

The Long Range Curriculum DTF Report

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We are pressed to decide whether we will accept or reject the Long Range Curriculum DTF's recommendations--the chief of which is to reconstitute the Specialty Areas so that

- they become larger in size, fewer in number
- they become mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive, i.e. we are each in only one and together they harbor all of us
- they have pathways through them to the golden threshold of the working world.

This is not a happy prospect.

The DTF wasn't able to reconstitute the Specialty Areas. There is no reason to think that all of us could do better. The last time we did this the result was, by the DTF's own estimate, a 70% failure. (One wonders how badly something has to fail before it's counted as an Evergreen experiment that successfully proved that something doesn't work.)

The DTF is sick of the whole business; we suspect that we soon could be.

Some of us also suspect that we would disagree strongly with the thrust of the report if it were possible to discern what is really meant by "liberal arts" as it is used in the report. I don't object to someone hinting to a prospective student that if the student comes to Evergreen he can 1) get a job 2) in the Pacific Northwest, as long as it is clear that I am not saying that. All I ever want to say is that the traditional liberal arts curriculum is the most versatile curriculum ever invented, as well as the oldest. I came here to learn how to make as much of that curriculum as I could available to students who seemed fated not to get it but could get it if it were presented in a new way. I have had some success in learning how to do that. Nothing could convince me to change my view that whatever is wrong with the world or Evergreen it's not the liberal arts curriculum. I wouldn't know what to say to a person who decided that the liberal arts curriculum is passé.

We are at an impasse. I think that is what the DTF's report really evidences; and that suggests a compromise. I have no objection to teaching students who want to pilot computers or become solar magicians, as long as that doesn't become my professional identity. I am willing to teach in MPI; I don't want to belong to MPI. We can all agree that we want 1) a new structure 2) that improves the present curriculum and allows for new offerings 3) soon.

Richard Alexander has a proposal that does those three things and also offers a way out of the impasse the DTF Report calls "a major dilemma, probably never to be finally resolved." Richard's proposal speaks to graduate requirements, divisions, Specialty Areas, and curriculum design. It is still in outline form (see Appendix). For this present purpose I will quote him on divisions and Specialty Areas:

Divisions: the four traditional divisions--Natural Sciences & Mathematics, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts.
Basic Programs (Core)
Northwest Native American Studies

Each Division has a chairperson. The Chairs are responsible for curriculum development and faculty evaluation, with the collaboration of the Deans and Provost.

Specialty Areas would continue. Most of our current Specialty Areas fall neatly within only one of the traditional divisions; only two are definitely cross-divisional, and would operate as interdepartmental majors do everywhere else. New Specialty Areas could be added as needed, and moribund specialties could be retired gracefully. The six Divisions would remain throughout any such changes.

In Exhibit 1 I have represented Richard's structure with one modification. His six divisions do not make a logical grouping. I put our ancillary activities, including Summer School, under an associate dean. I have also formalized the inevitable working arrangement of the "chairs" and the deans into a Course and Curriculum Committee. I don't mind if the name is suppressed.

