

Adoption of the No-Requirements Curriculum

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Grinnell College has had the so-called “No-Requirements” Curriculum for more than thirty years. This is rather remarkable both for the length of time the curriculum has remained almost unchanged and also because most other colleges which experimented with such a curriculum in the 1970’s have returned to a more structured plan.

Because the origin of the Grinnell plan may be of some general interest, and because I was closely involved with its adoption, I have decided to write an account of those discussions and events in the 1960’s and 1970’s which led to its development. This account is based upon memory, with all the selection effects associated with the passage of thirty years, buttressed by documentary evidence in my files and in the college catalogs. Because this is based to a great extent on my memory of my own motives and thoughts, it will make more use of the first person pronoun that would be appropriate in a more formal history. I also have not consulted some sources, particularly the student newspaper, the Scarlet and Black, which undoubtedly would provide detail which I have forgotten.

The 1966-68 college catalog lists the Requirements for Graduation thus:

- I. General Requirements
 - A. Humanities 8 credits
 - B. Historical Studies 8 credits
 - C. Foreign Language 16 credits
 - D. Philosophy or Religion 3 or 4 credits
 - E. Science 12 credits
 - F. Fine Arts 4 credits
 - G. Physical Education 2 credits
- II. Satisfactory Completion of a minimum of 30 credits in a major field.
- III. The Major Field Examination
- IV. Completion of a total of 124 credits
- V. College Residence

The science requirement was at least eight hours of a laboratory course in either the biological sciences or the physical sciences, and four hours either laboratory or non-laboratory in the other broad field.

The language requirement could be reduced or eliminated based on high school work; the requirement was that one reach the level of performance equivalent to the end of the fourth semester of college courses.

The Major Field Examination was a senior comprehensive exam administered by the major department.

Those graduation requirements had stood almost unchanged for many years. The foundation of the requirements was the two eight-credit sequences, Humanities and Historical Studies. The usual schedule was for students to take Humanities I during the first semester of the freshman year, Humanities II and Historical Studies I during the second semester of the freshman year, and Historical Studies II during the first semester of the sophomore year. Prospective science majors were at a disadvantage because they needed to begin both mathematics and a science immediately and had limited freedom to explore new areas.

The two core courses, Humanities I and II and Historical Studies I and II, had been developed during the 1950's. Teams of faculty, fired with enthusiasm for broad courses appropriate for general education, had developed both, and they were great courses. Together they aimed to introduce students to the great works of literature and to the best thought of western civilization from ancient times to the present. The faculty who taught the courses shared a common understanding of the purpose and the methods to be used in instruction. The Historical Studies courses had small groups meeting with individual instructors and also a weekly common lecture for all participants. The staff held regular meetings to plan and to discuss progress.

By the late 1960's, however, the faculty who had developed the courses were no longer the sole participants. Some had left the college, and some had tired of the repetition and moved on to other work. New people who had been brought in to teach the courses did not always share the vision and enthusiasm of the founders, and the quality of the courses became uneven. The problem was particularly acute in the humanities courses, which were restricted to small sections because they were the place where the college taught writing. Some faculty wives and other part-time instructors were recruited to teach sections, and a willingness to teach sections of humanities was a hiring criterion in some departments. As the initial vision and enthusiasm declined, so in some cases did the teaching. Perhaps the low point was reached with a humanities instructor who stood in front of the class and said "I do not want to teach this course, but I have to do it." That is not the way to fire students with enthusiasm for the course.

Realizing that the curriculum in use had problems, the faculty appointed a committee, headed by Robert Haveman of the economics department, to propose changes. The committee worked for many months and produced a report which came to be known as the Haveman Report. The faculty then spent months discussing and debating the report, and finally adopted most of its main recommendations in 1968.

The 1969-70 catalog lists these graduation requirements:

I. General Requirements

A. Under class General Education Program

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|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. Humanities | 8 credits |
| 2. Social Studies | 8 credits |
| 3. Science | 8 or 9 credits |
| 4. Foreign language | 14 credits |
| 5. Fine Arts | 4 credits |
| 6. Physical Education | 2 credits |

- B. Upperclass General Education Program 16 credits
 - 1. At least 16 credits in courses outside the division of the student's major department.
 - 2. At least 16 credits in courses within one of the interdisciplinary or other special non-major fields
- II. Credits in the Major Field-----Minimum of 30 credits
- III. Achievement of a passing grade on the senior comprehensive examination in the major field.
- IV. Independent Study: Completion of at least 4 credits
- V. Distribution of Credits: Completion of at least 76 credits in courses not within the student's major department
- VI. Completion of at least 124 credits.

Clearly the specification of the requirements had become much more complex. The Historical Studies course had disappeared, but Humanities remained much as before.

Two new sequences had been decreed into existence—two Social Studies courses, and two sciences courses, called Science I and Science II. Science I was biology, and Science II was a combination of chemistry and physics, taught jointly by the two departments. The idea of the Social Science courses was to produce courses which would serve as introductions to the social science departments and at the same time provide appropriate general education courses for students not majoring in one of the social sciences. Likewise, Science II was to provide a foundation course for both chemistry and physics majors and also serve as a general education course for everyone else. All the new courses foundered.

