

General Education

Business Administration Department

We have no difficulty with the aims of the General Education program as stated in Title V and the HSU Catalogue. These are noble and defensible aims for a Baccalaureate degree. We have some concern, however, with the implementation of the stated philosophy in the HSU General Education program and its implications in the utilization of scarce resources and the quality of the educational process. *None of us has yet been exposed to a defensible case for requiring that separate courses be required in any discipline that presents both "foundation" courses for majors and a G.E. course in the discipline.* It is our opinion that any excellent course, designed to lay the foundations for a discipline, would also be an excellent course for meeting the breadth requirements for G.E. Furthermore, it is our opinion that that such courses should be taught by the best qualified and most dynamic teachers available in the offering department.

As we see it, a good "foundation" course—and also a good G.E. course—must meet the following minimum requirements:

- A. It must locate the discipline in the general body of knowledge and examine its relationships, interfaces and overlaps with other disciplines both in the same general area and in other areas.
- B. It should critically examine the fundamental axioms and theories on which the current concepts and techniques of the discipline are built. And it should do so, as well, in a historical context that displays the

controversies and evolutionary changes that have led to the current state of the discipline.

- C. It should acquaint the student with enough of the specialized concepts and vocabulary of the discipline to enable him to read at least the elementary literature of the discipline and to communicate with specialists in the discipline.

The implications of A and perhaps B to teaching assignments is that Graduate Assistants and most recent Ph.D.'s are probably not yet fully qualified to teach the course. They lack the maturity and breadth of view that comes from years of collegial activity and intellectual interaction with colleagues in other disciplines. They have not yet shed the constraints of the narrow specialization that was essential to completion of their graduate programs. (This, by the way is an unfortunate consequence of the distortion of the concept of "evidence of research capability"—the Ph.D.—into one that equates such evidence as proof of competence to teach.) Also, recent Ph.D.'s are usually so thoroughly indoctrinated into current theories that they may not be able to examine objectively the historic evolution of basic precepts in the discipline. It takes a bit of maturity to look with awe at the giant strides made by the early heroes of a discipline and to admit the importance of the contribution even if the stride was in the wrong direction. The importance of the historical perspective is that it allows for the admission that even today's basic theories—accepted and taught as fact—may be upset by future observation and induction therefrom.

Finally, relative to item C above, the foundation course and the G.E. course *should extend the student's vocabulary sufficiently to facilitate communication between disciplines, but should leave the highly specialized vocabulary of the discipline for later course work.* This too implies that some separation, in time, from the intensely specialized activity in their graduate work is needed before faculty members recover their tolerance for non-specialized vocabulary and their ability to communicate with others outside the discipline.

In brief, then, we feel that the University should:

- a) In general, eliminate special G.E. courses;
- b) Allow any *good* foundation course in a discipline that meets the criteria of A, B and

C, above, to count both for G.E. and as a prerequisite to advanced courses in the discipline;

- c) Demand that only the best, most mature and most dynamic instructors be assigned to teach the courses. We trust that these qualities will not prove to be mutually exclusive.

We believe, further, that a G.E. program that is established on these principles will provide a measure of stability that is lacking, at present, and will alleviate much of the difficulty that the faculty and students have in interpreting the requirements.