



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
TWIN CITIES

Department of Philosophy  
355 Ford Hall  
224 Church Street S.E.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

May 8, 1986

Dear Colleague:

Enclosed is the final report of the Special Committee on Coordinating Lower-Division Education on the Twin Cities Campus. Also enclosed is a resolution (containing some of the major recommendations from the report) that will be presented to the Twin Cities Assembly on June 5.

The Special Committee was appointed last September. We were charged with examining goals and means for improving lower-division education and, more specifically, with determining how best to implement those recommendations in Commitment to Focus that concern coordinating lower-division education on this campus. In January we issued an interim report that was widely distributed. We received many comments on the interim report, and we have tried to take all of them into consideration in drafting our final report. Although the final report has some things in common with the interim report, they differ significantly in a number of ways.

The Special Committee adopted the final report almost without dissent, but a minority response has been written by one member. That document, by Professor Sandra Flake, is also enclosed.

I welcome your comments on the Committee's final report. You can reach me by phone at 625-7573 or by mail at the address printed above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William H. Hanson".

William H. Hanson, Chair  
Special Committee on Coordinating  
Lower-Division Education on  
the Twin Cities Campus

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## RESOLUTION

April 30, 1986

The Special Committee on Coordinating Lower Division Education on the Twin Cities Campus believes that the University of Minnesota, being a large, urban, land-grant, research institution, needs to reaffirm in actions its commitment to quality lower-division education and, more generally, to quality undergraduate education on its Twin Cities campus. We believe that the size and complexity of the Twin Cities campus can be used to advantage in providing a rich variety of quality educational opportunities for undergraduates. We recognize the value of an educational environment that emphasizes the importance of communication, computer, and study skills, fosters student engagement with a wide variety of subject matters, encourages student involvement in the academic life of the institution, honors the importance of student achievement throughout the educational process, and respects the diverse needs of students. In order to help ensure the realization of these goals, the Special Committee recommends that the Twin Cities Assembly adopt the following resolution:

In order to improve the quality of undergraduate education--especially lower-division education--on the Twin Cities campus, the following steps should be taken:

1. There should be established on the Twin Cities campus an Undergraduate Center, responsible to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, for the purposes of: a) providing a single office to serve as a point of first contact with the University for undergraduates and prospective undergraduates; b) serving as a visitor center in a highly visible and accessible location on the Minneapolis campus; c) helping people new to the Twin Cities campus--students and visitors alike--find their way to appropriate services and offices; d) providing advising referral and certain important advising services that are not currently provided; and e) simplifying the processes of approaching, entering, and moving through the University.
2. The Undergraduate Center and Student Support Services should be linked under Academic Affairs in such a way as to facilitate and encourage cooperative work in recruiting, prospective-student relations, admissions and records, financial aid, and other important student services. The Center should also be linked under Academic Affairs with the Office of Minority and Special Student Affairs in such a way as to facilitate and encourage cooperative work and to ensure that the needs of students are adequately met. The possibility of a similar linkage of the Center and the Office for Students with Disabilities should be studied and seriously considered.

3. The faculty should seek to provide in all undergraduate classes, but especially in large classes, structured experiences that promote active learning and work to lessen the anonymity that students too often encounter. Such experiences are especially important during the freshman year when students new to the University feel most isolated.
4. Faculty and administrators should seriously consider establishing on the Twin Cities campus a research center on undergraduate education that would deal with all aspects of the educational process, including curriculum, teaching, learning, advising, and special programs. Such a center would draw on the expertise of the University's faculty, including specialists from the General College, the College of Education, and other colleges, to seek ways of improving the undergraduate experience.
5. Major administrative responsibility for protecting and enhancing the quality of undergraduate education should be focused on a senior officer in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. That officer should be given sufficient authority to carry out his or her charge. In particular, the officer should: a) be responsible for the Undergraduate Center and for its linkage with Student Support Services and the Office of Minority and Special Student Affairs; b) coordinate and support, in concert with their respective deans, the lower-division academic-support services offices in the several colleges in such a way as to encourage a higher quality of services, easier student access to services, greater efficiency, and protection of those offices' budgets in times of retrenchment; c) be responsible for carrying out the recommendations for improving undergraduate education contained in the report of the Committee on Quality Undergraduate Teaching and Learning (Page report) and the report of the Task Force on the Student Experience (Wallace report); d) take steps to ensure that the All-University Liberal Education requirements are met by students in every college; e) take steps to ensure that barriers between colleges--both those that inhibit transferring from one college to another and those that inhibit students in one college from taking courses in another--are kept at a minimum; and f) initiate and support ongoing review of teaching and advising, curriculum overlap, and student involvement.

