

THE FINAL REPORT  
OF THE  
CORE CURRICULUM TASK FORCE

University of Houston-Downtown

June 21, 1983

## CHANCELLOR'S STATEMENT

The work represented by this document is essentially that presented by the Core Curriculum Task Force. (For membership see Preface) Slight refinements and modifications were made at various steps in the review process. This process outlined below indicates the extent of faculty involvement resulting in this document which reflects consensus.

1. The final report of the task force was submitted to the vice chancellor for academic affairs in December, 1982.
2. Copies of the final report were distributed by the chancellor to the faculty on December 20, 1982.
3. On February 5 the task force made a formal presentation of and answered questions concerning the final report to the faculty assembly.
4. The college curriculum committee then solicited comments from the faculty and after three meetings approved the final report with a few minor revisions on March 7.
5. The faculty senate devoted two meetings to the final report of the task force and the report by the curriculum committee. On April 5 the senate endorsed the report as amended by the curriculum committee.
6. On April 6 the college council also approved the report as amended by the curriculum committee.
7. The final report of the task force and recommended modifications were discussed at a general faculty meeting on April 12. The faculty then approved by written ballot the final report as amended.

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

The educational program of the University of Houston-Downtown features a variety of career-oriented degrees which combine specialized course work in the major with a general background in the traditional academic areas. When the University of Houston-Downtown was founded in 1974, it inherited from South Texas Junior College a program which offered quality education in the basic academic disciplines. As the University of Houston-Downtown began to develop four-year degrees, more specialized courses required to support degree objectives were added to the curriculum. Graduation requirements in degree programs typically called for the completion of work in a number of traditional academic areas as well as the concentrated work called for by the major. Work in the traditional academic areas constituted an important component of each program because such work was recognized as being essential to the kind of intellectual development that is fundamental to any college education. In the process of establishing new degrees, a de facto general education core evolved consisting of course work in English composition, mathematics, literature, history and government. Various combinations of other general education courses in the natural sciences, humanities and social and behavioral sciences were also made part of all degree requirements.

In the fall of 1980, the college curriculum committee began to consider the adoption of a formal college-wide general education program. This action followed the adoption of an institutional six-year plan which called for such a program. The underlying concern was that as more degree programs were developed, there should be a clear college-wide policy establishing the common learning experiences to be provided in all degree programs. The curriculum committee worked throughout the 1980-81 school year to develop a core curriculum. At the end of the year, a proposed program was circulated for departmental review. The program recommended skills courses in the areas of written communication and analytical reasoning and distribution requirements in selected knowledge areas. The reaction of the departmental faculty, while generally favorable, was sufficiently mixed to convince the curriculum committee that further work was required.

Concerns expressed during the review process centered on the proposed core's size, the broad options it offered in several of the knowledge area clusters, and the inclusion or exclusion of a number of specific courses. Some members of the curriculum committee believed more study and reflection about the philosophy and objectives of a general education core were needed before specific requirements were finally established. In the fall of 1981, a subcommittee was created in the curriculum committee to study the question of what type of general education would best serve the needs of the University of Houston-Downtown.

The members of the subcommittee organized their work according to the following plan:

#### Phase I: Background Research

- survey various approaches to general education
- evaluate general education needs at University of Houston-Downtown

#### Phase II: Adoption of a Philosophy and Objectives Statement

- determine common objectives
- determine extent to which objectives are currently being met

### Phase III: Recommendations for Reaching Objectives

- choose requirements to satisfy each objective
- plan for implementation and administration

During the background phase, the subcommittee sought to identify the major themes and issues raised in the extensive body of literature on general education. Also examined were the general education requirements of all of Texas' public colleges and universities, and of other selected institutions throughout the nation. To encourage faculty-wide deliberation on the basic goals and issues of general education, the committee summarized the most useful information and distributed it or made it available to the faculty through the library (See Appendices). A second major area of research and study involved the evaluation of the general education needs of the University of Houston-Downtown. The subcommittee considered the institution's role and scope, the characteristics of its student body, and the nature of its degree programs in its assessment of these needs.

With the completion of Phase I, the subcommittee began work on a philosophy and objectives statement which would set forth a framework for general education at the University of Houston-Downtown. A statement was prepared by the subcommittee and endorsed by the full curriculum committee and then presented to the faculty at a general faculty meeting on April 1, 1982. The response of the faculty members present was positive and the approach to general education recommended in the statement was endorsed. The statement, which is presented in Chapter Two of this report, established the guidelines under which subsequent work on the development of a general education program took place.

Because the term of office for curriculum committee members would expire at the close of the 1981-82 academic year, the committee requested that the chancellor reconstitute its core curriculum subcommittee as an independent task force to provide for continuity as the work on a general education program went into its third year. The chancellor accepted the recommendation and charged the task force with completing its work and filing a written report with the vice chancellor for academic affairs by the first Monday in December, 1982. The only change made in the membership of the group was the addition of the dean of arts and sciences.

At the beginning of the 1982-83 academic year, the task force finished Phase II by asking all departments to review the general education requirements of their existing and proposed degree programs in reference to the philosophy and objectives statement which had been developed in the preceding spring. Department comment was specifically solicited on the following points:

1. the extent to which each objective contained in the general education statement was being met by the current requirements of their degree programs;
2. the possibility of modifying courses presently required degree programs to better serve general education objectives;
3. those objectives which might require additional hours of course work if they are to be satisfactorily achieved;
4. the types of accomplishments which each department believes would best indicate satisfactory attainment of each objective.

The development of a set of recommendations to direct the construction of a general education program was the major task to be accomplished in the third and final phase of the work plan. Chapter Three of this report presents the specific general education recommendations agreed to by the task force. These recommendations include specific course requirements as well as proposals to encourage greater attention to general education objectives in all areas of the curriculum.

The final two chapters address resource considerations and implementation and administration procedures. Chapter Four presents estimates of the resources needed to implement fully the proposed program while Chapter Five recommends procedures for implementing and administering the program. The principal recommendation of the last chapter is that responsibility for both the implementation and administration be given to a newly established committee on general education as a way of clearly fixing responsibility for the program in a single central authority.