The first time the social science departments taught one of the new Social Science courses, the departments came to the faculty and asked permission to grade the course pass/fail because it was such a disaster that grading students would be unfair. Science II fared somewhat better, but it showed little promise of ever reaching its goal. Science II may have been handicapped slightly by the fact that Luther Erickson and I had worked together developing a syllabus, and then both of us were on leave and away from Grinnell the first time the course was taught. However, I am convinced that the real problem is that we had set up impossible and incompatible goals, and there was no possibility from its first conception that the course would be successful. Luther and I were spared the embarrassment of seeing our course falter by being out of town. Both the social scientists and the physical scientists had tried in good faith to develop courses that the faculty asked be developed but which proved impossible to produce.

On February 25, 1970, I distributed to the faculty "A Proposal That All Graduation Requirements Be Abolished." It was reproduced by Ditto, the purple-ink duplicating system which, at the time, was most commonly used for making multiple copies of documents for wide distribution on the campus. The proposal produced comment but no formal action until after the next summer. The Proposal is attached as Appendix A. (As I reread this document now, I realize that if I were writing it now I should make much less use of the third person male pronoun. At the time I knew that half the "he's" I was

discussing were “she’s,” but it was still common to use “he” to refer to both in such contexts.)

The Haveman committee had worked for a year and the faculty had worked for another year producing a curriculum which, by the spring of 1970, was in a shambles. Two of its major supports, the social studies and science courses, had collapsed. An *ad hoc* committee was set up to work during the summer of 1970 to make new recommendations.

Members of the Summer Study Committee were: Kenneth Christiansen, Beryl Clotfelter, Luther Erickson, James Hottois, Donald Irving, Neal Klausner, Beth Noble, Victor Verrette, Robert Voertman, Waldo Walker, Joseph Wall. On August 25, 1970, the committee presented to the faculty three models regarding general education requirements. The complete report is attached as Appendix B.

The three models were these:

Proposal I: The present curriculum with modifications.

Proposal II: A curriculum in which the general education requirements are met largely or exclusively by distributional options among the several divisions.

Proposal III. A curriculum with no fixed requirements, other than a limitation upon the number of credits that can be counted toward graduation in any one field and a fixed number of credits required for graduation. As explanation of this option, my proposal first distributed in February was attached.

As a reading of the original proposal shows, I was not alone in favoring the abolition of most of the general education requirements. Intense curricular discussions had been underway at the college for at least three years, and this was one of many proposals that had the support of significant numbers of faculty. I expressed ideas held by many in a concrete proposal, and this became known as “The Clotfelter Proposal,” but in fact I was not alone in supporting the idea. I think that those who were most determined to attach my name to the proposal were some of its opponents, who wanted everyone to remember who was to be blamed for it.

Important in my thinking which led to this proposal were several observations based on recent history at Grinnell. The humanities and historical studies courses had been great when they were first developed and remained so as long as the faculty who had helped develop them or had been thoroughly indoctrinated remained enthusiastic about teaching them. When they became stale to original staff or were staffed by people who lacked the enthusiasm of the founders, their quality deteriorated. Thinking about this fact led me to prefer a more open system in which faculty with interesting ideas might develop courses that would be taught for a few years, so long as the originators remained involved, and then could disappear from the catalog and be replaced by something else produced by different faculty. An example of the sort of thing I hoped would develop was the four team-taught humanities courses developed a few years later. They were good courses, but they lasted only about twelve years, by which time staff replacements and loss of freshness led to their demise. I hoped that if the courses everyone was required to take and which were expected to last for decades were abolished, faculty would develop many

courses, comparatively short-lived, which would help serve the general education function.

Unfortunately, few courses of that sort have been developed. When the broad general courses that required participation by many departments were dropped, most departments turned their attention to their own curricula, and courses for beginning students were formulated as departmental courses, with the notable exception of the tutorials. The trend away from general education interdisciplinary courses was reinforced by the increasing emphasis within the college on publishable scholarship, for junior faculty could not afford to spend time and energy on general courses which might count for little in tenure considerations.

The strongest argument for required courses as part of the general education component of a Grinnell education is that they guarantee that everyone knows “what every educated person should know.” (Another argument is that they provide a common experience. The argument is not without force, for probably having all freshmen discussing the same works in humanities and in historical studies at the same time raised the level of campus conversations. It also may have produced mass panic in freshman dormitories on the nights before major exams in those courses.) The problem with basing requirements on “what everyone should know” is that then the faculty must decide what everyone should know. That might not be impossible if time were not an issue, but four years would not be enough time to take all the courses the faculty might consider essential. And if we ask that the knowledge essential to be a liberally educated person be packaged in, perhaps, eight courses, the task becomes ludicrous. It seemed better to give up that hope.

I considered distribution requirements a poor cop-out. Typically distribution requirements were stated in terms of divisions or some other moderately rational division of the material taught at the college. It is difficult to argue on what basis one decides that a course in astronomy is equivalent to a course in biology or one in psychology. What are those courses expected to have in common that makes them interchangeable? The same question can be asked of the social studies division—is a course in economics really equivalent to a course in sociology or history? Then there are the odd departments: Is philosophy really part of the humanities or social studies? What should one do with mathematics? Are all the fine arts to be lumped together so that music, art, and theater are to be considered equivalent?