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The Special Committee's final report contains not only the recommendations listed above, but a number of others concerning curriculum, quality of teaching and learning, academic student services, creation of intellectual communities, and the role of the General College. In implementing this resolution the University should be guided by all the recommendations in the Special Committee's final report.

William H. Hanson, Chair  
Special Committee on Coordinating  
Lower-Division Education on the  
Twin Cities Campus

**FINAL REPORT  
OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON  
COORDINATING LOWER-DIVISION EDUCATION  
ON THE TWIN CITIES CAMPUS**

**University of Minnesota**

**May, 1986**

**MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON  
COORDINATING LOWER-DIVISION EDUCATION  
ON THE TWIN CITIES CAMPUS**

William Hanson, Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy, Chair, Senate Committee on Educational Policy; Chair

Thomas Daniels, Student, School of Management, and Student Representative to the Board of Regents

Sandra Flake, Associate Professor, General College, and Member, University College Assembly

Patricia Gearrick, Student, Institute of Technology, and Member, Senate Consultative Committee

Russell Hobbie, Associate Dean, Institute of Technology

Kenneth Howey, Associate Dean, College of Education

Fred Lukermann, Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Ian Maitland, Associate Professor, School of Management, and Member, Senate Committee on Educational Policy

William Rempel, Professor, Department of Animal Science

Steven Schomberg, Director, Summer Session

Alexander Sellers, Student, College of Liberal Arts

Eleanor Sullivan, Associate Dean and Associate Professor, School of Nursing

Patricia Swan, Professor, Department of Food Science and Nutrition, and Member, Senate Planning Committee

Elizabeth Wales, Director, University Counseling Services

John Wallace, Assistant Vice President, Academic Affairs

George T. Wright, Professor, Department of English

Kenneth O. Doyle, Research Associate, Academic Affairs; Staff

## FOREWORD

The charge of this Special Committee was to "examine goals and means for improving lower-division education" on the Twin Cities campus of the University of Minnesota. Specifically, we were charged with determining how best to implement those recommendations in Commitment to Focus that concern coordinating lower-division education. We were asked to examine and make recommendations on four areas: advising and counseling, curriculum, co-curricular activities, and standards for transition to the upper division; and to take up such matters as the feasibility of establishing an administratively distinct lower division, possibilities for improved coordination of resources in colleges and other units that serve lower-division students, guaranteed admission to the upper division for a selected group of new freshmen, access to the University for underprepared students, and the possible roles of the General College in a coordinated lower division.

The work that led to this final report spanned the better part of seven months. Early on we interviewed representatives of each of the freshman-admitting colleges and the various student support services, and we studied documents these people provided. We also divided into subcommittees to examine in detail some major areas of lower-division education: curriculum and breadth of educational opportunity, advising, quality of teaching, and student involvement. We used the reports of these subcommittees and the results of our discussions in writing an interim report that was circulated widely in January, 1986. We received many comments on the interim report, including major documents from the General College, the Commitment to Focus Coordinating Committee, and the Faculty Consultative Committee. All of these we studied carefully as we prepared this final report.

**THE CHALLENGE OF PROVIDING  
HIGH-QUALITY LOWER-DIVISION EDUCATION  
ON THE TWIN CITIES CAMPUS**

In implementing Commitment to Focus the University faces both an opportunity and a challenge with respect to lower-division education on the Twin Cities campus. The opportunity is to use the more rigorous and focused nature of the institution to enhance significantly the experiences of lower-division students. The challenge is to plan and allocate resources wisely so as to take maximum advantage of this opportunity. More specifically, the University needs to decide what sort of balance it will strike between its mission of lower-division education and its other missions. It then needs to carry out that decision in a way that maximizes the educational opportunities available to students, while preserving access in a manner that is consistent with its land-grant tradition. The recommendations contained in this report are intended to inform the decision and guide the action that will be required.

In carrying out its charge the Special Committee reflected on the major goals of lower-division education, which it takes to be three: to introduce students to life in an academic community; to provide them with the beginnings of a sound liberal education; and to prepare them for, and facilitate their transition to, the more specialized phase of their undergraduate work, the upper division. Each of these goals poses special difficulties and challenges on the Twin Cities campus of the University of Minnesota.

Helping students to function effectively as members of an academic community involves both introducing them to appropriate habits of thought, study, and communication, and helping them become integrated socially into the community. These are of course related, and they pose special challenges on the Twin Cities campus in view of the size and diversity of the student body, the fragmentation of many student careers due to part-time and discontinuous registration, and the fact that most students are commuters.

Providing students with the beginnings of a sound liberal education involves ensuring that they acquire certain basic skills and that they become familiar with the methods and the results of inquiry in several areas of learning. Nationally, the latter goal is often pursued by means of distribution requirements, a core curriculum, or courses that attempt to integrate the subject matter of several disciplines. (Not all of this needs to be accomplished during the first two years of study, but it seems reasonable to expect that a good deal of it will be.) The challenge on the Twin Cities campus is to decide on an approach or approaches that best meet the needs of the diverse student body described above and that make optimum use of the resources available at a major research university.

