

Submitted APRIL 23, 1986

REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON GENERAL EDUCATION

The Ad Hoc Committee on General Education of the College of Arts and Sciences was appointed by Dean Steigelfest early in Fall Semester 1985. The committee was charged with reviewing the existing distribution requirements and, if deemed necessary, recommending new requirements for the College of Arts and Sciences.

Literature on the reform of general education was reviewed by the committee, including:

Bennett, William J., "To Reclaim a Legacy: Text of Report on Humanities in Education." The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 1984.

Hansen, Desna W. "New Direction in General Education." The Journal of General Education 33(4), 1982.

Gaff, Jerry, "Curricular Imperatives for Reviewing General Education." The Journal of General Education, 34(3), 1982.

Cobb, Wm. Daniel, "General Education: The Prior Agenda." Liberal Education, 1982.

Association of American Colleges, Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community, 1985.

Copies of Cobb's article and the relevant chapter of the Association of American Colleges report are attached for information purposes.

The committee concludes that the existing distribution requirement is not doing what might be assumed was intended. It is ensuring neither breadth nor depth in the liberal arts and sciences. The committee recognizes that many students, because of their own choices and good advising, are served well by the present requirement. For many other students, however, their liberal arts and sciences education is a "smorgasbord" of courses selected too often for non-academic reasons such as the fit in their schedules. Committee members expressed concern that significant numbers of students are graduating without having had certain intellectual experiences or acquired certain skills.

Regardless of which goals and requirements for general education are approved by Arts and Sciences, the committee recommends that efforts be made to express to students and faculty the purpose of general education. At present, no formal statement of the goals of general education (or the distribution requirement) appears in the Widener Bulletin. No guidelines are provided to faculty for advising students how to put together an appropriate general education program.

The committee recognizes a conceptual distinction between distribution requirements and general education requirements. Distribution requirements compel students to take a specific number of credits in each

of the divisions of Arts and Sciences, thereby distributing their exposure to liberal arts and sciences across the three units. General education requirements typically involve more direction. The assumption is that there are certain identifiable skills and/or knowledge areas which should be part of a baccalaureate program. Distribution requirements and general education requirements are not incompatible.

With regard to general education requirements, the committee recognizes the distinction between skills and knowledge areas. The goals of general education recommended by the committee reflect this distinction.

GOALS OF GENERAL EDUCATION

SKILLS

The three skills are writing, mathematics, and critical thinking.

Writing

All students are required to take ENGL 100/101 Composition and Critical Thought. Instructors in these classes clearly define a minimum level of writing performance for passing the course. Where appropriate, courses commonly taken to satisfy general education requirements should include writing, e.g. papers, essay exams, lab reports. In all such assignments, students are expected to be able to express themselves accurately and effectively. Students identified by faculty as having difficulty writing should be referred to the Writing Center. Faculty may make a student's final grade conditional on the student's effective participation in individualized Writing Center instruction.

Mathematics

Mathematical competence is expected of all students. This can be demonstrated by successful completion of one of the following courses: MATH 101, 107, 117, or 141. It can also be demonstrated by passing a proficiency test in basic mathematics administered by the Science Division. The proposed Math Remediation Center will be available for students needing assistance.

Critical Thinking

Students are expected to develop basic critical thinking skills, including: (1) the ability to evaluate arguments critically; that is, to be able to say whether an argument is valid or invalid and to explain why; (2) the ability to think logically and to produce valid arguments; and, (3) the ability to draw entailed conclusions from premises. This goal is primarily satisfied by PHIL 105 or PHIL 120. Selected other general education courses, or courses from the majors may also be judged to satisfy this requirement.

KNOWLEDGE AREAS

Five knowledge areas have been identified as goals for general education. The general objective is to acquaint students with the perspective and associated content of the five areas. The areas are listed with brief elaborations.

Arts

To enable students to analyze and critique the aesthetic judgements of themselves and others.

To encourage an appreciation of the arts/literature and to cultivate students' abilities to experience their environment from an aesthetic perspective.

To encourage and develop students' appreciation of the artistic and literary achievements of individuals in our society and others.

Historical Consciousness

To enable students to understand the methods of historical inquiry.

To enable students to understand the historical, social and philosophical contexts of important human achievements.

To develop students' appreciation of the contributions of our forebearers, be they figures in politics, economic enterprise, the arts, philosophy, social movements, or the natural and social sciences.

To enable students to understand the conflicts faced by our predecessors and their attempts at resolution.

To encourage students' appreciation of the fact that what exists today in society is an outgrowth of what has occurred in the past.

Science

To develop students' understanding of the scientific method.

To develop students' appreciation to the role of science in individuals' lives and in modern society.

To give students an awareness of the accomplishments of the scientific community.

Societal/Cultural Perspective

To develop students' understanding of the empirical (i.e. social science) approaches to human behavior.

To develop students' understanding of human behavior and how it is influenced by the societies/cultures of which we are part.

