

HERBERT H. LEHMAN COLLEGE
OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

GRADUATE OFFICE

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BEDFORD PARK BOULEVARD WEST
BRONX, NEW YORK 10468

September 14, 1970

Dr. Leonard Lief
President
Herbert H. Lehman College

*File
Lehman College
Guidelines & Resolution
of the Univ. Degree*

Dear President Lief:

My comments on "The University Degree -- Individualizing the Educational Process at the City University" follow.

I think Chancellor Bowker is perfectly correct in indicating that the control mechanisms which operate within The City University for monitoring alterations of curriculum do actually inhibit change and are perceived by the faculty as inhibiting change. I think his suggestion that removing these barriers is potentially a feasible and potentially fruitful approach is dangerous. I agree that our present system is cumbersome, that for individual students with a high degree of motivation and a high level of ability to work independently, unconstrained curriculum is desirable; and that the concept of small groups of faculty working directly with individual students as they pursue an ordered process of intellectual growth is a beautiful thought. However, I feel that the dangers in this proposal far outweigh the esthetic advantages.

First, the approach in general seems to be based on the assumption that experimentation in curriculum planning is in itself a positive good. As an experimental scientist, I am convinced that most experiments, unless carefully controlled, are apt to be wasteful in effort, repetitious in nature, and unfruitful in results. While a carefully planned and carefully executed and carefully controlled experiment can be a thing of beauty, poor experiments tend to be total shambles.

I cannot easily conceptualize a program of study which is not defined in terms of standards of growth and development leading to an academic degree. Without definition of the degree of intellectual achievement to be expected at the end of a student's course of study, and without some method of measuring whether or not this intellectual achievement is attained, granting of a degree for a series of experiences in my opinion, constitute a complete undermining of the meaning of a baccalaureate education. I suppose that I have been conditioned by my many years at Hunter and at Lehman College to a suspicion that the university degree proposed in this paper may well be a watered down degree.

September 14, 1970

President Leonard Lief

I would find it easier to accept the concept if the program were limited to those students who had demonstrated in their first year at the University some unique ability in traditional academic areas, in the arts, or in such community oriented activities which make them more suited to a city-wide experience rather than an individual college experience.

Certain questions about the specific proposal occur to me. Will any review committee be established to check on the individual ad hoc faculty degree committees? What sort of compensation in time or money will individual members of the faculty degree committees receive for their activities? Where will this program be housed? How many students are expected to participate in this program in the first year? What will be the criteria for selection of students to participate in the program leading to this university degree? For what sort of professional occupation will these students be prepared?

The answer to these questions will determine whether or not the proposed university degree will be an experimental, good, innovative degree planned for the exceptional student or whether it will provide a mechanism whereby a student who cannot qualify for a normal baccalaureate degree in The City University will obtain an "inferior" university degree.

If Lehman College is to participate in this program I hope we will limit our participation to encouragement of highly qualified and highly motivated students.

Very truly yours,



Mary Jane Kingkade
Associate Dean of the Faculties

MJK:gt

The City University of New York Office of the Chancellor

535 East 80 Street, New York, N.Y. 10021

212/360-2121

August 31, 1970

President Leonard Lief
Herbert H. Lehman College
Bedford Park Blvd. West
Bronx, New York 10468

Dear Len:

I am enclosing a copy of my present thinking
on the university degree which I have turned over to
the Birenbaum Committee. Please let them know your
opinions.

Sincerely,



Albert H. Bowker

Chancellor 1963-1971

Chancellor U. of CA, Berkeley
1971-1980

died. Jan. 23, 2008

cc: President Birenbaum

William M. Birenbaum
President S.I. Community College
Sept. 1, 1968 - 1976
President, Antioch College
1976 - 1978
Provost, Antioch College
1979-1982
President Antioch Univ.
1978-85

RECEIVED

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OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE
DEAN OF THE FACULTIES
LEHMAN COLLEGE

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RECEIVED: PRESIDENT
HERBERT H. LEHMAN COLLEGE

The University Degree -- Individualizing the Educational Process at the City University

