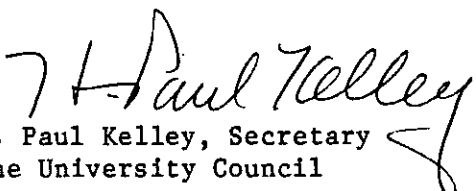


DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

Frank D. Bean (Sociology), Chair of the ad hoc Committee on the Undergraduate Experience, has filed with the Secretary of the University Council the report reproduced below. The Report is being distributed to members of the University Council for their information, and it will be discussed at the University Council meeting on January 27, 1992.


H. Paul Kelley, Secretary
The University Council

ENRICHING THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE
AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

A Report and Recommendations

Prepared by

The Committee on the Undergraduate Experience

November, 1991

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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November 26, 1991

Dr. William H. Cunningham
President
The University of Texas at Austin
Main Building 400
Austin, Texas 78712

Dear President Cunningham:

On November 29, 1990, you created the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience and directed it to undertake a comprehensive and thorough examination of undergraduate education and life at The University and to propose recommendations for improvements.

It has been my privilege to chair this endeavor. On behalf of the members of the committee, I am pleased to transmit this report, Enriching the Undergraduate Experience at The University of Texas at Austin.

In developing its recommendations, the committee devoted nearly a year to gathering information and to discussion of issues. The committee members individually and collectively sought the opinions of hundreds of students, dozens of faculty, and numerous representatives of The University's staff and administration. We benefited enormously from their advice and suggestions.

Our recommendations are directed toward improving the educations and lives of our students. We are particularly enthusiastic about proposals that will strengthen university-wide education and the campus-wide delivery of student services.

The committee believes adopting and implementing these recommendations offer the prospect of meaningful enrichment of the undergraduate experience at The University. Accordingly, the members of the committee unanimously and enthusiastically support the entire set of recommendations set forth in the report.

We have worked hard, and there is much work left to be done. We look forward to joining with you and the rest of The University community in the continuing effort to improve undergraduate education and life at The University.

Respectfully,



Frank D. Bean
Ashbel Smith Professor of
Sociology and Chair, The
Committee on the
Undergraduate Experience

The Committee:

Dr. Daniel Acosta, Jr.
Ms. Brooke Barton
Dr. Alan Campion
Dr. Melissa Collie
Mr. Hector DeLeon
Dr. Mario Gonzalez
Mrs. Jo Anne Hawkins
Admiral Bob R. Inman
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Mr. Wayne Marshall
Ms. Priscilla McMillion
Ms. Beth Moy
Ms. Sonya Pickens
Ms. Tracy Silna
Mr. Paul Suarez
Ms. Cheryl Wood

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to develop new initiatives to strengthen undergraduate education, President William H. Cunningham appointed the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience in the Fall of 1990. In his charge to the committee, President Cunningham asked the group to conduct "a thorough examination of all aspects of The University's undergraduate program" and to make "comprehensive recommendations to the faculty and administration to ensure that the undergraduate experience serves the needs of students who will live most of their lives in the 21st century." This report is the committee's response to the President's charge. It seeks to take a hard but balanced look at undergraduate life and education at The University.

In the course of its work, the committee came to the strong conviction that The University provides excellent academic opportunities for students to obtain an undergraduate education characterized by both breadth and depth of intellectual experience. The University also offers a wide range of non-academic experiences that provide additional enrichment and fulfillment. Nevertheless, in the process of carrying out its charge to assess thoroughly undergraduate education and life at The University, the committee also came to the realization that increases in the size and complexity of the institution over the past decade, as well as a growing trend toward autonomy on the part of the colleges and schools, have created a special need to reemphasize undergraduate education at The University, particularly those parts of the undergraduate experience that foster a sense of intellectual and institutional community. Broadly speaking, the challenge facing undergraduate education at The University is one of finding ways to build greater intellectual community and institutional integration without diminishing the benefits that accompany size, complexity, and increasing specialization.

This report sets forth specific recommendations to meet this challenge, together with rationales for each. Based on its assessment of the undergraduate experience at The University, the committee concluded that five kinds of improvements would increase

intellectual community and institutional integration and lead to significant enhancement of the undergraduate experience at The University. These are: (1) strengthening general education courses and developing university-wide undergraduate programs; (2) paying more attention to the needs of individual students; (3) developing greater respect for diversity; (4) promoting better teaching and active involvement in learning; and (5) improving student services. Our recommendations for enhancing the undergraduate experience are divided into these five kinds of improvements.

General education and university-wide programs. In this area, we recommend a pilot program to develop integrated core curricula in natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities; a university-wide first-year orientation and introduction to The University course; a campus-wide University Honors Program; the consolidation of undergraduate administrative functions; the insertion of a statement of the General Education Requirements in university publications; and the addition of dormitory space to facilitate the integration of first-year students into The University's intellectual and institutional community.

Focusing more on student needs. In this area, we recommend a periodic survey of students and student services; the establishment of a Volunteer Center; several activities to foster more personal relationships between faculty and students; departmental information and problem/solving offices; and a training program for staff in communication and customer service skills.

Achieving greater respect for diversity. In this area, the committee was keenly aware of the extensive studies being conducted and the recommendations being advanced by the Faculty Senate and University Council committees on multicultural education. As a supplement to this work, the committee recommends establishing a multicultural dormitory and a Festival Texas week each spring to celebrate racial and ethnic diversity on campus.

Improving teaching and fostering active learning. In this area, the committee recommends that more tenured and distinguished faculty become involved in General Education Requirement courses; that efforts be renewed to reward outstanding teaching and

involvement in undergraduate education; that a University Teaching Institute be established; that more writing occur in academic coursework and that a Division of Rhetoric and Composition be established; that the structure and course sequencing of majors be reviewed; that a university-wide review of the curriculum generally take place; that at least one seminar-type experience for each undergraduate be provided; and that cohort registration systems be implemented.

Improving student services. In this area, the committee recommends expediting construction of the Student Services Complex; expanding student advising services, including the expansion of the new centralized advising center; implementing automated degree checks; and improving communication with students.

Now is clearly a propitious time to strengthen undergraduate education at The University. The quality of the faculty is excellent, the students are outstanding, the physical plant and educational facilities are generally good, and the past decade has witnessed significant improvements in undergraduate programs. The University, however, is currently severely underfunded relative to other major state universities. This deficiency threatens not only the prospect of implementing major improvements in undergraduate education, but also The University's ability to achieve its basic mission. Texas is the third most populous state in the country, the third largest economically, the second largest geographically, and a national force politically. The educational impact of the state's flagship institution is consequently national in scope, not merely regional or local, and its place ought to be among the top ten public institutions in the country. The University cannot maintain its national stature unless it is allowed to fulfill the mission for which it was created--that of being the pace setter for higher education in the state. Its funding structure must support that goal, or it becomes difficult to think that further major improvements in undergraduate education can be put into place, let alone that The University can realize its larger mission.

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ENRICHING THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE
AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

INTRODUCTION

This is a time of reflection and renewal for American undergraduate education. Colleges and universities throughout the United States are reassessing their missions, their curricula, and the ways in which they organize themselves to foster undergraduate education and learning. This reappraisal is born of many forces. The increasing complexity of the modern world and the explosive growth of knowledge require the constant renovation of the process and structure of undergraduate learning. As the cost of college tuition has risen more rapidly than family resources, parents have become more sensitive to the quality of the undergraduate education received by their children. Trends toward credentialism and specialization have heightened tensions between basic or general education requirements and expanded professional and technical programs. And as educators and students have grown more interested in the study of non-Western as well as Western societies and cultures, efforts to emphasize not only commonality but also diversity in the curriculum have increased on campus. These forces, combined with the importance of education for national technological competitiveness in an increasingly global economy, have led American colleges and universities to reassess the nature of the undergraduate experience.¹

The University of Texas at Austin is no exception. In fact, The University has devoted considerable attention to its undergraduate programs in recent years and has achieved notable progress in a number of areas. These achievements include but are not limited to: (1) the development and implementation of a broad and deep set of basic education requirements; (2) the successful implementation of efforts to solve course-availability problems; (3) the reduction of student/faculty ratios through the addition of faculty; (4) the appointment of a Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education to give greater emphasis to undergraduate programs; (5) the creation of a campus-wide advising center in the Flawn Academic Center; (6) the development and implementation of the TEX-telephone-registration system; (7) the provision of staff through the Office of the Dean of Students to support student academic

counseling and retention; (8) the appointment of staff to foster closer ties and better working relationships with student organizations; and (9) the construction of a new Recreational Sports Center.²

The Charge to the Committee

As it moves into the 1990s, The University continues to seek ways to improve its course offerings, the quality of its undergraduate instruction, and the overall environment in which learning and campus life take place. In an effort to develop new initiatives to strengthen undergraduate education, President William H. Cunningham appointed the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience in the Fall of 1990. (For a list of the members of the committee see Appendix A.) In his charge to the committee, President Cunningham asked the group to conduct “a thorough examination of all aspects of The University’s undergraduate program” and to make “comprehensive recommendations to the faculty and administration to ensure that the undergraduate experience serves the needs of students who will live most of their lives in the 21st century.” (See Appendix B for the full text of the President’s charge to the committee.)

