

Cunningham announces decisions on recommendations proposed by Committee on the Undergraduate Experience

President William H. Cunningham has announced a series of decisions in response to recommendations of the special Committee on the Undergraduate Experience, which was chaired by Dr. Frank D. Bean, professor of sociology.

In a letter to Bean on May 1, Cunningham said:

"The work of this committee is central to the University's continuing renewal of emphasis on undergraduate education. I agree with the committee that the University has devoted considerable attention to its undergraduate program in recent years and that we have achieved notable progress. I concur as well, however, that much remains to be achieved.

"The committee has done an outstanding job, fulfilling its charge to undertake a comprehensive and thorough examination of undergraduate education and life at The University of Texas at Austin in an exemplary and timely manner. We are grateful for your comments and your recommendations, and believe that the University community will benefit significantly for many years to come through your special efforts on behalf of this important initiative."

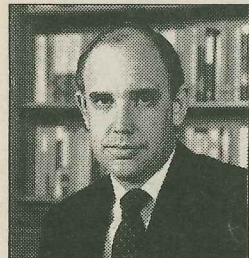
Attached to the letter was the following summary by Cunningham of his comments and decisions regarding the committee's 26 recommendations.



File photo by Larry Murphy

Summary of comments and action regarding the Undergraduate Experience Report

The executive officers devoted a two-day retreat to very careful consideration of the



Cunningham

report and recommendations of the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience. In addition, the executive officers consulted with the Deans' Council regarding the report and recommendations, and later held extensive further discussions. As a result, I have made the following decisions.

1. 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.

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President William H. Cunningham describes the work of the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience, chaired by Dr.

Frank D. Bean, as being 'central to the University's continuing renewal of emphasis on undergraduate education.'

The concept of integrated core curricula has been attempted before at the University with the American Experience sequence and is currently being tried with Plan II. The focus should be to integrate courses within a discipline area or to integrate courses within a core of related disciplines. Also, the focus should be put on integration of courses for non-major students. An effort to address all areas in the curriculum may be too broad or complex to undertake and should probably be avoided. This recommendation has been referred to the Educational Policy Committee for further review.

2. 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.

It was agreed that the syllabi of courses in each of the six general education areas satisfying the General Education Requirements should be carefully evaluated to determine if they satisfy the General Education Requirements. However, it is my belief that the college and school curriculum committees are the most appropriate sites for such reviews. The deans, therefore, have been asked to have their college and department curriculum committees review the course syllabi that are commonly used in courses to satisfy the general education requirements.

The colleges and schools should engage in regular consultation regarding the syllabi of widely used or University-wide required courses relating to the Basic Education Requirements.

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

The development of such programs for students who wish to participate on a voluntary basis — some general and some college-specific — should be explored, but it may not be appropriate to require students to take a "University 101" course. This recommendation has been considered by the University Council and has been referred to a special committee of faculty, students, and staff, chaired by Dean of Students Sharon Justice. This committee is currently developing plans for a pilot project for Fall 1992.

4. Recommendation: The University should establish a University Honors Program.

This recommendation has been sent to members of the new working group on honors programs, and they have been asked to review this issue, especially honors programs for freshmen and sophomores. Practically, what should the role of honors programs be? Should these programs start during the first year in all of the colleges, or are there reasons to allow them to continue to vary from college to college with some beginning during the junior year? I have asked Dr. James W. Vick, vice president for student affairs, and Dr. George C. Wright, vice provost for undergraduate education, to meet with the working group on honors programs.

5. Recommendation: The University should assign administrative responsibility for the direc-

tion, operation, oversight, and coordination of University-wide academic undergraduate programs to a single administrative position.

The critical nature of undergraduate education to the fundamental mission of the University is recognized, and the position of vice provost held by George Wright was created to focus on, and be an advocate for, undergraduate educational programs. However, it is my belief that undergraduate education is so important that the responsibility cannot rest in a single individual. Therefore, primary responsibility in this area must continue to reside with the deans, colleges, and departments. Dr. Wright will, however, meet regularly in a coordination role with individuals in the colleges who oversee undergraduate academic affairs. This would be a policy group meeting. The deans have emphasized the need for continuing and thorough communication within this group.

6. 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 Catalog.

This recommendation is approved, and Executive Vice President and Provost Gerhard Fonken and Vice Provost George Wright completed this project before the publication of the committee's report.

7. Recommendation: The University should construct or acquire additional dormitory space.
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University pledges to reward outstanding undergraduate teaching, innovations in curricular development

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When explaining the reasons for this proposal, the committee noted that living on campus leads first-year students to become "integrated more quickly into the academic and student organizational life" of the institution. The University does not have enough space to accommodate all first-year students in the dorms. For several reasons, however, it would not be practical to expand dormitory space to accommodate a larger number of freshmen.

