

Fred Russell-Grantland Rice Scholarship in Sports Journalism, 2024–2025



Dylan Jacob Tovitz

College of Arts and Science, Class of 2028

Undeclared

Livingston, NJ

"I would like to sincerely thank you and your organization for helping to give me this amazing opportunity to attend Vanderbilt. Your generosity and belief in students like myself inspires me to make the most of my opportunities on and off Vanderbilt's campus. To know that I was chosen to not only represent your organization, but also to carry forward Fred Russell and Grantland Rice's legacy is a tremendous honor, and I am deeply grateful for it."

Tell us about your background (where you're from, interests, family). Why did you choose Vanderbilt, and what influenced your decision?

I was born in New York City but have lived in Livingston, New Jersey with my parents and younger sister since I was three years old. I have been a huge sports fan for as long as I can remember, specifically of the Yankees, Giants, and Knicks. In high school I served as captain of my varsity tennis team and also played baseball and was a pickleball instructor. Beyond athletics, I was involved in student journalism, serving as editor-in-chief of my high school paper *The Lance*, and co-creating and producing a live radio talk show called *Office Hours*.

Outside of that, I love to listen to country and classic rock music and spend time with my friends. When it came to choosing a college, Vanderbilt stood out as the right fit for me for several reasons. I wanted a school that had top-tier academics and a Division I sports presence while still having a manageable size that wouldn't overwhelm me as a first-year student. Vanderbilt delivered on all three of these fronts, while also being located in Nashville. Having both the opportunities that come with living in a growing city, while also still having a defined campus, made Vanderbilt stand out for me. Lastly, the school's emphasis on extracurricular involvement and experiential learning assured me that I would be able to grow personally and find my passions at Vanderbilt.

How did Vanderbilt's financial aid affect your decision to attend?

This scholarship has been an incredible benefit to me and my family, significantly influencing my decision to attend Vanderbilt. I was deferred in the early decision round and applied to over a dozen different other universities in hopes of finding one that both had an excellent academic environment and a manageable financial burden. I ultimately had a few options I was deciding between, but receiving this scholarship truly made my decision extremely clear. Being a Russell-Rice scholar not only made it more possible for me to attend Vanderbilt but has also encouraged me to fully explore my passions on campus. Although there is no formal journalism program on campus, the scholarship has inspired me to seek out student journalism in other ways, ultimately leading me to the *Vanderbilt Hustler*. The opportunities and financial relief that the scholarship has provided me have been nothing short of a blessing.

What does a Vanderbilt education mean to you?

A Vanderbilt education has already had a profound impact on me during my short time here. Vanderbilt's unique course offerings have allowed me to explore classes that genuinely inspire me. In my writing class Sports and Asian America, I have studied topics ranging from Japanese internment to Linsanity to Shohei Ohtani, gaining an understanding of the generational impact of Asians on sport. In another class, United States Elections, I had the incredible privilege to hear Nancy Pelosi and Mitch McConnell speak, a unique experience that I never imagined having in my first semester of college. These stories truly highlight the opportunities that emerge from a Vanderbilt education, and the emphasis on a well-rounded education has enabled me to explore diverse disciplines and discover what I am passionate about and what I want to pursue for the next three years and beyond.

Are there student programs or activities that have significantly impacted you thus far and what programs or activities are you most excited to get involved with during your time at Vanderbilt?

In my short time on campus, I have already immersed myself in the university's extracurricular scene. Already passionate for student journalism, I quickly joined Vanderbilt Hustler as a sports staff writer. This role has allowed me to improve my journalistic skills by covering all aspects of Vanderbilt athletics, including getting the privilege of interviewing football coach Clark Lea and baseball coach Tim Corbin during press conferences. I am also currently training to become a Vanderbilt tour guide, where I will lead weekly tours of campus for prospective students, combining my passion for storytelling with my appreciation for Vanderbilt's community. I have also pursued my interest in sports analytics through the Vanderbilt Sports Business and Analytics Club, where I was elected co-director of relations with Vanderbilt Athletics. As I gain more experience in these fields, I am eager to deepen my contributions and explore new opportunities to make the most of my time on Vanderbilt's campus.

What intrigues or excites you most about the Immersion experience graduation requirement?

Vanderbilt's Immersion experience reflects the university's commitment to meaningful, hands-on learning that prepares students for life beyond graduation. This requirement reflects Vanderbilt's dedication to bringing academics to the real world, which is a new concept to me that has helped make learning so much more intrinsically valuable. Although I have not started exploring immersion opportunities just yet, I am excited to learn about what I can do outside of the classroom, whether through research, an internship, or some other activity. As someone who values the outcomes of my education, I find this emphasis on experiential learning compelling, and I am eager to delve into the immersion requirement and learn how I can make a difference in whatever field I choose to pursue.

How have you found a sense of belonging at Vanderbilt?

Vanderbilt's motto, *Crescere aude*, or "Dare to Grow" is more than just a motto. It's an attitude that stands out on campus every single day. What stands out most to me is how the culture of growth extends beyond just individual aspirations. I have noticed at Vanderbilt, it's not just about personal growth, but everyone is deeply invested in helping others thrive as well. There truly is such an extraordinary sense of community on campus. Whether it's the deans, professors, or fellow students, everyone genuinely wants you to succeed. Knowing that I'm part of a university where people have my back has already helped me grow so much as a student and as a person, and I can't wait to see where it takes me in the coming semesters. From my time living on The Ingram Commons to my involvement in Greek life and campus clubs, I have already met so many incredible people that have inspired me to be the best version of myself. This supportive and collaborative environment is the living embodiment of *Crescere aude* and it will undoubtedly have a profound impact on my experience in college and beyond.