

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

S.436

MEMORANDUM

To.....Members of Senate.....

From.....B.G. Wilson.....

.....Vice-President, Academic.....

Subject.....

Date.....November 25, 1970.....

The attached paper represents a recommendation from the Academic Planning Committee for the establishment of a non-specialist degree program in Arts, Science and Education. This paper has been circulated to departmental chairmen and through them to their respective faculty members for information and comment.


B.G. Wilson

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Encl.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To.....Members of Senate.....

From.....B.G. Wilson.....

Chairman, Academic Planning Committee.....

Subject.....

Date.....November 25, 1970.....

RECOMMENDATION: That Senate approve the introduction of a non-specialist degree program in Arts, Science and Education. The program would be designated General Studies and, after successful completion, a degree of Bachelor of General Studies would be awarded by Senate on the recommendation of the Dean of the Division of General Studies. In such a program students would not be required to specialize in any subject and the program would be relatively unstructured. Specific recommendations are as follows:

a) 120 semester hour credits with a minimum grade point average of 2.0, including,

b) at least 45 upper level semester hour credits, and

c) a minimum of 15 semester hour credits in the general areas of humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Designation of courses falling in these areas would be the responsibility of Departments.

REASONS FOR THIS RECOMMENDATION

BACKGROUND

In the light of the best information available for the 1971/72 budget year, the amount of money available to mount new programs is likely to be quite limited. The Academic Planning Committee has felt therefore that it was worth investigating the possibility of devising programs which may either produce sufficient revenue to be self-supporting or, by reorganization of existing offerings, provide new program opportunities at little or no cost. At the last Senate meeting Senate approved the concept of continuing education programs which should fall under the former category, reaching a clientele not presently served by Simon Fraser University. This proposal suggests program alternatives which can be mounted for little or no cost since students will take courses presently authorized by Senate and offered by Departments in the regular program. In addition the Academic Planning Committee is presenting for the approval of Senate other programs at this and subsequent meetings which represent inter-departmental approaches to learning.

There have been many expressions of student disinterest in highly structured or "traditional" education. Students express themselves as interested in "relevant courses and programs" although the definition of relevance is often hard to formulate. Some would argue, on the other hand, that the function of universities should be to provide in each student a basis for his future development so that he can better meet the problems of tomorrow rather than relating education specifically to the problems of today.

The Academic Planning Committee takes no position on the issue of relevance; it does however take the position that additional educational opportunities can and should be provided for students who are interested in obtaining a broad general education without the currently required specialization in one subject area. Many students who might wish to take such a non-structured program may subsequently find areas of interest in which they would wish to specialize and such students would in fact complete degree requirements under current regulations. On the other hand students who feel that their best preparation lies in a broad educational experience together with those whose initial interest in a subject becomes dissipated with time, could complete degrees in the General Studies Program. Since courses available to such students are those courses presently offered by Departments in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Education, together with any courses subsequently developed by the Division of General Studies, the quality of the degree should be comparable to the B.A. and B.Sc. degrees.

ORGANIZATION

It has been stated above that students taking a general studies program would be recommended for their degrees by the Dean of General Studies to Senate. Almost all the courses taken by students would be taken from Departments in Faculties but, since no major would be declared, it is necessary to have the basic book-keeping provided outside Departments. The Dean of General Studies seems an appropriate agent. The degree of administration that the Dean would have would be limited. He would be responsible for establishing that the minimum requirements for graduation had been met and would provide an academic counselling service. The Dean, in recommending candidates for degrees based on courses offered by Departments within the other Faculties, would have a role somewhat analagous to the Dean of Graduate Studies who recommends candidates for graduate degrees.

SUMMARY

This proposal is not particularly innovative since General Studies degrees and similar programs are available at many universities. The specific title of the degree is currently unique in Canada but it exists at universities in the United States. Since all or almost all of the courses offered in such a program will be by Departments in the present Faculties, the standards of the degree are in the safe-keeping of Departments and the requirements are the same as for existing degree programs apart from the absence of a minimum specialization requirement in one subject area. Rather than being some kind of degraded B.A. or B.Sc., the Bachelor of General Studies should be regarded as a different kind of intellectual attainment.