

# College catalogues revised to emphasize basic 'core curriculum' for undergraduates

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During his annual address to the General Faculty last fall, UT President Peter Flawn said bringing to "successful conclusion" the University's "thorough review of undergraduate curricula ... must be our primary objective for 1982-83."

To this end the University Council has been revising college catalogues to bring degree programs in line with what is known as the Vick report. That study recommended in 1981 a new set of basic education requirements — a "core curriculum" — for all undergraduates.

The concept of a core curriculum was gaining popularity nationwide about the time Flawn was making his transition into office in the late 1970s. At the same time, several universities, including Harvard, were revising their basic education requirements.

However, James Vick, dean of the UT College of Natural Sciences and

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## The Vick Report

### creating a core curriculum

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First of five articles

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chairman of the Committee on Basic Education Requirements, says the Vick report was not born out of a sense that there needed to be reform.

Flawn's "War on Mediocrity" and the University's Centennial, Vick says, were among the influences spawning the University Council's Committee on Basic Education Requirements in fall 1979.

"The committee was formed and told to study the situation and see if there was a need for reform," Vick said. "In general, there wasn't a groundswell of feeling things had gone to pot."

Composed of faculty, administrators and students, the Vick Committee submitted its report in January 1981.

When the committee finally reached

a consensus, the basic education requirements it proposed for all undergraduate degree programs were:

- Twelve hours of English beyond E306, which would become an admissions requirement. Six hours could be fulfilled by upper-division courses certified to have a "substantial writing component." This requirement later was changed to nine hours of English — E306, E316K and E346K.

- Six hours of courses certified to contain a "substantial writing component." At least three of these hours must be upper-division, and preferably within a student's field of study.

- Three hours of social science beyond the legislative requirements of history and government. These three hours could be taken within the departments of anthropology, economics, geology, linguistics, psychology or sociology.

- Three hours of mathematics.

- Nine hours of natural sciences, at least six of which must be in the same subject.

- Three hours of fine arts and humani-

ties taken within the departments of music, art, classics, archaeology, architecture or philosophy.

- Eight hours of a foreign language. Students entering without two high school foreign language units would lose one semester of college credit for each unit they are deficient.

Vick said he became depressed as the University Council debated the report during the next three months and then accepted a substitute motion that tacitly approved the report's basic education requirements, but left the final curriculum changes in the hands of individual schools and colleges.

But as departments and colleges worked out curriculum changes over the next 18 months to fit the committee's recommendations, Vick saw that the report, although sometimes met with opposition, had not been swept under the rug as he had thought. "Fortunately, I was wrong," Vick said.

*Tuesday: Ironing out the wrinkles.*