Colleges and universities across the nation have now completed their sixth year of student unrest. We have witnessed rising activism, occasional and sometimes deadly violence, and the rapid destruction of the normative bonds which have traditionally been the mechanism for social interaction in our educational institutions. Predictably, the coming year will provide new instances of widespread unrest and dissatisfaction. Predictably too, the by-now-traditional faculty and administration rhetoric will begin again, bemoaning the outside forces which they believe have provoked student disaffection: the war in southeast Asia, racism, destruction of the environment, and other national issues of overriding importance. Faculties will vote on ending the war, administrators will sign petitions and visit Washington. Efforts of the academic community have had a major impact on attitudes toward southeast Asia and this year with the two weeks off before election this involvement may have more impact upon the political decision makers. It will however have little effect on the attitudes of students towards their institutions.

In focusing on outside forces which provoke student discontent and alienation, and over which we have relatively little control, we have failed to act on basic internal problems which we do possess the power to correct. The most pressing of these problems is the content of the undergraduate curriculum.

It is not that this problem has been ignored; on the contrary, faculty and administrators appear to share the belief of most students that the present curriculum is unsatisfying, unrealistic, inappropriate, and, in the jargon of the day, irrelevant. These shared sentiments have not, however, led to any significant change in college curricula during the past two decades. In fact, it is safe to say that problems of the curriculum have worsened during this period rather than moved towards any meaningful resolution. We are dealing today with a college program created by other faculties for other students in other times. Regardless of what may happen in national or international affairs, student unrest will continue until this anachronism is removed.

We are faced now with a host of interrelated anomalies in higher education. Among them:

- as the student body becomes more diversified, institutions and their programs are growing more and more alike;
- as the need for activities to counteract a growing sense of individual anomie becomes more essential, institutions are increasing in size and becoming more impersonal;
- as the need for consensus-based change becomes more acute, isolated and polarized groups within the institution make the possibility of change based on information-sharing and appeal to reason more difficult to achieve.

~~Three basic factors are at the root of the problem.~~ First, the traditional curriculum attempts^{ed} to include a program of liberal education containing within it certain "essential" intellectual and cultural elements. Faced with increased proliferation of knowledge and individual specialization, faculties are no longer able to agree on what these elements should be. Second, power in the institution has been dissipated to such a degree that leadership to effect change has become increasingly difficult to develop. Faced with the impossibility of initiating change themselves, faculties have sought and achieved collective power to prevent the initiation of change by others, including their own colleagues. And third, faced with the multiple demands of research, publication, the search for contract funds, consultation, and government work, faculty have, by and large, ignored their responsibilities both for teaching and for undergraduate curriculum reform.

~~There appear to be two general directions towards which institutions can move to increase the~~ ^{cover} ~~relevance~~ ^{apply} of the undergraduate curriculum to the needs of today's students in today's society.

~~While there is no agreement on which path is the proper one,~~ there is probably no reason why most institutions could not explore both simultaneously. The first is to increase specialization and vocational training during the undergraduate years, thus focusing directly on student interests and on the skills needed for employment, while making the liberal arts components of education available to students subsequently at any time in their development when they

would hopefully find them to be meaningful and relevant. The second ✓
^{was} is to revise completely the structure of undergraduate liberal education to permit the student and faculty, in consultation, to determine an appropriate individual course of study free from most predetermined constraints.

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Whatever changes have occurred in higher education during the past decades have for the most part been in the first category, that is, an increased emphasis on early specialization and vocational training. City University has played a leadership role in this approach. ~~An abbreviated recitation of some of its developments will serve to indicate the kinds of programs which have also been initiated by other institutions in the recent past.~~

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During the past five years, the University has placed particular emphasis on the expansion of its system of community colleges, and particularly on the growth of career-oriented programs within these institutions. At the same time, it has formed a new kind of four-year institution, emphasizing preprofessional programs, offering both associate and bachelors degrees. The University has expanded and strengthened the Bernard M. Baruch College, which focuses on business and public administration, and has created a new institution, the John Jay College to serve the needs of students in the field of correction, police, and probation. Other programs include a University-wide emphasis on health career programs, both in the two and four-year colleges, including the formation of a Health Career Institute, and the allocation of increasing resources for teaching training programs at all levels from the pre-baccalaureate to the doctorate.