## Chapter Two

### PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES OF GENERAL EDUCATION

There is a large and growing body of literature on the subject of general education. In working to develop a goals and philosophy statement, our principal challenge was to distill from the voluminous amount of information available on general education those theories and ideas which were most consistent with the mission and traditions of the University of Houston-Downtown. There is no one ideal model of general education. A dominant theme in the general education literature is the necessity for each college to develop a program reflective of its own institutional character. Table I in the Appendix summarizes the basic approaches to general education used in colleges throughout the country along with a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of each. Also in the Appendix is a question outline of the broad objectives general education programs can be designed to serve. Choosing one set of objectives and developing a coherent program to reach these objectives necessarily means that other worthwhile goals will have to be neglected. We believe that specific decisions on general education requirements should be guided by a formal philosophy and objectives statement which establishes the rationale for the general education program and the types of educational goals to be given priority attention in the program. Our rationale for a general education program and the priority objectives we think the program should address are presented in the following section.

#### General Education and the College Curriculum

The granting of a college degree signifies that an individual has reached a level of intellectual development of sufficient merit to justify formal recognition. Intellectual development can be measured in terms of breadth of knowledge and depth of knowledge, and a college degree usually is understood to signify growth along both dimensions. In most college programs a student demonstrates his depth of knowledge through successful completion of courses required for a disciplinary major and his breadth of knowledge through successful completion of general education courses, courses required of students in all majors. The general education program attempts to provide those experiences which define what it means to be a college-educated person while the discipline major attempts to provide those experiences which define what it means to be a part of that discipline. The assumption behind a general education program is that the phrase "college-educated" has its own meaning, that it signifies a type of intellectual breadth and perspective which all students should exhibit regardless of their major. General education requirements are referred to as the core curriculum because they define what is central to the college experience, what the common standards are that are used to measure the intellectual development of all students.

There is an unfortunate tendency to see the breadth and depth components of a college program as having conflicting purposes. While they do constitute different dimensions of intellectual growth, they are not independent of each other. A student's ability to pursue in-depth study in any field of intellectual endeavor depends upon the type of general skills and experiences which a general education program seeks to impart. Conversely, a student will be unable to make effective use of general intellectual skills without specializing in a specific knowledge area. The ability to communicate complex ideas is of value only to those with complex ideas to express.



A college curriculum should not be structured as two distinct components: those courses required to fulfill major requirements and those required to fulfill general education requirements. General education objectives should not be confined to a specific set of courses in a school's core curriculum but should consist of objectives pursued throughout the whole curriculum. General education should not be one fragment of a fragmented curriculum but the unifying focus of the curriculum. It should serve to remind those in different disciplines of what they have in common as educated men and women; it should represent the common goals they share as members of the college faculty, goals which complement rather than compete with the goals they hold as members of a department faculty.

The goals of general education in a college program should be based on those attributes which distinguish college-educated people as a single group. Curriculum objectives at the college level should not be confused with the attainment of those basic skills necessary to function in society. In order to pursue a college education, a student must already possess basic reading, writing, and computational skills. In addition, a student should manage time effectively and show an openness to learning which demonstrates that the student has seriously addressed and overcome former negative learning experiences. Also, the student should possess basic analytical, research, and study skills. Proficiency in these areas is not the mark of a college-educated person but the prerequisite for college work. Students with deficiencies in these areas should be afforded the opportunity to overcome these deficiencies through a developmental program.

The following outline suggests one way of looking at general education objectives for the University of Houston-Downtown. The outline examines only possible objectives, not a mechanism for reaching them. The identification of specific objectives does not necessarily mean that specific courses are needed to reach those objectives. In fact, for general education to fulfill its mission as a unifying force, the temptation to reach general education objectives through the further proliferation of courses, especially discipline-based courses, should be resisted.

## General Education Objectives

### A. How We See the World

One trait which should be common to all educated persons is an ability to view events from a variety of perspectives. We want to free students from depending on their own limited range of experiences as the sole basis for interpreting life. We want to give a contextual richness to the frameworks through which our students look at the world. We want to enlarge the pool of symbols and images students use to interpret their world and give it meaning by sharing with them the experiences of other peoples from backgrounds different from their own. In attempting to expand the range of our students' perspectives, we should seek the following objectives:

1. Sensitivity to Time: a sensitivity to what is new and what is old and to the manner in which the new is related to the old; a sensitivity to those forces which have shaped our past and which are shaping our future.
2. Sensitivity to Culture: a sensitivity to the pluralistic nature of American society; a sensitivity to similarities and differences and interrelationships between our own

society and those of other lands; a sensitivity to the process through which cultural values are formed and transmitted to succeeding generations.

3. Sensitivity to People: a sensitivity to the differences among individuals and the forces responsible for those differences; a sensitivity to basic human needs and the way man seeks to fulfill those needs.
4. Sensitivity to the Physical World: a sensitivity to natural ecology; a sensitivity to the opportunities and constraints which the natural world places before people.

#### B. How We Respond to the World

Educated persons are marked not only by how they view the world but by how they respond to it. Capacity for effective and responsible action as well as clear vision should be the goal of general education. We believe that our students should be familiar with the major methods used to pursue knowledge, solve problems and make decisions. We also want to develop in our students an awareness of the limitations of each methodology and a critical appreciation of the underlying assumptions and the value criteria they use to define truth and right action. We believe that a trait of college-educated persons should be a conscious attention to methodology; educated persons do not reach conclusions without an awareness of the process which led them to those conclusions and of other processes which might have resulted in other conclusions. In expanding our students' awareness of the way knowledge can be pursued and problems approached, we should seek the following objectives:

1. Knowledge of the Standards of Science: an understanding of the scientific method and its importance in the modern world; an understanding of the values and requirements of science; a capacity to use the scientific method in personal and professional pursuits.
2. Knowledge of New Technologies: an understanding of the ways technological change affects the quality of life; an appreciation of the interrelationship between the user of technology and the creator of that technology; a capacity to apply existing technology.
3. Knowledge of the Standards Used in the Arts and Humanities: an appreciation of the criteria used in evaluating products of creative enterprise; an appreciation of the humanities and their importance to contemporary man; a capacity to make aesthetic judgments; a capacity to interpret the vision of reality underlying works of art and literature.
4. Knowledge of Ethical Standards: an understanding of the basic concepts of right and wrong underlying various cultures; an ability to identify the value assumptions of ideas and actions and to analyze their ethical implications; an awareness of major ethical issues in the disciplinary major; a capacity to engage in ethical analysis.