I based none of my thinking on student hopes or desires. I thought that the decisions about the curriculum were the responsibility of the faculty, and decisions should be made by the faculty with little regard to student desires. I think that most students favored some reduction in the rigidity of the general requirements, but I recall one group that vociferously objected to dropping all requirements. I am sure that a rereading of the *Scarlet and Black* for that period would yield much information about student opinion, but so far as I know, it had little effect on faculty deliberations.

The faculty convened in a special meeting at 9:30 a.m. Friday, August 28, 1970, primarily to deal with recommendations from the Summer Study Committee. The meeting adjourned at 11:50 and reconvened at 1:30, then ended at 3:24 p.m. Much of the meeting was taken up with enacting recommendations from the summer committee to

keep the curriculum in usable condition for another year, and a schedule for discussion of a complete revision was prepared. Minutes of that meeting are attached as Appendix C.

At the first regular faculty meeting of 1970-71, on September 7, 1970, Mr. Parslow spoke in defense of the set of general-education requirements then in effect, Mr. Erickson spoke on defense of a set of distributional requirements, Miss Noble explained a new form of distributional requirements she had recommended, and I spoke briefly about the no-requirement proposal.

During the next few weeks the faculty met weekly to debate the curricular proposals before it, and numerous faculty distributed written comments and proposals. I have in my files comments distributed to the faculty from Luther Erickson, Robert Voertman, Ron Kurtz, Charles Cleaver, Philip Kintner, Ed Moore, Victor Verrette, Anna Mae Wack, Beth Noble, James Magee, William Oelke, Grant Gale, Beryl Clotfelter, Linda and John Morris, Alan Jones, Joseph Wall (Dean), Andy Loewi (SGA President), Arnold Adelberg, Philip Bays, and Karl Delong. Some of these wrote more than one memo.

One of the problems with the abolition of specific requirements is that it casts a heavy burden on the student advising system. Previous to this time entering students were assigned to faculty advisers on the basis of the hall in which the student lived or some other equally meaningless criterion. When a student went to see the adviser for the first time to plan a semester's course of study, the primary criterion for choosing courses was "Let's get the requirements out of the way as quickly as possible." The adviser had no incentive to inquire deeply into the student's background or interests except as they might affect the early beginning of mathematics or a science sequence. Under the proposed system without stated required courses, the adviser would be expected to get to know each advisee well enough to genuinely advise.

The breakthrough on advising came with a memorandum from Alan Jones dated October 12, 1970, proposing a freshman tutorial. Jones suggested mechanics for implementing the proposal and gave a rationale for it. That memorandum from Alan Jones is attached as Appendix D.

At a faculty meeting on Monday, October 26, 1970, I proposed a motion adding the freshman tutorial as an amendment to the earlier motion to set up a no-requirements curriculum. During the next few weeks the proposal for a freshman tutorial was modified slightly, and on November 16, 1970, the new requirements for graduation as they appeared in the next catalog were approved by the faculty. The final vote was 48 for, 12 against, with 4 abstentions.

The 1971-71 Catalog listed the Requirements for Graduation thus:

I. Freshman Tutorial

A freshman tutorial must be successfully completed in the first or second semester of the freshman year, selected from the list of tutorials being given that year, for 4 credits, graded on the credit-fail basis, with no letter grade reported by the instructor.

II. Credits in the Major Field

Satisfactory completion of a minimum of 32 credits in a major field.

III. Senior-Year Program

Individual departments have in most instances established a senior-year program which must be satisfactorily completed in order to satisfy the major requirements for graduation.

IV. Total Credits

Completion of a total of 124 credits, with an over-all cumulative grade-point average of 2.0. No more than 48 credits in any one department and no more than 92 credits in one division may be counted toward the 124 credits required for graduation.

V. College Residence

Except in cases of approved acceleration, 8 semesters of college residence.

I think that Alan Jones hoped that the tutorial would be much like the tutorials of Oxbridge, but lacking experience in that method of teaching, most of the Grinnell faculty were unable to copy that method closely. What the tutorial did accomplish, however, was extremely important. It provided a course in which student writing skills could be addressed. Because faculty from all parts of the college taught tutorials, and many of them had no experience and little confidence in teaching writing, summer short courses in how to help improve student writing were developed for tutors, and faculty across the college became more aware of their responsibility to teach writing. I think that the emphasis on writing extended to courses in which instructors had never considered that part of their responsibility—in the sciences, for example—in a way that was beneficial to the education of all students. Most importantly, however, the tutorial provided a framework for advising. In the tutorial, one instructor taught a maximum of twelve students and got to know them well enough to be a genuine adviser. Until students chose majors, they were advised by the tutorial instructor. Both students and advisers were required to confront the array of choices offered by the course listing and plan a course of study appropriate for that student.

In my opinion, the feature of the no-requirements curriculum which has been most important in its continued success is the tutorial as a device to bring students and advisers together. We began with a Tutorial Committee, a faculty committee charged with choosing tutors and overseeing the program. That committee was careful in the first years of the existence of the tutorial to choose faculty to be tutors on the basis of its judgment of their suitability for the job. I recall one faculty member who was not chosen for the first two or three years because the committee thought that he would not be a good tutor. Eventually the man complained that everyone should have the right to try, and the committee capitulated. The man taught one tutorial, and even he concurred that the committee's judgment had been vindicated. Of course, that system placed a heavy burden on those tutors who were successful and were called on repeatedly, and so the committee selection of individual tutors was replaced by requests that each department

provide a specified number of tutors. The results may have been less uniform than under the original system, but apparently they still have been satisfactory.