Preparing students for and facilitating their transition to the more specialized part of their undergraduate education is integrally related to provision of the skills and background just mentioned, since all have



traditionally been thought of as important parts of a liberal education. The sheer size of the Twin Cities campus and the large number of different programs it offers make it essential that students be well apprised of the range of opportunities and that they receive good counsel in making their choices.

We believe that a balanced approach to lower-division education on the Twin Cities campus requires recognition and creative use of the unique resources that are available here. These include: a high-quality faculty actively engaged in research; a large graduate-student population, many of whom play important roles as teaching assistants; a collection of fields of study that is by far the largest of any available in the state; and the cultural opportunities available in the metropolitan area. By creative and efficient use of these resources the Twin Cities campus can offer a program of both lower- and upper-division education that is sound, attractive to students, and unavailable at any other institution in the state, public or private.

In reflecting on the place of lower-division education within undergraduate education, however, we became convinced that it would be a mistake to try drawing too sharp a line between lower and upper division. On the Twin Cities campus, with its diverse and mobile student body, students with fewer than 90 credits do not always take traditional "lower-division" courses or sequences, and students with more than 90 credits often do take them. More importantly, perhaps, many of the students who would benefit most from the kinds of services and opportunities that are often thought of as most appropriate for lower-division students are those who are transferring (either into, within, or out of the University) or returning after a break in their study. Not all of these are lower-division students. Finally, the distinction between lower and upper division is one to which colleges on the Twin Cities campus have paid less attention recently than in the past, and this suggests that it may not be wise to make too much of the distinction. For these reasons this report does not attempt to restrict its attention to lower-division education, and many of our recommendations deal with undergraduate education generally.

We believe the entire undergraduate program on the Twin Cities campus can be improved significantly, and this report contains a number of recommendations for doing so. Before getting down to specifics, however, we want to make several points as a background to everything else that is said in this report.

1. When implementing changes in the present system, we should take care not to deplete the resources of valuable programs that are already seriously underfunded. Funding for instructional expenditures in the undergraduate colleges on the Twin Cities campus is low, and in some colleges these funds have decreased significantly in recent years. Yet these same colleges bear the major responsibility for lower-division education, and under the recommendations of this report they will continue to do so. There are many valuable programs that need more funds if the number of students they serve stays the same, or fewer

students to serve if the level of funding remains constant. One of the main principles of Commitment to Focus is that ways must be found to increase the level of funding per student. This principle must be borne in mind when implementing the recommendations of this report.

2. The focus on research and graduate education on the Twin Cities campus can be used to advantage in lower-division education. Too much has been made of the tension between this focus and the goal of undergraduate--and especially lower-division--education. Undergraduates can play an active role in the research mission of the University (witness the success of the recently initiated UROP program), and graduate teaching assistants are a maligned group. With proper training and supervision graduate students can be effective teachers. They often approach their work with enthusiasm and, being not far removed from their own undergraduate experiences, can readily understand and empathize with their students' problems. Furthermore, professors actively engaged in significant research are often excellent undergraduate teachers.
3. A new state law makes it particularly important that special attention be paid to lower-division education at this time. Under the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Act of 1985, Minnesota high school students in grades 11 and 12 may register for courses at colleges and universities in the state and use the state aid that would ordinarily go to their school districts. There are already nearly 200 students at the University under this act. The act has the potential to bring many more young students to the University and seems to be part of a trend to soften the present sharp boundaries between secondary and post-secondary education. In these circumstances it is important for the University to review carefully its plans and procedures for educating beginning students.
4. New preparation requirements are likely to be adopted that will change the University's opportunities and responsibilities with respect to lower-division students. The Special Committee on Unified and Increased Preparation Requirements is recommending a number of requirements (i.e., four years of high school English, two years of social studies, three years of mathematics, three years of science, and two years of a foreign language) that students would be strongly encouraged to meet before entering the University and would be required to have met at a subsequent point in their careers. If this recommendation is adopted the University will need to provide: appropriately challenging courses for entering students who meet the requirements; more basic courses for those who do not; advising that is sensitive to these requirements and helps students satisfy them in a way that is least disruptive of their college-level work.
5. The recent reports of two other special committees bear heavily on lower-division education and should be considered in conjunction with this report. The reports of the Task Force on the Student Experience (1984; "the Wallace Report") and the Committee on Quality Undergraduate

Teaching and Learning (1985; "the Page Report") contain many excellent recommendations, the implementation of which would substantially improve lower-division education on the Twin Cities campus. We see our role as differing from that of these two committees in a number of ways, the most important being that our charge focuses on lower-division education, and that we are specifically charged with considering the feasibility of establishing an administratively distinct lower division. We nevertheless think of this report as complementing the two reports just mentioned.