First, we are generally able to accommodate all students who request on-campus housing. It is doubtful that there would be a demand among students for additional space. Many freshmen as well as other students prefer to live in private, off-campus dorms or apartments. Considering that some incoming freshmen are "older than average" and have had other experiences before coming to college, such as raising families, it would be impractical to expect them to live on campus.

Second, freshmen currently occupy the largest share of campus housing. Of 5,400 entering freshmen in fall 1991, 3,165 chose to live on campus. There are currently 5,300 spaces in campus housing, so requiring freshmen to live on campus would mean that only freshmen would find a space unless the number of rooms were greatly increased.

Third, the University does not have the financial resources that would be required to expand campus housing to accommodate all freshmen. That would require the addition of more than 2,000 beds, if older students were not to be displaced. That number of beds would be the equivalent of a new dormitory about 60 percent as large as Jester Center.

There are other options available to students in private housing that provides a similar experience and relieves the University of the financial obligation of building and maintaining new dorms. The University is considering a limited expansion of graduate student housing, which would make existing space available for more undergraduate students.

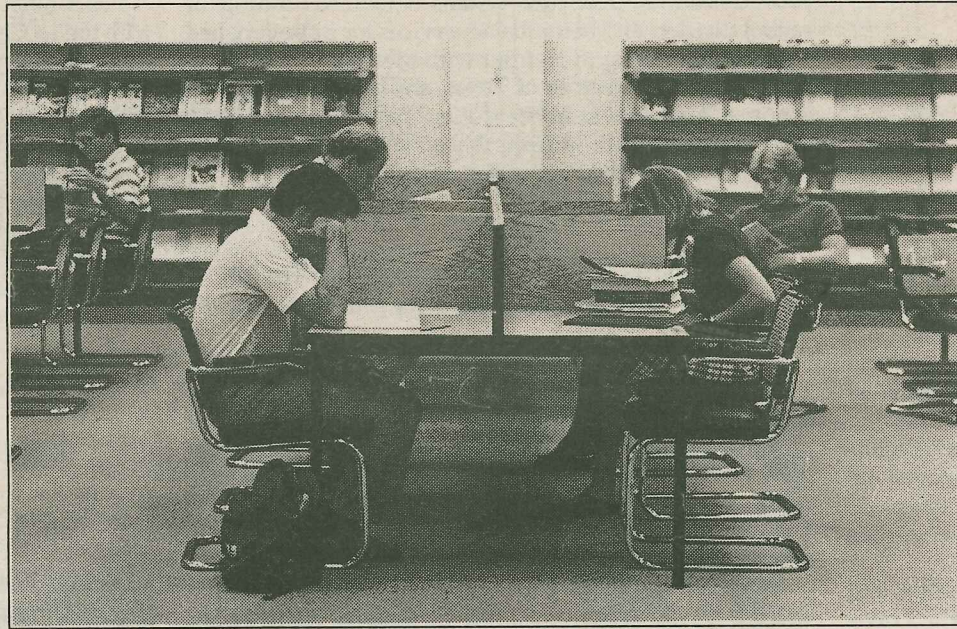
8. Recommendation: The University should conduct a periodic survey of student services.

This recommendation is approved, and I have asked Dr. Vick to develop a proposal that includes an implementation plan.

9. Recommendation: The University should establish a Volunteer Center.

This is a good idea, and one that the University and the Students' Association should jointly sponsor. If the Students' Association is willing to support half of one full-time person (approximately \$10,000 a year for an administrative assistant), the University will fund the second half of this position and will find a facility to be used by the Students' Association as the site for the Volunteer Center. It is hoped that students will volunteer to work at the center and be involved in its total program.

10. Recommendation: The University early in the fall semester should devote a full day to first-year students, should mandate that deans or department chairs send a personalized letter to first-year students, and should require that each de-



File photo by Larry Murphy

To improve instruction in writing, the University will mandate that all departments require students to complete written work -- including homework, papers and essay examinations -- on a regular basis and give greater emphasis to writing in all courses.

partment sponsor a faculty/student gathering to greet new students.

It is important to welcome new students. Therefore, the deans have been asked to see what can be done to assure an appropriate level of orientation for the students in their colleges. Several colleges already are involved in such activities. For example, early in the fall semester, the College of Engineering sponsors a day-long college activity which is then followed by a barbecue. The College of Pharmacy also has a day-long program, planned by the student council, followed by a social. The activity concludes with a group photograph, which is then distributed to the faculty in a timely manner. The College of Business Administration relies on upper-class students to contact new students and plan a day-long program.