Another feature of Grinnell College which has contributed to the success of the no-requirements curriculum is the almost total absence of courses that might be considered “fluff.” There is no danger that students will accumulate the required credits for graduation by taking entirely undemanding courses simply because there are few if any such courses offered.

The nature of the students attracted to Grinnell also is significant, for we get mainly students who want a liberal education and are amenable to suggestions from advisers that they broaden their horizons. There are exceptions, of course, and there may be humanities students who never see the inside of the science building or science students who take nothing in the fine arts. Such students are in a small minority.

Some of the effects of dropping the old requirements were surprising. Probably the biggest losers immediately were the modern languages. Students had been required to reach the proficiency equivalent to two years of college study in a modern language, and the easiest way for most people to satisfy that requirement was to continue a language begun in high school. When the requirement that everyone reach such proficiency was dropped, enrollments in modern languages plummeted. At the same time the enrollment in Greek surged! Over time enrollment in the modern languages climbed again, and when, a few years later, the faculty debated reinstating requirements, including a language requirement, some of the most vigorous opponents were faculty in the modern languages who argued that they were overrun with students already and could not handle the extra students who would be forced onto them by the proposed requirement.

I am sure that no one who participated in the discussions and decision expected the curriculum as adopted in 1970 to persist for so long with as few changes as have been made. Certainly I did not. Undoubtedly one of the features of this curriculum which has contributed to its longevity is its flexibility—one can tinker with courses, add interdisciplinary majors, emphasize student research, experiment with interdisciplinary concentrations, etc.—without having to reconsider all graduation requirements. Experimentation and change have been common at Grinnell during these thirty plus years, but always within the framework of the graduation requirements adopted in 1970.

Appendix A

February 25, 1970

A PROPOSAL THAT ALL GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS BE ABOLISHED

Beryl Clotfelter

The proposal is that the only requirements for graduation be completion of 120 (or 124) credits with satisfactory grades and completion of a major-- departmental, interdisciplinary or general. No more than 48 credits in one department could be counted toward a degree.

Arguments for such a simple statement of graduation requirements reflect both an educational philosophy and a judgment about how well certain types of programs are working and are likely to work in the immediate future. The most important arguments center on the role of the general education part of a college education (as distinct from work in or directly related to the major field) and on certain beliefs about the conditions under which learning takes place.

Those of us who favor this sort of requirements statement see a college experience not as the capstone of an education but rather as a time to begin the process of self-education which should continue throughout life, and we think that the most important function of the general education part of that experience is to help students acquire the interests and skills necessary for them to educate themselves. We reject the assumption, implicit in our present system of requirements, that a proper basis for planning a college education is the listing of the "things that everyone should know." Knowledge is now too diverse and vast to permit anyone to pick out the portion which can be included in a four-year study plan and say of it, "This is what every liberally educated man should know." We are resigned to the fact that all students will graduate ignorant of some things we consider important, but we shall be satisfied if those graduates have developed the ability to work independently from inner motivation so that they can learn the things they need to know after they leave Grinnell.

Our present set of general education requirements implies that all students arrive at Grinnell with approximately the same set of experiences, that they will all respond to the same stimuli here, and that they all

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have similar goals for their education. Each of these assumptions is false, as everyone on the faculty knows, yet we persist in treating students as if their differences were unimportant. One advantage of eliminating general requirements would be that each student could have a program suited to his unique background, interests, and goals.

We believe that there exists no single best route to general education for all students, and we suspect that enthusiasm for what is being studied is often more important than the specific subject matter. And since one of our goals is to help the student begin to take responsibility for his education, we wish to have him more involved in the planning of that part of it which will take place at Grinnell than he now is.

Our perceptions of the way programs are actually working now lead to the conclusion that student resentment against requirements is often so intense that it constitutes a real impediment to education, with the number of students who are turned against courses or disciplines by the fact that they are required probably equaling or exceeding those who discover a fondness for a discipline after they are required to try it. We know that students often go through required courses learning just enough for a satisfactory grade and then promptly forget most of what they learned, and we suspect, that in many cases much of the time spent in required courses is time wasted for both the student and the teacher. We also observe that when uniform courses are required of all students some teachers whose enthusiasm for the courses is less than total must be impressed into teaching them with the result that the teaching is not the best the teacher is capable of delivering under better circumstances. Teachers do not often announce to classes that they dislike the course and do not want to teach it, but those attitudes are often conveyed subtly (and probably unconsciously) to their students. Since it seems almost axiomatic that learning occurs best when interested students are taught by enthusiastic teachers, we hope by abolishing the traditional requirements to increase the number of occasions when this ideal condition can occur. If one gives up the notion that certain specific works or facts must be taught to all students, he is free to permit instructors to design courses for the general education program which reflect their own interests and competencies. This is not

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to imply that only professional courses are contemplated or even that the courses now required should be dropped, for a vigorous general education program of optional courses should be maintained,, and the faculty should insist that each department do its part in such a program.

All of us believe in the advantages of the breadth of education which the present requirements are intended to insure, but we believe that the actual learning which occurs in these required courses is often less than it should be, and we think that if students can be persuaded to take the courses instead of being forced to take them more learning will take place. This faculty, like many others, has long deluded itself by assuming that forcing students to sit in required courses produces a broad education. Genuine education requires a more active participation by the learner than required courses elicit from many students, with the result that the greatest benefit of the system of requirements may be to the collective conscience of the faculty rather than to the students.

