

**General Studies at Seaver College, 1990-1992:  
Assessment and Recommendations**

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## **I. Introduction**

The General Studies Committee of Seaver College was given a special charge by the President of the University and the Dean of Seaver College during the 1990-91 academic year. The committee was to examine the General Education (GE) requirements in light of the extensive changes phased in over the course of several years beginning in the Fall of 1987. The committee was to assess the program from a cost/benefit point of view, recognizing that we have finite resources with which to work.

The plan of the committee was to collect data, debate the issues, and present this report at the end of the 1990-91 academic year. Since the data collection process was somewhat time consuming, however, we were not able to meet our deadline. The Committee members agreed to serve on the same committee the following year to complete their task. The only changes to the committee the second year were the addition of the representative from the Business Division and the replacement by the new Associate Dean as the Ex officio member.

The remainder of this report consists of four sections:

- Background and Goals
- Assessment
- Recommendations
- Appendices

The next section describes the history of the General Studies requirement and its goals at Seaver College. The section on Assessment consists of some raw data but is mostly a distillation of the data found in the Appendices, which are included because all data is subject to interpretation. This problem is especially acute in this report because the data sometimes consists of transcripts from interviews and open-ended comments from questionnaires. The section on Recommendations describes the issues that the committee debated, the recommendations that we propose, and the reasons for them.

## **II. Background and Goals**

The current GE requirements at Seaver College can best be understood by examining the history behind them. The University opened its new campus at Malibu in 1972, the first year of operation of Seaver College. The GE requirements that were established remained in place for 14 years. A Faculty Curriculum Committee was asked to examine the general studies program and issued a report of recommended changes. Their report influenced the changes in the GE requirements that were made in 1986.

This section consists of three parts

- General Studies Before 1986
- The Faculty Proposal
- Current Requirements and Goals

The section on The Faculty Proposal is historical. That is, it describes the proposal that influenced the changes made in 1986. It is not the proposal made by the Committee in this report.

### **A. General Studies Before 1986**

The goals of the original GE requirements emphasized interdisciplinary studies. The Seaver College Catalogs before 1986 described the educational philosophy as follows.

Seaver College is dedicated to the informed, purposeful, reverent human personality. Every aspect of Seaver College is devoted to the development of mature individuals. The faculty of Seaver College believes that an interdisciplinary program best accomplishes this purpose. Frequently, courses are not confined to traditional disciplines or departments. The goal of unifying knowledge prevails throughout Seaver College.

Before the Fall of 1986, the GE requirements at Seaver College consisted of 60 units composed of 14 four-unit courses and 4 one-unit courses in physical education. The GE requirement was 46.9% of the 128 units required to graduate. The following courses were required:

<u>Pre-1986</u>	
English Composition, one 4-unit course	4 units
Foreign Language or Communication and Culture	4 units
One elective Communication seminar	4 units
Introduction to Fine Arts	4 units
Western Heritage, two 4-unit courses	8 units
One elective Humanities seminar	4 units
Man and Science	4 units
One elective science seminar	4 units
Religion, two 4-unit courses	8 units
American Ideals and Institutions, one 4-unit course	4 units
Man and Society, one 4-unit course	4 units
One elective social science seminar	4 units
Physical Education, four 1-unit courses	<u>4 units</u>
	60 units

All courses were 4 semester hours, regardless of the course content. The foreign language requirement was waived for those who had at least two years of foreign language in high school.

Three courses in particular emphasized the interdisciplinary approach—Communication and Culture, Western Heritage, and American Ideals and Institutions. The original intent of these courses was to integrate topics from several different disciplines, often by team teaching in a large lecture setting.

## **B. The Faculty Proposal**

The original impetus for the change in the GE requirements came from the Administration (during the University's "Wave of Excellence" campaign). The faculty was charged with the task of assessing the GE program without regard to cost. The Curriculum and General Education Committee issued a report that identified the following general concerns (from the report of the Committee):

The current list of courses seems to have been designed as an attempt to balance unit-load distributions among the divisions of Seaver College rather than as a carefully planned program to achieve sound theoretical and academic goals.

The rigid scheme in which every course is worth 4 units regardless of its content or requirements creates some unnecessary limitations.

There are several significant omissions from the current requirements: mathematics, speech, and foreign language, for example.

There is a significant number of major requirements which are disguised as general education requirements.

We believe that there are some inequities in the current list: business majors have few choices, even in their "seminars"; BS candidates in the natural sciences may omit one of the seminars, but BS students in business or physical education may not.

The Committee also had these specific concerns about the core lectures, the freshman seminars, and the English composition requirement (again from the report of the Committee):

*Core lectures*—Some of the core lecture courses are no longer interdisciplinary. The absence of discussion/quiz sessions makes them largely impersonal, and makes the students passive rather than active learners. The size of most makes testing other than by objective tests virtually impossible, thus missing an opportunity to have students write more. Some educators believe that large lectures are inherently bad.

*Freshman seminars*—Many are dominated by upperclassmen. Many are not taught as seminars. Many are taught by adjunct faculty. Many are designed to be the introductory course for the major. There is tremendous variation in the quality, rigor, and requirements.

*English composition*—A one-trimester course requires cut-off for LA 099 to be very high. The divorce of composition instruction from literature means teaching writing in a course with no integral subject content.

The Committee's recommended general studies curriculum reflected the above concerns. The GE requirements they proposed consisted of the following core requirements and distribution requirements:

Proposed core requirements

Western Heritage, 3-course sequence integrating Fine Arts  
English Composition and Literature, 2-course sequence  
Religion, 2 courses  
Freshman seminar

Proposed distribution requirements

Foreign language, through 251 level  
Mathematics or computer science, 1 course  
Natural Science, 1 course  
Behavioral Science, 1 course  
American Heritage, 1 course  
Speech and Rhetoric, 1 course  
Upper division seminar, 1 course  
Physical Education, no change

The Committee specified their proposal in terms of courses, not semester units. They recommended that several of the GE courses (not specified in their report) should be three units instead of four units.

The Committee's report stated that the Religion requirement should be specified as a two-course core sequence or as a single core course with an additional religion course listed in the distribution category.

The Committee had some preference for the three-course sequence in Western Heritage, but it was not a strong one.

