

Elimination of BDRs should provide stronger curriculum

By COLLEEN BARRY
Collegian Staff Writer

Eliminating the baccalaureate degree requirements in favor of courses supporting the concept of general education is only the first step in strengthening what many view as an inadequate undergraduate curriculum.

The process of replacing BDRs — criticized for not supplying students with a framework to place their knowledge — began last spring when the Faculty Senate adopted objectives and a definition of general education. Implementing courses and adopting course criteria is now the job of the senate committee on curricular affairs.

"The senate is trying to make a graduating student a more liberally educated adult," said senate Executive Secretary George Bugyi.

Jay Clark, president of the Undergraduate Student Government's Academic Assembly, said "general education should get students to relate things that are not related and teach them how to think, to be able to make a point

and argue for it."

Because of the failure of BDRs to do many of these things, the list will be eliminated by Fall Semester 1989 and replaced by courses recommended by each department and approved by the curricular affairs committee, said Jerry Covert, committee chairman.

Before courses are approved, they must be consistent with the senate definition of general education, which calls for courses that will "aid students in developing intellectual curiosity, strengthen the ability to think and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation."

The actual selection will be based on a more concrete criteria for evaluating general education courses, based on the criteria used for BDRs. It will, however, be updated so that it more closely corresponds to the objectives of general education, Covert said.

For example, while no 400-level course may be used as a BDR, the general education criteria may allow this.

In addition, according to the BDR criteria, some departments specify which courses meet the BDR requirement for a particular

major. In the microbiology major, to fulfill the BDR requirement for quantification a student must take Math 140 and Math 141. Students are offered no choice.

"This destroys the idea of general education," Covert said.

Students looking for guidance in choosing courses might find they will be encouraged to take courses that they know have some thematic or sequential link. A formal linkage process failed in the senate last spring.

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Covert said this arose because the process of accepting BDRs is continual — at any time a new course may be proposed and added to the list. In some ways the open proposal was positive, because it provided flexibility. However, "it created an advising nightmare," because no one was ever certain what courses were on the list and which were not.

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BDR debate has spanned three decades

By ALAN J. CRAVER
Collegian Staff Writer

General education at the University has once again moved into the spotlight as administrators and Faculty Senate members examine the standard academic requirements for undergraduates.

The senate is developing criteria for general education requirements in preparation for the elimination of the baccalaureate degree requirements.

Its objective is to give students a more common educational background by providing more definitive courses to fulfill the requirements.

Administrators and senate members have debated the issues surrounding standard academic requirements since the early 1950s.

The arguments have wavered between implementing more flexible or more definitive requirements.

In the 1970s, the list of courses was expanded to give students more of a choice. Today, the senate is again forming a more definitive list of courses.

In 1954, the senate, then called the University Senate, studied changes that could be made in the standard requirements students must complete to graduate. The study, known as the Callenbach Report, became the basis of the University's requirements until the early 1970s.

The Callenbach Report was formed on the premise that the University, then very research oriented, must prepare students to adapt to the changes and the needs of society. It stressed that students need a broad range of studies to emphasize society's structure through science, literature and fine arts.

The report called for testing freshmen and transfer students in reading,

take a remedial course if the test showed it necessary.

In the early 1970s, the senate formed the Cunningham Committee to review and update the requirements.

The new committee decided that the Callenbach Report was ineffective because it had not been carried out as planned.

The committee said BDRs needed to be more flexible than the Callenbach Report requirements. In contrast, with its predecessor, the Cunningham committee adopted the view that general education is not feasible for all students and that the University should not attempt to produce the "well-rounded citizen" in four years of diverse educational exposure.

Bugyi said the Cunningham Report allowed students more freedom in meeting standard academic requirements by expanding the number of courses available.

At the same time, Bugyi said, the Cunningham Report became more specific in defining its seven objectives of personal and social development.

Students should learn to communicate better with others, learn better physical and recreational activities and learn the importance of a well-balanced diet and detecting sickness, according to the objectives under personal development.

The social objectives said students should learn about civilization, culture and society through courses in the general sciences, humanities and arts, psychology, sociology and anthropology.

