



University of Delaware

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May 6, 1986

TO: All Faculty Members

FROM: Raymond A. Callahan, Vice President
University Faculty Senate

Raymond Callahan

SUBJECT: Special Faculty Senate Meeting, May 16, 1986

By the authority vested in the President of the Faculty Senate, James R. Soles, a special meeting of the University Faculty Senate has been called for Friday, May 16, 1986 at 4:00 p.m. in room 110 Memorial Hall. Dr. Frank Murray, Chair of the President's Commission on Undergraduate Education, will submit the Committee's report for discussion (copy attached).

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Attachment: President's Commission on Undergraduate
Education, Interim Report for Open
Hearing Responses

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President's Commission on Undergraduate Education
Interim Report for Open Hearing Responses¹

The Commission was charged to make recommendations about things which must be done to strengthen the total learning environment of our undergraduates so that our graduates can take their place as leaders in the multi-cultural world of the 21st Century. The whole of the undergraduate experience--academic, extra-curricular, cultural and residential--was studied by the Commission.

The Commission gave particular attention to the following items:

1. The implementation of changes that will improve the likelihood, without compromising our standards, that the students we recruit and enroll will fulfill their intellectual potential.

¹This report contains a summary of the principal recommendations of the several subcommittees of the Commission. These recommendations have been adopted individually and tentatively by consensus of the Commission, and have not been approved in total by a formal vote. Additional recommendations are anticipated as are modifications of the recommendations in this report.

The report is issued only as a basis for wider University discussion of the proposals the Commission is actively considering. A final report will be issued after that discussion is completed.

2. The implementation of changes that will enhance the interactions between faculty and students.
3. The examination of the undergraduate experience for educational and cultural enhancement, particularly for blacks and females.
4. The contribution of all University programs--academic, residential and commuter life--to the academic goals of the University.

In addition, the Commission reviewed the recommendations on undergraduate education made in 1971 by the Community Design Planning Commission to see which of those worth implementing have not been accomplished.

The Commission believes the University of Delaware should be distinguished by the following attributes: (1) the teaching atmosphere of the small high quality liberal arts college, (2) the faculty quality of the major research university, (3) the preparation of students to be multi-culturally literate citizens, and (4) two fundamental missions of the land grant university--the dissemination of academic information throughout the state and region and the education of experts who give professional service in important social areas and who create the knowledge needed for the solution to many of the region's pressing problems. We seek to create a symbiotic relationship between these attributes in which each enhances the others. Above all, we want to insure that policy decisions about how we do our research and provide consulting services to the region and the professions enhance, and at least not diminish, our overriding

obligation to provide the highest quality instructional program for our students.

We seek to extend the best instructional features of the graduate school as far downward into the undergraduate programs as possible. We wish to see our undergraduate students, wherever possible, working independently and actively under the same kind of close supervision and guidance as our graduate students receive. In other words, our aspirations for the kind of academic environment our undergraduate students experience is not inherently different from our aspirations for the kind our graduate students typically experience.

The Commission's examination of the major higher education reports led it to see that the lessons in the Nation at Risk for the high schools hold as well for the University. Whatever evidence there is for a crisis in public education (K-12) can be brought forward with equal force for the upper levels of public education (12-16). There is a continuity in the indicators of educational quality that extend from the high schools into the University. Like SAT scores, the Graduate Record Examination scores have declined (in both the basic aptitude tests and in academic subject examinations); like public school teachers, faculty award higher grades than students earn; faculty positions--like all teaching positions--are becoming less attractive; as, in the high school there has been a proliferation of elective and major subject areas. In general, the pressures inherent in the laudable goals of universal schooling have forced

the higher education institutions to compromise their standards in much the same fashion as the high schools have had to compromise theirs.

The report, All One System (Demographics of Education, Kindergarten Through Graduate School), issued by the Institute for Educational Leadership, makes it plain that the next generation of undergraduates will be quite different from those currently enrolled in higher education. One indicator of the change in the undergraduate population are the dramatic increases over the last ten years in the percentages of women (60%), minorities (85%), over 24-year-old students (70%), part-time students (65%) at a time when percentage increases in males (15%) and full-time students (18%) were much smaller. In addition, for the next twenty years the nation will have to work with such a limited number of young people, whether in higher education, the military or business, that it will not be possible to replace the failures with others of the same age as we have in the past. As well, the University of Delaware will need to confront the issue of why higher education isn't more attractive to minority high school graduates, whose high school completion rates have been increasing, and why it loses its appeal for the approximately 30% of our students who do not complete their programs.

The recommendations in the national reports specifically about higher education are in line generally with the Commission's analysis of the undergraduate programs at Delaware. We found a similar lack of coherence in the curriculum, an

avoidance of a core of enduring and fundamental ideas of the sort, but by no means limited to or identical with that cited by the National Endowment for the Humanities in To Reclaim a Legacy. We see the same failure of the faculty to assume a corporate responsibility for the entire undergraduate program that the American Association of Colleges found in Integrity in the College Curriculum. The discipline or departmental organization of the University, the source of so much strength in the modern university, is at the same time a symptom of the limited faculty attention and leadership to issues that extend beyond the narrow boundaries of the academic major. The Commission was in agreement with the National Institute of Education's Involvement in Learning in which it was argued that the test of sound academic policy was whether it increased the students active involvement in genuine problem solving, especially during the critical first two years of the curriculum where it is so noticeably absent.