Although the faculty discussions about the general studies program at the time were framed in terms of "desired academic quality without regard to cost," the Committee did estimate

the cost of their proposal. They calculated an additional teaching requirement of 9.4 full-time equivalents. Details of their estimate are given in section III.D of this report.

### **C. Current Requirements and Goals**

What are the stated goals of the current GE requirements? The concerns of the original Curriculum Committee listed in the previous section certainly influenced the current program. However, the question, “What are the stated goals of the current program?” is one that this Committee struggled with, because that question is different from the question, “What goals shaped the current program?”

Two documents that state the goals of the program are the Seaver College Catalog and the Seaver College Mission Statement. The Seaver College Catalog no longer emphasizes the interdisciplinary approach of the pre-1986 program. The educational philosophy of Seaver College as stated in the current catalog is described as follows:

Seaver College stresses both academic excellence and Christian values. Its programs emphasize the importance of thinking clearly, communicating effectively feeling keenly, and exploring thoroughly. The curriculum has been carefully designed to enable students to acquire breadth of knowledge as well as depth of knowledge.

The first sentence in the Mission Statement of Seaver College states that “Seaver College exists to provide a link between the knowledge and wisdom of the past and present with the challenges of the future.” It goes on to state:

Seaver is a liberal arts college. As such, it nourishes and transmits the noblest ideas of Western culture—the achievements of modern science and technology as well as the artistic, intellectual, and ethical heritage of the Western world. ... the college is completely committed to the spirit and intent of the traditional baccalaureate: the sharpening of the mind, the ennobling of the heart, the broadening of the vision, and the cultivation of the arts of speaking and writing which result in civilized and fruitful discourse. It is likewise devoted to the relentless search for truth in an atmosphere of freedom of inquiry: to think, to question, to doubt, to believe, and to affirm.

The Mission Statement of Seaver College was formulated after the current GE requirements were determined, and so cannot be claimed to have influenced our current general studies program. Although the Mission Statement was not the guiding document for the original Curriculum Committee, the GE requirements nevertheless reflect many of the goals of the Mission Statement.

In the course of gathering data, this Committee formulated specific course goals for each of the GE requirements. These stated goals were used in a student survey and a faculty survey, and are listed in Section III.A.2 of this report.

The table in Figure 1 shows the content of the general studies requirement at Seaver College. Of 128 total units required to graduate, 65 are GE requirements, which is 50.8% of the total.

Two factors must be kept in mind when interpreting the table. First, if students do not have the prerequisites for a given GE requirement, they must acquire them. In particular,

the Foreign Language 251 requirement forces many students to take the language course at the 151 and/or 152 level because of inadequate preparation from high school. This issue of “hidden requirements” was frequently encountered by the Committee.

Second, if incoming students score high enough on the math placement test, they are not required to take MATH 102.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the requirements across subject area and takes into account the fact that some courses cover more than one area. The Western Heritage sequence has components in art and music, literature and philosophy, and history; the speech course has a history and writing component, and the Freshman Seminar has a speech and writing component. The Committee recognizes that writing English cuts across all disciplines and did not try to allocate that area to different courses.

Another complication is the fact that students can pick any two of ECON 200, HIST 200, and POSC 200. The total units were calculated assuming that half the students choose HIST 200 as one of the requirements from this group. (Assuming half take 8 units of Social Science and 0 units of History, and half take 4 units of Social Science and 4 units of History, the computation toward the total is 6 units of Social Science and 2 units of History.)

The Great Books sequence fulfills ENG 101/102, REL 301, and ECON/HIST/POSC 200 and is not included in the summary table.



**General Studies Curriculum Content**

Course	Units	%Fine Arts	%Eastern Culture	%English, Lit, Phil	%Foreign Language	%Seminar	%Frosh	%Math	%PE	%Rel	%Natural Science	%Social Science	%Speech	%Western History
ENG 101	3	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ENG 102	4	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
REL 101	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	100	0	0	0	0
REL 102	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	100	0	0	0	0
REL 301	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	100	0	0	0	0
HUM 111	4	33	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33
HUM 112	4	33	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33
HUM 113	4	33	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33
Non-Western	4	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ECON 200 *	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0
HIST 200 *	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
POSC 200 *	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0
PSYC 200 **	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0
SOC 200 **	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0
Foreign Lang 251	4	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Science with lab	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0
MATH 102	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPE 180	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	75	25
PE	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
GS 199, Frosh Sem	3	0	0	0	0	80	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0

Total:	65	4	4	11	4	2.4	3	4	9	4	9	3.6	7
% of Total:	100%	6.2%	6.2%	16.9%	6.2%	3.7%	4.6%	6.2%	13.8%	6.2%	13.8%	5.5%	10.8%

Graduation Req: 128  
 % of Graduation Req: 50.8%

\* Note: Select two  
 \*\* Note: Select one  
 \*\*\* Note: Assumes half pick Hist 200 as one of the two required