Two major criticisms of the no-requirements plan have been offered—one, that some students will take all their work in a narrow area and will not have much breadth in their college education, and the other that the plan places great responsibility on the advising system, a system whose past performance gives little reason for optimism about its capabilities.

In response to the first criticism one can say two things. Experience with Grinnell students leads to a confidence that the number who would choose to spend their four years here pursuing a narrow specialty is small; most want to explore many areas or could be easily persuaded that only by studying in several parts of the college could they get maximum benefit from their time at Grinnell. If there are students who are so determined to stay in one area that advice and persuasion will not deter them, the benefit they would derive from courses into which they might be forced is problematical, and furthermore no one can be sure that their long-term education is not best served by that sort of intense experience in college. Breadth can come after Grinnell, and one may hope that the inevitable exposure to people in many disciplines during a four-year sojourn on this campus will produce curiosity and interest that will lead to breadth of education eventually.

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With regard to the second criticism, one reason the Grinnell advising system for underclassmen is unsatisfactory is that the elaborate system of requirements seems to both the advisor and the advisee to relieve them of the necessity of talking about anything important. After students declare majors, their major advisors discuss with them their plans for a career, their special interests, etc., and by common agreement the advising at this point becomes good. The freshman and sophomore advisor usually does little, however, but try to help the student fit all his requirements into the schedule, and the requirement scheme makes that reaction almost inevitable. Removing the requirements will not guarantee good advising, however, and probably it is not possible to devise a system that will have this effect. Having become disillusioned by all schemes and devices to insure that everyone will act as he should, at least some of us think that the most we can do is increase as much as possible the opportunities for good advisor-advisee relationships to develop and to permit whatever relationships do develop to be used. One such system which may hold promise is this: Assign freshmen advisors on the basis of general field of probable major interest. Encourage each freshman to change advisors during the first semester, choosing someone with whom he has become acquainted, perhaps one of his first-semester teachers.

Two things could be done to take some of the pressure off the advisors and to minimize the effect of failures in the system. One is to send to students before they arrive on campus carefully prepared advice on planning a college program, and the other is to prepare several model programs which would give the bewildered freshmen some concrete suggestions.

For a specific student a Grinnell education might develop some thing like this: Before he arrived on the campus, he would be sent a booklet pointing out that the major responsibility for planning his college education rests on him and discussing some of the considerations which should go into that planning, notably the need for early exploration of areas in which he might want to major and the arguments for doing a reasonable amount of work in all the main divisions of the college. When he arrived on campus for a somewhat longer New Student Days than we now have, he would be assigned an advisor who would discuss with him his high school preparation, his goals, and the sort of schedule which seemed reasonable for the first

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semester. If he lacked specific ideas about what he wanted to take, the student could be advised to follow one of the model plans until he developed more definite ideas of his own. Most freshmen probably would take a series of courses not greatly different from those which they now take.

If during the first semester the freshmen developed a rapport with some other faculty member greater than he had with his original advisor, he would change advisors, subject only to the restriction that the person he had chosen were not overburdened with advisees. The goal would be to make his formal advisor someone with whom he could easily discuss his educational progress. At all registrations the advisor's signature on the registration card would be merely an indication that the student had talked with some faculty member about his enrollment; the advisor would not be able to coerce the student by withholding his signature.

In succeeding semesters he would continue very much as at present, developing a major and at the same time continuing to take courses in other parts of the college. The typical student, we are convinced, would want to take courses over a range of disciplines similar to that now required, but he might take them at different times. Every time a student enrolled in a course (with the possible exception of required courses in major sequences) he would be doing so because he had chosen to take the course; his attitude would almost certainly be different than if he had been forced into the course. Our experience with Grinnell students convinces us that the number who would choose only the courses which seem easiest is virtually zero; the inducement to departments to offer "snap" courses in order to become popular would be slight or nonexistent.

Students' would be protected against the despotic power of departments in three ways. The number of credits in one department applicable toward a degree would be limited, so that no department could require its majors to take most of their work in that department. The establishment of interdisciplinary and general majors will offer alternatives to departmental majors and would help curb departmental excesses which might develop. And third, the faculty, acting through the Dean of the College, would require all departments to devote some reasonable part of their manpower to general education courses, designed for the non-major.

Appendix A

The proposal that general education requirements be abolished is offered not to subvert the traditional goals of a Grinnell education but to realize those goals more fully. Given the preparation which students in the 1970's will bring to college and the attitudes which those students have, we think that the best way of achieving our educational goals is likely to be the abolition of requirements, and we firmly believe that the experiment is worth trying immediately.

Appendix B

To: The Faculty

From: The Faculty Summer Study Committee

25 August 1970

The Faculty Summer Study Committee wishes to present three curricular proposals regarding general education requirements. The Committee as a group presents all three without prejudice or favor for any one of the proposals-although the individual members of the Committee in some instances strongly favor or disapprove of each of the proposals.

These proposals were discussed by the joint meeting of Trustees, Student Government Association officers and the Summer Study Committee. The members present at this joint meeting recommend to the Faculty that consideration be given to these proposals at the earliest possible moment so that the Faculty may make a decision on any basic curricular change this fall.