The committee was large and diverse. Consisting of thirty-six persons—including ex-students, faculty, undergraduate students, and staff--the committee met for the first time on November 29, 1990, when President Cunningham presented the group with its charge. From January 1991 through July 1991, the committee met as an entire group a total of eleven times, with each meeting lasting approximately three hours. The full committee also divided into subcommittees, each of which focused more exclusively on issues pertaining to curriculum, instruction, resources and facilities, and community. Each subcommittee met several times to gather information, discuss issues in its assigned area, and formulate recommendations. The subcommittees presented preliminary reports and recommendations to the full committee in early July. A first draft of the committee report was prepared by early

September. From September to November 1991 the committee met an additional five times to review and adopt the proposed recommendations. An ad hoc subcommittee on general education also met during this time and offered additional recommendations for the consideration of the committee. Finally, a writing review subcommittee met several times to review and revise subsequent drafts of the report.

The recommendations of the committee are based on the information it received from a number of different sources. Committee members themselves were a substantial source of knowledge about The University. In addition, the committee received testimony from thirty-four persons knowledgeable about undergraduate education and campus life, including ex-students, administrators, students, faculty, and staff. (A complete listing of the persons who appeared before the committee is attached as Appendix C, together with brief synopses of their remarks to the committee.) Through its subcommittees, the committee also met with eight focus groups of undergraduate students. (A summary of the results of these focus group discussions is attached as Appendix D.) The chairs of academic departments and the directors of centers involved in undergraduate instruction were also invited to write to the committee about their perceptions of undergraduate education and about successful activities and programs that might be candidates for wider implementation throughout The University. (A list of the persons who responded, together with excerpts of their remarks, is attached as Appendix E.)

The committee relied substantially upon the reports of previous committees and commissions that had examined various aspects of the undergraduate experience at The University in the recent past.³ The efforts of the present committee were informed and enriched by these earlier endeavors, even though the present committee differed from these committees in that its membership and charge were broader. Unlike the Basic Education Requirements Committee (the "Vick" Committee), which focused on definition of general undergraduate education requirements, or the ad hoc Committee on Undergraduate Education

(the "Doluisio" Committee), which examined a proposal for a new interdisciplinary major and considered solutions to course-availability problems, the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience was asked to examine undergraduate education broadly and conceptually and to extend its inquiry to include the non-academic features of undergraduate life that nonetheless hold implications for the quality of the undergraduate experience and for how students evaluate that experience.

The Response to the Charge

This report is the committee's response to the President's charge. It seeks to take a hard but balanced look at undergraduate life and education at The University, the institution with the largest enrollment in the state of Texas. In the course of its work, the committee came to the strong conviction that The University offers excellent opportunities for students to obtain an undergraduate education characterized by both breadth and depth of intellectual experience. The University has a first-rate faculty, (one that was recently rated the 21st best in the country according to a national reputational survey of university and college presidents and deans),⁴ outstanding students whose Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and other academic achievements continue to climb, and a generally excellent physical plant. The University also provides undergraduates numerous opportunities outside the classroom for non-academic enrichment and personal fulfillment. In short, there are many reasons to think that the undergraduate educational experience at The University is rich and rewarding in both its academic and non-academic dimensions.

Nevertheless, in the process of fulfilling its charge to assess thoroughly the undergraduate experience at The University, the committee also came to the realization that increases in the size and complexity of the institution over the past decade, as well as a growing trend toward autonomy on the part of the colleges and schools, have created a special need to reemphasize undergraduate education at The University, particularly those

parts of the undergraduate experience that foster a sense of intellectual and institutional community. Large academic institutions like The University necessarily possess a high degree of organizational complexity and professional specialization. These properties themselves can be sources of quality and enrichment, because they are accompanied by internationally renowned faculty and programs unavailable at smaller non-research universities and colleges. Although excellent faculty and outstanding programs in specialized areas may bring overall prestige to The University, and thus may increase the value of an individual's undergraduate degree, they do not necessarily provide that undergraduate with a good general education. Confronted with a multiplicity of degree programs within increasingly autonomous colleges and schools, undergraduate students may benefit individually from separate components of specialized excellence at The University without comprehending their relevance to their own experience or to education of the "whole" person. Broadly speaking, the challenge facing undergraduate education at The University is one of finding ways to foster greater intellectual community and institutional integration without diminishing the benefits that accompany size, complexity, and increasing specialization.

This report sets forth specific recommendations to meet this challenge, together with rationales for each. Some recommendations entail new programs or facilities; others simply suggest the potential that can be realized through existing programs if these are given greater emphasis and campus-wide coordination. The Committee saw itself as an "idea" rather than an "engineering" committee. We defined our task as one involving conceptualization and the generation of ideas more than the development of designs for their implementation. As we considered recommendations, we kept in mind The University's current budget constraints. We did not avoid recommendations we believed were important because they entailed cost, but we did try to develop recommendations that offered the prospect of both meaningful improvement and successful adoption and implementation. Accordingly, we considered at length but finally rejected as currently impractical such sweeping recommendations as that of

the 1981 Centennial Commission to restructure undergraduate education at The University in the form of a University College.⁵ But we have recommended other university-wide changes such as the review and strengthening of general education requirements, the development of a first-year orientation course, the formation of a University Honors Program, and improvements in student services and academic programs.

DEFINING UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Any assessment of the undergraduate experience must begin by seeking to define the goals of undergraduate education. According to Ernest Boyer, undergraduate education in America has traditionally derived its unique mission from the conviction that it “will lead to a more competent, more concerned, more complete human being.”⁶ This conviction has stemmed from the belief that liberal arts education--that is, the education of the “whole” person--is essential preparation for good citizenship and the responsible practice personally and socially of the professions and business. Historically, the undergraduate college has been the institution most responsible for achieving this social mission, so much so that distinguished graduate and research institutions like Harvard University and the University of Chicago have embedded undergraduate colleges within their larger structures. Even universities that offer professional undergraduate degrees have typically acknowledged the importance of the liberal arts and the sciences by insisting that all their students take “general” or “basic” education courses, classes in such subjects as history, language, math, science, and literature.

At the same time, American undergraduate education has also accommodated more utilitarian goals. Students seek to develop skills that will help them earn a living, while also learning how to live a full and meaningful life. They engage in specialized study in their major, while taking courses that will broaden their perspective and sharpen their judgment.

The mission of undergraduate education in America is thus both social and pragmatic in its emphases. Each of these emphases can help to foster the development of both individuality and community. Following Boyer, by individuality we mean "the personal benefits and the utility of education....,"⁷ the chance to choose one's own major, follow one's own aptitude, and enhance one's own likelihood of career success. By community we mean "an undergraduate experience that helps students go beyond their own private interests, develop a sense of civic and social responsibility, and discover how they, as individuals, can contribute to the larger society of which they are a part."⁸ Although these two values in American education "have defined throughout the years the boundaries of the collegiate debate about purposes and goals....,"⁹ the ideal undergraduate educational experience combines the best of both these traditions.

General Education

These themes and traditions find their expression in more specific objectives concerning what college level students should learn during their undergraduate years. Stated in terms of the kinds of knowledge and skills that students should acquire while at The University, the committee thinks undergraduates should:

- improve their mastery of the English language in both its written and spoken forms;
- learn to use competently at least one other language besides their own;
- gain greater comprehension of their own as well as other societies and cultures;
- increase their understanding of their own history and that of at least one other culture or country;
- increase their appreciation of the scientific method and their knowledge of at least one of the major branches of scientific inquiry;

- increase their understanding of mathematical principles and basic computer science, as well as their understanding of the effects of technological change on individuals and society;
- gain further appreciation of ideas of form and beauty through the study of the fine arts and literature, and increase their appreciation of ideas in general through the study of philosophy;
- come to know the principles and methodologies of a discipline through the study of a single subject in depth.

Most universities in the United States attempt to achieve these educational objectives through general education or core curriculum requirements. Such is the case at The University. In 1983, at the direction of President Peter Flawn, all colleges put into practice a set of General or Basic Education Requirements recommended by a faculty committee chaired by Professor James W. Vick of the Mathematics Department. These requirements, listed in Appendix F of this report, do not specify the content of courses to be taken by all students, but rather stipulate that courses be selected from certain areas, on the assumption that courses in these areas will ensure at least minimal exposure to certain content. For example, the natural science requirement consists of nine hours (three courses), including six hours in one subject. Requirements are also set forth in the areas of English/writing, foreign language, social science/history, mathematics, and fine arts/humanities.

