

Will come up again in the Jan. F.S. Meeting

AA: 002.1 10-4-79

A PROPOSAL TO REVISE THE UNIVERSITY'S GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS AND TO REVISE CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COLLEGE CURRICULUM COMMITTEES, THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL, AND THE GENERAL EDUCATION GUIDELINES COMMITTEE.

### Revised General Education Requirements

Total requirements in general education would be 53-54 hours.

#### Required courses. (11-12 hours)

English Composition--6 hours

Physical Development--2-3 hours (present Category E)

Math or Philosophy 110 or INFS 142 or CS 240--3 hours

#### Selected general education courses. (42 hours)

Courses will be divided into three categories:

Humanities (present Categories A and B)--12-18 hours

Social and Behavioral Studies (present Category C)--12-18 hours

Natural Sciences and Math (present Categories D and E)--  
12-18 hours

Present Category F would be divided among the above three categories. To meet the requirements of the selected general education courses:

1. A student shall take 12 to 18 hours in each of the three categories listed above for a total of 42 semester hours.
2. The courses must be selected from at least three different fields within each category.
3. A student majoring in any discipline listed within one of the categories may count only 12 hours in that category toward general education.
4. Only those courses recommended by the various departments for meeting general education requirements may be selected.

### Revision of Responsibilities

The final responsibilities for approving courses for general education will lie with each department in the University. The college curriculum committees, the Academic Council, and the General Education Committee of the Academic Council shall no longer have the responsibility of considering and recommending courses for general education that already exist in the different departments, providing the courses have received departmental approval for general education

The General Education Committee shall continue to review the general education guidelines and make recommendations to the Academic Council in regard to the distribution of courses and the total hours in the required and selected general education categories. The committee shall also have the responsibility of recommending the appropriate categories for the different general education courses approved by the departments.



REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

12-13-79

In further explaining the proposal to revise the University's general education requirements (AA: 002.1), a distinction needs to be made between the "required courses" (11-12 hours) and the "selected general education courses" (42 hours) that are outlined in the attached proposal.

The "required courses" are generic courses which are believed to be essential for success in college; they are meant to inform the student's minds by emphasizing knowledge and skills; and they are to be taken early in college, preferably during the freshman year. They include 6 hours of English composition, necessary for communication skills in college and in general life; 2-3 hours of physical development to promote the values of physical fitness and healthful living; and 3 hours of mathematics, logic, or computer science for quantification skills and/or rational thinking.

The "selected general education courses" are actually liberal-education courses which are essential for building a foundation upon which the students can attain the good life. They are meant to develop the student's minds by emphasizing interests and values as well as higher-level intellectual skills and abilities (analyzing and synthesizing, e. g.); and they are balanced to allow the students to elect courses equally from the humanities, the social studies, and the natural sciences. No specific courses are required, but a wide range of both participative and non-participative



courses are encouraged to be offered in all departments. The liberal-education courses are to be distributed throughout the student's college careers along with advanced courses in the major and/or minor fields with as many connections as possible established between liberal education and professional training.

There are provisions in the proposal to assure diversity in the liberal education courses--a minimum of 9 fields must be experienced, and courses in as many as 14 fields may be taken. There are also provisions for students to explore a liberal-education field outside their majors or minors in greater depth than is now possible by taking up to four courses in that field, thus going beyond the concepts and values taught in that field's introductory course.

Since two courses taken by a student in a particular field would probably count as both major requirements and as general education requirements, and if other courses also counted for both the minor and general education, the total requirements in general education could be as low as 41-42 hours outside the major and minor fields instead of the 53-54 hours as stated in the proposal. It would be a mistake to reduce the total general education requirements further. With renewed emphasis on educating the "whole person", with a rapidly-changing career market, and with the continued knowledge explosion, then concentrating on a student's individual interests and attitudes toward learning has become more vital than increasing the requirements in a student's field of specialization.

If certain programs demand that specific courses be taken to satisfy certification requirements and/or accreditation standards,



then those programs would probably be exempt (as they are presently) from following the general education guidelines.

The concern for the general education program at Western was pursued by the Academic Affairs Committee partly because a number of complaints had been heard from faculty members about the "inequity" of requiring 15 hours in the social studies while requiring only 12 hours in the natural sciences and 9-12 hours in the humanities. There were also claims that certain general education courses were approved and/or required because those courses had been favored by former high administrators; and that, by approving some courses for general education and disallowing others, some academic deans were protecting the less-popular departments in their colleges, while some department heads were protecting enrollments and incompetent faculty members within their own departments. The AAC found no evidence to support any of these rumors and suspicions. Instead, the present general education program, inequitable or not, seems to be a product that reflects the philosophies of the majority of the members of the Academic Council rather than a product of political trickery and power plays that did or did not occur in the past.