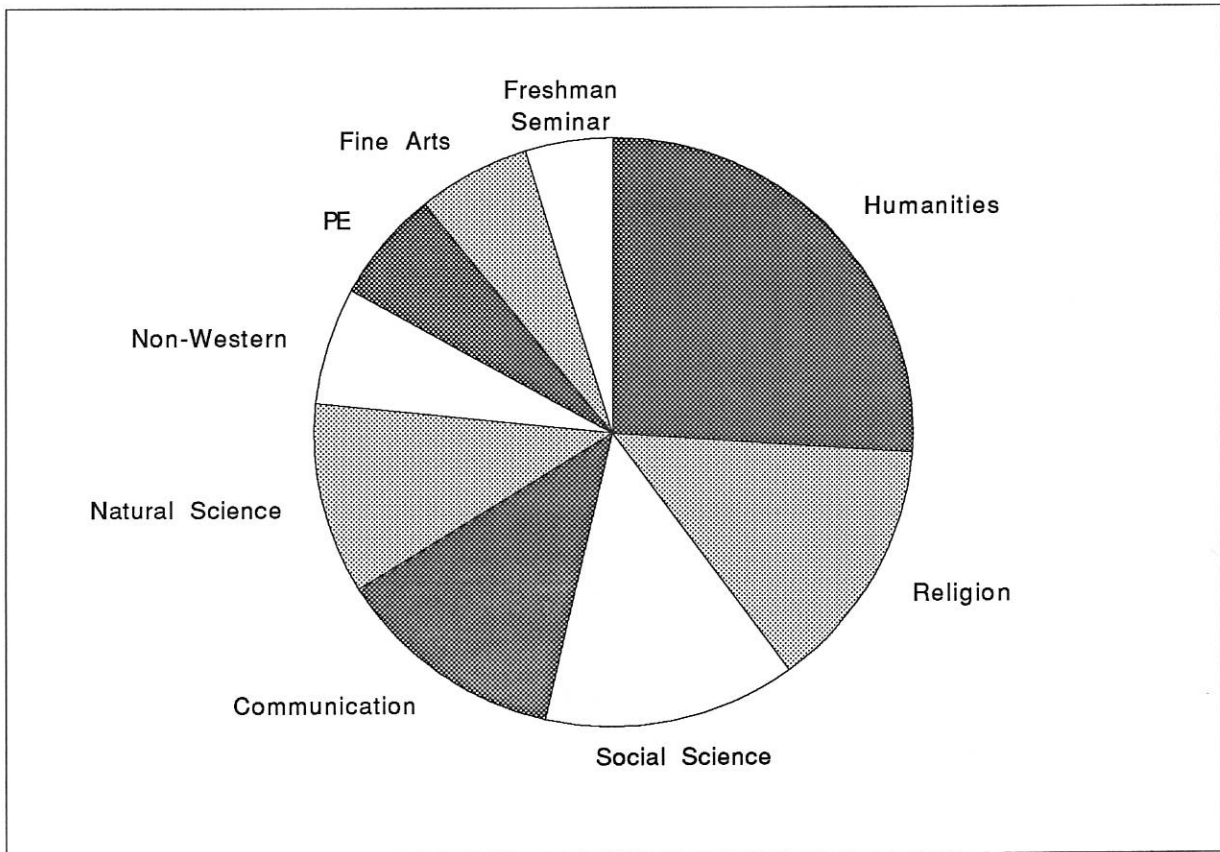
*Figure 1*

The pie chart in Figure 2 shows the percentage of the total of each category as taught in the academic Divisions at Seaver. PE is included in a separate category, as is the Freshman Seminar.

Humanities is the largest component, comprising a little more than a fourth of the total. Religion and Social Science are the second largest with about 14% each. Communication comprises about 12% and Natural Science, which includes mathematics, about 11%. The remaining requirements—Non-Western, PE, Fine Arts, and Freshman Seminar—are each less than 7%.

**GE Divisional Allocation**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Units of GE Content</b>	<b>Percent of GE Content</b>
Humanities	17	26.2%
Religion	9	13.8%
Social Science	9	13.8%
Communication	8	12.3%
Natural Science	7	10.8%
Non-Western	4	6.2%
PE	4	6.2%
Fine Arts	4	6.2%
Freshman Seminar	3	4.6%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



<b>Category</b>	<b>Courses</b>
Humanities	ENG 101, 102, 66% of HUM 111, 112, 113, HIST 200
Religion	REL 101, 102, 301
Social Science	PSYC 200 or SOC 200, ECON 200, POSC 200
Communication	SPE 180, Foreign Language 251
Natural Science	MATH 102, Lab Science
Non-Western	ISAC 101 or 301, or ANTH 262, or COM 513, or HIST 220, or REL 501 or 526, or REL/ANTH/SOC 592
PE	PE 100 plus three others
Fine Arts	33% of HUM 111, 112, 113
Freshman Seminar	GS 199

*Figure 2*

Seaver Academic Council adopted a slightly different sequence of courses than those proposed by the original Curriculum and General Education Committee in three areas—the Religion requirement, the upper division seminar, and the Non-Western requirement.

*Religion*—The original Committee specified the Religion requirement as a two-course sequence or as a single core course with an additional religion course listed in the distribution category. The appendix of their report shows the results of a faculty referendum in which the two-course sequence was approved by the faculty by a vote of 52 (approve) to 3 (disapprove). The current Religion requirement is three courses.

*Seminar*—The original Committee specified an upper division seminar in addition to the Freshman Seminar. This one-course requirement was to be chosen from any discipline outside the student's major. The faculty approved this requirement by a vote of 37 (approve) to 16 (disapprove). There is no upper division seminar requirement.

*Non-Western*—The original Committee did not specify a Non-Western requirement. They did, however, include the question of such a requirement in the faculty referendum. The faculty approved the requirement by a vote of 28 (approve) to 26 (disapprove). Seaver College now has a four-unit Non-Western requirement.

The original Committee specified its recommendation in terms of courses, not semester units. It did not address the question of how much of the total curriculum should be devoted to general studies as opposed to the majors. The effect of the eventual change in the curriculum was to increase the GE requirements from a minimum of 60 units to a minimum of 65 units. These numbers are minimums because many students must take prerequisite courses before enrolling in required GE courses. Since 128 units are required to graduate under both the old and the new system, the GE requirements were increased from at least 46.9% to at least 50.8% of the total.

### **III. Assessment**

The problem of assessment is difficult since it involves value judgment. Who's values should be applied in making the assessment? Recognizing that several groups of people are affected by the GE requirements the Committee collected data from several different constituencies. The assessment part of the Committee's evaluation has the following three components:

- Student perceptions
- Faculty perceptions
- Divisional chair perceptions

The committee reviewed the cost estimate made by the original (pre-1986) Committee for its proposed curriculum. A cost/benefit analysis of the current GE requirements concludes this section.

#### **A. Student Perceptions**

To assess student perceptions of the GE requirements, the Committee examined data from the following sources:

- Course evaluations
- Student survey
- Other sources

This section describes the data we examined from each of these sources. It tries to present the data in a purely descriptive fashion. Interpretation of the data is left for the recommendations in Section IV.

##### **1. Course Evaluations**

The Committee obtained permission from the faculty to examine summary statistics from the following six questions on the teacher evaluation forms that are administered in each class during the last week of the semester.

- The course is well organized.
- The course objectives have been defined and met.
- The textbook and other reading assignments are appropriate in content.
- The papers, reports, and/or other written or oral assignments are reasonable and fair.
- The tests and other evaluations are appropriate and fair.
- Overall this is an excellent course.

The results for the GE courses from Fall, 1990, are summarized in the table below. Data for the humanities courses (ENG 101/102, HUM 111/112/113, ISAC 101/301, HIST 200) are from Fall, 1991. The responses are the average on a 5-point scale, with a 5 interpreted as "very descriptive" and 1 as "not at all descriptive." The number of sections listed is the number for which the Committee received responses.

