

# VUMC Reporter

## Aspirnaut event details impact of art in science

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Portrait artist Igor Babailov, right, looks on as Billy Hudson, Ph.D., and Julie Hudson embrace at last week's Aspirnaut portrait unveiling event. (photo by Steve Green)

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Students watched, transfixed, for nearly an hour last Friday as internationally known portrait artist Igor Babailov sketched Jeff Balsler, M.D., Ph.D., vice chancellor for Health Affairs and dean of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

The sketching, projected on a big screen in the Eskind Biomedical Library board room, was the concluding event in the Aspirnaut annual summer research program for high school and undergraduate students from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds.

The event introduced a new dimension to the program, launched at Vanderbilt in 2009 by Billy Hudson, Ph.D., and Julie Hudson, M.D. — drawing in science.

The ability to draw is an essential part of the scientist's toolkit, yet few scientists have been trained to draw, Billy Hudson explained.

Some top-tier scientific journals now require authors to provide "graphical abstracts," summaries of their findings in pictorial form. Drawings help scientists visualize, communicate and solve complex scientific challenges.

“The skill of drawing is a vehicle for discovery and for translation ... for colleagues and the lay public,” he said.

Beginning next summer, Aspirnauts who complete the drawing component will receive Certificates of Drawing in Science, said Julie Hudson.

Also during Friday’s event, Babailov unveiled his portrait of Julie Hudson surrounded by students. The painting illustrates the Aspirnaut motto: “Aspire, Seek, Achieve.”

The summer research program is “an educational gift to you from Vanderbilt,” Billy Hudson told the 40 Aspirnauts who attended the event. “Develop your math and science talent so you can pay it forward, to help your families and communities. The future is with you.”

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