April 9, 1981

TO: Byron Youtz

FROM: Upside Down Degree DTF, Matt Smith, Chair

RE: Upside Down Degree DTF Final Report

Introduction

The charge of this DTF was to review the Upside Down Degree program in order to
determine whether such a program was warranted, whether it could be organized in
such a way to provide Admissions with clearer guidelines for admitting students
to the program, and if mechanisms could be established to simplify the admini-
stration of the program once in place. In the past the program has been highly
individualized with rather elaborate admissions rituals and complex although not
necessarily effective advisory procedures. Recent moves by the college to esta-
blish the transferability of certain OTCC degrees and ATA degrees to TESC by
administrative agreement raises serious issues of the appropriate locus for such
decisions and the advisability of having any such agreements. The DTF's review
has raised a number of important concerns and will make at least one major pro-
prosal concerning academic requirements.

The program has been organized on a very individualized basis. This individual-
ization has been seen as a way to screen the students for admission quite care-
fully and to guarantee close monitoring of the student while they are enrolled
at the college. It was designed to give the program a maximum of flexibility
in terms of responding to the variety of experiences brought to the college by
holders of ATA degrees. While in theory these goals seemed laudable to the
committee, in practice the structure of the program has led to serious diffi-
culties. Because admission to the program has been conditional on an elaborate
screening process for each student, involving two faculty members and a special
counselor, it has been impossible to tell applicants to the college whether
they were acceptable as upside down degree candidates early enough to use the pro-
gram to influence student's decisions about attending TESC. Thus the program
provided no advantage in terms of recruitment. Further the complex process of
admittance and program assignment necessitate a great deal of faculty and stu-
dent time in advising and consultation. This time was frequently wasted or stu-
dents failed to enroll in the college because the complexities of trying to ob-
tain the agreement of two separate faculty advisors and counselor became too much
and students dropped the program. Further the individualized decision-making
process led to relatively frequent incongruities between students in terms of
the acceptability of their transfer credit and the worth of their programs.
Finally, the complexity of the procedures for individual students and their
faculty advisors meant that even when students were enrolled the system failed
conspicuously to actually provide the support and consultation for academic de-
cisions for which it was designed. Student's often found themselves in the posi-
tion of rationalizing post hoc work in the program, completing forms many quarters
after the work, etc. Thus while several students (16) have graduated from the
program two or three times as many have not. While it is impossible to determine
why they have not, it is clear that if the program is to make a significant
contribution to enrollment or to be carried out on a larger scale through the

establishment of transferability agreements a less cumbersome and time consuming
and, presumably, more equitable form of administration needed to be found.

In what follows we suggest that there is a reason to have such a program, that
the question of transferability of the ATA credit should be primarily oriented
around the acceptability of the ATA program, that there should be requirements
for ATA transfer students on arrival at TESC, and that administration of the
degree be simplified.

Part One: Why a Program in the First Place

The question of the desirability of such a program was debated at some length by
the committee and while there was no single argument that convinced all of us,
several arguments led us to think that such a program had merit. First, the
committee felt after reviewing the content of a number of ATA degrees that a good
case could be made that they constituted a reasonable rigorous and acceptable
form of specialization. Second, we discussed the rather serious issue of aca-
demic snobbery that defined some degrees as academic hence worthy of transfer,
and others as technical, hence unworthy. Third, we noted that many students had
been quite successful in completing their work. Finally, we, quite frankly, saw
ATA transfer students as a potentially significant pool of students for admissions.

While none of these arguments is particularly overwhelming in itself, we felt
that, since many programs seemed to be quite rigorous and well thought through,
the distinction between academic and technical often appeared quite arbi-
trary, and that the success of these candidates in the past and the hope of more
in the future justified a continued program.

The major change in emphasis brought out by our consideration of this issue was
a shift from an emphasis on the individual candidate's attitudes and perceptions
to an emphasis on the credit worthiness of the ATA degree program. It was argued
persuasively that what was creditable was not attitude, but the program. Further,
it was argued that the only justification for accepting some otherwise unacceptable
technical course work was that the whole of the work in a program was greater than
the sum of its parts since the specialized and technical work took place within
the broader context of the degree program. This decision to accept programs
rather than individuals is a major change in the policy.