In addition to its role in building intellectual community, general education is important for practical reasons as well. Evidence is growing that strong general education curricula foster the development of higher level mental performance. Daniel J. Singal points out that a large part of the decline in verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores over the past twenty years results from a drop in the marks of top-quartile scorers (i.e., from a decline among the nation's best students).¹⁰ According to Singal, we can learn something about the reasons for this drop by studying the attributes of high schools whose students have not suffered a

decline in SAT scores. He notes these schools share three characteristics: (1) they place priority on academics over other activities, (2) they maintain a “dogged reliance on a traditional liberal-arts curriculum,” and (3) they group students by ability.¹¹ These attributes have implications for the college experience. Top universities probably vary more across and within institutions in regard to the second characteristic. The failure to emphasize a traditional liberal arts curriculum and to foster premature specialization may thus have adverse effects on the continuing development of higher level cognitive skills among college students. General education is not only good preparation for a responsible and rewarding life, but also good for developing and sustaining abstract thinking and problem solving.

The General Education Requirements at The University constitute a broad and solid foundation on which to build an excellent undergraduate education. When compared with those at several other large public universities, the requirements at The University are frequently at least as comprehensive and involve at least as much depth of exposure as those at other institutions. For example, The University’s natural science requirement is as broad as the requirement at any of the other comparison schools. And the conceptualization of The University’s English and writing requirement has been cited by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a model attempt to improve the opportunities for college students to write well.¹² In short, the structure for obtaining a thorough and wide-ranging general education is solidly in place at The University. As noted below, however, we think certain improvements in general education requirement courses, including the systematic and periodic faculty review and oversight of their content, are necessary to achieve the potential inherent in the existing structure.

The Context of Undergraduate Education at The University

The quality of the undergraduate experience is influenced by other factors that structure the context within which formal education occurs. The committee thinks five of

these are particularly deserving of comment in the case of The University -- (1) the overall level of enrollment at The University; (2) the circumstances and conditions that foster respect for diversity; (3) the research environment on the campus; (4) the accessibility and quality of intramural and intercollegiate athletics; and (5) the physical attractiveness of the campus.

Enrollment. The committee believes that adopting and implementing recommendations to give greater emphasis and strength to undergraduate programs will have maximum effect if further increases in undergraduate enrollment do not occur. The University has achieved a measure of progress in enrollment management in recent years as a result of the high priority the central administration has given this issue. New faculty positions have been added and enrollment management procedures implemented in an effort to reduce The University's student/faculty ratio. Over the past twenty years, this ratio has declined from about 25 to 1 to about 20 to 1.¹³ The current administration has worked particularly hard to improve this ratio and the committee wishes to commend this effort. Despite the progress made, however, The University still ranks 50th out of the top 51 national universities in this important indicator.¹⁴ Given that applications for undergraduate study are not likely to decline in the foreseeable future, the committee wishes to state in the strongest terms possible that improving the quality of undergraduate education at The University depends heavily on keeping undergraduate enrollment at about 34,000 students or below, with an overall enrollment of about 48,000 students.

Diversity. The committee also devoted a considerable amount of attention to the issue of the interrelationship between respect for diversity and the development of a sense of institutional community. The committee has been impressed by recent efforts on campus to increase sensitivity among students, faculty, staff, and administrators to issues pertaining to racial, ethnic, and religious diversity. The President's 1989 ad hoc Committee on Racial Harassment recommended improvements in university policy concerning procedures followed and actions taken in dealing with charges of racial harassment. The Faculty Senate

and the University Council appointed committees in 1989-1990 to develop recommendations with respect to multicultural education at The University. Versions of the recommendations of these committees have been debated and passed on a first vote in the University Council. The Committee on the Undergraduate Experience commends the attention these issues have received in the larger university community. In addition, because we think that fostering sensitivity to and respect for individuals of various racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds are integral parts of developing a sense of institutional community, the committee is suggesting additional recommendations in this area that we think offer the prospect of still further improvements. These recommendations are for the development of a multicultural dormitory and the establishment of a Texas Festival week to celebrate cultural diversity.

Teaching and Research. Teaching and research are complementary missions. As one of the state's most vital research institutions, The University has a responsibility to impart not only general education, but also the awareness that knowledge is constantly changing. If we fail to show our students that knowledge is a dynamic enterprise, then indeed we have been remiss in our educational mission. One of the strengths of undergraduate education at The University is that many of the institution's faculty are particularly well suited to integrate teaching and research. Faculty in every department at The University are involved simultaneously in pursuing cutting-edge research and in teaching the techniques and approaches involved in exploring new problems. Active research faculty provide students with a better education than they would receive at an institution with capabilities limited to teaching. One of the challenges facing The University is to find ways to involve these faculty even more in undergraduate instruction, particularly in general education courses.

Athletics. The committee also wishes to emphasize the importance of intramural and intercollegiate athletics for undergraduate students. One of the strongest messages heard from students was their positive evaluation of the intramural sports program and the recreational sports facilities, particularly the new Recreational Sports Center. The committee also heard

student comments about the value of intercollegiate athletics. As expressed in the Knight Commission Report, "intercollegiate athletics provide millions of people--athletes, undergraduates, alumni, and the general public--with great pleasure, the spectacle of extraordinary effort and physical grace, the excitement of an outcome in doubt, and a shared unifying experience."¹⁵ The committee received testimony from Dr. Bryce Jordan (a member of the Knight Commission) and from DeLoss Dodds and Donna Lopiano (Directors of Men's and Women's Athletics, respectively) about the relationship between academics and athletics. The committee commends the national leadership record of The University in advocating the principles of integrity and strong academics in athletic programs and in applying those principles to its own programs. The committee also endorses the principles stated in the Knight Commission Report and urges The University to work for their wider implementation throughout the National Collegiate Athletic Association as the fundamental goals of intercollegiate athletics.

Campus appearance. The committee also thinks it is important that renewed efforts be directed at maintaining and improving the attractiveness of the campus. Students and alumni take great pride in the appearance of the buildings and landscaping of The University. The committee urges the administration to remain sensitive to this issue and to consider such modest projects as the construction of kiosks for the posting of notices and announcements to improve the appearance of the campus and to facilitate intra-campus communication. More importantly, like many universities throughout the country, The University has been forced to defer maintenance, thus creating a potential future budget deficit. The reduction of funds available for maintenance is starting to take its toll on the appearance of the campus and on its infrastructure. The committee is aware of the difficulty of rectifying this situation in a time of severe budgetary constraints and competing budget priorities, but urges the administration to give it as high a priority as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY

The committee believes the primary challenge to undergraduate education at The University is to find ways to build a sense of community, both intellectually and institutionally. As we have explained above, intellectual community can best be enhanced through strengthening general education. Institutional community--by which we mean a sense of belonging to The University as a whole and participating in the achievement of its educational mission--can be enhanced if both the academic and the non-academic aspects of campus life and environment are organized to build awareness of and respect for the mission of The University, to provide commonality of educational experience, to encourage a high degree of interaction among students and faculty from different schools and colleges, and to foster respect for uniqueness and difference. An environment that is conducive to the development of trust and security, that provides accessible and well-publicized student services, and that supplies well-coordinated institutional support services also builds a strong sense of institutional community.

Students will identify with The University as a whole to the degree that they are actively involved in both its intellectual and institutional life. Because this identification will be most meaningful for the student and most productive for the society when it grows out of an arts and sciences educational experience that clarifies the intellectual antecedents and bases of the larger context in which students live their lives, intellectual community is an important part of institutional identification. Student loyalty and commitment also depend on unity of purpose among different parts of The University. Students are more likely to identify strongly with The University when all components subscribe to and actively promote common goals instead of each going its separate way. Thus, intellectual community and institutional integration are important pre-conditions for the development of institutional identification.

Based on its assessment of the undergraduate experience at The University, the committee concluded that five kinds of improvements would increase intellectual community and institutional integration and lead to significant enhancement of the undergraduate experience at The University. These are: (1) strengthening general education courses and developing university-wide undergraduate programs; (2) paying more attention to the needs of individual students; (3) developing greater respect for diversity; (4) promoting good teaching and active involvement in learning; and (5) improving student services.

Our recommendations for enhancing the undergraduate experience are divided below into these five kinds of improvements. Although we number them for ease of presentation, we do not intend to list them in any order of priority. We think they are all important. We begin, however, with those recommendations that we think most directly impinge on the development of intellectual and institutional community, two of the issues most central to the traditional mission of undergraduate education in the United States.

I. STRENGTHENING GENERAL EDUCATION AND BUILDING UNIVERSITY-WIDE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

When the various colleges and schools of The University unite in support of stronger general education and cooperate to build university-wide undergraduate programs, both intellectual and institutional community are enhanced. The committee wishes to reaffirm the importance of both of these senses of community. We include in this listing those recommendations we think most directly affect the development of intellectual and institutional community. We think many of our other recommendations also carry implications for their development, but because these recommendations better fit in one of the other areas, we have listed them elsewhere.

Recommendation. The University should embark on a five-year pilot project to introduce integrated core curricula in science, humanities, and social science that would satisfy portions of the General Education Requirements.