Proposal I. The present curriculum with modifications.

This proposal is to maintain the present curriculum with the existing general education requirements, modified by some of the specific proposals which are being presented to the Faculty for action at this time.

Rationale: Those who support the present curriculum believe the rationale offered at the time that the present curriculum was adopted in 1968 can still be considered as valid for justifying this curriculum. They feel it unnecessary to give an elaborate explanation of and justification for this curriculum. This curriculum would maintain a list of requirements consisting in part of specified core courses and in part of distributional requirements.

Proposal II. A curriculum in which the general education requirements are met largely or exclusively by distributional options among the several divisions.

The Committee considered several such distributional arrangements. It presents the following two plans as representative of many different possible arrangements.

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Plan A.

1. Completion of 124 credits with an overall cumulative grade point of 2.0.
2. Distributional requirements.
 - a. Science - 8 credits from the departments of biology, psychology, chemistry, physics or mathematics.
 - b. Social Studies - 8 credits from the departments of anthropology, history, sociology, economics, or political science.
 - c. Philosophy, literature and the arts - 16 credits from the departments of English, classical languages, German, French, philosophy, Russian, Spanish, art, communications, music and theatre. The present humanities course, or a modified version, would be offered on an optional basis for credits in this area.

Plan B.

1. Completion of 124 credits with an overall cumulative grade point of 2.0.
2. Core course requirement: Humanities, 4 credits. This course would be taken during the freshman year. It should combine elements of literature, history, social studies, etc. The staff would discuss and draw up a common syllabus, but individual staff members would be free to make substitutions in the reading list or to offer experimental sections with a different reading list. A minimum of five essays would be required in each section. No section would be larger than 18 students.
3. Distribution requirements: Completion of a distribution requirement of 8 credit hours in courses in departments in each of the following groups:
 - Group A--Biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, foreign language courses, mathematics.

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Group B--Anthropology, economics, education, history, political science, sociology.

Group C--Art, communications, literature courses, music, philosophy, theatre.

Each department shall submit a list of courses which will meet the requirement in its respective field. Courses listed in more than one department shall be considered to be in the group determined by the departments involved to be the most appropriate to fulfill the requirement. No distribution requirement can be met by Independent Project (397, 398, 399).

4. Physical Education: Demonstration of a certain level of skill in one adult carry-over sport and

(for men) completion of the team sport objective or demonstration of a certain level of skill in a second adult carry-over sport,

(for women) completion of the physical fitness objective or demonstration of a certain level of skill in a second adult carry-over sport.

Rationale: A curriculum with distributional requirements is a fairly traditional form among many colleges of the present time. In some respects, it represents a compromise between the "core course" curriculum and the curriculum which has no fixed requirements. It allows the student greater flexibility in the selection of courses to meet requirements and at the same time it ensures some breadth of program among the several divisions for all students. Because a great majority of the students would undoubtedly take some course work in all three divisions, it is not unduly restrictive on any student.

Proposal III. A curriculum with no fixed requirements, other than a limitation upon the number of credits that may be counted toward graduation in any one field and a fixed number of credits required for graduation.

Rationale: The rationale for this proposal has been written by Mr. Clotfelter and is attached. [This was the document listed here as Appendix A.]

Appendix B

Members of the Summer Study Committee

Kenneth Christiansen

Beryl Clotfelter

Luther Erickson

James Hottois

Donald Irving

Neal Klausner

Beth Noble

Victor Verrette

Robert Voertman

Waldo Walker

Joseph Wall

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A special meeting of the faculty came to order at 9:30 AM on Friday, 28 August 1970, Dean Wall presiding. A motion to approve the minutes of the faculty meeting of 27 May 1970, as distributed, was seconded; Mr. Bowman asked that the spelling of Mr. Will's name in those minutes be corrected. The minutes were approved as corrected, by voice vote. A motion to approve the minutes of the faculty meeting of 26 August, as distributed, was seconded and carried. Mr. DeLong's motion of 27 May, that the Aerospace Studies Committee be continued for the 1970-1971 academic year, and that its membership remain as in 1969-1970 with Mr. Pfitsch replacing Mr. Bowers, was reintroduced by Mr. Valentine; it appeared that the original motion had not been acted upon in May. The motion was seconded and carried by voice vote.

Mr. Clotfelter, on behalf of the Summer Study Committee, moved that the present general College requirement for an upperclass general-education program (minor), adopted by the faculty in the spring of 1968 and effective for the present junior class and succeeding classes, be abolished. The motion was seconded and carried by a vote of 62 for, 11 against, with 8 abstentions reported.

On behalf of the Summer Study Committee, Mr. Clotfelter further moved that the College recognize three types of majors:

- 1) The traditional field of concentration from among the several departments presently offering major fields of concentration. Requirements for the major are determined by the department, with the approval of the Executive Council.
- 2) The interdisciplinary major as an established program. Requirements for the major are determined by the teaching staff of the program with the approval of the Executive Council.
- 3) The independent major, in which a student, with a faculty adviser of his choosing, works out his own major program. This program must be approved by the Dean of the College, who may at his discretion consult with faculty members from two or more disciplines that relate to the student's independent major. Inasmuch as

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there will not be an established major curriculum for this type of major, students who develop independent majors will usually be expected to write a senior thesis This requirement may be waived by the Dean of the College upon the recommendation of the faculty adviser of the independent major. Students who wish an independent major must work out their programs and select a faculty adviser before the end of their sophomore year.