6. A very recent report on graduation and retention rates among undergraduates on the Twin Cities campus is also relevant to this report. The report entitled "Understanding Twin Cities Campus Graduation Rates" (Student Support Services, March, 1986) contains data on the percent of our entering students who complete degrees and on the length of time it takes them. These data are alarming when compared with corresponding data from peer institutions. The Special Committee hopes that implementation of its recommendations, along with those of the Special Committee on Unified and Increased Preparation Requirements, will bring improvement in graduation and retention rates.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Special Committee's recommendations concerning the substance of undergraduate education deal with five areas: curriculum, quality of teaching and learning, academic student services, creation of intellectual communities, and the role of the General College. In addition to these recommendations of substance, the Committee has one further recommendation concerning their implementation and coordination.

#### 1. Curriculum

The Special Committee recognizes the importance of having entering students be uniformly well-prepared for college work, and of being able to offer these students challenging courses. At the same time the Committee believes that preparatory coursework should be available for students who are generally qualified for admission but have some specific deficiencies. We also recognize and affirm the importance of requiring that students in all the University's undergraduate programs acquire a strong liberal education background. Finally, we see the diversity of its programs and courses as one of the University's great strengths, and we think that this diversity should be readily available to undergraduates. We therefore make the following recommendations:

- a. There should be a formal review of the manner in which the University defines and implements its liberal education goals. This review should include, but not be limited to, an examination of current all-University liberal education requirements and of

the ways in which they are implemented. It should be carried out under the joint auspices of the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) and the Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Education and Outreach, and it should take into consideration recent national reports on undergraduate education, such as "Involvement in Learning" (National Institute of Education, 1984) and "Integrity in the College Curriculum" (Association of American Colleges, 1985). More generally, SCEP should assume, as one of its principal ongoing responsibilities, review and recommendation of changes in University liberal education goals and policy, and the Assistant Vice President should monitor and enforce compliance with this policy in all colleges.

- b. SCEP and the Assistant Vice President should conduct a campus-wide review of undergraduate curricula to identify and initiate changes necessary to adjust instructional programs to the needs of students who are more consistently and rigorously prepared. (The University will admit increasing numbers of such students as the recommendations of the Special Committee on Unified and Increased Preparation Requirements are implemented. This recommendation reflects and supports recommendation 15 of the final report of that special committee.)
- c. There should be established on the Twin Cities campus an adequate program of preparatory coursework to meet the needs of students who are otherwise qualified for admission, but are deficient in specific areas. (This recommendation reflects and supports recommendation 12 of the Special Committee on Unified and Increased Preparation Requirements.)
- d. Some integrative courses should be developed in each major area (e.g., science, social science, and humanities) that would count toward the satisfaction of the all-University liberal education requirements. These should be designed cooperatively by departments and the six freshman-admitting colleges. Whether or not such courses should be required by departments or colleges is a question that can be answered only after the courses have been designed and tried out.

Alternative models for such integrative courses should also be considered: for example, thematic courses that raise questions or invite solutions across the whole spectrum of humanistic, social-scientific, and scientific disciplines; or a basic course or courses in each of the four groups (A, B, C, D). Such alternative models might have the advantage of stressing content less than method of inquiry.

These courses should be taught by both senior and junior faculty rather than by teaching assistants.

- e. Our examination of the state of affairs with regard to barriers suggests that this problem may not be widespread. Nevertheless, we believe that some further study should be directed at: problems caused by home-college restrictions on transfer of credits, the feasibility of simplifying procedural steps for cross-college transfer and registration, the uniformity of rules and regulations regarding transfer from and to the various colleges, the availability of information as to which courses meet specific requirements in or transfer to another college (perhaps as a listing in the college bulletins), the issue of student access to courses essential for their academic progress, and the availability of information on the full range of courses offered on the Twin Cities campus (e.g., a campus-wide bulletin).

## 2. Quality of Teaching and Learning

The Special Committee believes that this is an area in which there are great opportunities for improving undergraduate education, but that hard decisions will need to be made and determined actions taken if these opportunities are to be realized. Fortunately, a large amount of good advice is readily available in the reports of the Task Force on the Student Experience (Wallace report, 1984) and the Committee on Quality Undergraduate Teaching and Learning (Page report, 1985). We recommend that both of these reports be used to guide decisions and actions in this area. Our more specific recommendations are divided into those concerning administrative actions, those concerning the teaching activities of the faculty, and those concerning research on undergraduate education.