During the period in which this rapid growth was taking place, there has been no comparable movement towards a re-definition of the liberal arts curriculum. This has been true not only at City University, but at those institutions which have traditionally provided such leadership in the past. Lack of change and a reluctance to experiment have been caused by several factors. Of critical importance has been the lack of the financial resources available for curriculum innovation -- a problem which will become even more severe in the future than it has been in the past.

Change and experimentation ^{within the curriculum} have also been inhibited by the faculty-created mechanism for monitoring alterations in curriculum. At the City University, as in other institutions, suggested curriculum revisions must go through various levels of faculty approval at department, division, and college levels, in addition to approval by various curriculum committees and councils. At each level, suggested changes are altered, modified, and compromised so that those proposals which are finally adopted usually do not fully reflect the basic philosophy of those who first proposed them.

Faculty members also tend to feel that administrators at the dean and presidential level inhibit change through use, or threat of use, of their veto power. At City University there is also the feeling among some members of the faculty that the Committee on the Academic Program of the Board of Higher Education and the Chancellor's

Office act as barriers to change due to lengthy review procedures and powers of non-approval. Major changes at our University require the approval of the State Education Department and the Board of Regents, and, in addition for major changes a Master Plan amendment is required which must be approved by the Governor of the State of New York. The degree to which each or all of these control mechanisms actually inhibit change is difficult to determine; the fact is, however, that they are perceived by the faculty as limiting their power to innovate. It is largely this perception which acts as a barrier to the inception and development of new curriculum models.

There appear to be two alternative ways for the City University to move towards a new concept of the liberal arts program. One way is to attempt to create new models based on the best current thinking, and to initiate massive curriculum revision following an agreed-upon pattern. The second is to take an experimental and encouraging stance towards curriculum change by removing many of the currently existing barriers to innovation. The latter procedure should permit the simultaneous development of a number of different approaches which can be separately analyzed in order to provide directions for the future. This appears to be both the most feasible and potentially fruitful approach.

~~One~~ One procedure which may lead to a diversity of models is the establishment of a University degree, partially free of constraints imposed by a college faculty as a whole, and offered under the aegis of small groups of faculty working directly with individual students. It is to this approach that we now turn.

Note

The major emphasis of this proposed new program is upon the student's freedom to learn, and the relationship between the student and faculty member as they interact in the learning process. It attempts to remove constraints under which both faculty and students have operated in the past by providing more flexibility to create programs suitable to the needs of individual students.

The present system of academic checks and balances is the establishment of curriculum and degree requirements was formulated in an environment which no longer exists. The system is characterized by several facets:

1. Each student is expected to fulfill certain requirements in a "major" area. These requirements are generally determined by the faculty in that discipline and are generally supposed to prepare students for advanced work in the discipline.
2. Each student is expected to fulfill certain "general education" requirements, identified either as specific courses or as courses selected by the student from within certain areas.
3. Students are expected to earn their degrees after completion of courses offered in the institution, and, in general, 120 credits with a stated average grade of "C" are required. Work outside the institution, which contributes to a student's growth and development, is often not recognized.

4. The faculty as a whole has retained the responsibility for determining the requirements for the degree, and for determining the regulations which govern the completion of the degree. The administrative determination of completion is usually made by the registrar, operating under rules and formulae which define satisfactory completion of academic work in terms of grades and credits.

The effect of these rigid procedures has been to dehumanize and de-intellectualize the educational process. It has done so in several ways. First, it defines educational accomplishment in terms of grades and credits, rather than in terms of intellectual, social or moral change undergone by students. Second, it places arbitrary and often irrational constraints on what students may study, and what faculty members may teach. Third, it generally defines as "learning" only those activities which take place in the classroom.

