

**THE ALL-UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM
SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY**

Introduction and Background

At the beginning of American higher education in 1640 students of Harvard College took ten courses over a period of three years, all taught by the President of the college. These courses were exclusively classical, covering languages, theology, philosophy and ancient literature. [Carnegie, Mission of the College Curriculum, p. 1] This course of study was neither as esoteric nor elitist as it may seem to us today, for it ideally suited graduates to the professions of the day: law, the clergy and politics. This state of affairs persisted essentially unchanged until the latter part of the nineteenth century when studies for other professions, notably agriculture and science were gradually added to the curriculum for some students.

"General education," which once constituted 100 percent of the curriculum, now claims one-third of the student's attention with one-third devoted to "major requirements" and one-third to "electives." [ibid, p. 7]

In spite of the attention and struggle that curriculum receives from college faculty, it is not the most important aspect of the student's education. The most important part is the quality of the faculty: "that the teachers should be alive with living thoughts." [Whitehead; The Aim of Education, 1929] However the curriculum is the major statement any institution of higher education makes about itself, about what it thinks is important in its teaching service to society. [Carnegie, op. cit., p. 18]

In 1970 Southern Connecticut State College adopted a major liberalization of its curriculum, replacing nearly all specific course requirements with area requirements, reducing the number of credits required for graduation and reducing the number of courses required in the all-college category. Other colleges underwent even greater liberalization in response to student demands and faculty attitudes, but most are now adding more structure to their requirements. ["Change on Campus", Wall Street Journal, Mar. 9, 81, p. 18] This university now finds itself very near to the mainstream in regard to its curriculum. This committee found no overwhelming demand for comprehensive curricular change from either faculty or students. In wide ranging discussion with faculty who teach the all-university requirements, several problems were found, but most of these can be addressed by "fine tuning" the present curriculum. A word of caution is in order at this point, for what is a minor change in terms of the overall pattern may prove to be a substantial change for a few departments or for a minority of especially ill-prepared students.

I. Goals of the Curriculum

"Since it is impossible for a college to expose its students to all available knowledge, the best basic objective of the curriculum must be to provide students with skills for lifelong learning. These

will include the ability to analyze written and spoken ideas, to use computational tools properly, to integrate information gathered from more than one source to produce new conclusions, to test the validity of conclusions, and to use knowledge (facts and techniques) to solve problems." [Carnegie Report, op. cit, p 120]

The only thing that we can say about the future with any degree of certainty is that it will be much different from today, and that changes will take place with ever increasing rapidity. In designing a curriculum we must make our best guesses about the future realizing that these are only guesses. The key item that must be instilled in our students is adaptability, for this alone prepares them to cope with an uncertain future. Many of the traditional tenets of a liberal education have been successful in producing adaptable, educated citizens.

While many of our incoming freshmen are certain about their career choices and are confident that they know what courses are needed to prepare them for this career, this is pure illusion on their part. Most careers will change significantly during the four years that these students are in college, many of the students will change their courses of study, and further career changes will occur after graduation. Consequently, the liberal arts portion of the student's education may ultimately prove to be the most important and valuable part of the curriculum. One of the primary tasks of concerned faculty is to convince students of these conclusions so that they view these requirements in proper perspective and give them the attention and study they deserve.

II. Communication Skills

One of the most immediately striking characteristics of an educated person is the facility that is presented in written and spoken English. This facility is critical for success in university level work in all areas of study, but in the graduate's lifetime it will be even more important in determining the prospects for career advancement.

While it may be necessary to review grammar in these courses, the primary emphasis should be on the clear expression of complex ideas and the ability to organize complicated arguments. Students who are seriously deficient in grammar will be required to take remedial work for which no university credit will be given.

These skills require repeated practice for mastery; consequently, all faculty of the university must work with students to develop their communication ability by advising them to register for appropriate courses and by giving them written and spoken assignments whenever possible. The courses which are required in this area must be viewed as a foundation upon which all other university courses will build.