- a. **Administrative Actions.** We recommend that a senior officer in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs be responsible for developing data and goals, providing incentives, and establishing sanctions concerning the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning. (In carrying out this recommendation, the officer should of course consult widely with faculty and collegiate deans.) To illustrate what we have in mind in each of these areas, we cite specific recommendations from the Page report that we strongly endorse.

- **Data and Goals:**

Recommendation 18. Develop a set of departmental data that bear on undergraduate education and include full attention to the undergraduate mission of units in the University's formal, recurring departmental reviews.

Recommendation 26. Determine acceptable faculty-student ratios needed for departments to accomplish their mission.

- Incentives:

Recommendation 5. Recognize the validity of educational development and instructional improvement as a basis for sabbaticals, single quarter leaves, and other institutionally sponsored programs; establish Faculty Summer Instruction grants, analogous to the (Graduate School) Faculty Summer Research grants.

Recommendation 13. Increase the number of teaching assistantships, so that very large classes--to the extent that they remain a necessity in some areas--can become better teaching/learning opportunities for both faculty members and students.

Recommendation 15. Upon occasion make non-recurring awards of \$15,000 to \$25,000 to five to seven departments judged to be offering undergraduate instruction of outstanding quality, to be used at the department's discretion for undergraduate teaching.

Recommendation 17. Establish a Fund for Improving Departments' Instruction (FIDI) to receive competitive submissions for broad, department-wide instructional improvement projects.

Recommendation 22. Encourage departments to give faculty members differential assignments among the several faculty obligations, especially as this might be appropriate at different times in a career.

- Sanctions:

Recommendation 2: Designate a certain minimum percent or amount of the merit money allotted each year for award on the basis of outstanding teaching.

Recommendation 16. Use the level of departmental attention to undergraduate instruction as an important consideration in responding to any requests that departments make.

In making these recommendations we want to emphasize the importance of having appropriate data readily available, especially data that are directly relevant to the University's goals. We refer here not just to the departmental data mentioned in recommendation 18 of the Page report, but also to data that bear on retention and graduation rates, movement of students within the University, and on educational outcomes. This suggests that the University should undertake a far more comprehensive program of

assessment of the effects of its programs on students than it has up to this time.

- b. Teaching activities of the faculty. We recommend that faculty seek to provide in all undergraduate classes, but especially in large classes, structured experiences that promote active learning<sup>1</sup> and work to lessen the anonymity that students too often encounter. Such experiences are especially important during the freshman year when students new to the University feel most isolated.
- c. Research on undergraduate education. We recommend that faculty and administrators seriously consider establishing on the Twin Cities campus a research center on undergraduate education that would deal with all aspects of the educational process, including curriculum, teaching, learning, advising, and special programs. Such a center would draw on the expertise of the University's faculty, including specialists from the General College, the College of Education, and other colleges, to seek ways of improving the undergraduate experience.

### 3. Academic Student Services

By academic student services we mean: a) those basic services needed by all students to approach, enter, and progress through the University, such as provision of information, prospective student services, admissions, orientation, and financial aid; b) academic advising; and c) programs for special groups of students, such as high-ability, under-prepared, minority, and handicapped students. Our overall goals with respect to these services are that complete and reliable information about them be readily available to students, that access to the services themselves be simple and convenient, and that they be of high quality. We believe that these goals can best be achieved by having final authority for academic student services rest with a single administrator. We further believe that, given the academic nature of these services, that administrator should be the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Our specific recommendations in this area include the establishment of an Undergraduate Center, several steps designed to integrate and coordinate the activities of the Center with those of existing student-service units, and some specific recommendations concerning advising.

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<sup>1</sup>Active learning focuses on a task requiring observation, analysis, evaluation, synthesis, or problem-solving, often in a group setting. Students are prompted to go beyond note taking and memorization to active consideration of ideas and points of view. A handbook of teaching strategies developed by University of Minnesota faculty called Strategies for Active Teaching and Learning in University Classrooms is available from the Office of Educational Development Programs.

- a. An Undergraduate Center. We propose a Center that would be a single point of contact for prospective students, new students, and students who need special help in transferring within the University or between the University and another institution. It would also provide leadership to support and coordinate teaching, advising, and co-curricular efforts that are intended primarily for large numbers of new students. The Center would be headed by a director who would report to a senior officer in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and in all of its activities it would work closely with the several undergraduate colleges. The Center would be a valuable resource not only for lower-division students, but also for prospective students and their parents, transfer students, and students who have not formed strong collegiate or departmental associations.

A major purpose of the Center would be to present accurate information about University programs and services with a friendly and helpful attitude, even one of advocacy, while itself providing certain concrete services to students and visitors who need any of the following:

Help in finding a location, an individual, an officer, or a service on the Twin Cities campus and in understanding the most effective way to gain access.

Help in understanding the appropriate route to solving a problem related to a University service (e.g., questions of financial aid, food services, housing, academic records, non-academic organizations).