#### C. How We Communicate With Each Other in the World

Educated people are recognized most quickly by their ability to communicate in a clear and persuasive manner. The complexity of people's perspectives on life and the sophistication of the methodologies they use to pursue truth will be apparent only if they are capable of effectively communicating what their thoughts and findings are.

Effective communication requires a pool of symbols large and varied enough to convey complexity of thought and nuances of meaning. It also requires the facility to use some medium through which those symbols can be transmitted and requires a sensitivity to audience and to the capacity of others to correctly interpret the meaning of the symbols. In seeking to improve students' abilities to communicate effectively with each other, we should seek the following objectives:

1. **Written and Spoken Communication:** the ability to understand and produce effective units of discourse which exhibit an observance of the rhetorical elements of subject, audience, and purpose; the ability to condense (abstract) information gathered from oral and written sources; the ability to use standardized documentation and to provide the appropriate acknowledgment of shared information; the ability to use language which observes the conventions of standard written English.
2. **Nonverbal Symbolic Communication:** the ability to understand and use arithmetic and algebraic concepts; the ability to apply skills of quantitative reasoning and analysis at a level adequate to the uses of mathematics in college-level work; a capacity for the continued use of mathematical symbolism and the deductive approach to problem solving to assist in the development of qualitative reasoning skills.

### Summary

The foregoing statement sets forth a conceptual framework for the development of a general education program. In considering specific recommendations, we have tried at all times to work within the constraints this framework imposes. By adopting this approach, we believe that our program will have greater coherence and a sharper focus than those general education programs which simply set forth a set of distribution requirements with no clear underlying rationale other than the value of diversity. The basic principles of general education underlying the philosophy statement and guiding our design of a program can be summarized as follows:

- General education should provide the type intellectual growth which distinguishes college-educated from the non-college-educated in our society.
- The goals of general education should be broad goals of intellectual development which transcend disciplinary boundaries.
- The goals of general education should be the goals of the whole curriculum, not just the goals of one block of courses.
- Basic skills are necessary prerequisites for pursuing general education objectives, but they should not be viewed as the central component of the general education program.

The basic goals of general education we established to aid us developing specific course requirements can be summarized as follows:

- an ability to view events from a variety of perspectives including perspectives from different points of time, different cultures, different people, and from that of the physical world;

- an awareness of the various ways people pursue knowledge including knowledge of scientific standards, ethical standards, standards used in the arts and humanities, and knowledge of new technologies;
- an ability to communicate clearly and effectively and make use of different media for the transmission and processing of information.

A final set of considerations which guided our deliberations concerned the current programs and resources of the University of Houston-Downtown. In developing a set of recommendations consistent with the philosophy and objectives statement, we were also guided by the following concerns:

- that recommendations should not impose undue hardships on existing degrees;
- that recommendations should not make unrealistic resource demands on the institution.

## Chapter Three

### RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS

#### Introduction

We propose to pursue the goals and objectives set forth in the philosophy statement through the following means:

1. a common core of twelve courses emphasizing the skills and experiences fundamental to all intellectual endeavors,
2. a nine-hour group of courses stressing the application of the communication and analytic skills learned in the common core to work directly related to the student's major field of study,
3. additional course work within the student's major field of study designed to enhance the capacity for effective and responsible action, and
4. a general policy that all courses offered at the University of Houston-Downtown strive to address general education objectives.

The type of integrated general education program we are proposing requires more than a list of common course requirements. A common core is important, but the other categories of recommendations are also important if we are to achieve our goal of making the general education program the unifying element of the curriculum. For each category of recommendations, we have tried to explain the rationale behind our recommendations, to identify the objectives to be reached through recommended course work, and to show the role each requirement plays in the overall program. These various recommendations should not be viewed as a group of miscellaneous curriculum proposals but as the essential components of a single comprehensive program of general education for the University of Houston-Downtown.

The four categories of recommendations are explained in detail in the following sections. The specific course requirements are summarized at the end of this chapter.

#### The Common Core

The common core is designed to meet a specific set of objectives we believe all students should accomplish regardless of their major. Successful completion of the common core will certify that students have been exposed to a variety of ways to pursue knowledge and view the world. Satisfaction of core requirements will also provide students with the basic skills necessary to pursue effectively work in their major. The core block seeks to provide a breadth of educational experience as well as providing the skills and perceptions necessary to the in-depth study of a particular discipline. The common core is not intended in itself to fulfill the general education objectives set forth in the philosophy statement but to provide the necessary foundation for their fulfillment. The specific objectives of the common core and the courses which will satisfy these objectives are given below.

## A. Communication Skills

The mastery of communication skills is fundamental to all college learning. The type of communication which has the broadest range of applications in academic study is that which takes place through the written word. The ability to use words in a skillful and sophisticated manner is a conventional measure of the educated person. While language skills do constitute a recognized mark of education, we believe that their importance is not so much the appearance of education which they convey as the ability to pursue education which they provide. We must set a high standard of proficiency in language skills if our students are to have the opportunity to participate fully in the highest levels of intellectual pursuits.

We believe that all students should be required to take the college's six-hour sequence of course work in English composition (ENG 1301 and 1302, or the equivalent), which should teach students to address the rhetorical strategies of subject, audience, and purpose and to observe the conventions of standard written English. The courses should also provide training in the various techniques of effective writing, giving special emphasis to the preparation of academic research papers. In addition to requiring written assignments, the composition courses should strive to improve a student's sensitivity to language through the careful analysis of selected texts. Finally, students should be given some understanding of the nature of language--why and how it has evolved and how it reflects cultural values and customs.

One major purpose of the freshman composition course requirement is to develop the capacity of students to read intelligently and write intelligibly about college level subject matter. Successful completion of freshman composition marks the beginning rather than the end of the development of the high level of literacy we believe every student should possess. We see the further refinement of communication skills to be an appropriate objective for all course work at the college to address. An insistence on high writing standards in all courses is essential if our students are to reach their full intellectual potential. We are convinced that by demanding clarity in all written assignments, we are encouraging clearer thinking and logic and aiding in the development of sharper analytic skills. No other area of instruction is so basic to a student's academic progress.