We said above that at a minimum we seek to resolve the conflicts--sometimes inevitable conflicts--between the teaching, research, and service missions in ways that do not detract from the teaching mission. We urge a vigilant scrutiny of the innumerable small decisions by faculty and administrators that so clearly compromise and weaken the instruction program while they attempt to strengthen our service and research competence. The employment of faculty and teaching assistants who do not speak English well is for us a prototypical example of where the

pursuit of excellence in research is conducted at the expense of teaching. The ubiquitous faculty request for a reduced teaching load, rather than reduced research or service obligations, is another symptom of our concern.

The Commission notes that the undergraduate program is not a four-year program for most students. At the University of Delaware, and nationally, less than half (about .46) of the undergraduates complete their programs in four years. Nationally only about seventy percent of those who start actually receive a baccalaureate from some institution by their seventh year of academic study. Unlike the high school dropout, the college dropout has as good grades as those who stay to complete the program. At Delaware, about 30% of our freshmen will not complete their programs--even after six years. Several of the Commission's recommendations are designed to improve these disturbing percentages at Delaware.

Finally, the Commission believes that none of our goals for excellence can be achieved without an equitable campus climate that supports each student's personal, academic, and social development. There can be no excellence without equity. The final barriers of gender, color, language, culture, and attitude that work against our students' academic accomplishments and personal development must be removed. Specific recommendations to assist the University in achieving and maintaining excellence with equity are being formulated by subcommittees of the Commission.

The Commission is prepared to recommend the following policies for the University of Delaware and to present analyses to show how these are feasible, consistent, and will ultimately lead us to be a better university.

Conditions for Change

Our recommendation for a reduction in the size of lower division classes is a critical precondition of many Commission recommendations. At least half the enrollments in 100 and 200 level courses should be in sections small enough for there to be significant amounts of writing and speaking.

Currently, class sizes for only about 20 percent of registrants in 100 and 200 level courses meet a standard of enrollments between 1 and 30, and nearly 50 percent of all students in 100 and 200 level courses were in classes of over 100 students. This recommended reduction in the size of sections in which freshmen and sophomores typically enroll should not be made through increases in the size of other university classes. The implementation of the policy will require several of the following:

1. significant addition and reallocation of resources to the undergraduate programs.
2. increases in the average faculty teaching load (currently at 5.2 credit hours per week).
3. the use of video-disk and cassette formats in large lecture courses in which dialectic and class discussion are not necessary or desirable.

4. reductions in the number of students enrolled in the University, but without a reduction in the enrollment of black students and with increased efforts to retain those who are already enrolled.
5. conversion of non-faculty lines to teaching faculty positions.
6. reductions in the numbers of seniors and juniors who take lower division courses (e.g. in the College of Arts and Science between 55% and 72% of the courses in degree programs are at the 100 and 200 levels).
7. significant changes in the way we evaluate and reward effective teaching.
8. the addition of up to 256 additional sections each semester.

Finally, let us make clear two things we are not advocating. First we are not advocating an across-the-board increase in every faculty member's teaching load. Faculty talents and interests are not all alike and each should be permitted and, indeed, encouraged to specialize more heavily in that area best suiting his or her abilities. Second, we are not arguing that an increase in the overall average faculty load is a costless panacea. We recognize that more time spent with students means less time available for research and service. We simply submit that if the University is sincere in its desire to improve undergraduate education, it must pay that cost.

Another critical precondition for the changes we seek centers on the type of high school curriculum our applicants have taken.

Admission Standards

The Commission endorses the logic of the predicted grade index (PGI) means of admitting students and urges the constant evaluation of the utility and validity of the factors used to compute the PGI. As well, it urges the constant exploration for new predictive indicators of academic success at the University of Delaware.

The admission standards and procedures of the University should be published and widely disseminated.

We believe that applicants for admission to the University should have followed the following college preparatory curriculum in high school (grades 9-12).

1. Four years of English with extensive writing components.
2. Three years of mathematics (including algebra I and II and geometry).
3. Three years of science (including 2 years of laboratory science in physics, chemistry and/or biology).
4. Three years of social studies (including at least two years of history).
5. Two years of study of a foreign language.

In addition, we recommend that four years of study in mathematics, science, social studies and foreign language be undertaken as the most desirable preparation for the University of Delaware. These standards should take effect three years after their adoption and initial dissemination.

We believe the admission decision and the accuracy of the PGI would be improved by the inclusion of achievement test scores in mathematics, English, and a third area related to the student's intended major. As well, we believe that placement tests in mathematics and the sciences would aid students in curriculum planning.