The committee concluded that the General Education Requirements adopted in 1983, while excellent in their structure and intention, have in practice been diluted because of a proliferation of courses that will satisfy these requirements and because of inadequate advising. The core curriculum initiative suggested here--enrolling perhaps 400 students at the freshman and sophomore levels--would test this theory by bringing greater coherence and integration into the general education courses. The goal is to enrich a student's study of the sciences, humanities, and social sciences by linking disciplines and focusing study. It is assumed that students enrolled in one of the integrative courses would satisfy a portion or perhaps all of the general education requirements in the area in which the pilot course is offered. The objectives of this initiative are to provide a model curriculum for The University as a whole, to improve the quality of required courses, to unite the community around a core curriculum in which students share certain key texts and ideas, and to work toward a balance between specialized and liberal arts education. The committee agrees with Ernest Boyer that "general education urgently needs a new breath of life. More coherence is required to relate the core program to the lives of students and to the world they are inheriting. There is a need for students to go beyond their separate interests and gain a more integrated view of knowledge and a more authentic view of life".¹⁶ At the end of the five-year pilot project, the program, depending on its success, could be retained, expanded, or abandoned.

Recommendation. The University should instruct the Educational Policy Committee to create committees to review the syllabi of courses in each of the six general education areas that satisfy the General Education Requirements.

The committee supports the General Education Requirements adopted in 1983. At the same time, it has concluded that because many existing courses have slipped into the general education curriculum unexamined, that the requirements are not serving the students as well as they might. These oversight committees would review each course that satisfies a basic education requirement, its content as well as the way it is taught, in order to determine whether it should continue to be certified as meeting the requirement. One of the criteria for accepting a course as a General Education Requirement course is that it should provide exposure to the full range of approaches and methodologies used in a given discipline, even if the course is a specialty course within the discipline.

Recommendation. The University should offer a one-hour credit, one-semester "First-year Experience" course for entering first-year and transfer students.

The purpose of this course would be to allow first-year students another opportunity to facilitate their integration into the intellectual, cultural, and institutional life of the campus. This course would seek to familiarize students with The University and with tools for how to succeed in college. It would introduce first-year students to the intellectual and cultural smorgasbord that is The University of Texas. For example, the course could expose students to some of the outstanding teachers and scholars on campus addressing the latest and most exciting developments in their fields, perhaps through widespread lectures. The purpose would be to excite students about the world of ideas and the arts at The University, to help them become familiar with the intellectual geography of the campus. Other class periods could introduce students to the various resources on campus serving student intellectual needs, including the Learning Skills Center, the library system, and the counseling and

advising centers. It would also draw from a broad array of campus resources and would present information on University history and traditions; student organizations; library services and facilities; honors programs and societies; counseling, advising and placement services; student government; student financial aid and employment services; and student discipline and grievance procedures.

Difficulties in making the transition from high school to college were cited many times in testimony before the committee as constituting one of the major barriers to adjusting to college life, to developing loyalty to the institution, and to succeeding academically. It was also noted numerous times that learning about The University's services, activities and structure greatly facilitated this adjustment. It was also suggested that the current summer orientation program, while useful, is too short, and that many topics introduced during summer orientation could be more effectively covered during the first semester when students actually begin to encounter problems. Students also expressed a desire to learn more about the cultural and intellectual opportunities available at The University, a result that could be better achieved in a longer time-frame than that afforded by the brief summer orientation period.

Recommendation. The University should establish a University Honors Program.

The University has many more high quality students than can be accommodated in the Plan II degree program or in college honors programs such as the Dean's Scholars Program in Natural Sciences, the Senior Fellows Program in Communications, or the Humanities Program in Liberal Arts. While many students in these programs go on to distinguish themselves in departmental honors and in other college honors programs, The University does little extra for them during the freshman and sophomore years. A university-wide program would be designed to enrich the education of these students, especially at the freshman and sophomore level, and also to provide them with a sense of identity and

intellectual community. Such a program would foster institutional integration by bringing together students from all parts of The University for General Education Requirement courses, for Honors Program activities, and, in some cases, for residence in the honors dormitory.

Students admitted in the freshman year into the University Honors Program, for example, could be eligible for activities such as the following : (1) participation during the freshman and sophomore years in at least three one-hour courses established by each college to introduce students to exemplary research being done in the disciplines in that college; (2) application to live in an all university honors dormitory; (3) enrollment in General Educational Requirement courses in groups of twenty with a teaching assistant (T.A.) assigned to that group in each of the disciplines (students, for example, would take HIS 315 in a large class, but that class would be taught by outstanding faculty members, and students would attend it with their group, and have discussion sections with their T.A.; their language class on the other hand might consist of just twenty students); (4) participation in departmental and college honors programs at the junior and senior level; (5) eligibility for advising by faculty mentors; (6) attendance at special education programs set up specifically for students in the University Honors Program.

Recommendation. The University should assign administrative responsibility for the direction, operation, oversight, and coordination of university-wide academic undergraduate programs to a single administrative position.

Sharper definition, greater emphasis, and enhanced visibility of undergraduate education could be achieved through consolidation of the administration of academic undergraduate programs into a single office. Such an arrangement might not only reduce duplication in the colleges and thus be cost-effective, it may also give identity to the entire undergraduate program, foster a sense of intellectual and institutional community, provide an

organizational mechanism for developing such initiatives as a university-wide honors program, provide a means to strengthen the General Education Requirements (through review and oversight of general education courses, for example), provide leadership for administering a university-wide orientation course for first-year students, and provide a structure for administering and coordinating the university-wide Advising Center. The person holding the position could function as an advocate for undergraduate education on campus, as an innovator of new initiatives with respect to undergraduate education, and, most importantly, as a force for integrating and coordinating what are now disparate and Balkanized college and school programs. The office would thus serve to emphasize and strengthen the common elements in the undergraduate experience at The University and as a way to tie together different parts of the campus.

Recommendation. The University should insert a statement of the philosophy and rationale for the General Education Requirements, as well as a statement of the Requirements themselves, in the General Information Bulletin and in the new Undergraduate Catalogue.

It is striking that the General Education Requirements are not articulated in the official academic publications of The University. The requirements are usually unrecognizably embedded in the old "Area A", "Area B", "Area C", "Area D" classifications as presented in the individual college catalogues. Seldom does a statement of philosophy of education or academic justification for general education appear with these listings of area requirements. An important step in acknowledging the importance of the Requirements and the rationale for them is to state them in the General Information Bulletin and in the new Undergraduate Catalogue.

Requirements now not only appear separately in individual college catalogues (and sometimes separately by major within colleges), they also vary across colleges. The commonality of the general education curriculum is obfuscated by the separate college

programs. What is in reality a well-constructed and comprehensive set of General Education Requirements appear as separate individualized college (and sometimes departmental) requirements lacking university-wide coherence. As a result, neither the students nor the outside world are fully aware of the breadth and depth of the general education curriculum to which students are commonly exposed. This tends to reinforce the appearance of balkanization at The University. A well-articulated statement of the requirements and the rationale for them would give visible substance to the potential for achieving intellectual community that already exists at The University. It would also help to foster institutional identification and serve as an important recruiting tool for The University.

Recommendation. The University should construct or acquire additional dormitory space.

One of the ideas most frequently heard by the committee was that first-year students who live on-campus become integrated more quickly into the academic and student organizational life of the campus. At present, The University does not have sufficient dormitory capacity to accommodate all first-year and other students wishing to live in dormitories on campus. An additional dormitory would make possible such an arrangement. Such a residence could be a multi-level complex that would be different from traditional dormitories. It should provide more lounge and study space, access to computer facilities, and kitchenettes with refrigerators and microwaves. The primary purpose of the building would be to provide more living space near the campus so that more students, especially freshman, would be near the libraries and student recreation centers and would be able to attend university cultural and social events, orientation, and other sessions at night.

II. PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

Several considerations govern any discussion of making the undergraduate experience at The University more personally rewarding. The University has nearly 50,000 students. This means many large lower-division classes, and intense competition for specific course sections, dormitory rooms, and tickets for athletic events. The number of students at The University has other, perhaps less obvious, implications, including reliance on automated procedures for processing paperwork, impersonality in instruction and administration, and decentralized information services.

The University of Texas at Austin is a highly ranked research institution. Many benefits accrue from this distinction, including faculty who are recognized nationally and internationally, a library system that ranks among the best in the world, and research that can benefit every element of our entire society. Few members of The University community would criticize the desire to be preeminent in research. Most are dedicated to greater distinction and achievement. Many undergraduates, however, do not understand how research benefits them. Instead of seeking to understand how graduate research improves the quality of all education at The University and raises the value of degrees, undergraduates often think that the individualized instruction that characterizes graduate education and the financial resources required by graduate research mean that undergraduate education is devalued.

The University of Texas at Austin is highly competitive. Enrollment pressures and the institutional goal of academic excellence necessarily require selection and recognition based on academic performance. Competition in the classroom is intense, because a first-class institution has high expectations of all its constituencies: faculty, staff, and students. Many students, however, mistakenly view the undergraduate educational environment not

merely as competitive, but as hostile, even cutthroat. Stated differently, many of those who do not excel in terms of standard measures feel that they are relegated to a collective, anonymous status.