Questions

Course	# Sec's	Orgnz'd	Objctv's	Textbook	Papers	Tests	Overall
ENG 101	30	4.32	4.44	4.30	4.59	4.52	4.37
ENG 102	3	4.70	4.80	4.69	4.49	4.59	4.43
HUM 111, d	12	4.16	4.28	4.12	4.19	3.74	3.65
HUM 112, d	5	3.18	3.37	3.86	3.92	3.60	3.13
HUM 113, d	7	3.77	3.90	3.88	3.91	3.39	3.38
ISAC 101/301, d	5	4.05	4.09	4.12	4.28	3.86	3.84
SPE 180	23	4.28	4.45	3.79	3.94	3.79	3.68
<i>Lang 251's</i>	15	4.25	4.29	4.34	4.40	4.25	4.10
<i>Lang 152's</i>	13	4.22	4.11	4.34	4.33	4.16	3.97
HIST 200	5	4.40	4.57	4.31	4.70	4.40	4.25
<i>SoSc 200's</i>	3	4.44	4.46	4.25	4.41	3.94	4.31
PSYC 200	3	3.57	3.88	4.11	4.30	3.66	3.62
REL 101	6	4.39	4.33	4.12	4.27	3.69	3.67
REL 102	5	4.26	4.22	3.98	4.18	3.84	3.48
REL 301	12	3.57	3.59	3.24	3.61	2.97	2.85
<i>Nat Sci</i>	5	4.27	4.43	4.37	4.26	3.92	3.90
<i>Math</i>	3	4.22	4.08	3.83	4.34	4.31	3.41
GS 199	33	4.02	4.14	3.96	4.19	3.96	3.96
Median		4.27	4.26	4.12	4.28	3.85	3.76

Note: d = discussion sections only. Does not include large lecture component.

Care must be exercised when interpreting this data. The results are a snapshot from the course evaluations from only one semester. Although each number displayed in the table is the average of several sections, it is possible that such a snapshot is not representative of the assessment from the students in general. Also, as indicated in the table, some of the large lecture classes only provided data from the discussion sections, not from the large lecture component. Another factor to keep in mind is that the number of students per section is not considered. That is, a section with many students has the same weight in the average as a section with few students.

With these caveats in mind, the courses fall into roughly six groups based on the summary question, Overall this is an excellent course.

Average of 4.43 to 4.10

English 101/102  
Social Science 200's  
History 200  
Language 251's

Average of 3.97 to 3.84

Language 152's  
Freshman Seminar  
Natural Science  
ISAC 101/301

Average of 3.68 to 3.62

Speech 180  
Religion 101  
Western Heritage 111  
Psychology 200

Average of 3.48 to 3.38

Religion 102  
Mathematics  
Western Heritage 113

Average of 3.13

Western Heritage 112

Average of 2.85

Religion 301 (but see following paragraph)

It should be pointed out that the data for Religion 301 is from Fall, 1990. As mentioned in Section III.C.1, the Religion chair indicated that the Division has changed the 301 course this year based on their experience with this course. The above data does not reflect these changes. Data from the five sections of Religion 301 taught in Fall, 1991, average 4.24, which is a significant increase over 2.85.

## **2. Student Survey**

In the course of our assessment, the Committee heard much anecdotal evidence about student perceptions of the GE requirements. As expected with such evidence, there was plenty to justify each side of a particular issue. During the second year of our deliberations we embarked on a project to determine as systematically and scientifically as possible what are the student perceptions of the GE requirements.

The Committee enlisted the help of the University's Institutional Research office and consulted with several Social Science professors. Our goal was to be meticulous in our methodology so that, as much as possible, the data that we collected would not be biased. Three possible sources of bias in a survey are the design of the instrument, the sampling procedure, and a low response rate. We controlled each of these factors as follows.

*The instrument*—The Committee spent a great deal of time designing the student questionnaire. Many of the issues we were considering are controversial, and the final instrument is the result of compromises between different members of the Committee. The diversity of viewpoints on the Committee, with a representative

from each academic Division, served as a check that the questions would not be asked in a leading fashion. The specific wording of the questions was improved by our consultation with experts from the Social Science Division.

*The sampling procedure*—To avoid bias in the sampling procedure, the Institutional Research office produced a computer-generated random sample stratified by class (that is, proportions of freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior equal to the proportions in the college) of the Seaver College undergraduate population. Our consultants indicated that a sample of 20% of the population would be necessary to achieve statistically reliable results. Accordingly, our sample identified 505 students by name whom we wished to poll.

*The response rate*—Our consultants indicated that about 80% of the those polled needed to return the questionnaire for the data to be unbiased. To achieve such a high response rate, Institutional Research produced a computer match of the student list with the enrollment list on the University's Student Information System. We identified a set of courses in which the students were enrolled. The plan was to have the instructors in each of these courses ask the individual students to complete the survey. The instrument was designed to be short enough (one page, double sided) that the student could fill it out on the spot and return it immediately. We faxed the survey to those students in the sample who were in the Year in Europe program. The result of this effort was an actual return rate of 75%. Such a high response rate was difficult to achieve, and is gratifying to the Committee.

The complete questionnaire is in Appendix A. The questions were divided into three categories on the survey—course goals being met, miscellaneous issues, and number of units required.

Following is the first group of questions as they were asked on the survey (in their original order). Each goal was primarily determined by considering a Divisional representative's specification of the goal for the course from his or her Division, frequently in consultation with other faculty members in that Division. Enunciation of the goals was especially difficult because each had to fit in the space of two lines of text in the instrument. Several Committee members felt that this requirement of conciseness did not allow the goals to be enunciated as well as they should have been. Also, there was not unanimity on a few of the goals, so those questions reflect a compromise.

The English 101/102 classes improved my ability to write effectively and increased my appreciation of literature.

The Religion classes encouraged me to develop a personal value system and gave me a better understanding of Judeo-Christian principles.

The Western Heritage classes gave me a better understanding and appreciation of Western art and music, literature and philosophy, and history.

The non-Western class (ISAC 101/301) gave me a better understanding and appreciation of non-Western culture.

The ECON/HIST/POSC 200 classes gave me a better understanding and appreciation of American history, economics and/or government.

The PSYC/SOC 200 classes gave me a better understanding of human behavior.