Part Two: A Mechanism for Accepting or Rejecting Programs

The committee felt that a decision to award or not award credit for programs
ought, in the first instance, to rest with the faculty. The following procedures
and guidelines were proposed for making this decision.

We see the decision to accept or reject programs as involving a shared respon-
sibility between the Admissions Office, deans and faculty. We anticipate that
formal acceptance of initial programs may be somewhat more difficult than later
decisions, but for the first round we propose the following mechanism. Using
the criteria outlined below and their perceptions of the location of potential
students, the Admissions Office and the deans should identify specific programs
at specific colleges they feel meet the criteria and are compatible with on-
going studies at Evergreen. Next, the curriculum dean should send the descrip-
tion of the program along with other useful supporting materials to the appro-

priate specialty area convenor. The convenor will bring the proposed program to the specialty area for a decision about the acceptability of the ATA program. A program rejected by the specialty area is a rejected program -- decisions of the specialty area are definitive when negative. If the program is acceptable to the specialty area it is referred to the deans and may be accepted or rejected by them. To simplify matters it is important that this process happen relatively infrequently and that similar programs be brought together for consideration. Once a program is accepted by both the faculty and deans, negotiations for a transfer agreement can be undertaken.

The DTF recognizes the considerable difficulties that will attend any process of establishing a set of acceptable programs. The process promises trouble on at least two major counts. First, internally, it can potentially lead to an administrative overload for the specialty areas who are to moniter and accept these ATA Degree programs. Second, externally, it puts the college in the position of acting almost as an accrediting agency toward these programs. This raises both possibility of inter-institutional rivalry at the community college level and inter-departmental rivalry within each of the community colleges. While there is no simple way of overcoming these difficulties, the DTF urges that the following steps be taken to help keep these problems to a minimum. First, we should emphasize in our negotiations our concern to do well by these students. Thus we should be certain that programs we accept have a relatively strong academic component within them and are clearly related to academic specialization that the college can effectively support with program and group contract choices. Second, we should attempt to develop this program slowly over a number of years. This means concentrating on a relatively limited number of potential feeder schools for both the Olympia and Vancouver campuses, and focusing on a relatively limited range of degree programs for incoming students. We hope that by emphasizing the tentative nature of the program, and by trying to keep its development gradual, we can both minimize internal work loads -- leading to better decisions, and keep external expectations regarding the number and type of acceptable programs to a minimum -- thus reducing problems of rivalries. Finally, we recognize the serious potential for damaging our relations with community colleges through indelicate phrasing, unsupportable promises, and unwarranted meddling. This danger is real and it seems the only way to minimize it is to make certain that all such negotiations be conducted with the knowledge and advice of the curriculum dean.

With all of the above in mind, the criteria established thus far are:

1. The degree is from a two year accredited school, or from a sub-baccalaureate technical school of an accredited four year school.

2. The degree must be almost entirely constituted of voc/tech course work related to one field. Ordinarily, seventy (70) credits should be in or closely related to the voc/tech field identified in the degree.

3. The content of the degree should be somewhat related to one of Evergreen's Academic specialty areas.

4. The degree has at least one college level course in composition within the curriculum.

We anticipate that these criteria will need modification in the long run, but that they provide a reasonable starting point for discussion. There are three things to note. Criterion two means that if a student is expected to take course work in a narrowly defined field and selects from a reasonable list of elective options to a total of at least 70 credits, we will be willing to consider the degree. Criterion three means that we are interested in locating programs that bear a reasonable relationship to our own curriculum so that we can support the student's work at reasonably advanced levels. Finally, although we wanted a requirement of two composition courses, a quick perusal of catalogues convinced us that this was unrealistic. We would urge the deans to push strenuously for such a requirement in any negotiation for an automatic transfer agreement.

Part Three: Admission of Students to the Program

We tried to design the student admission process so that it could be carried out entirely by the Admissions Office, thus reducing the faculty work load imposed by our current procedures.

In addition to the acceptability of the program, we felt that there must be criteria for the quality of the student's work in the ATA program. These criteria are as follows:

1. The technical degree must be earned prior to the student's enrollment at TESC. In certain cases students who attended TESC prior to enrolling in a technical program are eligible for the upside down degree.

