Guidelines for

The Core Curriculum Oversight Committee

The University of Alabama

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the foreign language requirement and the number of oversight committees was reduced from four to one.

The core curriculum is based upon the following assumptions:

1. That no revision of the curriculum can in itself create academic excellence unless this excellence is genuinely sought by faculty, students and administrators.
2. That change often involves risks, and we cannot fully predict the consequences of change.
3. That refusing to change involves risks, and we cannot fully predict the consequences of refusing to change.
4. That any proposed curriculum involves not a choice between perfect and imperfect options, but between a number of imperfect options, one of which is the status quo.
5. That a core curriculum is a minimal curriculum, and that departments or divisions are free to add more extensive or intensive requirements to it.
6. That educated people are people who possess certain basic skills, who are aware of their own cultural heritage in the context of other cultures, and who understand the methods and limitations of various modes of inquiry.
7. That defining the skills and knowledge essential to an educated person is a matter of choice and value judgment, not an empirical exercise, and that the choices we make are relative to the institution, its clientele, and its historical context.
8. That the choice of essential skills and knowledge cannot be based upon utility alone.

In short, the core curriculum is based upon the assumption that no one can become knowledgeable in every field, but that there are nevertheless certain skills, subjects, and methodologies that no educated person should be without. The essential skills include writing, both as an analytical tool and as a means of communication; critical reading; and the ability to perform mathematical computations beyond the level of college algebra. In the broadest sense, the essential subject matter is knowledge of one's own culture and an awareness of other cultures. And the essential methodologies may be listed as symbolic and deductive (e.g., mathematics and symbolic logic); quantitative and inductive (e.g., physical, biological, social, and behavioral sciences); and rhetorical (e.g., ethics and aesthetics).

These categories are not intended to be exhaustive. There are other skills, subjects, and methodologies that are important in themselves, but for philosophical or logistical reasons cannot be required of all students. Nor are the lists intended as separate and distinct categories. Some of the courses listed below might well fit under more than one heading.

Early in its deliberations, the Committee considered instituting new crossdisciplinary courses like those recommended in the recent Carnegie Report. The Committee decided, however, that courses of this sort are too susceptible to changes when the faculty members who initiate them are no longer available to teach them. The Committee also considered a number of courses that might be considered as basic to a college education as those that were eventually decided upon. For example, the Committee debated the possibility of requiring courses in ethics, economics, speech, foreign cultures, and the philosophy of science and technology. The Committee concluded, however, that because of curricular constraints in the various divisions, only a small number of courses could be required of every University student, and that the divisions and departments themselves would be encouraged to require more general education courses in a manner consistent with their overall objectives. Programs that would like