Referral to the right counseling service to help with a personal, vocational, or financial problem.

Help in deciding whether the University of Minnesota can provide the type of academic programs and educational environment desired by a prospective student.

A related concern of the Center would be to help ensure that students are able to obtain appropriate academic advising. The Center's staff would be thoroughly informed about the advising services available on the Twin Cities campus, and so the Center would be a major source of advising referrals. It would be able to provide guidance in finding appropriate academic advising if a student is considering changing his or her major, wishes to explore certain types of academic opportunities and doesn't know exactly where they exist in the University, or needs some help in getting appropriate academic advising in his or her present academic home. The Center would also have some advising services of its own that are not available elsewhere, and it would work to coordinate undergraduate advising on the Twin Cities campus. More



specifically, the Center could be responsible for providing the following advising services:

Pre-college advising

Advising for students enrolled under the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Act

Advising concerning transfers into, within, and out of the University

The Center's role in advising would be to supplement but not supplant existing advising services. In particular, major and pre-major advising would continue to be provided by the several colleges.

In addition to its responsibilities for information and advising, the Center could play an important role in other areas of undergraduate education. These might include recruitment and orientation of new students, and coordination among offices responsible for special student needs (e.g., commuter, extension, minority, handicapped, transfer). They might also include coordination of planning for the preparatory courses that will have to be offered because of new preparation requirements, and encouragement of a reduction in restrictions that limit the extent to which students may use credits taken in one college to satisfy the requirements of another.

- b. Realignment of Existing Student Service Units. If the Center is really to simplify the Twin Cities campus for undergraduates, it must be carefully coordinated with other student service units. To this end we recommend that the Center and Student Support Services be linked under Academic Affairs in such a way as to facilitate and encourage cooperative work in recruiting, prospective-student relations, admissions and records, financial aid, and other important student services. The Center should also be linked under Academic Affairs with the Office of Minority and Special Student Affairs in such a way as to facilitate and encourage cooperative work and to ensure that the needs of students are adequately met. The possibility of a similar linkage of the Center and the Office for Students with Disabilities should be studied and seriously considered.
- c. Coordination of Central and Collegiate Student Service Units. Our study of advising and other student services on the Twin Cities campus has convinced us that the general structure of the present system, under which some services are provided by centralized offices while others are provided at a number of decentralized locations, is a good one. In order to ensure proper functioning of this complex system, we recommend that a senior officer in the

Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs be given the responsibility and authority to coordinate the undergraduate academic-support services offices of the several colleges with each other and with the corresponding central offices.

- d. Academic Advising. We believe that several different kinds of academic advising are needed, and that these are often best provided by different kinds of staff: content advising by faculty, university-requirements advising by professional advisors, etc. The University should catalogue the kinds of advising that are available and communicate that information to students. In order to help improve performance and increase the status of advising done by faculty we recommend:

Increasing the relevance of advising in hiring, promotion, tenure, and salary decisions; and

Providing appropriately adjusted work loads in selected cases for faculty who have heavy undergraduate advising responsibilities.

With respect to both faculty and professional advisors we recommend:

Increasing the frequency of public testimony by top administrators on the value and significance of high-quality undergraduate advising;

Creation of a comprehensive and regularly updated information source (e.g., a notebook or a computerized data base) that would be available to all advisors and contain information on such things as registration procedures, courses, majors, distribution and graduation requirements;

Recognition of the importance of reasonable advisor/student ratios; and

Support for a collaborative network and newsletter for advisors.

#### 4. Creation of Intellectual Communities

The Committee believes that it is desirable for students to be actively involved with other students and with faculty in intellectual pursuits that go beyond work required for specific courses. We also realize that, because of the large number of part-time and commuter students, implementation of all the other recommendations in this report may not be sufficient to bring this about on a very large scale. We therefore recommend that faculty, administrators, and students adopt as a special goal the creation of student-centered intellectual communities on the Twin Cities campus. To

this end we specifically endorse the following recommendations from the Wallace report:

II.D. The Need to Create a Stronger Sense of Community among Undergraduates

Recommendation 19: University and college administrators should develop programs that integrate new students into campus life.

Recommendation 20: University, college, and departmental administrators should emphasize to students the benefits of participation in student clubs and organizations.

Recommendation 21: University and college administrators should use coordination and scheduling as means to create small groups of students within the larger undergraduate environment.

Recommendation 22: University, college, and departmental administrators should give priority to non-classroom space used to promote interaction among students.

II.G. The Need to Encourage One-to-One Interaction between Students and Faculty

Recommendation 29: The University should better publicize to students current opportunities for one-to-one interaction with faculty, and should increase the status of faculty advising activities.

Recommendation 30: University faculty should try to create opportunities for faculty-student contact outside of the classroom.