Mr. Voertman moved to amend the third part of the motion, so that the word "adviser" should be changed to the word "sponsor" wherever the former occurred, so that the phrase "with a faculty adviser of his choosing" should be replaced by the phrase "with the consent and approval of a faculty sponsor of his choosing," and so that the last sentence should be deleted and replaced by the sentence: "A student who wishes an independent major must work out his program and obtain the consent of a faculty sponsor before the end of his sophomore year." The amendment was carried unanimously. Mr. Valentine moved that the question be divided, the body to vote first on the third part of the motion, and subsequently on the first two parts taken together; the motion died for want of a second. The motion as amended was carried by a vote of 84 for, 2 against, with no abstentions reported.

On behalf of the Summer Study Committee, Mr. Clotfelter further moved that the present stipulation that the Science and Social Studies requirements be met by the end of the sophomore year be changed to the stipulation that these requirements be met by the end of the junior year. The motion was seconded and carried by a vote of 86 for, 1 against, with one abstention reported.

On behalf of the Summer Study Committee, Mr. Clotfelter further moved that, for the coming academic year, students be allowed to substitute Physics 107, "Physics-- an Historical Approach", or Physics 116, "The Universe and its Structure", for Science II, as a means of meeting the science requirement. Mr. Erickson moved that the motion be amended to read as follows:

that, for the coming academic year,
students be allowed to substitute
Physics 107, "Physics --an Historical
Approach", or Physics 116, "The

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Universe and its Structure", for Science II or for other presently recognized alternatives, as a means of meeting the physical-science requirements.

The amendment was seconded and carried on a voice vote. Mr. Wubbels moved to amend the amended motion by deleting the phrase "or Physics 116, 'The Universe and its Structure'". The amendment was seconded and carried by a vote of 41 for, 18 against, with 27 abstentions reported. The amended motion was carried by a vote of 62 for, 2 against, with 8 abstentions reported.

Dean Wall suggested that the meeting be recessed at 11:55 AM and be reconvened at 1:30 PM. No objection was raised.

On behalf of the Summer Study Committee, Mr. Clotfelter moved that faculty meetings be open. The motion was seconded. Mr. Valentine offered a more detailed motion, as follows:

that faculty meetings be open to students and other members of the College community, being held in a room large enough to allow reasonable numbers of spectators; that such meetings may be closed at the discretion of the presiding officer, or by motion of the faculty members attending; that spectators may be allowed to speak, but not vote, at the discretion of the presiding officer, subject to contrary motions of the faculty; and that a meeting called by request of any twelve (12) faculty, members may be closed by their specifying in their request that it be closed.

There being no objection to the substitution of this language, it replaced the original proposal. The motion, in its longer form, was carried by a vote of 72 for, 10 against, with 2 abstentions reported.

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Mr. Valentine moved that the meeting be recessed until 1:30 PM. The motion was seconded and carried, there being no objection, at 11:52 AM.

The meeting came to order again at 1:35 PM. On behalf of the Summer Study Committee, Mr. Clotfelter moved that a committee be appointed to study the development of a descriptive course-evaluation form for use at the College, the membership of the committee to be established by the Dean of the College. Mr. Milner moved that the motion be laid on the table; the motion was seconded by Mr. Magee, but was lost by a vote of 17 for, 41 against, with 5 abstentions reported. Mr. Clotfelter moved the adoption of a substitute for this motion: that the Dean establish a committee to study the possibility of course evaluation at the College. The motion to substitute was seconded and carried by a vote of 63 for, 3 against, 2 abstentions being reported. This substitute motion was then carried by a vote of 71 for, 4 against, no abstentions being reported.

On behalf of the Summer Study Committee, Mr. Clotfelter further moved that consideration of the Betts Proposal, and the Wall modification thereto, be laid on the table until faculty discussion and decision on the general curriculum be completed. Mr. Jones moved that the phrase "on the general curriculum" be replaced by the phrase "on general-education requirements". There being no objection, the amendment was adopted. Mr. Kleinschmidt moved that the phrase "on general-education requirements" be replaced by the phrase "on degree requirements". The amendment was seconded and carried by voice vote. The motion as amended was seconded and carried by a vote of 70 for, 4 against, with 3 abstentions reported.

On behalf of the Summer Study Committee, Mr. Clotfelter further moved that each divisional EPC begin immediately to consider and to formulate plans of study for students who express an interest in majoring in a discipline within the division. The motion was seconded. Mr. Guroff moved that the motion be laid on the table; this motion was seconded but lost by a vote of 31 for, 35 against, with 3 abstentions reported. The motion was then lost by a vote of 13 for, 56 against, with 1 abstention reported.