The University is understaffed. For years published statistics have demonstrated convincingly that the cost of administration at The University is among the lowest of flagship institutions in the United States. For students this often means long lines and delays for advising, for resolving a difficulty with a registration bill, or for seeking information about financial aid. Administrative staff have little or no opportunity to explain the understaffing problem, and students--even if they understood--find little comfort in such an explanation. They often conclude that "no one cares."

Although it is not possible to provide an antidote for all problems that confront students at The University, the committee thinks certain actions can improve the quality of the undergraduate experience by changing the attitudes and behavior of those elements of the campus that to most undergraduates are "The University": not laboratories, libraries, buildings, or research awards, but faculty, staff, and administrators. In short, we seek to personalize the undergraduate experience by creating a sense of institutional community, a sense of belonging, an environment that promotes trust and security. The recommendations discussed below pertain to three areas--Administration, Colleges/Schools and Departments, and Staff.

Recommendation. The University should conduct a periodic survey of student services.

A recurring assessment of the extent to which student services are satisfying student needs is essential if students are to feel that The University cares and that their opinions matter. Surveys of the type recommended here would enable The University administration to identify possible problem areas requiring further study or action. A Campus Activities

Steering Committee, consisting of the administrative heads of those entities that have a significant impact on student experience outside the classroom, should examine the results of the surveys and recommend corrective actions.

Recommendation. The University should establish a Volunteer Center.

Many student groups on campus are currently involved in activities designed to promote a sense of community. Examples include cleaning up Waller Creek and Town Lake and tutoring at-risk students in East Austin. These efforts are often uncoordinated, however, because there is no central agency to help connect groups on the campus. Students and administrators are wasting time and energy in a duplication of effort when they try to establish or implement programs that are already underway. In addition, individual students who want to volunteer are often left out because they are not a part of a student group in which volunteer information is presented. Although Student Volunteer Services attempts to organize student volunteer efforts, the small staffing level is insufficient to serve the needs of a large and energetic student body. A fully staffed Volunteer Center needs to be established in order to build a sense of community through service, and a directive issued to diverse campus units to use the new Center.

Recommendation. The University early in the fall semester should devote a full day to first-year students, should mandate that the Dean or Department Chair send a personalized letter to first-year students, and should require that each department sponsor a faculty/student gathering to greet new students.

Devoting a full day (Saturday, for example) early in the semester to incoming students would allow upper division students to become involved in the discussion of topics critical to freshman: development of study skills, tutoring and counseling services, the proper balance between academic and social activities, and academic advising. Tours of college (or school) and department facilities should be included. At each step on the tour, faculty and student

mentors should discuss specific aspects of the program of study and respond to questions from students. The day should be concluded with a social activity that involves faculty, upper division students, and participating freshmen.

The personalized letter should be accompanied by a self-addressed postcard that asks questions that come under the heading, "How are you doing?" Serious problems should be addressed immediately. The process should be repeated toward the end of the fall semester.

Each faculty member should get to know at least a few students personally, either through departmental honors programs, through academic student organizations, or through informal gatherings. One way to start such a process is through a departmental gathering. Students appreciate invitations from professors to their homes or to gatherings outside class.

Recommendation. The University should provide an information/problem solving office in each department.

The image provided by an academic unit is influenced heavily by what happens outside the classroom or laboratory. Students--and especially new students--often need information and advice on matters that relate solely to their major department. If university staff create the image of The University, then departmental staff create the image of a department. Students should be able to get correct and timely responses relating to advising, registration, prerequisites, job interviews, student organizations, and so forth. The committee thinks each department should identify clearly departmental faculty or staff who are available to provide such assistance.

Recommendation. The University should develop a training program in communications and customer service skills for support staff.

Receptionists, departmental secretaries, University guards, and library assistants are often the first people who represent the University to students. Their interaction with students is a critical part of the undergraduate experience. The quality of campus life is

profoundly influenced by these people. If they are helpful, the interaction and experience will be exceptional. If they are rude and uncaring, the student will be disappointed, to say the least, and perhaps alienated and angry.

University staff who interact with students are employed primarily because of their clerical and administrative skills and not necessarily because of their "customer-service" and public relations skills. Industry has long known that these first-line employees set the tone for an organization and thus have created training programs for staff to develop these customer-service skills. The University must do likewise to ensure that staff are committed to serving students and have the skills to succeed. This training program would complement the current training in diversity sensitivity currently being offered through the Counseling and Mental Health Center and the Office of Personnel Services and Employee Relations. We would emphasize that this multicultural sensitivity is also critical to providing information assistance and customer service to all segments of the campus community.

III. ACHIEVING GREATER RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

The Committee has discussed in great detail the issue of multicultural sensitivity and education at The University. We have heard from curricular and co-curricular experts on the issue, as well as from students who have been bothered by issues related to race, ethnicity, and culture. The committee members wish to state their strong support for the principle of learning to respect and work harmoniously with individuals of various racial and ethnic groups. The committee believes that efforts to increase the sensitivity to and the respect for individuals regardless of race or ethnicity should continue to be strengthened, and the committee commends the efforts in this direction undertaken at The University in recent years. In addition, the committee wishes to supplement these efforts by making two additional recommendations.

Recommendation. The University should set aside a single, University dormitory for students who have a special interest in developing multicultural relationships.

It is only when persons of goodwill interact on a day-to-day basis that genuine understanding can be reached and problems of race and ethnicity breached. The committee thinks that such a dormitory will (1) act as a visible symbol of The University's commitment to multiculturalism; and (2) serve as an academic center for sponsoring far-reaching campus discussions, lectures, and symposia on multicultural issues and ideas. The committee thinks that "If we invite them, they will come." Hence, we suggest that both entering and continuing students be invited to live in the multicultural dorm and that every attempt be made to ensure as much pluralism among the residents as possible. Accordingly, no more than one-third of the residents should be permitted to be members of any single racial or ethnic group.

Recommendation. The University should conduct under the direction of the Campus Activities Steering Committee a Festival Texas each spring to celebrate the richness and diversity of the various racial and ethnic groups on campus.

The festival could feature films, art exhibits, folk dances, cultural activities, and lectures emphasizing the cultural diversity of the student body. Organizational features of such a festival could include, for example, the promotion of one continent each day and making mixed groups responsible for each day. For much of its history, The University's student body has been primarily Anglo, with an influential if not dominant student group involved in fraternities and sororities. Today, the student body is much more diverse with large numbers of graduate students, foreign students, and non-Anglos. Activities sponsored by various student cultural organizations are often uncoordinated and poorly publicized. Festival Texas would showcase these activities and promote community through the development of respect and celebration of diversity.

IV. IMPROVING TEACHING AND FOSTERING ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING

The committee devoted considerable attention to the issues of how to improve teaching and how to generate more active student involvement in learning. At present, The University recognizes and rewards excellence in teaching through a variety of teaching awards and by taking teaching performance into account when candidates are evaluated for promotion. The excellent programs of the Center for Teaching Effectiveness are also frequently used by faculty as a vehicle for improving teaching. Nonetheless, the committee felt that more could be done, starting with the crucial General Education Requirement courses taken by all students throughout The University. Our recommendations in the area follow:

Recommendation. The University administration should explore with the Deans of the Schools and Colleges ways to improve large introductory courses fulfilling the General Education Requirements, and to involve more tenured (including distinguished) faculty as instructors in these courses.

These courses are the backbone of quality undergraduate education. One of the most frequent comments heard by the committee was that many of these courses could be improved if they were smaller, more active in their approach to learning, more focused on problem solving and writing, and less inclined to grade on a rigid and severe curve. Smaller and more numerous discussion sections could help achieve these improvements. Also, having larger numbers of tenured and senior faculty teach some of these courses could improve their quality of instruction in these courses.

Recommendation. The University should direct the Deans of the Colleges and Schools to formulate policies for the allocation of merit salary increases to faculty for work on educational issues, especially undergraduate teaching, and curricular development.

Although work on educational issues is rewarded at The University, the committee feels that more recognition and reward of this work should occur at the departmental level on a year-to-year basis. We recommend that faculty members who participate in local and national level work on instructional and curricular improvements in their disciplines be rewarded for that effort as with standard research work. Innovations that have broad impact should receive rewards commensurate with those for research. The force of this recommendation is to ask the Deans to begin devising ways to accomplish this.

Other suggestions we would make are to: (1) develop a mentor program whereby any new faculty member, especially those new to the profession, is paired with someone recognized on the faculty as being a strong teacher. The mentor and the new faculty member would be encouraged to have regular discussions about teaching, to observe each other's class sessions on a regular basis, and to brainstorm ways of dealing with problems; (2) re-examine criteria and procedures for promotion to ensure that excellence in teaching and involvement in undergraduate educational endeavors are given substantial weight. The University already does this, but we think it is worth re-examination and reaffirmation.

