CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR
tel: 212-736-4536
www.nyc.gov/mcb4

JESSICA CHAIT
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

December 8th, 2025

Angie Master
Vice Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
David N. Dinkins Municipal Building, 9th Floor North
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Proposed alterations to the General Theological Seminary for Vanderbilt University

Dear Vice Chair Master:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4), at its regularly scheduled meeting on December 3, 2025, voted, by a vote of 47 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, to recommend to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) approval with conditions of a Certificate of Appropriateness for proposed alterations to the General Theological Seminary in the Chelsea Historic District. MCB4 applauds the applicant's thoughtful proposal for the redesign of the 21st Street main entry, accessibility at building entrances, site lighting, and signage. Our recommendation of approval is conditioned on limitation of vertical banner signs to the 21st Street façades of Moore and Seabury Hall.

Background
In September of 2024, a 99-year lease agreement between Vanderbilt University and the General Theological Seminary was publicly announced. The proposed modifications will facilitate Vanderbilt's use of the Seminary buildings and grounds and serve preservation by keeping the Seminary in use and cared for. No building additions or demolition are proposed.

Recommendation
CB4 objects to the banner signs proposed for attachment to buildings along 21st Street other than Moore and Seabury Hall, which flank the campus's main entrance. These more modern buildings have brickwork with approximately 3/8-inch mortar joints that can more plausibly accommodate banner anchors without damage to adjacent bricks. The other building façades on the street have both more historically sensitive brickwork and narrower mortar joints. Installation and thermal expansion of anchors at these joints would almost certainly damage adjacent brickwork and

should be avoided, as should anchorage directly into bricks. The proposed attachment of banners to Hoffman Hall's buttresses should absolutely be avoided, for the above reason and to avoid interfering with the rhythmic and highly picturesque effect of the buttresses, especially when viewed obliquely from the adjacent sidewalk. The proposed signage advertising Vanderbilt's presence would extend most of the length of the block and overwhelm its residential character at any rate.

Sincerely,

Jessica Chait
Chair
Manhattan
Community Board 4

Gregory Morris
Co-Chair
Chelsea
Land Use Committee

cc: Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council
Vanderbilt University