The Foreign Language classes gave me a better understanding of another culture and improved my ability to write and speak in a foreign language.

The science and math classes gave me a better understanding and appreciation of quantitative and scientific reasoning.

The Speech 180 class improved my public speaking and critical analysis skills.

The Physical Education classes gave me a better understanding of the importance of lifelong healthy behaviors and the benefits of physical activity.

The Freshman Seminar gave me a better understanding of the culture and procedures of Seaver College.

The Freshman Seminar gave me a better understanding of its academic content area

The possible responses to this set of questions were

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Have not taken any of these classes

Figure 3 shows the percentage of students who indicated each of these responses, except for those who had not taken any of the classes in the group of classes for a given question. Hence, the responses shown in the figure are from only those students who experienced the courses in question.

Students perceive that Western Heritage, the Social Science courses, and English have the highest success in meeting their goals, with about 80% either agreeing or strongly agreeing, and only about 10% disagreeing.

The disagreement ratings increased to about 17% for the next group, which includes Foreign Language, Speech, Science/Mathematics, and PE, but the agreement rating for this group was above 65%. The disagreement rating increased and the agreement rating decreased for the next two course groups, Non-Western and Religion.

Of all the GE requirements, students felt that the Freshman Seminar was the least successful in meeting its goals. 50.4% agreed that the seminar gave them a better understanding of the seminar's academic content area and 41.6% agreed that it gave them a better understanding of the culture and procedures of Seaver College.

Student Survey: Course Goals

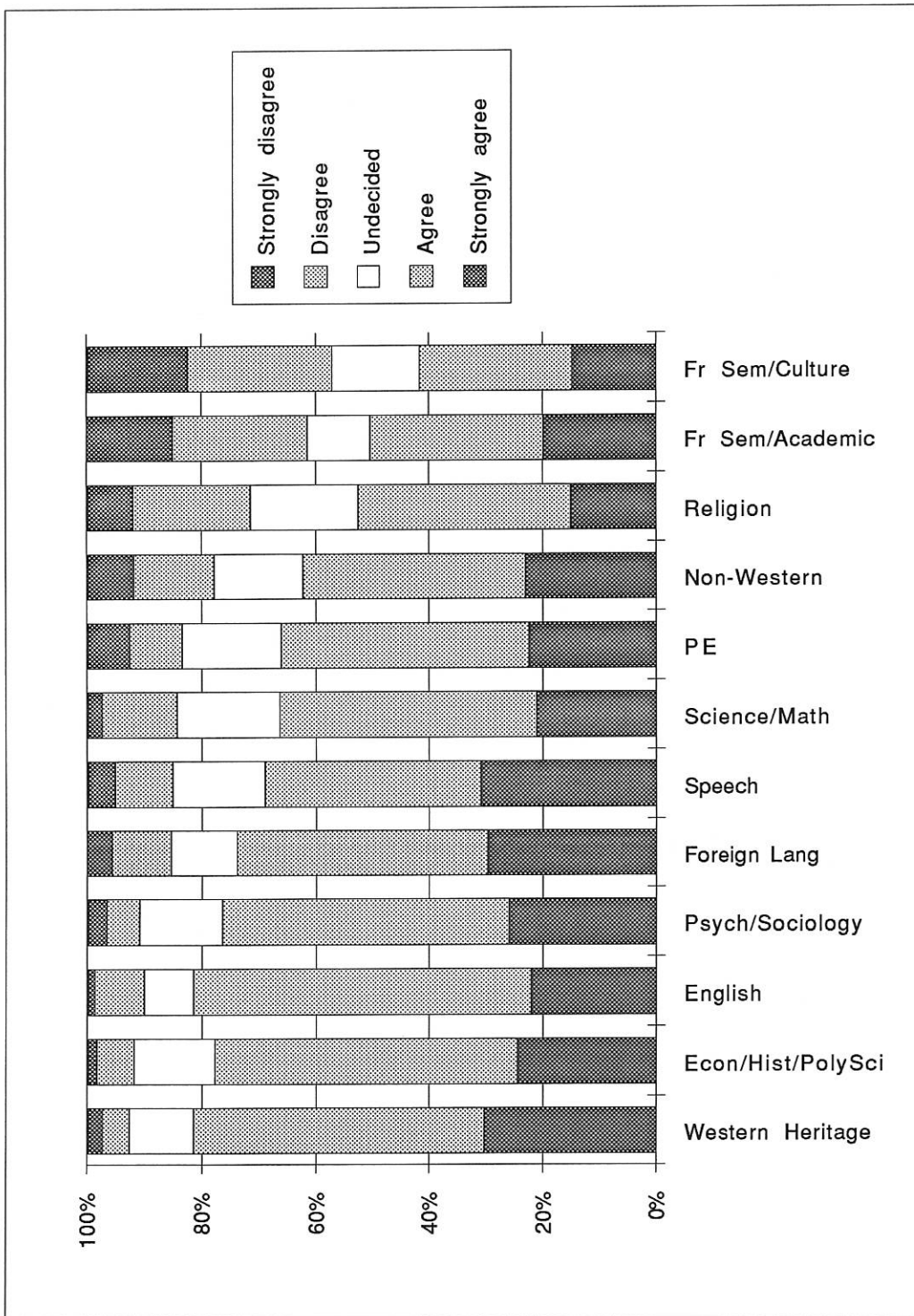


Figure 3

Following is the second group of questions as they were asked on the survey. These questions are of a general nature. Some were motivated by issues that have been voiced by various members of the academic community. Others reflected the goals that Seaver College has stated for its students in its published Mission Statement.

The quality of academic advising has been consistently high.

Incoming freshmen who know what they want to major in should have advisors from their major Divisions.

The General Studies classes that I took helped me to assume the responsibility for my own intellectual development.

The General Studies classes that I took helped me to make informed and responsible moral choices.

The General Studies classes that I took taught me the diversity of cultures through multi-cultural experiences.

I wish I had time in my academic schedule to take more classes in my major.

I wish I had time in my academic schedule to take more electives.

The large lecture classes that I took provided a positive learning environment.

Possible responses to these questions were identical to the first group of questions, except that the category, Have not taken any of these classes, was not included. Figure 4 summarizes the results.

The question that elicited the strongest response on the survey was the statement that incoming freshmen who know what they want to major in should have advisors from their major Divisions. About 57% strongly agreed with this statement, and 83% either agreed or strongly agreed. Only 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Some students may not be aware that another model exists and chose this response out of lack of knowledge about Freshman advisers.