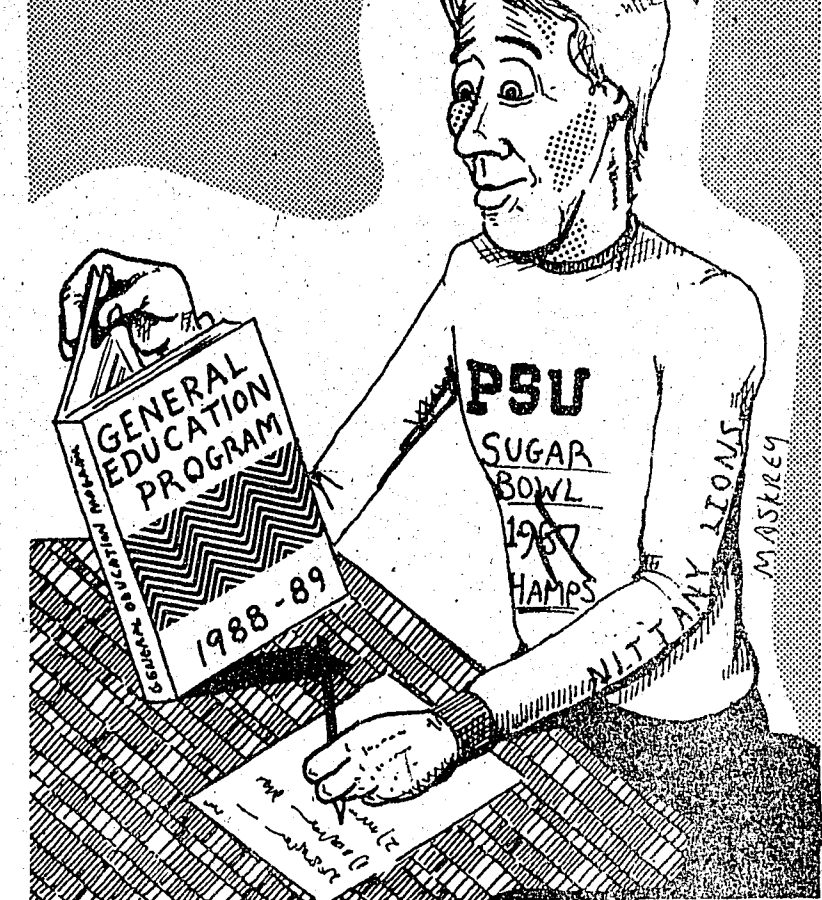
The Cunningham Report concluded that the University should outline certain general requirements for a baccalaureate degree. Those requirements should be in diversified areas and courses should be chosen by the colleges and departments.

The Cunningham Report recommendations were expected to go in effect by the 1972-73 academic year. Instead, an Ad Hoc Committee on

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While the future of general education is still in the planning stage, concrete plans for the addition of writing-intensive courses to the undergraduate curriculum are being made.

Last spring, the Faculty Senate recognized that courses other than English should emphasize the ability to write and passed a recommendation specifying that writing across the curriculum should be included in a general education program.

The assumption behind the proposal is that writing is a more effective way of learning because it forces students to put information in their own terms, according to Anne Herrington, chairwoman of the Writing Across the Curriculum subcommittee and associate professor of English.

In addition, she said, "There is an awareness that students are not writing very much in other classes."

"I believe that one of the most important things a student can take away with them is the ability to write," said Arthur Goldschmidt, faculty senator and assistant professor of history.

Instruction in writing will be a key element in implementing writing across the curriculum.

"We have to avoid a situation where students are asked to write a lot without instruction and guidance," Herrington said.

This differs from classes that require a term paper as part of the course work, because there would be interaction and feedback throughout the semester.

The first step of the committee work — defining the aim of the program and how it would fit into general education — is almost complete, Herrington said.

One option would require undergraduates to take from one to three writing-intensive courses on any level. Or students could be required to

take a designated number of writing-intensive courses as alternatives to the 200-level English courses.

The committee is now developing criteria for writing-intensive courses, which will be used to select courses to be added to the curriculum.

"If the University adopts some concept of writing across the curriculum, the committee feels it is very important that every department becomes involved," Herrington said.