Recommendation 31: University, campus, and college administrators should identify additional funding to increase the number of educational experiences that offer students one-to-one interaction with faculty.

5. The Role of the General College

The General College has a long history of special contribution to the teaching mission of the University as well as particular experience in advising undergraduate students, in developing and offering introductory, integrative, and cross-disciplinary courses, and in research and experimentation with teaching. In the light of that history and experience, we see the following as activities that should be emphasized in the General College:

Helping students who do not qualify for admission to other colleges of

the University to correct their deficiencies in preparation so that they can move into four-year degree programs;

Developing and implementing preparatory or remedial courses that help students meet new University preparation requirements, as well as integrative courses of the kind described in 1.d., above;

Disseminating knowledge gained from research and experience in undergraduate instruction (e.g., on active learning strategies, on teaching to students with different cognitive styles, and on teaching large classes), including knowledge gained through participation in the research center on undergraduate education mentioned in 2.c., above;

Working with other colleges to facilitate transfer of General College credits to those colleges; and

Consulting on the training, evaluation, and use of graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants and advisors.

If it is to achieve its goals, the General College will need to work closely with other colleges and the Undergraduate Center. To do this effectively, it will need the cooperation of faculty and administrators throughout the University.

#### **6. Recommendation Concerning Implementation and Coordination of the Preceding Recommendations**

Major administrative responsibility for protecting and enhancing the quality of undergraduate education should be focused on a senior officer in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. That officer should be given sufficient authority to carry out his or her charge. In particular, the officer should: a) be responsible for the Undergraduate Center and for its linkage with Student Support Services and the Office of Minority and Special Student Affairs; b) coordinate and support, in concert with their respective deans, the undergraduate academic-support services in the several colleges in such a way as to encourage a higher quality of services, easier student access to services, greater efficiency, and protection of those offices' budgets in times of retrenchment; c) be responsible for carrying out the recommendations for improving undergraduate education contained in the report of the Committee on Quality Undergraduate Teaching and Learning (Page report) and the report of the Task Force on the Student Experience (Wallace report); d) take steps to ensure that the all-University liberal education requirements are met by students in every college; e) take steps to ensure that barriers between colleges--both those that inhibit transferring from one college to another and those that inhibit students in one college from taking courses in another--are kept at a minimum; and f) initiate and support ongoing review of teaching and advising, curriculum overlap, and student involvement. In the course of carrying out these responsibilities the officer might engage in some or all of the following activities:

Hold regular meetings of directors of collegiate prospective-student advising offices;

Work closely with departments to coordinate teaching-assistant training, especially the orientation of non-native teaching assistants to American educational practices and social mores;

Encourage and organize workshops teaching strategies and other academic issues;

Convene and chair a committee on the teaching of larger classes;

Work to provide optimum integration of the resources and services available in the General College with other units of the University; and

Encourage appropriate departments to offer courses of the sorts described in l.d., above.

#### ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BY THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The Special Committee considered a number of alternatives, both general administrative models and specific educational strategies, for improving undergraduate education. Although we see no need to mention or describe all of them, two deserve comment.

We considered and rejected various proposals for a required core curriculum or highly-structured curricular tracks for lower-division students. There are several reasons why a substantial majority of the Special Committee believes it would be a mistake to try imposing this kind of curricular uniformity on Twin Cities campus students. For one thing, given the size and complexity of the campus, it would be a formidable undertaking. More importantly, given the registration patterns of students, it is doubtful that it would be effective. Such programs are most effective when students are able to register for sequences of courses with a group of their peers that remains fairly constant over the sequence. This is unlikely to happen on a campus where many students attend only part-time and frequently stop out for one or more quarters. The Cross-Disciplinary Studies experiment in the College of Liberal Arts was abandoned in part because of problems caused by this kind of registration pattern. Finally, the majority of our committee is unsure of the rationale for greater curricular uniformity on this campus. The diversity of courses and programs on the Twin Cities campus makes it unique in the state, and the breadth of opportunity available to students is one of our strengths. Student programs must of course be coherent, but proper curricular offerings and good advising are the ways to ensure this. The majority sees no need for, nor does it understand the rationale for, a required core curriculum or

highly-structured curricular tracks. In the view of the majority, then, well-designed liberal education requirements and a few carefully developed integrative courses, which would be widely attractive to students but not compulsory, are more appropriate means of curricular reform.

