INTRODUCTION

The following represents the rationale and organizational structure of the Core Curriculum that was originally proposed and published in The Dialog in April, 1982.

"The implementation of core curricula at various distinguished universities may be attributed to a revival of interest in the concept of "general education." In this context, "general education" refers to the Jeffersonian notion that the primary goal of a university is to provide all students, regardless of their specialization or professional interest, with the essential facts, skills, and concepts required for a critical understanding of and participation in their own culture. Until the first half of the twentieth century, the concern for general education was the distinguishing feature of universities in the Jeffersonian tradition, setting them apart and, in the public mind, above the land grant institutions that were concerned primarily with practical and professional education.

On many campuses, general education requirements in place at the beginning of the sixties were dismantled to allow students freedom to choose the education they considered relevant to their own objectives. Later, during the seventies, burgeoning enrollments in the professional schools indicated another trend: specialization at the undergraduate level, sometimes at the expense of the few surviving general education requirements, often at the expense of elective courses as well. A third force in the development of curricula has been the external accreditation agencies, some of which have been more sensitive than others to the value of general education.

Prior to the adoption of the core curriculum, the extent to which these national trends were reflected in curricula at The University of Alabama varied from division to division and from program to program. The result in general, however, was the lack of coherent educational philosophy for the University as a whole. Students in some professional schools were required to take more general education courses than liberal arts majors; other students were required to take only those courses they chose to take with the approval of an advisor; and many students were required to specialize so intensively as undergraduates that they received their degrees with little or no knowledge of basic facts and issues with which educated citizens ought to be familiar.

The purpose of the core curriculum is not to return to the past, but to establish a balance among legitimate interests in the present, so that professional education, general education, and freedom for electives are balanced in proportions that the University community deems appropriate.

The specific impetus for developing the core came from faculty members on the Graduate Scholarship Committee who were alarmed at the inability of some of our better students to address questions about matters of common knowledge. The original draft of the proposed requirements was the result of a full year of deliberations by the Graduate Scholarship Committee and the University Curriculum Advisory Committee with representation from every academic division and from the Student Government Association. That draft was revised by an ad hoc committee for implementation, which was charged with developing the rationale for the core and with making any necessary adjustments. The revised draft was then presented for comments to the Faculty Senate, to representatives of the Student Government Association, to the faculties of various divisions, to the Council of Deans, and to the Central Administration. This core curriculum adopted by the faculty includes a number of substantive modifications suggested to the Committee in discussion with these groups. For example, the W (writing) requirement was reduced from 12 hours to six, the science requirement was reduced to two