos, NM, July 13-20, 1997.

NASPA Women's Symposium, Cincinnati, OH, November 9-11, 1995.

First Year Experience Conference, "Programmatic Responses That Aid in Helping Students (And Their Parents) Make Successful Transitions From High School to College," Ireland, July 1994.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, Reaffirmation Committee, Eckerd College, September 1990.