



A Message from John Tarpley
to the 2008 General Surgery
Match Candidates



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Thank you for visiting the Vanderbilt General Surgery web-site. Dr. Jeff Dattilo and I welcome your interest and inquiries. Please browse our [Surgical Education drop-down section](#) and check us out. Currently, 254 ACGME-approved programs for residency education in General Surgery are available to you. We are one of many good programs. Our program is research-oriented with an academic focus. Most of our residents enter with an interest in possibly pursuing careers in “academic surgery” in one of its many iterations including basic science/bench research, translational research, outcomes, health policy, or education.

Each year we finish 7 chiefs. Most but not all pursue fellowship training. Of the 2006-7 chiefs, 6 proceeded to fellowships, usually obtaining their top choice: Surgical Pediatric Critical Care at Los Angeles Children’s Hospital, Surgical Oncology at Pittsburgh, Research Fellowship (Breast) at Mayo Clinic - Minnesota, Pediatric Surgery at Vanderbilt, Pediatric Surgery at Kansas City Children’s Hospital, and Minimally Invasive Surgery at Case Western. The seventh proceeded to Okinawa, Japan to commence his three year Naval commitment.

Our faculty and senior residents work to get our junior residents (PGY I + II) into the OR on most of their PGY I rotations and the non-critical care rotations of the PGY II year. Vanderbilt has the tradition and reputation of training residents who can operate--not a “given” in this decade or earlier decades for that matter.

Every word of each folder from our US medical school applicants is read. We utilize a 55-point screening system (letters, transcript, activities, research, USMLE scores, AOA or not) to help determine whom to interview. AOA counts only one point: some schools don’t have chapters or award AOA after March. We generally have ~ 450 US applicants; we interview ~ 75; we match 7. Note: each year 1500 US med students apply for ~ 1000 categorical general surgery spots. Thus we are privileged to read the folders of nearly a third of the folks pursuing the general surgery match. We take your time and interest seriously.

Nashville is a good place to live. The climate is comfortable with collegiate and pro sports, public parks, the arts, and lots of young folks here. Housing prices vary from moderate to expensive. Public transport is abysmal, but traffic is not so bad. Nashville is dynamic, lively with a diverse economy and reasonably “safe.”

Vanderbilt is a great university with a beautiful campus. The medical center has a state-of-the-art plant, a new Children’s Hospital, and a VA connected by a walkway. Rotations at St. Thomas and the Metropolitan Nashville General are within three miles.

We see a research opportunity and experience as a privilege, not a task. Most of our residents spend two years in research (very broadly defined). A funded PhD option is available. Eleven of

our current 46 categorical residents are in the lab and 1 is pursuing a PhD. Clinical as well as lab residents are encouraged to attend meetings and conferences and give presentations.

Vanderbilt and the VA are on the cutting edge of informatics. VU x-rays, records, and labs are accessible from home. Tech support within the section is outstanding.

Our strength is our people. We work hard. We like each other. We support and help one another. A collegial atmosphere exists between the attending surgeons, the departmental leadership, and the residents.

If this sounds appealing to you, forward your application to us. We have an informal get together on the Friday evening prior to the actual interview day, hosted on campus to permit those on call to attend.

- We have 4 Saturday interviews scheduled for this Match season: Dec 8 & 15 and Jan 12 & 19.
- Each candidate sees two faculty for interviews, a short chat with a departmental leader, and an interview with a senior/chief resident in addition to the program presentation, a brief tour, and a luncheon.
- Folks are able to depart mid-afternoon on Saturday if they wish.
- Grand Rounds are held on Friday mornings at 7am. Anyone who wishes is invited to Grand Rounds, Residents' Teaching Conference, and to hook up with various residents and see a day of regular work or check out Nashville prior to the 6 pm get together.
- One of our goals is for you to have free and ready access to our residents. We think they are "satisfied customers" and our best advertisement.

Our phone number is 615 343 6642. Feel free to contact any of us in the Surgical Education Office, General Surgery, Vanderbilt:

Coordinator: Stephanie Rowe
Education Assistant: Alli Watts
Associate: Maggie Tarpley
Associate Program Director: Jeff Dattilo, MD
Program Director: John Tarpley, MD

stephanie.rowe@vanderbilt.edu
allison.watts@vanderbilt.edu
margaret.tarpley@vanderbilt.edu
jeff.dattilo@vanderbilt.edu
john.tarpley@vanderbilt.edu

For the Surgical Education Office,
John Tarpley, MD aka "Tarp" 3 August 2007