She added that she would like to see writing required on all levels so students learn to integrate courses. Depending on the instructors, some classes may be writing-intensive in some sections and not in others.

While committee members consider the feasibility of a University-wide writing requirement, some faculty members have already begun implementing writing skills into their teaching on a voluntary basis.

Courses in which writing is being used range from Chemistry 19 to Political Science 417 to Mineral Engineering 451, Herrington said.

John Lowe, associate professor of chemistry, has integrated writing into his Honors Chemistry 12 course. He said writing is a powerful learning device if there is editing and feedback during the writing process.

"If the pay-off educationally is significant enough to make it worthwhile," he said, he would probably continue to emphasize writing in his honors class.

Observations of how well writing works in these courses confirms what was suspected about using writing in courses other than English. Writing must be clearly integrated with the course work, because there would be interaction and feedback throughout the semester.

Training instructors for writing-intensive courses is very important, said Goldschmidt, whose History 471 is writing-intensive.

Herrington pointed out that "most of the faculty is integrated with the course work, because they want to be involved. The challenge now is to develop a sound general education program."

campus briefs

Jordan to speak in North Halls

University President Bryce Jordan will address North Halls residents at 7:30 tonight in the Warnock Lounge as the final part of a series called "Communication Breakdown" sponsored by the Renaissance Interest House.

Jordan will speak about University issues and how they relate to communication with students, said Eric James, interest house president.

Hellenic Society sponsors lecture

The Hellenic Society will sponsor a lecture on "Cyprus and Greek-American Relations" by a British journalist at 7:30 tonight in 301 HUB.

Christopher Hitchens will discuss American relations with Cyprus, an East Mediterranean island under Turkish rule since 1974.

About 40,000 Turkish troops remain in northern Cyprus, said society President Andreas Theophanous.

Theophanous said University students should be informed about the existing minority rule in Cyprus and the United States' position.

The Greek Cypriots, who make up 82 percent of the 840,000 people on the island, are ruled by Turkish Cypriots, who account for 18 percent of the population, he said.

The United States is neutral at this time because Turkey is a NATO ally, Theophanous said.

"Cypriots are refugees in their own country," Theophanous said.

The Hellenic Society is made up of 60 students who are from Greece and Cyprus or are Greek-Americans.

New editor will be named tonight

Candidates for editor of The Daily Collegian for 1986 will be interviewed at 7 tonight in 101 Carnegie.

The 12-member Collegian Inc. Board of Directors will interview each candidate and will announce the new editor after private deliberation, Collegian General Manager Gerry Hamilton said.

The six candidates are Nan Crystal Arens, Kimberly Bower, Richard Duma Jr., Anita Huslin, Jeanette Krebs and Megan O'Matt. All are staff members.

The new editor will assume duties Dec. 10 after the Fall Semester final press run.

The board will interview business manager candidates for the Collegian at 7 tomorrow night in 101 Carnegie.

The new business manager will be announced immediately following that meeting.

Business manager candidates are Roland Deal Jr., Kathleen Heilmann, William Landis Jr. and Susan Shamlan.

—by W.T. Holland

Rosenblatt to tour residence halls

Undergraduate Student Government President David Rosenblatt will talk to all residence hall area government officers and constituents between 6 and 9 Thursday night.

Rosenblatt said the stops will give students an opportunity to voice concerns about various issues and allow

him to speak on topics that have not been given as much attention, such as the 14-week calendar and the teaching Fellow award, an alumni/student award to recognize teaching excellence.

—by W.T. Holland

Judge may reconsider Comitz sentence

A Centre County Judge who sentenced Sharon Kay Comitz to eight to 20 years imprisonment with psychiatric treatment for the murder of her infant son will decide today if he will reconsider the sentence.

Centre County President Judge Charles C. Brown Jr. said the attorneys for Comitz, 28, of Osceola Mills filed an appeal Monday to reconsider the Oct. 25 sentencing and review a psychiatric report from Dr. Joseph

Silverman of Altoona, which Brown did not have at the time of the sentencing.

Comitz pleaded guilty in June to the third-degree murder of her one-month-old son Garrett, whose body was found Jan. 4 in a mountain stream near Philipsburg. Comitz told police a day earlier the baby was kidnapped from her car parked outside a department store in Decatur Township.