We also considered and rejected various proposals for a single registration unit for lower-division students. Here as in the previous case, a substantial majority of the Committee had difficulty understanding the rationale for the proposals. If part of the rationale is to provide curricular uniformity, then the objections raised above apply. If it is to improve access to and quality of student services, then our response is that we believe the recommendations contained in this report provide better means to those ends. The majority also believes that all such proposals lead to problems concerning two classes of faculty, one for lower-division and the other for upper-division and graduate education, and finds this undesirable. Finally, the majority suspects that the uniformity of student experiences and the cohesiveness of student society that some have claimed would result from the creation of a single registration unit would not materialize on this campus. Given the commuter and part-time nature of the student body, and given that students in a single lower-division unit would be preparing themselves for many different upper-division colleges, this seems unlikely. We cannot solve all the problems that arise from our size, diversity, and metropolitan setting; what we can do is to help students draw more effectively on the great resources of the University.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
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May 6, 1986

TO: Members of the Special Committee to Coordinate Lower Division  
Education on the Twin Cities Campus

FROM: Sandra Flake, Associate Professor, General College *Sandra Flake*

SUBJECT: Minority Response to the Final Report of the Special Committee  
Coordinating Lower Division Education

While I believe that the Final Report supported by the majority of the Special Committee Coordinating Lower Division Education is definitely an improvement over the Interim Report, I find that I cannot support fully the conclusions and recommendations of the majority viewpoint. The Report does not deal effectively with several major issues, and this memorandum will summarize my remaining major concerns with the Report.

#### ISSUES THAT ARE INSUFFICIENTLY ADDRESSED IN THE FINAL REPORT

##### 1. The structure of improved coordination of the lower division

The Report reassigns several functions to a "senior officer in Academic Affairs." A more specific recommendation would be more helpful in facilitating the coordinating functions assigned to such an officer, and the Report would be strengthened by a clearcut structural reorganization proposal to merge the current functions of the Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Education and those outlined in the Final Report under the Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Education or an Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Education. Such a clearcut recommendation would give much more focus to establishing the kinds of linkages endorsed in the Final Report. Additionally, such a structure should include, under the Vice President for Undergraduate Education, the General College, the Undergraduate Research Center, and perhaps, University Counseling Services. Also, given the nature of the Undergraduate Center the Final Report endorses, some consideration should be given to the merger of the Undergraduate Research Center with this concept. Research should be tied to implementation as much as possible, and separating the two functions appears to serve no real purpose.

##### 2. Improvement in lower division curriculum

At the least, the University should be open to experimentation with curricular tracks or packages, as suggested by the Commitment to Focus Coordinating Committee, and General College could well serve as the site for such tracks. General College is already beginning experimentation in this area, and while the Final Report need not endorse adoption of the tracks concept, it should encourage experimentation and evaluation of such a concept before rejecting it outright. The rejection of such experimentation ignores recent national reports in Higher Education which call for a coherent curriculum at the lower division. Furthermore, curricular tracks or packages do not result in curricular uniformity, since they are developed in response to a variety of student needs.

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Rather, they move in the direction of providing students with a coherent curriculum which is meaningful to their preparation for upper division study.

The Final Report, in Recommendation 1 (c), endorses an adequate program of preparatory coursework for students who are deficient in meeting new preparation requirements, but fails to charge a specific body or group with overseeing the development of such work and effective implementation of such coursework in a student's curricular planning.

**3. The feasibility of establishing an administratively distinct lower division**

The Final Report rejects the concept of a lower division unit or college without offering a clear rationale, simply stating that such a concept is better dealt with by the recommendations made in the Final Report and that a coordinated lower division college would lead to problems with two classes of faculty. No provision is made for further study should implementation of the recommendations not result in improved lower division education, nor is there recognition of the fact that two classes of faculty might well be avoided if the faculty of a lower division college were properly empowered to deal with the University-wide lower division needs.

**4. Responsibility for implementation, monitoring, and evaluating the proposed recommendations**

The Final Report makes no recommendation for a schedule of implementation, for overall responsibility for implementation, for progress reporting, and for evaluating the effect of the implemented recommendations on lower division education. Without such a plan, the University is unlikely to know whether or not changes are being implemented and whether or not they are working effectively.

**5. Implications for the role of the General College**

The recommendations made in the Final Report do not facilitate the General College's integration into the total University Community. To coordinate the activities within the General College more closely with the Colleges to which its students aspire, the General College, like the Undergraduate Center, the Office of Minority and Special Student Affairs, and other academic support services, should be placed under the responsibility of the Senior Officer in Academic Affairs, ideally the Assistant (or an Associate) Vice President for Undergraduate Education. Furthermore, the Report fails to recommend a significant role for General College in developing and experimenting with curriculum and teaching methods which could be of value to students throughout the University. Recommending experimentation with curricular tracks and a centralized location, within the General College, of all University pre-college developmental coursework and services would enhance the role of the College, but would also eliminate some duplication and focus attention on the expertise General College can bring to such activities.

CC: Kenneth Keller, President  
Rama Murthy, Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Richard Heydinger, Chair, Commitment to Focus Coordinating Committee  
Deon Stuthman, Chair, Faculty Consultative Committee