Exhibit 1

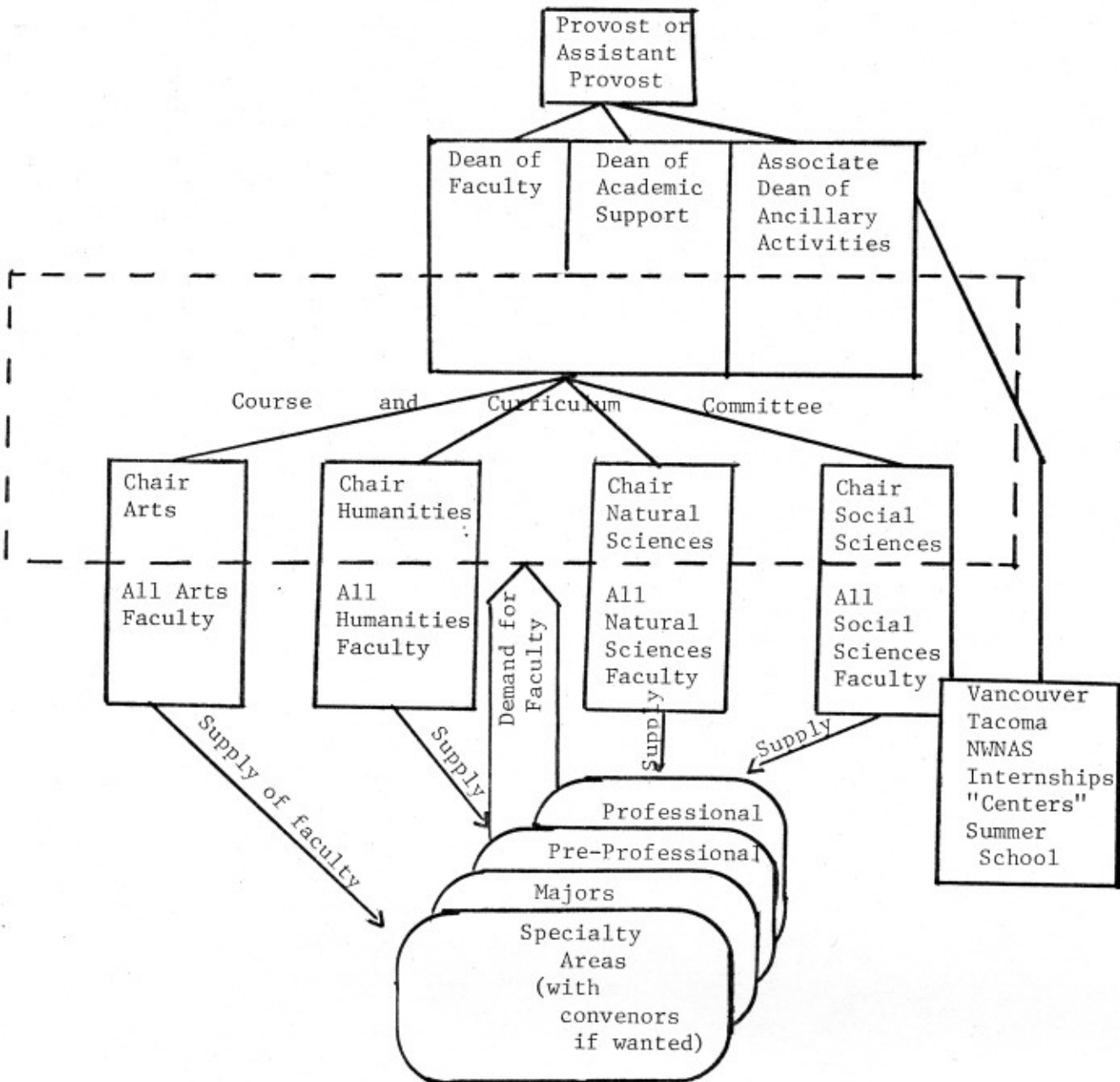


Exhibit 2

The College as Students Will See It

Senior	Advanced Programs and Senior Projects			
Junior	Arts	Humanities	Natural	Social
Sophomore			Sciences	Sciences
Freshman	Core Programs			

I. This structure makes sense because it rigidifies the administrative structure without sacrificing flexibility in the curriculum.

- We do need an administrative structure which makes faculty and administrators locatable and accountable. There has to be a situation where a dean or chairman can say to a faculty member, "If you help us out here now by doing Z, next time around I guarantee you A." It is in this framework that we carry out our personal and institutional duties.
- In the curriculum we can remain nomadic. There is no need for me to commit myself to MPI for three years, I'll be in MPI when I am teaching in MPI. I am always a member of the Humanities Faculty. My primary loyalty in the curricular structure is to the thing I teach. In this framework I carry out my professional duties.

II. This structure makes sense because it allows for an easy means of keeping the good and dropping the bad, and there is unlimited room for expansion without any need to change the basic structure.

- All of the planning activity that now goes on will continue, conveners convening, faculty teaming up, trying new combinations, sending their wish lists to the Deans; in addition, seven people (mainly) will be monitoring the curriculum long enough and from a ^{see} perspective that will allow them to track what is working and what isn't, and that the "pathways" are kept open.
- The prospect of having to not only reconstitute the Specialty Areas so that the faculty who are now in the 70% failures, ^{see it} but also make up new ones or expand old ones to accommodate sixty-five additional faculty is so daunting that I don't see how anybody can seriously consider it. But under this structure, a person can teach what he can teach if the deans and chairmen think it will fill. A person can be hired to teach what the deans and chairmen think will fill. All of this will be under the purview of four faculty chairmen who have professional loyalties and responsibilities in their own division and also have to cooperate with the chairmen who represent the other divisions--and with the administration.

III. This structure makes sense because it can be put into place easily and immediately. Once the structure is in place, the remaining work, designing the curriculum, can begin to go forward.

There are four steps:

1. The faculty accepts this suggestion.
2. Each faculty person identifies his/her division.
3. Each faculty votes for a chairman of the division.
4. Then we send them off to meet with the deans:
 - to finish whatever organizational business needs finishing, e.g. how do we get a chairman out of the chair?
 - to decide what they need from us in order to get a curriculum designed, i.e. a list of everything we can/want to teach.
 - to make their decisions and report to us.

Before we send them off, we have to tell them the guidelines within which their decisions are to be made. I have guidelines to suggest, but that requires a separate document.