Because of the central importance of writing skills to all academic work, we recommend the institution of a junior-year writing proficiency examination to be taken after completion of 60 and before completion of 75 or more semester hours, except that transfer students with 75 or more hours must attempt the examination during their first semester at University of Houston-Downtown. Such an examination would determine if students have retained the language skills learned in the composition courses and would ensure that all students proceeding to upper division work possess college-level writing skills. We recommend that the composition faculty of the department of arts and humanities develop a proposal for a junior-year writing proficiency examination which any student receiving a degree from University of Houston-Downtown would be required to pass.

Effective communication requires the mastery of speech skills as well as writing skills. We believe that students should be able to present material in an organized, standard manner in both their speech and their writing. Students who have achieved a firm mastery of the English language through successful completion of the ENG 1301-1302 sequence may be able to apply their language skills to their speech and make effective oral presentations with no additional formal course work. Those who have not had some experience in making formal oral presentations may require specific instruction in

the field of speech communication before reaching the level of proficiency necessary to make public presentations in a clear and effective manner.

We believe that there should be a performance standard students are required to meet in the area of speech communication; but we are not convinced that all students need to be required to take formal course work in the discipline of speech. We, therefore, recommend that in the area of oral communication, students be permitted to demonstrate their ability to make effective oral presentations in one of two ways: through a performance examination or through successful completion of a speech course in which a substantial percentage of the evaluation is on performance. The standard of competence we are suggesting is strictly a performance standard. The student who demonstrates his ability to make a well organized, grammatically standard, and confidently delivered oral presentation through a performance examination should not be considered to have mastered the same range of public speaking skills or to have gained the same theoretical background in speech as the student enrolled in a public speaking course. The need for further speech education provided through formal course work in speech is recognized in most of the existing degree programs at University of Houston-Downtown so our expectation is that most students will be fulfilling the speech requirement through completion of the particular speech course required by their degree plan. We do recommend that for the purpose of general education requirements, those students who have completed ENG 1302 and who have some experience in making formal oral presentation be allowed to petition to demonstrate competence in making oral presentations through a performance examination. We recommend that procedures for the giving and evaluating of the speech performance exam be worked out by the speech faculty and the committee on general education. It is understood that procedures will be developed to provide alternate means for speech-impaired students to meet this requirement.

## B. Mathematical Skills

The pursuit of knowledge requires a set of symbols through which we can label, communicate, and analyze information. Words provide us with one set of symbols while numbers and algebraic operations provide us with another. Facility with arithmetic and algebraic operations allows a rigor and precision in analysis that opens up many areas of inquiry that would be forever closed to those skilled only in the use of verbal symbols. Mathematics has played a central role in the development of modern science and is valued not only as a highly useful tool for pursuing knowledge but as an aesthetic achievement to be valued in its own right.

We recommend that all students be required to demonstrate an understanding of arithmetic and algebraic concepts and to acquire the mastery of skills necessary to apply quantitative reasoning and make use of mathematics in college level work. In addition to constituting an area of intellectual endeavor impressive in its own right and indispensable to the development of science and technology, mathematics provides training in abstract reasoning which has application in all academic and professional fields. While the specific topics treated in the various subfields of mathematics differ, all mathematics courses provide students with experience in solving problems through the manipulation of nonverbal symbols within a closed system. We believe that students will realize the same general benefits from mastering the subject matter of any college-level mathematics course, benefits which include an awareness of the importance of mathematics as an area of intellectual endeavor, an initiation into formal logic and abstract reasoning, and an appreciation of the importance of precision and discipline in problem solving.

Successful completion of any mathematics course for which Foundations of Mathematics II (Math 130B) or Algebra (Math 1400) is a prerequisite demonstrates the required competence in college level mathematics to satisfy the core requirement.

### C. Knowledge of the Standards of Science

The era in which we live is chiefly distinguishable from earlier eras in its reliance on and faith in science. The concept of science covers a broad range of activities, but central to this concept is the pursuit of knowledge through the systematic collection and testing of empirical data. For many in the modern era, "to know" means "to know through the methods of science." Scientific advances have been most dramatic in the explanation of natural phenomena. In a little over 400 years, scientific discoveries have transformed the conditions under which we live to a far greater extent than they had changed in the preceding 4000 years.

We believe that every college student should understand the scientific method and the impact of science, particularly science as wedded to technology, in contemporary society. Remembering a specific set of facts learned through the scientific method or the jargon of an individual science is not so important as understanding the nature of science as an intellectual enterprise. For the purposes of general education, the basic objective in exposing students to a variety of disciplines is to develop in them a methodological awareness and appreciation of the various ways knowledge is pursued, including an understanding of the underlying assumptions and inherent limitations of each approach. We recommend that all students be required to take 6-8 hours of course work with lab experience in the natural sciences in order that they might have a clear sense of the scientific process vis-à-vis other procedures for pursuing knowledge.

For the student majoring in an area not requiring work in a specific field of science, the educational objectives outlined above would best be addressed through a two-semester general science course which examines the scientific enterprise as it takes place in a variety of contexts. Such a course should be a rigorous college level course but one which stresses the importance of the process of science as a revolutionary force in the modern world rather than one providing an introduction to a specific scientific discipline. There is no general science course currently offered at University of Houston-Downtown, so we recommend that the department of natural sciences consider instituting one. Alternatively, any two natural science courses that meet the objectives stated above, as certified by the committee on general education, will be acceptable.

### D. Computer Literacy

Technological changes are reshaping our world on a continual basis. We believe that every college student should study the ways in which technological advancements are confronting people with new opportunities and new challenges. The topic of technology's impact on society is addressed in a variety of disciplines, and it is important that students be exposed to the broad perspectives that creative writers, historians, political theorists and other scholars in nontechnical fields have on technological change. The broad perspectives on technological change offered by these scholars do not, however, provide the opportunity for the student to learn about specific technologies on their own terms.



The new technology which has had the most dramatic and far reaching impact on our society in recent years is that related to the computer. To meet the core objective regarding knowledge of new technologies, we recommend that all students be asked to demonstrate a basic understanding of what computers are and how they can be used. Computer literacy has become a widely accepted goal of formal education. It is important not only for demonstrating an understanding of technology's role in society but because of ever increasing evidence that every person needs a level of computer awareness just to function competently in society. Within the academic world, computer awareness and literacy are especially important because of the increasingly wide application of computers in all fields of study. We believe that whatever the students' disciplines, they will benefit from a general introduction to computers.