On behalf of the Summer Study Committee, Mr. Clotfelter further moved that three faculty meetings be devoted simply to the discussion of the three degree-requirements

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proposals sent forward by the Summer Study Committee, and that two further meetings be devoted to debate and vote on these proposals, in accordance with the following schedule: on 7 September, the present requirements to be discussed; on 14 September, distributional requirements to be discussed; on 21 September, the no-requirement proposal of Mr. Clotfelter's to be discussed; on 28 September and 5 October, specific motions to be introduced,, debated, amended, and voted upon, a final decision being required by 5 October. Mr. Goldberg moved to substitute the following: that the faculty begin immediately to consider these degree-requirement proposals, and that disposition of these matters be required by 23 September. The original motion having been seconded, the motion to substitute was seconded but lost by a vote of 18 for, 47 against, with 9 abstentions reported. The original motion, however, was withdrawn. Dean Wall announced that debate on the degree-requirement proposals would begin, no schedule being set in advance, at the meeting of 7 September. He noted that faculty meetings would no doubt be scheduled at weekly rather than fortnightly intervals for some time.

A motion to adjourn was seconded and carried without objection at 3:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

William Lee Valentine
Secretary of the Faculty

October 12, 1970

To: The faculty
From: A. Jones

At some time in the curricular discussion I propose to introduce the following motion:

"Each Student is required to complete the Freshman Tutorial Program..."

The purpose of this motion (and the following rationale for it) is to focus discussion on the curricular problems of the Freshman Year - problems which are not being met with present requirements and which I do not believe can be met by any specific course requirements.

This is a possible catalogue description of the Freshman Tutorial Program:

"The Freshman Tutorial Program is a credit-fail non-classroom learning experience to be completed in the first semester of the freshman year. Each student will work closely with his faculty tutor in preparing a series of essays during the semester, and the aim of the program is to introduce entering students into a new learning experience emphasizing independent study and writing skills. Satisfactory completion of the program will carry four credits. The tutor will also act as the student's underclass academic adviser."

Mechanics of the Freshman Tutorial Program

The program would be supervised by a Freshman Studies Committee consisting of the Dean of the College, the Director of Counseling, two faculty members appointed by the Dean and two students appointed by the SGA. The Committee would select 30-35 tutors who would be given a regular course credit for participating in the program. This many tutors could handle a freshman class of 400-500 freshmen in tutorial groups of 12-14 students. In so far as possible students would be assigned to tutors on a common interest of divisional concentration, but students could change tutors (when possible) within the first three weeks of the term. Criteria for the selection of tutors would be worked out by the Committee; it is expected that

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many instructors now teaching Humanities would be appropriate choices.

The cost of such a program would not be excessive since the credit arrangements for students would mean that all entering freshmen would be carrying a three course load with a corresponding reduction in faculty teaching equivalents (see note by B. Voertman). The Freshman Studies Committee would supervise the program and in addition would have general oversight of the academic needs of freshmen, that is the Committee would make recommendations to the Executive Council on course and staff needs, on special (and optional) Humanities, Social Science, and Science Seminars for freshmen and on other innovative and experimental programs.

Rationale for the Freshman Tutorial

For some years the freshman year has been recognized as a problem. The curricular reforms (Humanities and Historical Studies) of twelve years ago were aimed at the freshman year. The Haveman Committee recognized the freshman year as a problem area and anticipated some improvement with its revised requirements and changed advising system (Its recommendations on advising have not been implemented.). The year is still recognized as a problem--on this see last spring's thoughtful study on the freshman year by a student committee. While the Clotfelter proposal may remove some of the problems of the freshman year by its abolition of specific course requirements (and I think this is a necessary first step), the Clotfelter proposal also creates new problems. At a point when the entering student is looking for a new intellectual experience and a sense of direction into college life he is left groping for advice in a complicated traditional curriculum with few courses open and available to him, or at least planned for him. The unsatisfactory nature of the freshman year is commonly recognized and we lose many students immediately because of it, partly through attrition at the end of the year, partly through undeveloped possibilities. A totally changed advising system is necessary, and the tutorial program meets this need and begins to get at some of the other needs of the freshman year.

The tutorial program also meets the need for practice and skill in writing now partly fulfilled by the present Humanities program. It would be anomalous to maintain the

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present Humanities program (or a one semester substitute) in the context of a proposal which removed all other specific course requirements. The present Humanities course deserves no special priority; in some ways it is a very unsatisfactory freshman requirement. It has always had staffing problems and it offers little in the way of a new intellectual experience; it is a traditional classroom course using material which students have confronted before in similar situations. In addition the course takes a rather narrow, formalistic and literary approach to the humanities, an approach no longer compensated by the Historical Studies course with which it was deliberately connected and created. The major justification for the present course is its responsibility for training in writing, a responsibility which can be assumed by other freshman courses and emphasized in the tutorial program.

Another justification for a tutorial program is that it is pedagogically innovative in Bob Voertman's sense. It offers immediately to freshmen a different kind of learning experience, one that is particularly appropriate to the kind of college we have become in recent years. By this I mean the degree to which we now emphasize independent work. This kind of study has increased greatly in the last few years and will continue to increase in the future. While there are many superior performances by students in independent projects, many of them also suffer because of the lack of preparation on the part of students for this kind of study. The tutorial program offers a supervised transition between traditional course oriented study and newer and more independent styles of learning.

Finally, I think the tutorial program is the kind of experiment which we should engage in at this time. We advertise and will have to continue to advertise ourselves as a small personal college with close faculty relations and quality instruction. If we are to continue as a quality college able to attract able students and keep them in a significant learning experience we must commit resources and abilities to programs that are personal, that provide good advising, that are tailored to individual student interests, and that create closer student-faculty relations. These matters are the priority items at this time for Grinnell and for higher education in general. I think a tutorial program would be a major effort toward dealing with these priorities.