11. Recommendation: The University should provide an information and problem-solving office in each department.

The deans have been asked to ensure that the undergraduate advising offices in each department are properly staffed and operated appropriately. In addition, students need to be aware of the University-wide undergraduate advising and information center. This center was established to assist students as they make decisions about courses and majors, and to offer a broad range of other academic and career advising services. This center will make the University more personal and more responsive to the new students who need special counseling and attention.

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

One way to approach this issue is through "total quality management," which focuses on students and other constituencies. The University has begun pilot programs in the College of Business Administration, the Department of Finance, the Division of Student Affairs, and the College of Engineering. These

programs will be evaluated for possible expansion.

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

The concept of a multicultural dorm is intriguing and has received a great deal of consideration. Unfortunately, such a dorm might lead to greater separation of students along racial or ethnic lines. The University does not want to take any action that would have the effect of promoting segregation.

In addition, it should be recognized that the percentage of minority students currently living in dorms is higher than the percentage of minority students on campus. For fall 1991, Hispanics made up 11.2 percent of our enrollment, but 15.5 percent of dormitory residents. Blacks made up 3.6 percent of enrollment, but 8.3 percent of dormitory residents. Asian Americans made up 6.8 percent of enrollment, but 12.9 percent of dormitory residents. Overall, 24 percent of the dormitory population is black or Hispanic, compared to 15 percent of University enrollment. Because of the way dorms are structured, we may have already come close to achieving the committee's recommendation that campus housing foster multicultural relationships.

14. 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.

This recommendation is approved. I would like the Students' Association, Dean of Students Office, and Texas Union staff to meet and suggest student organizations to develop implementation plans. The students should provide leadership, guided by Texas Union staff members.

15. Recommendation: The University administration should explore with the deans of the colleges and schools ways to improve large in-

troductory courses fulfilling the General Education Requirements, and to involve more tenured (including distinguished) faculty as instructors in these courses.

The deans should explore ways to improve the quality of teaching in all undergraduate classes, and they have been urged to evaluate their large introductory courses, work with the departments to determine how choices are made for classes, and make every effort to obtain the most capable teachers for these large classes, ensuring that the best faculty teach such classes on a regular basis. In addition, the deans of colleges that have large classes have been asked to report to the Provost's Office on progress that is being made in this area.

It is interesting to note that not all undergraduate classes are large and that all large classes are not poor educational experiences for students. In fall 1990, 55 percent of lower-division undergraduate classes had 25 or fewer students, and 85 percent had 50 or fewer. Also, most of the largest classes are taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty members. Some of our best teachers, including recipients of teaching excellence awards, teach many of the larger classes.

The large number of undergraduates at the University has helped perpetuate the idea that the "average" class is very large, probably numbering hundreds of students. Without question, large classes are an integral part of the lower-division offerings, but so are small classes.

16. 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 this is a complex issue, I do support this concept. The responsibility in this area lies with the colleges, but the University is firmly committed to rewarding outstanding undergraduate teaching and innovations in curricular development. The deans have been asked:

(a) To attach annually with their budget submissions a report indicating what was done in their colleges to ensure that teaching was given appropriate consideration,

(b) To inform Provost Fonken each year about the steps taken to arrive at recommendations regarding merit pay increases and promotions, and

(c) To meet in small groups or committees to develop recommendations concerning the evaluation of teaching, and to present those recommendations to the provost.

17. 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.

This is a good concept, but there are numerous reservations about creating a University Teaching Institute. Course development is a departmental responsibility, unlike

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Cunningham endorses recommendations on writing instruction, advising, degree plans

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the conducting of research projects. Therefore, a University Teaching Institute would not be as workable as the University Research Institute. In addition, the deans have academic development funds which are to be used for instructional development, and they have devised a number of ways to support course development. For example, Dean Jon Whitmore of the College of Fine Arts is using funds to develop an interdisciplinary course. Dean Robert Boyer of the College of Natural Sciences has been using these funds to pay a full-time person to work with teaching assistants and faculty to improve teaching of courses that have a substantial writing component. The College of Natural Sciences recently received approval for a science and math institute. The funds come from federal grants and contracts that are designed to improve teaching in science and mathematics.

18. 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 advisers 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.

These recommendations are accepted and have been referred to the deans of the colleges and schools. The deans have been asked to provide data from the departments and colleges regarding the success of the earlier writing requirements. Provost Fonken

is working with Interim Dean of Liberal Arts Robert D. King to explore the feasibility of establishing the Division of Rhetoric and Composition.

19. 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.*

This recommendation has been accepted, and the deans have been asked to review their programs to ensure that all courses fit into an integrated structure. It is important that there be a clear, concise catalog description of the course requirements.

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

In a very large decentralized system such as the University, questions about curriculum must be dealt with by the various colleges and schools. Therefore, this matter should remain a foremost responsibility of each college and school. The Educational Policy Committee should continue to study and provide advice regarding educational matters that are of University-wide concern.