Attorney Richard H. Milgrub of DuBois, representing Comitz, said he and attorney Earl D. Lees Jr. of Clearfield will ask that Comitz receive a lesser sentence.

The sentencing may be appealed to the state superior court if Brown denies the request, Milgrub said. Comitz is being held at the Clearfield County Prison.

—by K.J. Mapes

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AR. KING OF PRUSSIA	4:10PM		7:05PM	7:20PM	8:35PM	9:40PM
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158 Willard: HRB SINGER presents: Considerations for making the transition
160 Willard: GREENHORNE & O'MARA presents: Planning your interview

2:00 pm:
158 Willard: LOCUS presents: Interviewing/The life of an entry level engineer
160 Willard: GE SPACE SYSTEMS DIVISION presents: Challenges at GE Space Systems Div.

3:00 p.m.:
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Other schools' requirements found similar to BDRs

By ALAN J. CRAVER
Collegian Staff Writer

The University's current baccalaureate degree requirement program, now under study for revision by the administration and Faculty Senate, is similar to the standard requirements of similar universities nationwide, according to a survey conducted by the University's vice provost.

Carol Cartwright, dean of undergraduate programs, conducted a survey of large public research institutions such as Penn State last Fall Semester.

The survey was conducted to assist the Faculty Senate in determining how Penn State's baccalaureate degree requirement program compared to other universities.

"Generally speaking, on paper, Penn State stacks up pretty well," Cartwright said.

Only a few universities, such as the University of North Carolina, require more than the University's 40-credit BDR program, Cartwright said.

Most universities require about the same amount or less than that.

Although the University's program is similar to other universities, Cartwright said it is difficult to determine how effective the programs are in operation because the survey did not study the programs' degree of success.

However, the survey showed that Penn State does not have requirements that some universities already offer, such as linkage, intensive writing courses and a separate college all students enter before admission to a major.

According to the survey, the University of Texas and the University of Washington both require

students to complete credits in courses with a substantial writing component. A writing component is included in Penn State's move toward general education.

Washington also requires students to take at least 18 credits in natural sciences, social sciences and humanities courses that are linked. Linkage requires students to take courses, such as history, in a specified order so students learn several points of view on a similar topic.

Steven Olswang, vice provost at Washington, said, "Rather than receiving fragmented information from a smorgasbord of options, students can get an overview of a variety of perspectives on the same topic."

Penn State's Faculty Senate in April voted down a measure that would have introduced linkage to courses at the University.

Olswang said the intensive writing courses allow students to take either five credits in English composition courses or two courses that interest them and meet the writing requirement.

For example, a history major could take two history courses with intensive writing rather than English composition, Olswang said.

The administration at Washington started its general education program in 1984 by trying a semblance of order to its requirements and to provide students with common knowledge, Olswang said.

Before the program was implemented, Olswang said, faculty members and administrators were dissatisfied that students did not gain an early exposure to more integrated ideas.

Cynthia Dessen, assistant to the associate dean for general education at the University of North

Carolina, said that university's general education program is divided into two components — basic skills and perspectives.

Basic skills require students to complete courses in English, mathematics and three semesters of a foreign language. Perspectives require students to take courses in the natural sciences, philosophy, social sciences, culture and fine arts.

"I think that the students wonder why they have to take all these courses like a foreign language when they want to concentrate on their major," Dessen said. "But we feel they will be glad they took these courses to benefit them in the long run."

UNC's administration instituted its general education program because it believed students needed more educational direction and structure, Dessen said.

James Hamilton, assistant provost for undergraduate education at Michigan State University, said the university requires students to complete 45 credits in its general education program.

Hamilton said MSU requires students to complete 9 to 16 credits in each category of arts and humanities; biological, physical and mathematical sciences; and social and behavioral sciences.

Michigan State also requires students to complete nine credits in written and oral communication.

All students enter the university undergraduate division upon admission to the University, Hamilton said. Students must complete 8 credits before being admitted to their major.

Other universities surveyed include the University of Texas, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota, Ohio State University and the University of Illinois.