We wish to see many fewer students admitted with PGI less than 2.0 and then only when their admission furthers some other important University goal.

The utility of the SAT (or ACT) scores requires re-examination, and serious attention should be given to deleting them for applicants whose PGI is not affected by the inclusion of the SAT in PGI computation, e.g., those in the top 10 percent of their high school classes.

It should be noted that only 73 percent of the entering class in the Fall 1985 would have met the recommended high school curriculum standard, and only 8% would have met the criterion of four years of study in each area.

The Central Recommendations

Curriculum

The Commission's intention is to have each undergraduate study some important subjects that may not be covered in the current programs of study. In some cases, we wish to require new courses and in other cases we wish to require that certain subject matters be covered by existing courses or parts of several existing courses.

The Commission recommends that each degree program in the University have an appropriate and balanced distribution of at least 60 credit hours from the humanities, the social sciences, and mathematics and the physical sciences.

Drawing upon the faculty resources of the entire University, a new nine credit core course sequence will be developed and required in each degree program. The course sequence will cover a common set of significant ideas and developments in Western and non-Western civilization and may require up to 100 additional course sections each semester.

As well, each degree program should cover the following subject areas:

1. the equivalent of 6 credits in the first two years devoted to writing.
2. the equivalent of 3 credits of women's studies.
3. the equivalent of 3 credits of black American studies.
4. the equivalent of 3 credits of public speaking and oral presentation.
5. the equivalent of 3 credits (recommended) in health or wellness.

The entire Commission has not agreed that all of these areas should be required of each student, but is agreed that, if they were, many courses and parts of courses would satisfy this requirement.

Finally, there should be a 3 credit senior seminar in each degree program which places the major field of study in a broad context and demonstrates how it fits with and is related to other significant areas of study.

Honors Program and Student Research

The Honors Program and the undergraduate student research program should be enhanced and expanded to include all degree programs. The opportunities for honors courses, advisement, and research should be extended, without compromising the program's integrity, to as many students as possible. Undergraduate research attracts bright and well-motivated students to the University, improves the quality and enjoyability of students' undergraduate education, and strengthens the research productivity of faculty and graduate students. Active Departmental participation in undergraduate research should be encouraged by the appointment of faculty undergraduate research coordinators who would work with the Undergraduate Research Office. Faculty development and recognition should be fostered by the following steps: workshops for increasing the effectiveness of undergraduate research supervision, a prize for excellence in faculty direction of undergraduate research, consideration of supervision of undergraduate research in annual faculty performance reviews and in promotion and merit-increase decisions. All of this will require increases in the financial support and program staff of the Undergraduate Research Program.

Quality of Instruction

The quality of undergraduate education at the University of Delaware depends heavily on the quality of instruction given. The Student Subcommittee of the Commission notes that the problem of a classroom "language barrier" has been a longstanding concern of students in the cases of teaching assistants and professors. The Commission strongly recommends that all incoming professors be evaluated on their ability to speak English fluently and communicate subject matter well in a classroom environment. All professors about whom significant complaints have been filed should receive rigorous instruction in communication skills.

Evaluation

The Commission endorses the straightforward proposition that grades are a measure of student mastery of the course material and only that. Thus, the practice of "grading on the curve" or any practice based upon a priori or a posteriori fixed percentages or quotas for the A to F grades and quotas should not be permitted. The Commission, in support of this proposition, also supports policies that will reduce grade inflation (e.g., the plus/minus addition to the letter grade metric, no P/F option for required courses).

The impact of the overall Delaware curriculum on our students must be assessed. Whether this is done best through a uniform exit examination or by the evaluation of a senior thesis or project is an issue the Commission has not resolved. However, we do believe some assessment of the entire undergraduate

experience is needed, if only as a basis for sound academic and institutional planning. We hope this overall assessment would give us much more; we see it as a means for preserving our standards of excellence and for increasing the level of coherence and integrity in the undergraduate course of study.

Quality of Student Life

The test of the soundness of residence and student life policies is the degree to which they contribute to the overall goals especially the academic goals of the University but these academic goals cannot be separated from our goals for our student's social and emotional human development. We seek an undergraduate program that promotes the unity of intellectual, social, and emotional development.

The Commission sees a need for greater faculty involvement in the residence and student life programs and recommends that student groups and dormitories invite faculty to become affiliated with them. Faculty participation would become a part of their workload and promotion and tenure evaluation.

The Commission anticipates having more concrete recommendations about the expansion of the Student Center to include a multi-purpose auditorium area that would accommodate 3,000 persons. As well, the Commission is considering the establishment of a Commuter Student Office to address the unique problem of our commuting students.

In sum, these are the major recommendations the Commission is prepared to make. They are tentative pending the response of our colleagues. We seek these responses through a series of open hearings and forums.

Costs

The final report will include our assessment of the implications of our recommendations for the allocation of university resources. To date, the Commission and its subcommittees have relied upon such institutional research studies as were relevant and have in a few instances commissioned studies. The costs of implementing our current proposals are substantial and will require significant redirections in how most faculty spend their time.

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