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

This recommendation is an interesting idea, but additional information is needed from the deans about how many courses would be needed and whether it would be feasible given the enrollment and budget restraints The University faces. Therefore, this recommendation has been sent to the deans with the request that they provide the appropriate information to the provost.

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

This concept is currently being experimented with in the College of Engineering and the College of Natural Sciences. The experi-

ences of those colleges will be evaluated.

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

A committee has been established to prepare a feasibility study of the needs of the occupants of the proposed new building, and I have asked Dr. Vick to expedite the process. The administration will make available the current Student Health Center as a site for additional student service activities and will seek funds for renovation of the facility.

24. 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.*

The administration will continue to develop and expand the University's advising and information center that was created last year. The basic responsibility for advising, of course, rests with the colleges. The State of Texas does not provide adequate funds for first-rate academic advising. The colleges and schools that have made the most progress in recent years in the area of academic advising have funded it through a college-wide advising fee. The deans have been asked to review their own advising policies and services, within budgetary and personnel restraints. This recommendation has also been referred to Dr. Alice G. Reinartz, director of the Advising Center. The University will continue to improve TEX and other information data bases to improve advising services for students. The Advising Center will begin reporting to Vice Provost George Wright, effective June 1, 1992.

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

This is an excellent idea. Extensive work has been done by the Registrar's Office, and progress has been made, particularly by the College of Liberal Arts. But a complicating factor is that certified automated degree checks are very difficult due to the many

exceptions and judgment that are required. In addition, this project will not succeed without the active participation of and support by staff in the deans' offices. Much work is needed each semester to identify cross-listed courses and different sections (topics) of courses which will count the same. Requirements need to be coded for most degree plans to be used effectively within each college and across the campus. I have asked the deans to instruct their staffs to work with the central administration to implement automated degree checks as soon as possible.

26. 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.*

Students must be involved, and their participation must be encouraged. It is important to note that policy committees and boards have student representatives. Sixty-four students serve on 18 standing committees, and many other students serve on policy boards and committees, such as the board of Texas Student Publications, the Texas Union board and the intercollegiate athletics councils for men and women. Frequently, students are appointed but do not attend meetings. Very few students vote in campus-wide student elections. We must work to improve participation by students in campus affairs.

I meet with students and student groups regularly, as well as hosting each semester several informal sessions of randomly selected students. Dr. Vick also meets regularly with students and student groups.

Summary statement

A number of the recommendations that were developed by the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience have been forwarded to the deans or to specific college- or university-wide committees. I have asked each of the entities that have been sent a recommendation to respond to the provost by November 1 concerning actions that they have taken or recommendations that they plan to make. While this sounds like a great deal of time, it is important for everyone to remember that most faculty and student committees do not meet regularly during the summer.

University schedules final orals for doctoral students

11 Monday

2 p.m.

"Microstructure Modeling of Fluid Flow in a Layered Medium." Gordon Wayne Clark, mathematics. Chair: Ralph E. Showalter. R.L. Moore Hall 12.166.

3 p.m.

"Processions through Paradise: a Liturgical and Social Interpretation of the Ritual Function and Symbolic Signification of the Cloister of the Sixteenth-Century Monasteries of Central Mexico." Richard England Phillips, art history. Chair: Joan A. Hollady. Art Bldg. 1.206C.

12 Tuesday

2 p.m.

"The Crystallographic Refinement and Three-Dimensional Structure of Recombinant Ricin A Chain." Debra Elleman Mlsna, biochemistry. Chair: Jon D. Robertus. Welch 4.238.

13 Wednesday

2 p.m.

"Capo Alfiere and the Middle Neolithic Period in Eastern Calabria, Southern Italy." Jonathan Morter, anthropology. Chair: James A. Neely. E.P.Schoch Bldg. 1.130.

15 Friday

10 a.m.

"Telecommunications, International Capital, the Peripheral State: Case of Mexico." Eudardo Barrera, radio-tv-film. Jess H. Jones Communication Bldg. 4.128.

18 Monday

10 a.m.

"The Negotiation of Meaning and the Transfer of Responsibility for Learning through Teacher Scaffolding and Student Self-Scaffolding of Instruction." Debra Kay Meyer, educational psychology. Chair: Claire E. Weinstein. Education Bldg. 523.

19 Tuesday

9:30 a.m.

"The Sun, Split Like Spun Glass." Mark William Schultz, composition. Chair: Russell F. Pinkston. Music Bldg East and Music Bldg/Recital Hall 3.702

June 22 Monday

9 a.m.

"An Experimental Study of the Driving Mechanism and Control of the Unsteady Shock Induced Turbulent Separation in a Mach 5 Compression Corner Flow." William Berton McClure, aerospace engineering. Chair: David S. Dolling. W.R. Woolrich Laboratories 410.