The type of course we believe is necessary to provide students with a basic understanding of what computers are and how they can be used will be one which provides some actual "hands-on" experience at a computer terminal and covers the following topics: history of computers, nature of computers, communicating with computers, types of computers, capabilities and limitations of computers, computer uses and programming skills.

There are two courses in the present course inventory which meet the above criteria: Introduction to Computer Science (CS 1201) and Introduction to Data Processing (DP 1301). The only change necessary in the existing courses is to raise the prerequisite of DP 1301 to MATH 130B.

#### E. Knowledge of the Literary Arts

Language is basic to all intellectual endeavor. The posing of scientific hypotheses, the analysis of ethical issues, the process of problem solving--the very process of thought itself, all are dependent on people's capacities to use language. The utilitarian nature of language is undeniably essential to the communication and processing of information in all fields, but language is more than a basic technology through which discreet bits of information are transmitted. Words constitute the building blocks of the literary arts. The mastery of language allows writers to give artistic expression to their experiences in the world and to address the most fundamental problems of the human condition. Human life has been enormously enriched by the truth and beauty of great literary works.

We recommend that all students take three semester hours of course work in sophomore level literature. The type of course work which best meets the major objectives of the philosophy statement would be one which introduces the student to several different literary modes rather than one which is limited to a specific genre. Through the examination of selected types of works, students should gain an understanding of how literary artists work under the constraints of a particular literary mode and a particular historical setting to make statements about the timeless and universal aspects of the human experience. The English faculty presently offers survey courses in World Literature at the sophomore level and British Literature and American Literature at the upper-division level. We would endorse the proposal already under consideration in the humanities department to offer all these courses at the sophomore level and designate them as the courses through which students would satisfy the recommended requirement.

## F. Knowledge of the Fine Arts

Literature is but one of several ways people give artistic expression to their experiences in the world. The performing and visual arts constitute other areas of creative activity whose products have been recognized for their enduring value. We believe that all students should have at least an elementary exposure to the fine arts to give them some appreciation of the important role art and music have played in the search for meaning and understanding. Students should experience art and music directly and develop a capacity to make aesthetic judgments and offer interpretations of artistic endeavors.

We recommend the creation of a new course to be offered through the department of arts and humanities which would provide students with a basic introduction to the fine arts. This course should be designed for intellectual stimulation and enjoyment. Its objective should be to sample the arts rather than provide a comprehensive survey of them. Such a course would address several important objectives of the philosophy statement. Its primary justification is that the arts constitute a major way of response to the world and that human efforts to find meaning through artistic endeavors have resulted in some of civilization's greatest accomplishments. A further justification for requiring a fine arts course is that such a course would provide a different way for students to look at the world by providing them with an artistic perspective. We believe that the educated person should be aware of aesthetic qualities and have some understanding of how aesthetic standards have evolved over time.

We would expect an introduction to the fine arts course to give basic instruction in the elements of visual and aural literacy, to provide examples of the contribution various forms of art make to human life, to offer direct exposure to the works of major artists present in the Houston community, and to discuss the role the arts play in our culture and the funding and other support upon which they depend. We believe that these topics can be covered in a two-hour course offered in two one-hour segments spread out over the full academic year to take advantage of the complete calendar of artistic events scheduled in Houston. .

Introductory courses in music, art and theater are currently being offered by the arts and humanities department. While we believe that the general introduction to the fine arts course described above would best serve the needs of most of our students, we recognize that a course more narrowly focused on one of the fine arts could also provide students with an appreciation of human efforts to give artistic expression to experiences in the world. If the existing courses (Music and the Human Experience I & II - MUS 2301 & 2302, History of Art I & II - ART 1301 & 1302, Introduction to the Theater DRA 1301, and History of Theater I & II - DRA 2302 & 2304) were modified to include discussion of the role played by the arts in our culture and the sources of their funding and support, we would recommend that a student be permitted to satisfy the requirement by completing one of them instead of the general introduction to fine arts course.

We believe that some formal work is necessary to help students develop an understanding and appreciation of the fine arts but recognize that student involvement in the arts can also be encouraged through activities that are not part of the formal curriculum. To complement the proposed fine arts course, we urge that more school resources be committed to enriching the cultural life of the University of Houston-Downtown. The arts by their nature must be experienced as well as studied, and the University of Houston-Downtown is well situated to bring to its students a full array of artistic experiences.

## G. Knowledge of History

The state of Texas prohibits any public college in the state from granting a baccalaureate degree to any person who has not had credit for six hours of American History. At University of Houston-Downtown, this history requirement can be met through successful completion of any two of the following three courses: U.S. History to 1877 (HIST 1305), U.S. History after 1877 (HIST 1306), or Texas History (HIST 2303). We believe that besides satisfying the state requirement, these courses address many of the general education objectives set forth in the philosophy and objectives statement and should be listed as required courses in the core curriculum.

There is a heavy emphasis in the philosophy statement on providing educational experiences which allow students to view events from a variety of perspectives. The most valuable lesson to be learned from the study of history is a highly general one: things have not always been as they are now. The study of history frees students from imprisonment in the present by allowing them to examine the world through the perspective of time. An awareness of what is new and what is old and the means by which the new is related to the old helps students to evaluate the relative significance of the mass of information with which they are confronted on a daily basis. Knowledge of history aids in the development of mature, seasoned judgment. Perhaps the most important value of history is the reminder and caution it offers that human understanding of the world is rarely as complete as one is tempted to believe at any given point in time.

In addition to providing students with a sense of time, the study of history increases awareness of differences among cultures and peoples and encourages students to look at themselves and their society from the perspective of others. History also makes students more aware of the importance of the natural environment in determining the opportunities and constraints under which they live. The introductory American history course includes discussion of the several European cultures which had an impact on the "New World," the reaction of those cultures to the indigenous populations whose culture differed from those of Europe, and the way in which cultures responded to the contact. The course deals, necessarily, with people's relationships to the environment as the colonists faced the tasks of establishing a society in a pristine land and examines how the environment changed them and they changed the environment. Major topics of the second half of the American survey include immigration, the immigrants' cultures, the response of the existing society to immigration, the impact on the society of new technologies, the accomplishments of people in harnessing and exploiting the natural environment, and the philosophic and cultural changes brought about by the corporatization of the American society in response to industrialization. The Texas history course covers essentially the same topics but in the context of the state.