The AAC has persisted with the proposal because differing philosophies regarding the general education program obviously still exists in the Faculty Senate and in the Academic Council. Some faculty and administrators believe strongly in a core curriculum similar to the one recently established at Harvard. This return to a core at several colleges was usually a reaction to public criticism of higher education and to demands for accountability by tax payers, alumni, and boards of trustees.



The core curriculum is not always educationally sound for all institutions. While it is desirable to have high ideals, few would argue that Western's students have lower competencies than do the students at Harvard, and that the same general education program would therefore not necessarily be appropriate for both schools.

Some faculty and administrators also look upon the "smorgasbord" general education offerings or the "cafeteria approach" as being undesirable. These people apparently are prejudging some courses as being less worthy than others, ~~often basing their judgments than others,~~ often basing their judgments on hearsay or on their own undergraduate experiences.

This prejudice toward certain courses is the main reason for the second part of the proposal ("Revision of Responsibilities")-- to relieve members of the Academic Council from acting upon courses about which they are not familiar. The proposal intends to challenge all departments to use laissez-faire in attracting students through the improvement of quality in all sections of all courses offered for general education. Devoting conscientious effort to improving the quality of course offerings seems to be an approach that is more productive and respectable than is the present use of political rhetoric to get courses approved for general education in college curriculum committees and in the Academic Council.

joke

Some faculty and administrators believe that students are incapable of determining which general education courses to elect. The AAC believes that through proper advisement, students are not only capable of choosing liberal education courses that are



appropriate for them as individuals, but since education is different for each student, this freedom of choice provides valuable experience for all students and should therefore be a part of their education.

The following incidents, paraphrases and quotations support a liberalized general education program:

During the current revolving Faculty Exchange Program several interviews and discussions have centered around the general education programs at the three participating schools. It seems to be the consensus of those faculty members who were interviewed at Shippensburg State College and at Winthrop College that their respective general education programs were more liberal than Western's. Although the faculty (along with some students and administrators who were interviewed) cited both advantages and disadvantages to their programs, the prevalent opinion was that they preferred a general education program that had fewer required courses and more courses for students to elect. History and mathematics faculty members in particular indicated that they did not envy Western's faculty who had to teach courses that were required of all students in the University. The feeling was expressed that when students were allowed to elect courses rather than have them required, then the courses were more interesting to students and faculty alike, and better teaching and more learning therefore took place.

Raymond C. Gibson, Professor Emeritus of Education at

Indiana University, an international authority on higher education, and a W.K.U. graduate, does not believe in a liberal education program that has strict course requirements. According to Dr. Gibson, when such a program exists, students look upon it as "a necessary evil to be dispensed with as soon as possible and with the least possible effort."<sup>1</sup>

Bernard Murchland, Chairman of the Philosophy Department at Ohio University, has explained what he believes are the reasons for the "death" of liberal education:

--there has been too much emphasis on vocationalism.

*If this be true, why require English, math, P.E.?*

*would it be considered strict course requirements?*



- students have too little opportunity to explore a field outside their majors beyond the introductory courses in that field.
- students are not trained to exercise effective freedom of human choice in most educational situations.
- there is an absence of "fun" in the educational process where the student's personality can "grow according to its own natural rhythms."
- the universities have failed to rescue students from boredom.<sup>2</sup>

Even James J. Kilpatrick, conservative syndicated columnist, who is opposed to most liberal educational practices, concedes that individual rights are still the most important consideration in education. Mr. Kilpatrick apparently came full circle when he said:

"But occasional abuses are part of the price we willingly pay for freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of the mind to seek truth and happiness in individual ways. The benefits of diversity far exceed the supposed advantages of uniformity."<sup>3</sup>

Finally in discussing the "great Frisbee flap of 1979", Peter Diamandopoulos, President of Sonoma State University has this to say:

Some pundits insist that the only serious education is found through the time-honored disciplines. But it is misguided to attempt to impart knowledge exclusively through these. Higher education goes beyond textbooks; there are neither maps nor directional signs on the frontiers of knowledge.

There is no royal road to learning. Higher education, by its very nature and complexity, must evolve its own standards, adjust its strategies and shift its targets to an everchanging world.

A publicly supported university is mandated to educate the most diverse collection of students, with the most diverse interests and levels of preparation and kinds of educational expectations and varying social and moral and practical outlooks. Whatever assists in that effort--intellectually, psychologically, esthetically, physically, practically--should be tried.<sup>4</sup>

*Entirely out of context*



## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>Raymond C. Gibson, The Challenge of Leadership in Higher Education (Dubuque, Iowa W.C. Brown Company, 1964), pp. 181-199.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Murchland, "The Eclipse of the Liberal Arts; Change, (November 1976), pp. 23-26.

<sup>3</sup>James J. Kilpatrick, "A hallelujah for ruling on Kentucky schools," The Louisville Courier-Journal, November 15, 1979, p. A9.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Diamandopoulos, "Frisbee class in college: Here's why," The Louisville Courier-Journal, December 2, 1979, p. D3.