To develop students' understanding of the significance and variety of human groups and institutions (e.g. family, government, religion, economic institutions).

To enable students to recognize and confront the social issues facing our society and others and to appreciate the accomplishments of human societies.

To develop students' understanding of cultures/societies other than their own.

Values

To develop students' understanding of the ethical dimension of human existence.

To encourage students' appreciation that life for an individual as well as for a society involves ethical choices.

To encourage students' understanding of how our society and its institutions define and influence our values and ethical choices.

To encourage and enable students to recognize and confront the ethical problems facing their generation.

To encourage students' appreciation of the values of a democratic and pluralistic society.

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

At its December 5, 1985, meeting the committee approved the following recommendation for the general education program in Arts and Sciences.

- I. Arts and Sciences students must complete a minimum of 12 semester hours in Science with the following stipulations:
 1. Students must demonstrate mathematical competence by one of the following methods:
 - a) Successfully complete MATH 101 or MATH 107. (Note that MATH 101 cannot be used to satisfy the Science distribution requirements of 12 semester hours in Science.)
 - b) Successfully complete MATH 117 or MATH 141.
 - c) Pass a proficiency test in basic mathematics administered by the Science Division of the College of Arts and Sciences.

2. Complete one semester of a Science course with an associated laboratory. Any of the following are recommended:

BIOL 201

CHEM 101

ENVR 103, 104, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209

Any new courses to be specifically developed to satisfy this requirement.

3. Recommended additional courses to satisfy the Science requirement for those students who are not majoring in a Science discipline (or Nursing or Engineering) are:

BIOL 100

CHEM 100,110

PHYS 120

MATH/CSCI 107

CSCI 141, 142

ALL MATH COURSES NUMBERED GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 110

In addition, the following motion passed unanimously:

Science faculty must approve and assign a Science number to any course to be included as fulfilling the Science/Technology distribution requirement for Arts and Science majors.

- II. Arts and Sciences majors must complete a minimum of 12 semester hours in Social Science with the following stipulations:
 1. Students must take a minimum of two 100-level Social Science courses, which cannot be in the same discipline.
 2. Students must take a minimum of one 200-level or 300-level Social Science course.
- III. Arts and Sciences majors must complete ENGL 100/101 and a minimum of 12 additional semester hours in Humanities with the following stipulations:
 1. Students must take one course in at least two disciplines.
 2. Students must take a minimum of one 300-level course.

At the committee's February 12, 1986, meeting Dean Steigelfest proposed an alternative structure for general education. The committee discussed and amended the proposal and is sending it forward for consideration.

3 cr. A. English 100/101 - for writing skills

 B. Science/Math

4 cr. 1) Lab science

1 - 4 cr. 2) Math competency - course or exam

4 - 8 cr. 3) Additional science/division courses

 C. Humanities

3 cr. 1) History

 Suggested ways of meeting this requirement may be

 a) specialized courses identifying themes/epochs in human history and approaching these from different perspectives, or specialized courses identifying works and approaching these from different perspectives; or

 b) designated courses in history.

3 cr. 2) Arts

 Any course in literature, art history, music, and selected philosophy courses.

6 cr. 3) Additional courses in Humanities, one of which should be advanced (except if a student is taking two semesters of modern language).

 D. Social Science

3-6 cr. 1. Societal/cultural perspective

 a. Any introductory social science course(s).

3-6 cr. 2. Advanced course(s) in Social Science division.

3 cr. 3. Advanced student level course

 a. Group of courses on social issues taught from an interdisciplinary perspective.
 Prerequisites: senior status and completion of other nine semester hours in Social Science.

At the committee's April 3, 1986, meeting the following resolutions were passed:

Resolution 1. That the chair of the Committee on General Education review the final resolution of this committee and prepare an estimate of the resources needed for its implementation prior to forwarding the report to the Arts and Science Curriculum and Planning Committee. A statement should also be made about clearly discernable effects on faculty or divisional programs.

Commentary: These resources might include new faculty for teaching of laboratory science courses; plant and equipment costs.

Development and administration of math proficiency tests.

Faculty in mathematics.

As to other impact:

In laboratories designed to give students greater insight into scientific method and reasoning, will faculty seminars for those undertaking such instruction be available?

Resolution 2. The Committee on General Education recommends to the Arts and Sciences Curriculum and Planning Committee that it seek a commitment from the Provost that the resources necessary for the implementation of its recommendations, if adopted, will be forthcoming.

Resolution 3. That the Committee on General Education recommends that the final plan recommended by the Arts and Sciences Curriculum and Planning Committee to the faculty of Arts and Sciences will be accompanied by an estimated listing of resources necessary for its implementation. A statement should also be made about clearly discernible effects on faculty or divisional programs.

Further, the final recommendation, once approved by the faculty of Arts and Science, be accompanied by a similar statement listing necessary resources for its implementation. A statement should also be made about clearly discernible effects on faculty or divisional programs.