The content of the history courses currently required under state law appears to address those objectives of general education concerning the ability to view events from a variety of perspectives. Our understanding is that these history courses are giving students a sense of how society changes over time and the way in which people, social institutions, cultural values, and natural forces affect those changes. We recommend that these courses continue to be taught in a manner which stresses the interpretation of the American experience from a variety of perspectives.

## H. Knowledge of Political Systems

The second set of courses mandated by the state of Texas is a two-semester sequence of courses in American state and national government. United States Government I & II (GOVT 2303 & GOVT 2304) are the courses which fulfill the state requirement at University of Houston-Downtown. The public policy objective served by the government requirement is an informed citizenry better able to fulfill responsibly the obligations which democratic government imposes. The American government courses, which cover the topic of political socialization, are themselves part of the formal process of political socialization which the state relies on to teach basic constitutional values. The government courses, along with the state-mandated American history courses, are designed to help strengthen that basic consensus and common memory necessary for social solidarity.

In addition to addressing public policy objectives, the required government courses provide benefits important to the goals of general education. A nation's political system is in large part a product of its history and culture so that the study of American government promotes a better understanding of American society and the social, economic and cultural forces which shape it. People use the political process to pursue both individual and collective interests, so political studies help students to better understand basic human needs and the ways these needs can be fulfilled. The study of public policy must necessarily place before students consideration of the constraints which the natural world imposes. The government courses also provide an opportunity to discuss the basic ethical values which underlie American society and which should guide political action. We believe that the state required government courses complement the goals of the general education program sufficiently to justify considering them as a part of the common core. With some modifications, we believe these courses could be highly valuable vehicles for pursuing general education objectives.

A near universal recommendation in the literature on general education requirements is the need to give greater attention to the larger world community of which the student is a member. Our own philosophy and objectives statement specifically urges course work which provides a greater awareness of similarities and differences and interrelationships between our society and those of other lands. To reduce the tendency towards parochialism which comes from studying only American values and institutions, we recommend that the American government course be taught through an explicitly comparative approach. We believe that students should learn the basic principles of democratic capitalism but should also be introduced to other world-shaping ideologies such as democratic socialism, communism, and Third World nationalism. We believe it is important for students to know the workings of the American political process but also to understand that there are a variety of ways the political functions of society can be fulfilled. We, therefore, recommend that the scope of U.S. Government I be expanded to include the topic of comparative ideologies and possibly that of comparative political cultures while U.S. Government II be expanded to include material on comparative political institutions and comparative public policy.

### Application Courses

The application courses are courses which make use of skills taught in the common core at a more advanced level of academic work. We believe that the best way to convince students that basic skills are indeed essential in every field is to provide opportunities for their use in every program offered at the college. The application courses are intended to help draw the general education component of the curriculum and the disciplinary major

component closer together and to demonstrate the complementary nature of their relationship. We propose that every degree major include application courses in the following areas:

#### A. Writing Skills

We believe that all degree-granting departments should require substantial written work in their upper-division courses so that students will have the opportunity to make use of and further refine their writing skills within the context of their academic major. We recommend that departments designate those courses which do require substantial written work as "W" courses and that all students be required to take two such courses. Students should be permitted to substitute an advanced writing course which emphasizes the types of writing skills required in the academic major for one of the "W" courses, but the second course must be a "W" course in or closely related to the major field of study. Departments should compile a list of their own "W" courses and any advanced writing courses which address department objectives and submit it to the general education committee for review. Advanced writing courses currently offered by the Arts and Humanities Department include Business and Technical Report Writing (ENG 3302), Legal Writing (ENG 3308), Creative Writing (ENG 3309), Advanced Composition (ENG 4305) and Science Writing (ENG 4306).

In proposing courses to be designated as "W" courses, departments should indicate the nature of the writing assignments which each course will require. We recommend that courses designated as "W" courses have as their minimum writing requirement the production of the equivalent of twenty typed double-spaced pages of work. Assignments could be for one major research paper or a series of shorter papers or some combination of the two. While the exact nature of the writing assignments will vary from one "W" course to another, the papers produced in these courses should be of sufficiently high quality to demonstrate that the student has mastered the level of writing skill necessary for the effective communication of the subject matter of his discipline. A passing grade in a "W" course will constitute certification by the instructor that the student demonstrated a college level writing proficiency in the papers produced in the course.

We recognize that some faculty members may not feel comfortable supervising a major writing project and urge that a series of workshops be scheduled to provide these faculty members the opportunity to work with those who are more experienced in teaching writing skills. We would hope that departments would make full use of the expertise of the English composition faculty when considering the types of writing assignments to make and the standards by which the assignments will be evaluated. If there is a demonstrated need, we would support committing the necessary resources to ensure that any faculty member teaching a "W" course has available to him the assistance of a colleague with formal training in the field of English.

#### B. Nonverbal Analytical Skills

The common core requires that all students take one college-level mathematics course and one computer awareness course. These requirements aid in the development of nonverbal analytical skills. We believe that in addition to the core requirement, students should take at least one additional course which makes use of these skills in solving problems in work related to the student's major field of study. Departments should examine the various ways nonverbal analytical skills are useful in their disciplines and designate those courses which make use of such skills as "S" courses. Instead of, or in

addition to designating their own courses as "S" courses, departments may identify courses offered by other departments which make use of those nonverbal analytical skills with applications in the student's major field of study. We recommend that all students be required to take either an "S" course in their major or another course which emphasizes those nonverbal analytical skills with applications in the major.

In proposing courses to be designated as "S" courses, departments should indicate the type of problem-solving exercises the student will be assigned. The objectives of an "S" course need not be focused exclusively on the development and application of nonverbal analytical skills, but the use of these skills should constitute a major component of the course. For a course to be designated as an "S" course, we recommend that at least fifty percent of the course grade be based on exercises and exams requiring the use of nonverbal analytical skills.

### Enhancement Courses

Enhancement courses are those courses which examine selected general education concerns which have special relevance to students' major fields of study. These courses do not call for the application of skills learned in the common core but seek to provide further understanding of those fields of knowledge which will enhance the students' capacities for effective and responsible action as they pursue academic and professional goals. In addition to the social science and humanities courses required in the common core, we recommend that all degree programs contain course work which will further students' understanding of the following three subjects: the moral and ethical dimensions of life, the larger world community of which all people are a part, and human behavior and the dynamics of human relationships. These areas of study are particularly appropriate to pursue within the framework of the major field of study since they provide the students opportunities to approach issues and problems in their major fields from different perspectives and in different contexts. The types of course work through which these requirements might be met are described below.