Recommendation. The University should create and fund a University Teaching Institute (analogous to the University Research Institute), whose primary purpose would be to receive formal proposals made by the faculty for teaching assistance and educational development projects and to dispense monies to those applications on a competitive basis.

New interdisciplinary courses, new technologies for teaching, greater teaching outreach, new areas of specialization, and other curricular improvements could be better implemented through such an Institute. Such tasks now fall upon already burdened faculty

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shoulders. Currently, few funds are available for course development and no monies are available for educational developments activities of a duration sufficient for the planning, testing, and implementing of curricular changes.

Recommendation. The University should take the following actions in order to improve instruction in writing:

- that all departments require on a regular basis written work, including homework, papers, and essay examinations;
- that all colleges give greater emphasis to writing in all courses;
- that all colleges be required to offer a sufficient number of Substantial Writing Component courses to ensure that their majors can fulfill this requirement within their colleges in classes with an enrollment of 25 or fewer students;
- that one-hour writing adjunct sections for students in various courses be established;
- that advisors in all colleges encourage students to seek more writing experience beyond the minimum required;
- that a Division of Rhetoric and Composition be established in the College of Liberal Arts that would be responsible for the administration, staffing, and teaching of first-year and advanced composition courses.

The committee agrees with Ernest Boyer that "Clear writing leads to clear thinking; clear thinking is the basis of clear writing. Writing holds us responsible for our words and ultimately makes us more thoughtful human beings. As students put their ideas on paper, they improve their understanding and discover both the discipline and joy of self-expression. Guided by a good teacher, all students can become better writers, and in the process thinking becomes more precise".¹⁷

Writing well is a skill, arguably more than any other, that enables students to succeed in their university educations and in the world beyond. The University has over the past decade made a number of significant efforts to improve the opportunities for our students to improve their writing. In 1981 The Committee on Basic Education Requirements recommended 12 hours of writing courses beyond E306, consisting of another freshman course, E307, a sophomore course, 316K, and two upper division courses certified to have a substantial writing component. In 1983 The Centennial Commission cited again the importance of writing in a university curriculum and recommended "that The University insist that all students develop written communications skills adequate to self-express and that it provide, in all fields, courses which stress competence in writing English."¹⁸ In 1985 The University attempted to establish writing across the curriculum by recommending E346K, a course that would offer students a writing course in their disciplines at the upper division level. Because of various difficulties in implementation, these recommendations and initiatives have been only partially carried out. At present, the English requirement is E306 and E316K, with two additional Substantial Writing Component courses. Valuable as these courses are, the committee senses that the skills of our students in written English are still not sufficient for them to perform well in The University and in their lives beyond.

In the one hour writing adjunct sections, the courses would be directed by professors or trained TAs who would teach writing using assignments related to the content of the associated class. There are many advantages to this scheme. The course content and the writing instruction would be mutually supportive. The grading of the writing would be separated from the grading of the regular course. Some students in larger lecture courses could be in small writing adjuncts while others need not be. The proposed Division would oversee a first-rate computer laboratory devoted to the teaching of basic writing skills and to the development of programs to improve writing. In addition, it would be responsible for

running sections of supervised Graduate Teaching courses (398T) or providing assistance to 398T courses to help train Assistant Instructors (AIs) and TAs in the teaching of writing.

These recommendations are meant to strengthen the opportunities for students to hone this most basic of skills. They emphasize once more that students need to write more, need to write not just in English courses, but in their courses in all fields, and need to have available to them the best methods and latest technologies to help in their written work.

Recommendation. The University should direct the Deans to review all majors to ensure that courses fit into an integrated structure that can be made clear to undergraduates.

A chair wrote to the committee that "Curriculum should be reexamined and more structure introduced. Courses should fit, and faculty should feel an obligation to teach courses that fit within an integrated curriculum." The committee could not agree more. While many programs for majors have a clear structure and sequencing, many others do not, leaving students in those majors with little sense of what constitutes their discipline, why one course follows another, or what the goals of their major are. Moreover, in many disciplines there has been a proliferation of topics and highly specialized courses tangential to undergraduate education. Students should be able to see what is at the core of the discipline they study and how one course leads to another in a sequencing that leads to a greater understanding of that discipline. As a recent study puts it: "A major course of study ought to have a principle or principles of organization," and it "ought to have a beginning, a middle, and an end--each contributing in a different but specific way to the overall aim of the major".¹⁹

Recommendation. The University should charge the Educational Policy Committee with reviewing the curriculum continuously.

The committee senses that curriculum in many cases has been driven by the desires of individual faculty members without an eye toward the structure of the major, or any unifying educational principle. This review would include work with the curriculum committees of the

individual colleges to ensure that majors have a clear structure and that the total curriculum appropriately spans the spectrum of possibilities that The University should offer.

Recommendation. The University should direct departments to institute a seminar-type course for their majors with enrollments limited to 25.

Given the current budgetary realities in the State of Texas, The University is not likely to reduce its enrollment dramatically in the near future. Still, something must be done to ensure that each student has an intensive intellectual experience with a member of the professoriate before he or she graduates. Some students already have such an experience: Art majors in their studio classes; journalism students in their writing laboratories; history majors in History 350L. The Committee strongly recommends that such experiences be provided, at least once, for all University of Texas students. These courses, for example, might be designed as senior “capstone” seminars that would attempt to integrate the student’s understanding of the discipline and relate that discipline to other disciplines, or they might be junior seminars, taken as students are beginning to delve into a major.

Recommendation. The University should experiment with a system of registration that would put groups of 20-25 students into two or three common classes.

These groups could be encouraged to associate outside of the classes for study and socializing. Ideally, meetings could be held with an upperclass student, graduate student, or faculty mentor who would help draw the group together to succeed in the classes and see the connection among the subjects. However, just having a group with common courses and telling them about each other would help students to learn faster and to get to know a few other students during their first year. A cohort registration strategy could also foster greater learning among groups of honors and minority students.

Sets of three courses could be designed as core sets of courses frequently taken by various groups of students. For example:

Core 1 as Psychology 301, English 306, and Spanish 506

Core 2 might be Philosophy 304, English 309, and Economics 302

Core 3 might be English 309, Mathematics 408C, and Economics 302

Core 4 might be Physics 303K, Mathematics 408C, and Chemistry 301

Core 5 might be Physics 306, Mathematics 305G, and Chemistry 304K

Some Core sets could be designed for special majors while others would be attractive to undecided majors. For example, the Core consisting of CH 301, PHY 303K, and M408C would often be chosen by Engineering majors; while a Core consisting of PSY 301, E306, and SPN 506 would be suitable for many students seeking a B.A. degree. One virtue of this method of creating cohorts is that after the core unique numbers have been assigned and the seats reserved, the cohorts are produced by registering and no further administrative intervention is necessary.

V. IMPROVING STUDENT SERVICES

In any community the size of The University, the ability to use available services when needed is critical, affecting the quality of student life. The University already has many staff members and services dedicated to the success of students. In the committee's many discussions with students, however, the students often mentioned their frustration with finding critical information and with being caught up in the proverbial bureaucratic "run around". When students cannot get their questions answered, they often perceive The University as uncaring. The next set of recommendations aims at improving this particular aspect of the undergraduate experience.

Recommendation. The University should expedite plans to construct the student-initiated Student Services Complex.

The complex would be a clear symbol of The University's commitment to benefit students and to support an idea initiated by students. A centrally located building would bring together such services as those provided by the Dean of Students Office, the Students' Association, the College Councils, the Ombudsman's Office, the students' attorney, a volunteer center, cultural information centers, as well as the Academic Advising and Information Center described earlier. This would be a service center; the Texas Union would continue to do programming.

Recommendation. The University should expand its advising services substantially in general and it should expand the central academic advising and information service for students in particular.

It is a tragic loss of human potential to have students fail or waste their time because of poor advising. And yet, a survey of students who have left The University without graduating suggests that poor advice contributes significantly to failure and to abandoning plans for a college degree. The experience of counselors who deal with students on probation corroborates the view that poor advising often has a devastating effect. By contrast, good advising supports and encourages students so that they choose their course of studies wisely, finish successfully, and avail themselves of opportunities, such as special research projects or honors programs, that they might otherwise miss.

We recommend dividing academic advising responsibilities into two parts. One part, perhaps centralized, would be the responsibility of professional staff advisors; the other part would be assigned to faculty. Professional staff advisors know details about course requirements for degrees, know how social and personal student experience relates to wise academic decisions, know about common problems involving study skills and common

pitfalls such as taking too heavy a course load. Professors are not the best source for such information. However, they are exactly the appropriate advising resource for information about trends in a student's field of study and how best to prepare for future work in their discipline.