Of the three questions that asked about general goals from the Mission Statement, agreement was highest for the student assuming responsibility for intellectual development, followed by being taught diversity of cultures, and then learning to make responsible moral choices.

More than two thirds of the students want to have more time in their academic schedules, either to take electives or to take additional courses in their majors. Fewer than 13% disagree or strongly disagree.

60% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the quality of academic advising has been consistently high. About one fourth disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Whether large lectures provide a positive learning environment was a toss up. Students were about evenly divided on this issue.

Student Survey: Miscellaneous Issues

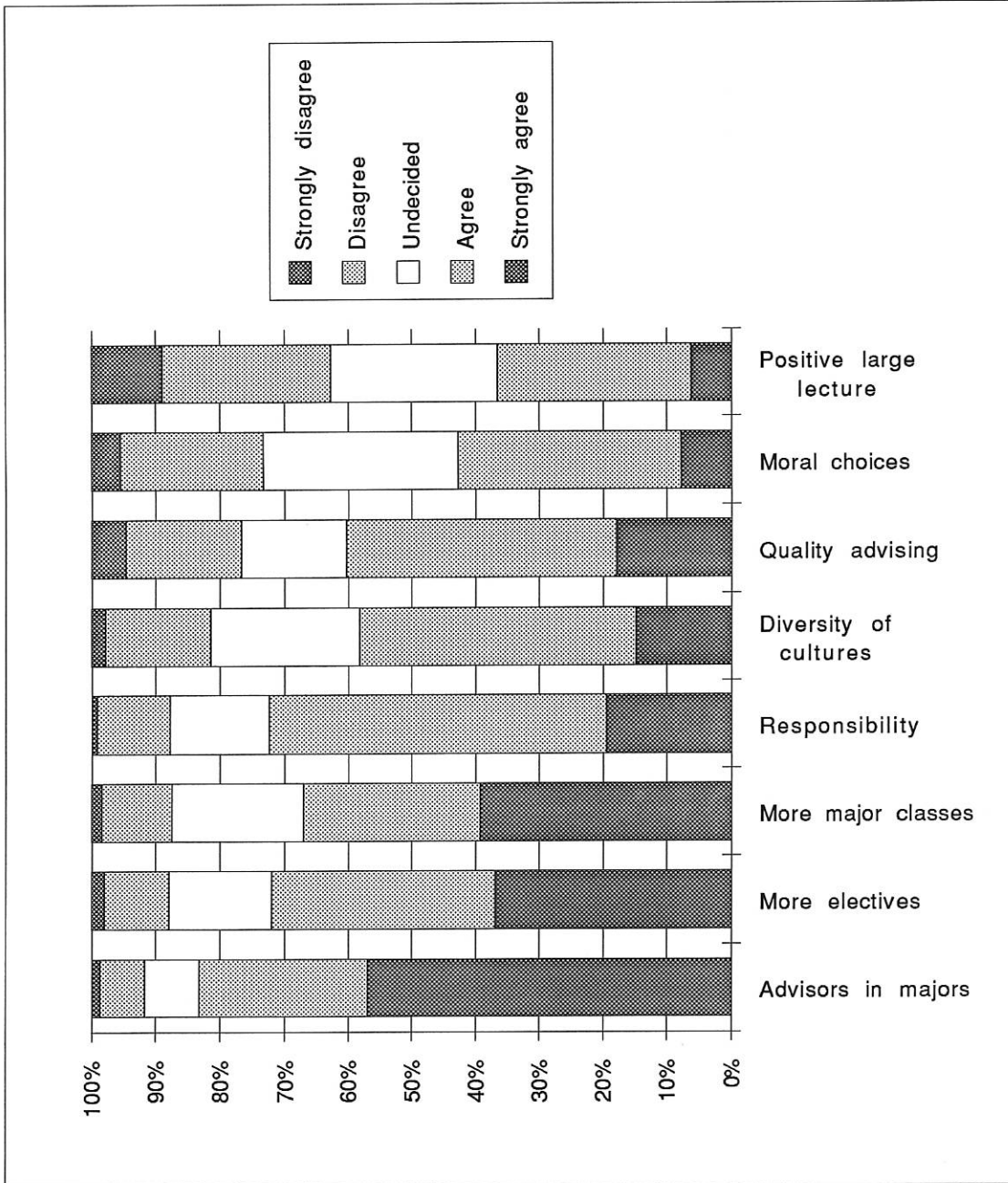


Figure 4

The third group of questions was designed to determine student perceptions about the number of units required in the general studies program.

The General Studies requirements are 65 units out of 128 units to graduate. The number of units required in the General Studies program is...

The current English requirement is 7 units (two courses). The number of units required in English is ...

The current Religion requirement is 9 units (three courses). The number of units required in Religion is ...

The current Western Heritage requirement is 12 units (three courses). The number of units required in Western Heritage is ...

The current Non-Western requirement is 4 units (one course, e.g. ISAC). The number of units required in Non-Western studies is ...

The current Social Science requirement is 11 units (three courses, e.g. ECON, HIST, POSC, PSYC, SOC 200). The units required in Social Studies is ...

The current Foreign Language requirement is at the 251 level (third semester). The number of units required in Foreign Language is ...

The current Science requirement is 7 units (two courses—lab science and math). The number of units required in science and math is ...

The current speech requirement is 4 units (one course). The number of units required in speech is ...

The current Freshman Seminar requirement is 3 units (one course). The number of units required in Freshman Seminar is ...

The current Physical Education requirement is 4 units (four courses). The number of units required in Physical Education is ...

The possible responses to these questions were:

- Way too high
- A little too high
- About right
- A little too low
- Way too low
- Undecided

The responses, summarized in Figure 5, show that 69% of the respondents think the number of units required for general studies is too high and 30% think it is about right.

Students perceive the English requirement to be about right, with a few more students actually believing the requirement is a little too low than those who believe it is a little too high.

Although the Non-Western course did not fare as well in the students' perceptions in terms of meeting its goals compared to the other GE requirements (Figure 3), 85% think the time

devoted to the requirement is about right or too low (Figure 5). The number of units devoted to the Speech requirement is perceived similarly.