There are several ways in which these problems can be overcome. The University degree is proposed here as one possible solution for CUNY. Its major purpose is to restore the concept of a community of student-faculty intellectual interests by giving both students and faculty the opportunity to work in partnership to define appropriate educational experiences which are both meaningful to the student, and, in the opinion of a group of faculty, involve rigorous educational experiences at a level normally required of a baccalaureate candidate.

The University degree would be available for all students and faculty who voluntarily desired to participate. It would be a B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) degree which would supplement, but by no means replace, the traditional degree programs at the colleges in which most students will most likely desire to continue.

The degree will be granted by the University, rather than any of the constituent colleges, although there is no reason why any college could not offer such a program to its own students as an alternative to its regular discipline-oriented degree if it wished to do so. The requirements for the degree will be determined jointly by a student and faculty members, and will be free of most requirements concerning courses, credits or grades. The degree will be granted by the University on the recommendation of an ad hoc Faculty Degree Committee as defined below.

1. An ad hoc Faculty Degree Committee may consist of any group of five or more faculty members who are chosen by a student and who agree to participate. The forming of such a committee will be the responsibility of the student. One faculty member shall agree to serve as chairman.

2. To encourage an interdisciplinary approach and to assure that the committee shall be relatively representative, each committee will include faculty from at least two departments or divisions of the college in which the student is enrolled. At least two of the five or more members shall be associate or full professors. Two others must be assistant professors, or full-time members of the

faculty. Committees on which faculty members from more than one institution participate will be encouraged.

3. The B.A. shall be awarded by the University upon (a) submission by the student of an academic transcript indicating at least ninety semester hours of passing grades in any courses offered by the University and approved by the faculty committee and (b) a letter by the chairman of the faculty committee explaining the non-classroom portion, if there is one, of the students' program and (c) authorizing the degree and indicating the basis upon which the committee feels the student has qualified for the B.A. This letter and the authorizing signatures shall become part of the student's official transcript. All five members of the committee shall sign the letter, and at least four of the five shall indicate their concurrence with the authorization of the degree.

The establishment of a University B.A. degree offers many advantages to the student, the faculty, and the University. The student will be free to plan a program consistent with his own needs and capabilities, free from restrictions placed upon him by college regulations. This program will consist partially of a minimum of ninety hours of course work determined by the student in consultation with his faculty committee. In addition, however, the student and faculty will decide jointly on other experiences which will contribute to the student's educational growth and development. Such experiences may include, but not be limited to, independent study or research, foreign travel, work experiences, artistic or other

creative endeavors, independent study of music, acting, or art, community action or civic service, additional course work, or any other activity deemed academically appropriate and educationally sound by the student and faculty.

This program will recognize that significant learning takes place outside of the college, as well as in the classroom. It opens wide the opportunities of New York City as a laboratory for students which, under faculty sponsorship, can yield learning situations in museums, industrial laboratories, the United Nations, corporate headquarters, civic associations and governmental agencies, performing arts groups, and other professional and intellectual experiences not available on the campus. It will help relate college education to the "real" world. Of greatest importance is that this program will require faculty and students to work together in a way which is no longer available to most students except in elite, small liberal arts colleges. It will force students to make choices, take risks, and plan their own educational experiences.

To the faculty, this program offers an opportunity to work towards the maximum development of their students, free from restrictions placed upon them by their colleagues acting as a body. It will encourage innovative approaches to education and foster the intimate student-faculty relationships which are a vital element of a sound liberal arts education. In doing so, it will focus attention on the needs of the individual student.

It can be questioned whether the B.A. will be a "watered-down" degree since it requires only three years of formal academic work. It should be noted that some academic institutions now offer credit for experiences outside of the classroom, including credit for Peace Corps service and cooperative education. While there may be some students who will abuse this program by selecting "easy" courses and forming a permissive faculty committee, it is believed that these potential abuses will be far outweighed by the potential for creative, innovative educational programs meeting the needs of the majority of students who will choose to enroll. In any case, since the basis upon which the degree is awarded will be indicated in writing on the student's transcript, together with the names of the faculty recommending him for the degree, a clear indication of the quality and quantity of a student's work will be available to those who may require it.

Albert H. Bowker
Chancellor

August 27, 1970