The Academic Advising and Information Center should be charged with providing accurate information about academic progress and answers to more routine informational matters. It could provide both telephone and computer access services as well as walk-in service. The computer access service would be connected to other data bases and computer information services so that a student's query could be logged on at the Center and transferred appropriately to the proper staff office. Such messages would always include the student's name and phone number so that the staff in the designated area could then respond directly to the student's question. In addition, students would be able to access either the Information Center's computer system or any designated office from terminals in dormitories, libraries, and other sites on campus. This system would work in conjunction with various departmental offices as well as the TEX-telephone-System, Telephone Counseling, and the computerized Calendar. If all queries, including phoned and in-person requests, were logged into a computer system, a by-product of the system would be to allow units to evaluate the quality of the information they are providing.

Some additional services that the Academic Advising and Information Center should have available include:

- a. A computerized syllabus bank that would be available on-line to all students in The University community. A database would save endless amounts of frustration for students. This bank would be updated each semester as course syllabi (and instructors) change. When using the syllabus bank, students would be able to browse freely and access quickly information about a particular course/instructor.

b. A computer data base providing information about scholarships offered at the department, college, and university levels as well as by outside sources. By specifying certain parameters, a student would be able to identify the scholarships for which he or she could apply. If the data base were properly configured, it would be possible for an organizational unit to obtain a list of students who have been awarded scholarships. Such a scholarship data base would be helpful to students as presently there is no single source listing scholarships available from the central administration, the 14 colleges, the 73 departments, Texas Ex-Students' Association, ROTC, and local civic organizations. Additionally, it would help in attracting outstanding students who need financial support. Finally, it would enable scholarship award committees to avoid the problem of awarding multiple scholarships to the same students and depriving other deserving students of an award.

c. An information/problem solving/academic advising desk should be provided in each department. Professional personnel staffing this desk would have quick access to the central Academic Advising and Information Center.

d. Computer, and possibly telephone, access to academic and information services should be provided on a 24-hour basis. The number of remote access lines should be increased.

Recommendation. The University should implement official, automated degree checks for students by 1992.

One of the frustrations for many students is the delay associated with applying for official degree checks. Much progress has been made toward computerizing this process. We need the cooperation of departments and the will of The University behind this effort so that students are able to know where they stand at any moment and what set of courses would allow them to finish their degrees.

Recommendation. The University should seek to provide additional ways for students to be informed about and have a chance to provide input on upcoming important decisions affecting their lives.

In open hearings with students, they were unanimous in stating that major decisions that affect students (for example, the levying of special fees for certain facilities) often appear to be made without student input. Although the students were reminded that many venues already exist for students to influence the policymaking process (for example, periodic student meetings with the President and student representation on The University Council), they were insistent in their appeal that something more be done to reach a wider audience. Once their perspectives have been solicited, they were also very much interested in being kept informed of what is going on.

In the spirit of information exchange and of enhancing students' sense of being a part of a special university community, we recommend that the administration devise additional ways for students to provide their perspective on important decisions. For example, the proposed Information Center could have a special bulletin, both physical and computerized, that lists decisions and debates open to student input. It could also collect student input by polling them and by posting regular notices of the status of decisions about important actions. In addition, and pending the implementation of the Information Center, a regular feature in The Daily Texan or in On Campus might function as a bulletin board. And finally, the administration might consider asking the University Council to consider adding more student members.

WHY IT MATTERS AND THE PROSPECT FOR SUCCESS

This report has been a year in-the-making. The committee members have individually and collectively sought the opinions of hundreds of students, dozens of faculty, and numerous administrators and staff. The committee itself has discussed at length many of the complex issues facing undergraduate education in the United States in general and at The University of Texas in particular. Based upon a careful weighing of the testimony and information it received, the committee has set forth concrete recommendations that it believes offer the prospect of adding additional strengths and improvements to undergraduate education and life at The University.

We think implementing these recommendations will make a difference. Undergraduates who experience the benefit of the proposed improvements will graduate from The University with better educations and with an enhanced sense of intellectual and institutional community. As an epilogue to this report, we think it is important to reiterate the reasons why we think this will occur. Essentially there are two. One involves activities that promote active rather than passive learning. The other involves activities that will foster greater integration of the curriculum, the delivery of student services, honors programs, first-year residential life, and program coordination and administration. Outstanding undergraduate education occurs when students are actively involved in the learning process. This is why the writing and small class experiences are so important. They promote active and interactive intellectual involvement. Students further achieve intellectual community when they share in the experience of acquiring a common intellectual foundation (general education) on which to build more specialized training. This is the essence of superior undergraduate education--active involvement and the sharing of common academic and non-academic experiences.

Why is superior undergraduate education important? As noted above, one reason is because it fosters the education of the "whole" person, and this is more than sufficient

justification to give high priority to undergraduate education. But there are other reasons as well, reasons that more directly make a difference for the practical well-being of the state of Texas. In his recent remarks upon receiving the Santa Rita Award, the highest honor given by The University of Texas System in recognition of contributions to higher education in the state, Jess Hay, chairman and chief executive officer of the Lomas Financial Corporation in Dallas, said: "the future of Texas requires a diversification in the state's economic base; there is a direct linkage between achievement of that objective and the quality of the state's education enterprise. We know that high quality basic research today attracts and produces equally good applied research tomorrow and that applied research, in turn, will be productive in the future of more jobs for more people -- and consequently more revenues to sustain our prosperity for future generations of Texans."²⁰ In addition to its many other benefits, higher education is vital for economic growth, especially in an era of increased global economic competitiveness. Although an excellent system of higher education does not by itself guarantee that a state will grow economically, a poor system virtually ensures that a state will lag behind.

Now is clearly a propitious time to take further steps to strengthen undergraduate education at The University. As noted above, the quality of the faculty is excellent, the students are outstanding, the physical plant and educational facilities are good, and the past decade has witnessed significant accomplishments. We would be remiss, however, if we did not emphasize in the strongest possible terms the extent to which The University of Texas is underfunded relative to other universities in the United States. Unless this situation improves, it is doubtful that The University can maintain its present level of quality, let alone forge ahead to meet the challenges facing undergraduate education.

It is important to understand the magnitude of the problem. Doing so helps to clarify why internal reallocations of funds are not the answer to achieving major improvements in undergraduate education. According to the Carnegie classification of colleges and

universities, there are 204 “national universities” in the country. U.S. News and World Report recently ranked these institutions on the basis of their standing on several indicators of academic quality relevant to undergraduate education. Fifty-one institutions comprise the top quartile (The University is in the top quartile, but ranked fifty-first in this group). The top 25 institutions in the highest quartile, most of which are private, spend annually an average of nearly \$45,000 per student enrolled. The second 25 universities (those ranked 26th through 50th), most of which are public, spend an average of \$24,600. The University of Texas is able to spend an average of \$11,700 per student, or about one-fourth as much as the top 25 and less than one-half as much as the second 25.²¹ Even allowing for the possibility that these figures are distorted by measurement and definition errors that would be viewed as enormous by any conventional standard, the amount of money available to The University to spend per student (which is determined by legislative appropriations and by Higher Education Coordinating Board formula funding) is appreciably lower than that of other first-rate public universities.

Given the current relatively low levels of investment by the state in quality higher education, it is a significant accomplishment that The University has achieved the national reputation that it has and is able to provide the quality of undergraduate instruction that it does. The administration at The University deserves enormous credit for this achievement and for the efficiency of its operations (in fact, only 6 percent of The University's budget goes for administrative expenses, versus an average of 12 percent at other large state universities).²² Unfortunately, this also means that administrative services for students and faculty alike are often stretched exceedingly thin. At a time when over three-fourths of the prestigious institutions that are members of the Association of American Universities are moving to strengthen their undergraduate programs,²³ further improvements in undergraduate education at The University may be imperiled because the institution is underfunded relative to other universities. The gap is so large that internal reallocations of funds would barely

make a dent in the problem. Merely to bring The University about halfway up to the average of the second 25 schools in the top quartile group would require spending approximately an additional 300 million per year. Funding of this magnitude can only come from legislative appropriations.

The relatively low levels of funding also threaten The University's basic mission. Texas is the third most populous state in the country, the third largest economically, the second largest geographically, and a national force politically.²⁴ The educational impact of the state's flagship institution is consequently national in scope, not merely regional or local, and its place ought to be among the top ten public institutions in the country. The University cannot maintain its national stature unless it is allowed to fulfill the mission for which it was created--that of being the pace setter for higher education in the state. Its funding structure must support that goal, or it becomes almost pointless to speak of achieving further improvements in undergraduate education, let alone realizing The University's larger mission.