#### A. Ethics and Moral Issues

Students should be exposed to the study of values and ethical standards, particularly those pertaining to their own discipline or chosen profession. A moral or ethical perspective is necessary to assess responsibly the propriety of actions which new knowledge or technology makes possible. We believe all students should have the ability to identify the value assumptions of ideas and actions and the capacity to engage in ethical analysis. Departments might provide this type of education by developing their own courses which examine ethical issues confronting their own discipline or profession or by including in their degree plans required work in some branch of normative philosophy. As an alternative for designating one course as the means for fulfilling the requirement, departments could designate a series of courses in which consideration of ethical issues constituted a major though not necessarily exclusive focus of the work.

#### B. The World Community

International education has been an area emphasized in many of the core curriculum programs recently adopted throughout the country. We agree that it is vitally important for all students to know about the world that exists beyond the boundaries of the United States but believe that greater awareness of other cultures and of the

whole international system can be provided through a variety of courses. We recommend that all degree programs require course work which is designed to further students' understanding of foreign cultures and their ability to examine issues from a global perspective. One way of encouraging greater awareness of foreign cultures is through the study of foreign language. We recommend that the traditional practice of requiring two years of study of foreign language in all Bachelor of Arts programs be adopted as formal policy at the University of Houston-Downtown. All degree plans might strengthen the international component of their course of study through course work in such fields as cultural anthropology, world history, comparative politics, international relations, and non-western humanities. Professional programs might develop their own course work which examines professional problems and practices or technological advancements from an international or comparative perspective. We believe that international education should be given greatly increased emphasis in the future and urge that resources be committed to assist in the development of a more thorough and comprehensive program of international studies.

### C. Human Behavior and Interpersonal Relations

We recommend that all degrees require course work designed to enhance students' understanding of human behavior and human relationships. By studying human behavior and the needs and motivations which are responsible for that behavior, students will understand themselves more fully and will be more sensitive to the differences and similarities between themselves and others. Such understanding will improve students' abilities to work effectively in collective enterprises and to provide able leadership. The majority of the existing degree programs seek to heighten students' understanding of human behavior and human relationships through required courses in psychology or sociology. These courses constitute highly suitable ways of satisfying this requirement. Other courses which we believe also enhance students' understanding of human behavior are literature courses in which considerable attention is given to the analysis of character motivation. A third category of courses which could satisfy this requirement would be professionally oriented courses in leadership or management taught through a human relations perspective.

### The Pursuit of General Education Objectives Through All Appropriate Courses

An underlying assumption of the recommendations we are making is that the objectives of general education are not objectives to be checked off as the student completes a given sequence of courses. Rather, we understand general education to be that education concerned with broad dimensions of intellectual development which both undergird and transcend the various academic disciplines. We are especially concerned with encouraging development along those dimensions of intellectual growth involving the ability to communicate clearly and effectively, to view events from a variety of perspectives, and to analyze the methodology on which a knowledge claim is based. We believe that these general education objectives should be pursued throughout the whole curriculum and should serve as a unifying focus for the college's entire educational program. We recommend that all courses attempt to further develop intellectual growth along these dimensions as they pursue their more narrow discipline- and profession-based objectives. We recommend the following steps to encourage faculty members to examine the ways they might appropriately assist in the general intellectual development of their students.

- A. The goals and philosophy of the general education program should be publicized to all full-time and part-time faculty employed by the University of Houston-Downtown. Workshops and other forms of assistance should be provided to help faculty members better support the program's objectives. Conducting these activities should be the responsibility of the committee on general education.
- B. Proposals for new courses and course revisions should indicate how the broad goals of general education are to be addressed. The curriculum committee should require a statement in this regard on the course approval form used to propose course changes.
- C. Department curriculum committees periodically should review existing courses to determine the extent to which they encourage the use of communication skills, examine events from different perspectives, and analyze the methods used in the discovery of the information presented in class.
- D. In the annual performance evaluation process, department chairs and faculty should consider the importance of addressing the goals and objectives of the general education program when the criteria for the assessment of teaching performance are established.
- E. The committee on general education should prepare an annual written report evaluating the general education program and making recommendations for its improvement. If the committee finds it worthwhile to try to measure the success of the program through some standardized test, the results might suggest specific areas of intellectual development needing further attention.



## Summary of Recommendations

- I. The Common Core
  - A. Communication Skills 6-9 hours
  - B. Mathematical Skills 3 hours
  - C. Knowledge of the Standards of Science 6-8 hours
  - D. Computer Literacy 2-3 hours
  - E. Knowledge of the Literary Arts 3 hours
  - F. Knowledge of the Fine Arts 2-3 hours
  - G. Knowledge of History 6 hours
  - H. Knowledge of Political Systems 6 hours
- II. Application Courses
  - A. Writing Courses 6 hours
  - B. Nonverbal Analytical Skills Course 3 hours
- III. Enhancement Courses
  - A. Ethics and Moral Issues
  - B. The World Community
  - C. Human Behavior and Human Relationships
- IV. A policy that all courses offered at the University of Houston-Downtown address general education objectives where appropriate.

## Chapter Four

### COST IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations contained in this report cannot be implemented without cost. There are three different kinds of costs associated with the changes we have proposed: monetary costs, disruption costs to existing programs, and the personal costs to faculty who are called upon to more fully incorporate general education objectives into their teaching. The proposed program has attempted to minimize the first two kinds of cost by relying upon existing courses to reach general education objectives whenever possible and by allowing departments considerable discretion in choosing how general education requirements would be met within their degree plans. While the basic structure of the curriculum will require only minimal changes under the proposed program, the program does demand that faculty members make a substantial commitment of time and energy if the program is to be successfully implemented.