The percentages of those respondents who thought that the requirement was about right or too low for the next group of GE requirements are: 78% (Science and Math), 72% (Freshman Seminar), 70% (Social Science), and 68% (Foreign Language).

Only half of the students indicated that the number of units devoted to the PE requirement is satisfactory, and only a third indicated so for the Western Heritage sequence. Western Heritage exhibits the reverse phenomenon than the Non-Western requirement, since students ranked Western Heritage near the top in terms of achieving its goals (Figure 3).

In this group of questions, the Religion requirement elicited the strongest responses, with 33% stating that the requirement is way too high, and 73% stating that it is too high or way too high.

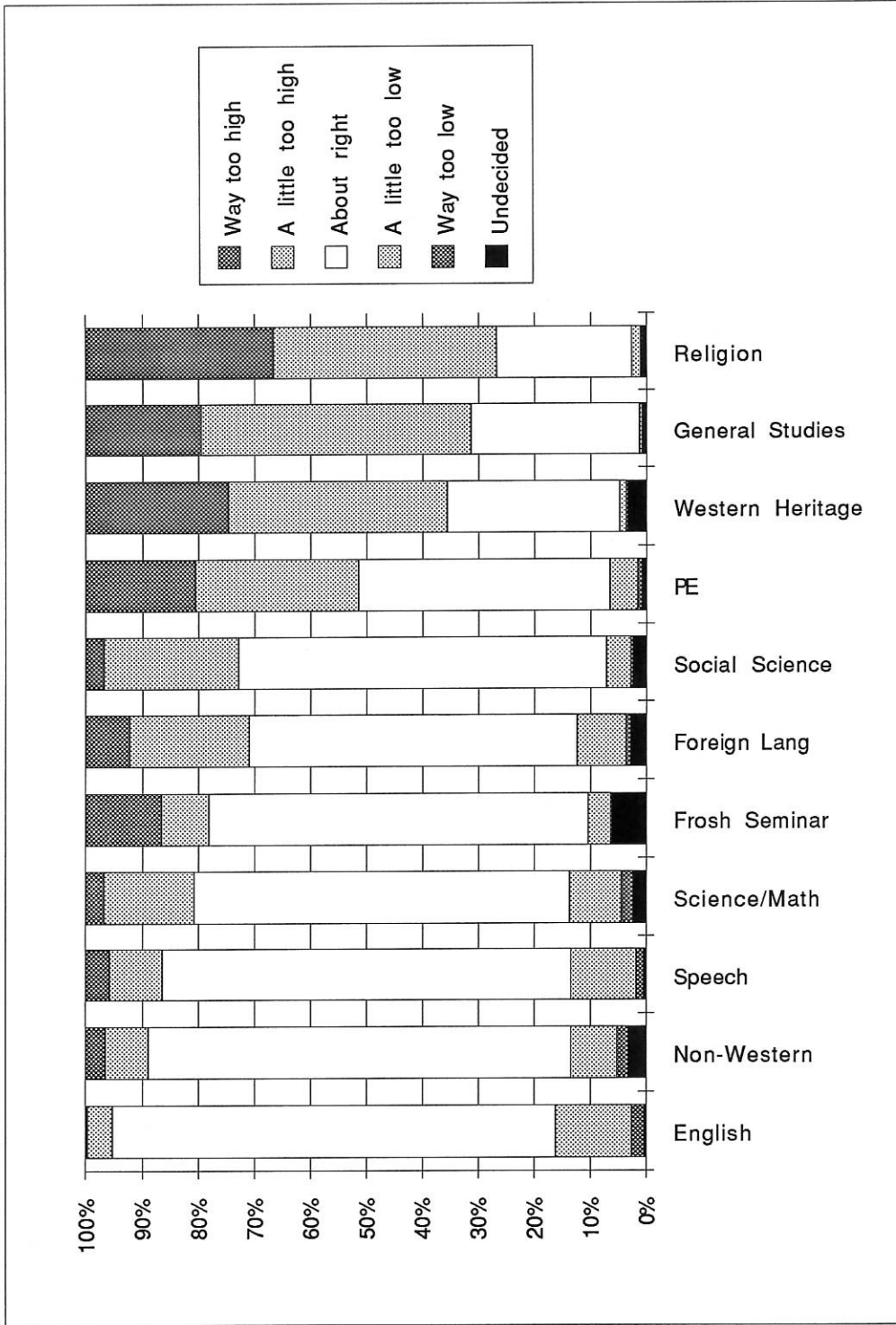
*Variation by class*—Since the random sample was stratified by class, we were able to tabulate the response of every question by class to determine if there are any trends. Such an analysis could show, for example, if seniors, who have taken most of their general education requirements, think differently about the number of units required for general studies compared to freshmen, who have taken few of their GE requirements.

A statistical analysis shows that for the most part, the results reported above are uniform across class. Only four questions showed a measurable trend by class:

- The Speech 180 class improved my public speaking and critical analysis skills.
- The General Studies classes that I took taught me the diversity of cultures through multi-cultural experiences.
- The current Non-Western requirement is 4 units (one course, e.g. ISAC). The number of units required in Non-Western studies is ...
- The current Social Science requirement is 11 units (three courses, e.g. ECON, HIST, POSC, PSYC, SOC 200). The units required in Social Studies is ...

Apart from these four questions, the data are broad based. That is, for the most part Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors have the same perceptions about the questions in the survey. Details of the statistical analysis are in Appendix A.

**Student Survey: Number of Units Required**



*Figure 5*

### **3. Other Data**

Seaver College administers the Astin Cooperative Institutional Research Questionnaire. A longitudinal study of 1987 freshmen, comparing the responses of the same student four years later, was used to evaluate our program on a value added basis. Since the same questions were asked, the results measure changes in student perceptions, philosophies, values, and attitudes. These results reflect the influence of both General Studies courses and major courses.

The Astin study compares the results with nonsectarian four-year institutions. Generally, the data show that more Seaver students report stronger abilities in

- tolerance of different beliefs
- public speaking ability
- religious beliefs or convictions
- volunteering to help others

after four years of college than students at other institutions. Approximately the same number of students report stronger abilities in

- general knowledge
- knowledge in a particular field
- job related skills
- problem solving skills
- writing skills
- confidence in academic skills
- ability to work independently
- cultural awareness
- acceptance of different races/cultures

after four years of college than students at other institutions. Generally, fewer Seaver students report stronger abilities in

- critical thinking ability
- leadership ability

after four years of college than students at other institutions.