ENDNOTES

1. For studies of trends affecting undergraduate education, see Ernest L. Boyer, College: The Undergraduate Experience in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); Ernest L. Boyer, Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate (Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990); Council on Competitiveness, Gaining New Ground: Technology Priorities for America's Future (Washington, D.C.: Council on Competitiveness, 1991); "Curbing Costs," U.S. News and World Report, America's Best Colleges 1991; "Energizing Teaching," U.S. News and World Report, America's Best Colleges 1992, p. 14; "Memorandum," Association of American Universities, September 10, 1990, pp 1-12; National Research Council, The Internationalization of U.S. Manufacturing: Causes and Consequences, (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1990; Diane Ravitch, "Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Plures," The American Scholar, Summer, 1990, pp. 1-18.
2. For an enumeration of several improvements in UT undergraduate education, see William H. Cunningham "The State of the University: Address to the General Faculty," Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the General Faculty for 1990-1991, pp. 19285-19292; and William H. Cunningham, "Undergraduate Education at The University of Texas at Austin," On Campus: The University of Texas at Austin, September 21, 1991, p. 2-3.
3. These included the 1979-80 Committee on Basic Education Requirements (chaired by Professor James Vick), the 1986-87 Presidential Commission on Fraternal Organizations (chaired by Mr. Jack Ratliff), the 1987-88 Committee on Faculty-Student Relations (chaired by Vice President Ronald Brown), the 1987-88 Committee on the Implementation of Basic Education Requirements (chaired by Professor Wallace Fowler), the 1989 ad hoc Committee on Racial Harassment by (chaired by Dean Mark Yudof), the 1988-89 ad hoc Committee on Undergraduate Education (chaired Dean James Doluisio), the 1990-91 Faculty Senate Committee on Multicultural Education (chaired by Paul Woodruff), the 1990-91 University Council Committee on Multicultural Education (chaired by Wayne Danielson), and the 1990-91 Faculty Senate Committee on Teaching Effectiveness (chaired by Professor Kenneth Kirk).
4. U.S. News and World Report, America's Best Colleges 1992, p. 54.
5. Report of the Centennial Commission, The University of Texas at Austin, 1983, p. 28.
6. Boyer, College, p. 1.
7. Ibid., p. 67.
8. Ibid., p. 67-68.
9. Ibid., p. 66-67.
10. Daniel J. Singal, "The Other Crisis in American Education," The Atlantic (November, 1991), pp. 60-61.
11. Ibid., p. 66.
12. Boyer, College, p. 80.

13. Marsha Moss, Director, Office of Institutional Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, personal communication.
14. U.S. News and World Report, America's Best Colleges 1992, pp. 13 and 24.
15. Keeping Faith with the Student Athlete: A New Model for Intercollegiate Athletics, Report of the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 1991, p. vii.
16. Boyer, College, p. 90.
17. Ibid., p. 79.
18. Report of Centennial Commission, 1983, p.27.
19. The Challenge of Connected Learning, Association of American Colleges, Washington, D.C., 1991, pp. 8-9.
20. Jess Hay, "Excerpts of Remarks Made Upon Receiving Santa Rita Award," On Campus: The University of Texas at Austin, September 21, 1991, p. 5.
21. U.S. News and World Report, America's Best Colleges 1992, pp. 13 and 24.
22. Marsha Moss, Office of Institutional Studies, Personal Communication; and Report of The Committee on National Data Sources for Use in Formula Funding, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1991.
23. "Memorandum," AAU, 1991, pp. 1-12.
24. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States 1990, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

APPENDIX A
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Frank D. Bean, Chair

*Ashbel Smith Professor
Department of Sociology*

Daniel Acosta, Jr.

*Johnson and Johnson Centennial Professor
College of Pharmacy*

R. Gordon Appleman

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Fort Worth, Texas*

Brooke L. Barton

*College of Business Administration
Junior*

Margaret C. Berry

*Former Dean of Students
Austin, Texas*

Alan Campion

*Professor
Department of Chemistry*

Larry D. Carver

*Associate Professor of English
Associate Dean of Liberal Arts*

Melissa P. Collie

*Associate Professor
Department of Government*

Eli P. Cox III

*Centennial Professor in Business
Department of Marketing*

Hector DeLeon

*Ex-Student
Austin, Texas*

Lonnie Fogle

*Ex-Student
Houston, Texas*

Mario J. Gonzalez

*Chair, and Professor Department of Electrical
and Computer Engineering*

Roderick P. Hart

*Centennial Professor
Department of Speech Communication*

Jo Anne Hawkins

*Assistant Director for Public Services
The General Libraries*

Richard L. Heller

*Former Associate Director
Texas Union*

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*President-elect of Ex-Student's Association
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*Former President of Ex-Student's Association
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*Associate Professor
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Tracy M. Silna

*College of Liberal Arts
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Paul R. Suarez
College of Communication
Senior

Michael P. Starbird
Associate Dean
College of Natural Sciences

Kyle E. Whitehouse
College of Liberal Arts
Senior

Cheryl L. Wood
Student Development Specialist
Texas Union

George C. Wright
Professor of History
Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

APPENDIX B
PRESIDENTIAL CHARGE TO THE COMMITTEE

APPENDIX B
PRESIDENTIAL CHARGE TO THE COMMITTEE

Charge to Committee on the Undergraduate Experience

The University of Texas at Austin

November 28, 1990

The committee is charged with constructing a thorough examination of all aspects of The University's undergraduate program and with making comprehensive recommendations to the faculty and administration to ensure that the undergraduate experience serves the needs of students who will live most of their lives in the 21st century.

The University has a tradition of creativity and experimentation in undergraduate education -- from the establishment of the Plan II honors program more than 50 years ago to the curriculum reforms instituted in the 1980s. The committee should draw upon that tradition and should not be afraid to recommend bold innovation.

In the broadest sense, the committee's work will aim at assisting The University in defining the purpose of undergraduate education and recommending policies and actions that will fulfill that purpose. The committee should examine issues related to curriculum, instruction, the sense of community on the campus, and resources and services for undergraduates.

Among issues that should be pursued are the following:

I Curriculum.

A. What does an educated person need to know in order to be an effective citizen in the 21st century? To what range of experiences and disciplines should today's students be introduced?

B. What is the appropriate balance between broad-based, liberal arts education and more specialized training?

C. Are there ways to expand and extend the traditional four-year undergraduate program so that it better serves the educational needs of the 21st century? Are there opportunities for expanding the integration of traditional undergraduate and graduate programs?

D. How can we increase the international or global scope of the undergraduate experience?

E. How can we emphasize the role of values in the undergraduate program, including instruction in ethics, as part of the contemporary educational experience?

II Instruction.

A. What are the optimum ways for using faculty resources at all levels for enhancement of the undergraduate program?

B. What challenges and opportunities lie ahead in the use of new technology in the classroom as part of the development and encouragement of innovative teaching?

C. What innovative methods are available for encouraging, recognizing, and rewarding excellence in undergraduate teaching.

D. How can we do more to nurture within the undergraduate program the natural and intimate connection between teaching and research?

E. How can we ensure that core courses are stimulating and fulfilling educational experiences?

III Community.

A. How can the campus environment be structured so as to provide support for and to foster community among students of diverse cultural backgrounds?

B. How can we more effectively integrate the colleges and schools into a campus-wide community? How can we foster inter-college communication as a way of enhancing the undergraduate program and broadening students' experiences?

C. How can more effective use be made of registered student organizations, of undergraduate residence halls, and of alumni to foster a sense of campus community?

D. How can we enhance the intellectual life of undergraduates outside the formal instructional program?

IV Infrastructure.

A. How can we enhance campus services that support the undergraduate experience, so that services are integrated into a more effective operation?

B. How can we better meet the special needs of undergraduates for academic and career advising?

C. How can we enhance the role of the libraries, computer facilities, residence halls, and other campus resources for undergraduates? How can we better acquaint undergraduates with the resources that are available?

D. Is there a need to integrate and coordinate the various undergraduate honors programs on the campus? Is there a need for an honors dorm?

APPENDIX C

I. PERSONS APPEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

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Shirley F. Binder*Director of Admissions
Associate Vice President***Ronald M. Brown***Professor
Department of Education Administration***April J. Cheatam***Minority Information Center Director
College of Business Administration***Sandra J. Christenson***President, Cabinet of College Councils
College of Business Administration***Wayne A. Danielson***Chairman
Department of Journalism***Garth P. Davis***President, Student's Association
College of Liberal Arts***DeLoss Dodds***Men's Intercollegiate
Athletics Director***Conrad R. Doenges***Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education
College of Business Administration***James T. Doluisio***Dean
College of Pharmacy***Larry L. Dubinski***President, InterFraternity Council
College of Liberal Arts***John Durbin***Professor
Department of Mathematics***Jennie L. Germann***Orientation Advisor
College of Liberal Arts***Rolando Gonzalez***Student Development Specialist
Texas Union***Ray Hernandez***Welcome Program
College of Engineering*

Rosa H. Hunt

*Student Development Specialist
Student Services*

Bryce Jordan

*Member, The Knight Commission
President Emeritus, Penn State University*

Sharon H. Justice

*Assistant Vice President
Dean of Students*

Jacqueline F. Lain

*Student Involvement Committee Co-Chair
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Ann B. Lenox

*Chair, Women's Conference
College of Natural Science*

Donna A. Lopiano

*Women's Intercollegiate
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*Orientation Advisor
College of Liberal Arts*

Roy A. Vaughan

*Director
Ex-Student's Association*

James W. Vick

*Vice President for
Student Affairs*

Paul B. Woodruff

*Chairman
Department of Philosophy*