We believe that the major cost of the program will be this commitment demanded from the whole faculty to assume responsibility for general education objectives. This responsibility falls heaviest on those teaching courses in the common core. The core courses are not the exclusive property of the department faculty assigned to teach them. Under the proposed program, several departments are called upon to design new courses or revise existing courses to address more directly the objectives of the general education program. The courses included in the common core are there to provide students with the skills and experiences essential to their basic intellectual development rather than provide them with the opportunity to sample work in a variety of discrete disciplines. In the application and enhancement course requirements, faculty are called upon to, integrate the work of the degree major with that of the general education program. We are aware that the development of "W" and "S" courses can be time consuming and challenging but are convinced that the required investment in these types of courses brings great academic benefit.

Closely related to the costs of time and effort required of the faculty to implement our recommendations are the disruption costs to existing programs. After establishing a set of basic objectives to be pursued through a general education program, we examined all existing and proposed degree programs to determine how the objectives could be achieved with minimal interference to existing degree requirements. We found that many of our basic objectives were already being adequately addressed by common coursework required in all the various degree programs. Some objectives were being pursued through very different kinds of course work or, in some programs, were not being pursued at all. Our recommendations do require that all general education objectives be addressed but they do not mandate that every objective be pursued through common coursework.

The application and enhancement course sections of our program are designed to allow departments to address selected general education objectives in a manner that is most compatible with the overall structure and design of their own degree programs. The development and teaching of enhancement and application courses do impose costs to the faculty but their objectives can be addressed within existing courses so no new additional hours need to be added to degree programs. The common core section of the proposal does impose specific course requirements but eleven of the thirteen courses in the common core are already required by all existing degree plans. We have recommended that courses in computer literacy and the fine arts be included in the common core because the objectives of these courses could not be incorporated into the

course work of all of the existing degree plans. The additional required coursework in these two areas will add a maximum of six hours to any of the existing degree programs at the University of Houston-Downtown.

The monetary costs of the proposed program include the costs of new staff and equipment, and the costs of faculty workshops. Some additional faculty may be required to cover the increased number of sections of new or existing courses that have been included in the common core. However, since all general education courses will generate formula funding, it is not anticipated that implementation of this program will have a long-range negative impact on funding for faculty salaries or department operating expense.

The computer literacy requirement does raise a special resource consideration because of the equipment required to provide students with hands-on experience. The enrollment in those classes presently using microcomputer equipment indicates that some 65% of the total freshman and sophomore classes are currently being served. The present number of microcomputers appears to be adequate. If the projected equipment purchases as requested in the University of Houston-Downtown's six year plan and the computer center's plan are met, the number of microcomputers should be sufficient to meet the increased demand brought on by the required computer literacy courses. A major concern is that the computer center lacks a sufficient number of lab assistants who could handle the increased enrollment and the increased time that labs should be available. These needs will have to be addressed by the administration.

The second area of expenditure is support for faculty workshops and other programs to assist faculty in assuming greater responsibility for the fulfillment of general education objectives. Much of this assistance can come from within the college such as workshops conducted by the English department faculty to help those who will be teaching "W" courses. Incentives should be provided to encourage faculty members to aid one another on both a formal and informal basis. We do not believe large amounts of money will be necessary to support these types of development activities but we do think such activities are essential to the success of the program and deserve the full support of the administration. Existing faculty development monies could provide some funding in this area.

## Chapter Five

### IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION

The proposed program represents a new approach to general education at the University of Houston-Downtown but it is a program which expands upon and gives clearer focus and cohesion to the existing set of de facto requirements rather than one which calls for radical change in the size and nature of the component of the curriculum specifically concerned with general education. We do not believe the adoption of the program will require major changes in the design of any existing or proposed degree program. If our proposed program is accepted by the end of the current academic year (1982-1983), we recommend that enforcement of the new requirements begin for all students entering the college on or after the fall semester of 1984. This would provide one year (1983-1984) to develop the new courses and make the necessary modifications in existing courses called for by the proposal.

The literature on general education stresses the importance of fixing responsibility for the operation of the general education program in a specific office or committee. The American College Testing Program (ACT) found in its College Outcome Measures Project (COMP) that those institutions which were most successful in meeting general education objectives were those which provided a centralized system for coordinating their general education program. We believe that a centralized system of coordination is especially critical for our proposed program because it sets objectives which are to be pursued throughout the whole curriculum rather than approaching general education as a checklist of courses to be completed. Our proposed program will require careful leadership and constant supervision if it is to be successful.

To provide the necessary leadership and supervision, we recommend the creation of a special committee on general education which shall serve in an advisory capacity to the vice chancellor for academic affairs in the implementation of the general education program. The committee will:

1. review all courses departments wish to propose as common core or application courses and advise the VCAA on those courses which should be certified as meeting the relevant general education guidelines;
2. develop and recommend to the VCAA a centralized system for certifying that students have completed all general education requirements prior to graduation;
3. review proposals from degree granting departments on how they will seek to satisfy enhancement course objectives and advise the VCAA on the extent each proposal meets these objectives;
4. advise the VCAA on needed faculty development activities in areas pertaining to general education;
5. continually evaluate the general education program and prepare an annual report on the state of general education at the University of Houston-Downtown and the changes needed for its improvement.

During the transitional year, the committee on general education will also:

6. assist in the development of the new courses and modification of existing courses necessary for the program's implementation;

7. assist in the development of the proficiency exams necessary for the program's implementation;
8. help disseminate information about the program and its rationale to all students and faculty;
9. assist departments in identifying the kinds of work which will satisfy the goals of the application and enhancement course requirements.

The purpose of the committee on general education is to assist in the maintenance of the integrity of the general education program. In all activities pertaining to the administration of the general education program, the committee will report to the VCAA. No responsibility of the committee should be construed to suggest any authority other than that of making recommendations. Administrative decisions regarding general education will be made by the VCAA and carried out through the existing academic chain of command. Any policy recommendations of the committee will be through the VCAA to the appropriate shared governance committee and reviewed through the regular shared governance process.

We recommend that the committee on general education be composed of five faculty members and the academic deans and that the faculty members be selected through shared governance procedures. All members of this committee should hold tenure, and no more than three of the faculty members should be from the same division and no more than one of them should be from the same department. Criteria for selection to this committee should include a broad perspective on the goals of higher education, demonstrated commitment to teaching, and a demonstrated ability to assist in the development of sound academic policies. Members of this committee would not serve as representatives of their own departments or disciplines, but would be expected to represent the philosophy and goals of the general education program. To ensure continuity on the committee, we suggest that appointment be for two year overlapping terms.