In 1981 the faculty voted to add to the curriculum a requirement for specific courses (among the all university requirements, electives, or major courses) which require extensive writing for all students starting with the incoming class of Fall Semester, 1982. The "L-Course Requirement" will be continued in this proposed curriculum, and the L-courses will continue to have English 100 as a prerequisite.

Requirements in Communication Skills

A. English Composition (3-6 credits). Courses which fulfill this requirement must stress the correct use of standard written English. The importance of organization, development and style in the expression of complex ideas will be covered. The range of credits in the requirement can be explained in the following way. The graduation requirement will be English 101, but a considerable number of students will be placed in English 100 on the basis of the placement exam.

B. Speech Communication (3 credits). Courses which fulfill this requirement must stress the use of standard spoken English to express, move and persuade. Students must gather facts, organize them into a coherent oral presentation and deliver this before a large or small group.

The Humanities

A. Literature

The courses which satisfy this requirement should introduce the student to a body of literary works whose intellectual and aesthetic influence has helped to shape the cultures of the world. Because literature influences and defines the nature of language as an instrument of thought, these courses also contribute to the students' understanding of linguistic constructs and to the refinement of their own writing styles. The courses offer students the opportunity to read "the best that has been thought and said" in their own and other ages. This cultural and historical value of literature is especially important for our students, many of whom come to us with little historical perspective or cultural sensibility.

The analysis of literature is an analysis both of language in its power to encompass reality and of the forms and structures of meaning which examine and define the elements of human experience. Good literature brings students to examine the conditions of their lives, the significance of their actions, and the assumptions which underlie their values. It develops a cosmic perspective and aesthetic sensitivity which strengthens the individual to meet the vicissitudes of daily existence and encourages him to act humanely in the often dehumanizing circumstances of our world.

B. The Fine Arts

"Traditionally the arts have been included in the curriculum on the grounds that they contribute to the esthetics of our environment, that they have recreational value to students and graduates and they provide a means for a creative experience. Recent studies indicate that they play a more fundamental role in knowledge. Throughout history, significant content has been expressed in images in two and three dimensions, construction in sound, and movement of the body.

In short, the arts provide students ways of perceiving their environment which are quite different from those which are gained by reading books, doing experiments, solving problems, or writing essays and theses." [Carnegie, op. cit., p. 112] In addition, the students of this generation are particularly deficient in an understanding of the cultural development of world civilization and this "sense of history" can be fostered in courses in the fine arts in ways that supplement formal courses in the History Department.

C. Philosophy

The ultimate aim of the all-university requirements is to instill in our students an appreciation and respect for ideas so that they will be able and eager to continue examining and learning new ideas after graduation. Most of these ideas which the students learn are presented in the various academic disciplines. A formal investigation into the relationship between ideas, their moral force, and the assumptions which underlie many "truths" is perhaps even more important for students in an institution which presumes a religious belief.

There are certain values such as "honesty" which are absolutely essential to the progress of human endeavors such as science, law, business and politics. These values are best investigated in a homogeneous group which includes students interested in all of these endeavors, for then the universality of these values can best be demonstrated.

D. History of World Civilization

The purpose of this requirement is to assure that our graduates are conversant with "(a) developments that shaped some significant portion of history irreversibly; (b) issues that were controversial in their time and that people struggled over; and (c) issues that are not directly related to modern policy questions." [The Harvard Curriculum, p. 47]

While courses which concentrate on important but brief periods such as the French Revolution may be appropriate for some students, this degree of specialization will not be allowed in fulfillment of this requirement. The History Department is currently redesigning many of its courses covering countries and areas so that students will be exposed to the development of a significant region of the world over a period of several centuries. In this way students will see that actions taken today will have consequences which extend far into the future.

Summary of Requirements in the Humanities

A. Literature (3 credits). Courses which fulfill this requirement will require students to read and write about important works of literature in English or in translation from the original language.