2. The degree program taken by the student may not deviate significantly from the catalog description.

3. The student must have maintained a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5.

4. The student must demonstrate college level competence in writing. This may be done by showing a grade of C or better in two college level composition courses, or by one college level composition course and enrollment in a basic program in the student's first quarter at TESC, or by one course and college level competence in writing as demonstrated by a comprehensive LRC assessment. The results will be evaluated by the Learning Resource Center and sent to the Academic Advising Office.

Thus in the standard case we would hope to have students who have graduated from approved programs and who meet the admissions criteria specified above. It should be noted that criterion two allows for some flexibility and substitution in the student's technical program. While criterion number three imposes a significantly higher admissibility criterion than set for other admissions.

Graduates from hospital nursing programs (3 year programs) will be reviewed individually by admissions for acceptance since these programs no longer exist to be reviewed for programatic acceptance.

After a quick look at current applicants the committee quickly disabused any notion that this would meet all students' needs, because students come here from all over with various technical degrees. In light of these problems we made the following recommendations.

When students are coming from programs that are comparable to accepted programs, we felt that Admissions should be given considerable latitude to interpret comparability and admit students to the degree transfer program. If a particular ATA program appears to be generating a significant number of students for the college it must be referred to the specialty area for formal review. A second problem involves students coming from ATA programs we have not reviewed and that are not comparable. In this case we feel that students should be admitted to the college and retain eligibility for the program, but no guarantee of acceptance into the transfer degree program should be made. Students should be made aware that this approval process will take a minimum of three months. The new program and supporting evidence should be sent to the deans for screening and possible review by the specialty areas. While all this may end up being prejudicial to specific individuals, we feel that it is a considerable improvement on the ad hoc process of years past.

Part Four: What Do We Expect of People Once They Are Here

The question here is of requirements and the consistency of imposing requirements on some students and not others. After considerable twisting and turning we came down on the side of requirements. However, we made a serious attempt to minimize these requirements and to state them in such a way as to allow as varied a set of options as possible to ATA transfer students. Our major concern in imposing requirements was to make sure that the student broadened his or her perspective on the ATA area of specialization and to insure the development of reasonable skill levels in reading, writing and seminar participation. To this end we adopted the following requirements for transfer degree students:

1. Students must accept entry into the Upside Down Degree Program within sixty (60) days of receipt of their credit evaluation.

2. Students must have an agreement signed by the faculty advisor, the academic advising office, and the student that specifies the student will participate in a specific coordinated study and to complete ninety (90) credits at TESC before posting of ATA credit to the transcript.

3. Students should complete this agreement before enrolling in their first quarter at TESC, and must complete such an agreement by the end of their first quarter.

4. The student must receive full credit for at least 32 quarter credit hours of a coordinated studies program before graduation.

5. If the student's transcript shows only one composition course and the student does not pass the comprehensive exam, then the student's first quarter must be spent in a basic coordinated studies program.

As the above requirement implies, each ATA transfer student would be assigned an advisor. We anticipate that these advisors would be rather carefully selected and given at least one training session to make them aware of the need for them to push strongly for the broadening of the student's background and the necessity for the student and advisor to maintain contact about the student's progress at TESC. We suggest that monitoring of the completion of requirements #4 & 5 be carried out by academic advising and that notice of completion of requirements be sent to the registrar.

The committee was quite troubled by the imposition of requirements on ATA transfers while not imposing such requirements on other students. In general it was felt that this inconsistency should be remedied by imposing minimum requirements on all students. Our recommendations are as follows:

All students with less than one year of credit should be required to take at least two quarters of a basic program. All students entering as sophomores should be required to take two quarters of a coordinated studies program. Students with junior or senior standing with the exception of ATA transfers should be encouraged but not required to take part in a coordinated studies program. We then would make the above recommendation for ATA transfer students as outlined above. There was a serious suggestion that if we were not willing to impose general requirements that we abolish the ATA transfer degree program. But the majority felt that despite the inconsistency the program was worth retaining.

Finally, the committee felt that after completion of the two quarter coordinated study requirement all learning modes at TESC including internships, external credit, teacher certification, and individual contracts should be open to block transfer students. Given the flexibility of the requirements as they now stand it appears that it will be possible for students participating in this program to receive a B.S. degree if they exercise careful planning and if the ATA degree can be seen as providing all of the lower division credit required.