B. The Fine Arts (3 credits). This requirement may be fulfilled by choosing from among history of the theatre, art, music, or the dance.

While skills and performance courses may be very beneficial for many students, they do not address the aims of this requirement and will not be allowed.

C. Philosophy (3 credits). The courses which fulfill this requirement will serve a multiple purpose: to introduce students to important traditions of thought, to make them aware of the intricacies of argument and to bring them to grips with particular questions of choice and value. [The Harvard Curriculum, p. 49]

D. World History (3 credits). The courses which fulfill this requirement may either be a survey of western civilization or a course which covers several centuries of the development and interactions of a nation or region. These courses should impart new knowledge, explain the historian's craft and promote analytical and interpretive skills on the part of the students.

IV. The Social Sciences

"The object of this requirement is to familiarize students with some of the central approaches of the social sciences and to do so in a way that gives students a sense of how these approaches can enhance their understanding of human behavior in the context of contemporary society. The courses offered to meet this requirement will provide formal coherent theories and analytical approaches that are tested or illuminated by empirical data." [The Harvard Curriculum, p. 49]

The social sciences in the all college requirements are divided into two groups. The differences between these two groups are important enough so that students will be required to choose a course from each group.

A. Nations and the World

The requirement that students chooses a course from this group is meant to ensure that our graduates are familiar with the global aspects of social science, in particular, those generalizations and laws which have been developed to guarantee the continued existence of civilization on this planet. The subjects studied in this group differ from those in the next group in that breaching the laws presented here can lead to disastrous consequences such as war, famine or economic depression.

B. Self and Society

In general, the theories which have been proposed in this group of subjects deal with smaller groups of people and as such are less well developed and less rigid than those in the previous group. In part this is because statistical fluctuations which "average out" when dealing with societies and nations have primary importance in individuals and small groups. This difficulty in arriving at hard and fast rules in this study is not meant to denigrate it nor diminish its importance in the education of students. Most of the interactions we have with fellow humans offer on an individual or small group basis and

any study which can give guidance and increase our sensitivity in these interactions will have lifelong value.

Requirements in the Social Sciences

A. Nations and the World (3 credits). A course in economics, geography, or political science. The courses which fulfill this requirement must cover the methods, findings, and current areas of study important to one of these disciplines.

B. Self and Society (3 credits). A course in anthropology, sociology, or psychology. Courses which fulfill this requirement must cover the best current theories which explain and illuminate the behavior of individuals and their interactions in groups.

V. The Natural Sciences

For the purposes of the all university requirements, the natural sciences have also been divided into two categories: those that are primarily descriptive and those that are primarily analytical. The purpose of these requirements is to help students to: (a) organize their observations of the natural world, (b) dispel superstition and recognize pseudoscience, (c) develop their abstract analytical reasoning ability, (d) understand the intricacies and interdependence of forms of life, and (e) appreciate the historical and cultural aspects of science. The study of the natural sciences is primarily the study of a method which looks beyond the authority of the written word to experimentation and observation as a source of truth.

Requirements in the Natural Sciences

A. Biology or Earth Science Laboratory Course (3 credits). Courses which fulfill this requirement will cover critical observations appropriate to the discipline, ordering of such observations into rational classificatory schemes, and developing and testing theories which seek to explain processes in operational terms. Implications of past and current discoveries and concepts will be examined.

B. Chemistry or Physics Course with a Lab Experience (3 credits). Courses which fulfill this requirement will require that students investigate some of the more abstract aspects of the discipline: topics such as energy, the mole and molecular theory. Students should be taught not only what scientists believe, but also the evidence which supports these beliefs.

The ideal laboratory experience is one in which students learn techniques of observation and measurement by individual manipulation of apparatus. Funding and staffing limitations have led departments to institute courses in which the laboratory is replaced by large group experimentation, videotaped experiments, or optional laboratory work on a walk-in basis. While such efforts are innovative, they are far from ideal. The current situation at this university requires, however, that they be allowed as laboratory courses for the purpose of this requirement.

VI. Mathematics

Mathematical literacy is vital to advanced study and to lifelong learning. Mathematics has wide-ranging application in many fields of study. However, this requirement is important even if a student enters a field which makes little direct use of mathematics. The informed citizen must be aware of the role of mathematics in the natural and social sciences and must be an intelligent consumer of quantitative information.

The courses which have been designed by the Mathematics Department to satisfy this requirement have as their primary goals the development of (a) analytic skills, (b) problem solving skills, (c) deductive reasoning ability, and (d) the ability to reason abstractly and to generalize. Secondary, but nonetheless important, goals are to develop the ability to (a) use mathematical algorithms and manipulate formulas, (b) apply mathematics to other areas, and (c) appreciate mathematics in its historical and cultural context.

Requirement in Mathematics

Mathematics (3 credits). All students must complete at least one approved course which is at a level more rigorous than arithmetic and elementary algebra.

VII. American Political Foundations

This requirement is directed toward developing in the student a comprehension of the evolution and constant testing of free political institutions in America and of the tensions throughout our history between majority rule and minority rights. By an analysis of the forces that created the American republic, molded our Constitution, stimulated territorial growth, facilitated the admixture of peoples, fostered urbanization and industrialization, and promoted social justice the student will be prepared to participate in the democratic process.

Requirement in American Political Foundations

Students will fulfill this requirement by completing a three-credit course in American political foundations from a list of courses designated by the Political Science or History Department.

VIII. Foreign Language

The foreign language requirement is being strengthened for students working toward a Bachelor of Science Degree. There are three fundamental reasons for this. First, students should be prepared to meet the needs of the community that the university is committed to serve. English is not understood by many of our citizens; moreover, many of the industrial firms of Connecticut are under European ownership and need employees who speak teaching foreign languages has improved and options available to students have increased. For instance, students may concentrate on spoken French or Spanish or

reading German. It is now possible to attain a useful and valuable skill at the second level of foreign language study. A level-two proficiency will better prepare degree candidates with the mental precision and cultural awareness needed in a competitive, shrinking world. Our graduates will have an edge over other applicants when seeking jobs in a country with large ethnic populations and in a state with many European businesses. Third, this increase in the graduation requirement for Bachelor of Science students will correspond more realistically to our students' backgrounds. About 85 percent of our undergraduates have had two or more years of foreign language study in high school and should as freshmen be able to waive one or more of these courses by examination.

Foreign Language Requirement for all B.S. degrees

Students shall demonstrate proficiency at the second level of foreign language by passing an appropriately designed examination or by passing a level-two course.

Foreign Language Requirement for all B.A. degrees

Students shall demonstrate proficiency at the fourth level of foreign language by passing an appropriately designed examination or by passing a level-four course.

IX. Physical Education and Recreation

There are two fundamental reasons for requiring activities in physical education. First, students should be made aware of the wide range of safe recreational activities of which they may avail themselves in their leisure time throughout their lives. Second, strenuous physical exercise is important for good health. These courses should provide examples of means of obtaining this exercise which are pleasurable rather than tedious.

Requirement in Physical Education and Recreation

Students will be required to complete two courses (at least 0.5 credits each) from a list of approved courses in physical education activities. The courses which fulfill this requirement should stress team and individual sports, coordination, conditioning, exercise, and lifelong recreational activities. Recreation 105 may be chosen to fulfill one of these course requirements.

X. Health Education

Personal well-being is essential to meeting the demand of academic and professional responsibilities and to effective daily living. A truly educated person is one who can apply knowledge to the task of more fully knowing him/herself, and can place the proper emphasis on personal growth and development. In this context, health promotional activities are the foundation for achieving and maintaining well-being. Health education contributes to health promotion by enabling the individual to: a) increase competency for making decisions

about personal, health-related behaviors, and b) increase skills and inclinations required for engaging in activities and behaviors conducive to well-being.

Certain health-behavior issues are especially timely for college students. However, the emphasis of this requirement is placed on behavioral and environmental adaptations which are intended to bring about lifelong improvements in health. This is done through a scientific approach which examines current research findings, and is presented within a framework of personal goals, needs, preferences and choices.

Requirement in Health Education

Health Education I (1 credit). Students will successfully complete the course HSC 100.¹² This course requires students to examine personal health values and behaviors along with scientifically based information on risk factors and health promotional activities.

XI. Graduation Requirements

	Bachelor of Arts	Bachelor of Science
All College Requirements	38-47 (1)	38-47 (1)
Courses Specified by the Major Department (2)	42	63
Level IV Foreign Language	6	0
Free Electives (3)	27-36 (4)	12-21 (4,5)
Total	122	122

- (1) Students who waive both English 100 and the Level II foreign language courses shall have 38 credits required. Students whose level of preparation requires that they take these courses shall have credits required.
- (2) The number specified in this column includes major courses, cognate courses and professional requirements. This is the maximum that may be required within the 122 credit limit. Professional or accrediting agencies may stipulate that more than 63 credits be required. This will mean that students will be required to take more than 122 credits for graduation, but the free electives may not be decreased.
- (3) The free electives are intended to be broadening and enriching and as such at least 12 credits must be outside the major department.

¹² Grading for HSC 100 will be based on the traditional A - F scale. The course may be waived by examination or successful completion of HSC 201 - Personal Health (3 credits), or (for programs requiring it) the completion of HSC 203.

- (4) The larger number applies to students who waive the English 100 and the Level II foreign language courses. The smaller number applies to students who must take these courses.
- (5) B.S. degree programs in professional areas provide for a minimum of 21 hours of free electives, while non-certifying programs provide a minimum of 12 hours of free electives.

THE FRESHMAN YEAR

All students should begin work on the fundamental college-level skills in the freshman year. These are skills which will be needed in upper-level courses in many departments. The following plan is recommended for the average student. Those who are deficient must be placed in special programs.

*English Composition (ENG 100 or 101)	(3 cr)
?Mathematics.....	(3 cr)
Social Science	(3 cr)
Natural Science	(3 cr)
World (non U.s.) History	(3 cr)
Health Education	(1 cr)

All students should take the foreign language proficiency test and begin study in this area if needed, otherwise they should elect a fine arts history course..... (3 cr)

Courses specified by the major department or advisor..... ..(12 cr)

Total (31 cr)

? These two areas are considered to have high priority because of their importance in the success of all other university-level courses and because their completion early in the university education will open up a wider range of choices in free electives and career possibilities.

A RECOMMENDATION ON READING PROFICIENCY

The university should provide a means of testing incoming students in the area of reading (both comprehension and speed) in addition to the current testing in mathematics and composition. Students who will probably need remedial work in any of these three areas should not be admitted to the university unless there is adequate provision for meeting these needs. It is recommended that students who are weak in all three areas not be admitted to the university. The university has an obligation to provide sufficient sections of remedial courses so that every deficient student may begin necessary remedial work in the freshman year.

UPPER AND LOWER DIVISION REQUIREMENTS

The Subcommittee on All University Requirements has observed that it is possible for students to graduate from the university with the majority of their courses at the introductory or 100 level. A graduate could have a transcript which shows 300 and 400 level courses only in the major. The U.C.I.C. investigated several ways in which this problem could be alleviated and students either could be required or encouraged to study subjects in a depth greater than an introductory course. The problem with the implementation of any of these plans is that there is no clear definition of exactly what the various course numbers mean in terms of level, depth, or prerequisites. The following recommendation is therefore offered.

The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee should develop a set of criteria and guidelines on the meaning of course numbers. These criteria should be used by the committee in its deliberations when new courses are presented for approval and in its ongoing review of departmental offerings. When these criteria are developed they should be transmitted to the University Curriculum and Instruction Committee which will then undertake a study of upper and lower division graduation requirements.