Other data on student perceptions include the Results of Assessment Interviews in Winter 1990 for ENG 101 in Appendix B. Interviews were conducted with students who had taken English 101 during the previous semester. Although many students who felt they were strong writers before they enrolled in the course did not see a great overall improvement in their writing, students who felt they were weaker writers often reported improvement. The report gives a list of teaching strategies that students felt were beneficial, most of which require small student/faculty ratios.

### **B. Faculty Perceptions**

This section describes the data we examined to determine faculty perceptions of the GE requirements. It summarizes the following data.



- Faculty qualitative survey
- Faculty quantitative survey
- Other data

### **1. Faculty Qualitative Survey**

To determine faculty perceptions about the GE requirements the Committee designed an open-ended questionnaire containing eight questions. Of the approximately 120 full-time faculty members who were sent questionnaires, 28 responses were received by the Committee (23%). This somewhat low response rate was in spite of the fact that the original memorandum to the faculty emphasized the importance of the project and included the special mandate given to the Committee by the President of the University. A follow-up reminder memorandum was also sent.

Appendix C is a transcription of the responses from the faculty. Although some of the responses were cursory, most of them were thoughtful and detailed. Opinions were wide-ranging, and a complete picture can emerge only by reading the Appendix. Here is an attempt at a balanced summary:

*Question 1.* How does the general studies curriculum (excluding freshmen seminars) benefit the student? How is it not beneficial?

Most faculty who responded reported the strong benefit of a broad-based liberal education that the GE requirements provide. Several perceived that the amount of GE requirements and Religion requirements are excessive.

*Question 2.* If you taught at Seaver College before the current general studies program was established, how do the changes in the general studies requirement (excluding freshmen seminars) benefit the student? How are they not beneficial?

The responses were about equally divided between a positive opinion and a neutral or mixed opinion (i.e., some good aspects of the change and some bad). The new ISAC requirement was both praised and criticized. The new writing and speech requirements were generally praised.

*Question 3.* Have you ever taught a freshman seminar? If so, how can the seminar program be improved?

The most frequently cited problem was the lack of uniformity between different sections of the seminar. Another common theme was the desire to increase the rigor. Coordination of the writing component of the seminar with the English Composition requirement would be desirable according to one respondent. While several felt the seminar is basically fine, others maintain that few seem happy with the program as it now stands.

*Question 4.* Whether or not you have taught a freshman seminar, how does the freshmen seminar benefit the student? How is it not beneficial?

The problem of variation in quality of instruction and material was cited again. Having a freshman advised by a professor outside her major was a complaint, but better advising in the seminars was also claimed. Responses were about evenly divided between those who thought the freshman seminar was a benefit and those who thought it was not.

*Question 5.* The committee wants to determine the extent of the impact that the general studies requirement has on the academic majors. In your view, how extensive is this impact? Do you feel too much of a requirement to support the general studies requirement at the expense of your majors program? Specific examples would be more helpful to us than generalities.

This question elicited the strongest responses. Some faculty who responded claimed that the impact of the GE requirements on the major was negative. Others said there was no impact, and some said the impact was positive. Appendix C contains the arguments expressed, both pro and con.

*Question 6.* How has the general studies program affected your professional development?

A few felt the GE requirements were a detriment to their development, a few felt they were broadening, and most said they had no effect.

*Question 7.* To what extent are you satisfied with the overall General Studies requirements?

Most faculty reported being satisfied with the GE requirements as a whole, although there was significant dissent. The primary theme that emerged was that the plan is better on paper than it is in practice, because of the limited resources we have to implement it.

*Question 8.* What other comments would you like to make about the GE requirements?

Ideas brought out by this question include suggestions that we consider a few GE courses as large lectures to pay for the ones that need to be small, and that we put as much emphasis on building solid majors as we do on the GE program.

In response to this question, one faculty member did an item-by-item comparison with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) 1989 report, *50 Hours: A Core Curriculum for College Students*, and found that Seaver College requires

- more English Composition and Literature
- about the same foreign language
- only half of the mathematics
- only half of the natural sciences, and
- slightly more social science.

Religion, speech, freshman seminar, and PE were not addressed by the 50-hour NEH curriculum. These subjects account for 15% of Seaver's 65-hour curriculum. What influence, if any, the NEH curriculum should have on the Seaver curriculum is addressed in the section on Recommendations.

## **2. Faculty Quantitative Survey**

Although the above qualitative data is valuable, the Committee sought quantitative data about faculty perceptions as well. We decided to administer the same instrument to the faculty that we had designed for the students. It was possible to ask virtually the same

questions by making only slight modifications to the wording. For example, where the student instrument would state

The Foreign Language classes gave me a better understanding of another culture and improved my ability to write and speak in a foreign language.

the corresponding statement on the faculty instrument is

The Foreign Language classes give students a better understanding of another culture and improve their ability to write and speak in a foreign language.

The only other change to the instrument is that the response, Have not taken any of these classes, is absent from the first group of questions about the goals of the courses being met. These data can show where faculty and student perceptions agree and where they diverge. The complete faculty survey instrument is in Appendix A.

Since the faculty population is relatively small, the Committee did not need to take a random sample. A 92% response rate was achieved from the 124 full time tenure track faculty members. This is an extremely high rate when you consider that it is the percentage response of the entire population and not just of a sample.

Figure 6 shows the responses of the faculty to questions concerning the goals of the specific general studies courses. Figure 6 corresponds to Figure 3, the responses of the students to the same questions. Overall, faculty and student responses follow a similar pattern.

These data show that the faculty have a distinctly higher rate of undecided responses. Whereas anywhere from 7% to 14% of the students are undecided in their opinions about course goals (depending on the particular course in question), from 17% to 37% of the faculty are undecided. This result could be attributed to the fact that all the students whose responses are shown in Figure 3 took the course in question. The faculty, however are giving their perceptions of classes in which they were not always directly involved.

Students tend to have stronger opinions than faculty. While it is rare that more than 20% of the faculty strongly agree that a course goal is being met, it is common for more than 20% of the students to think so. However, faculty and students are quite consistent in their total agreement of course goals being met. That is, fewer students are undecided than faculty members, but that lower percentage is compensated for by more students who disagree that goals are being met. The agreement percentages between faculty and students are about the same. To put it another way, where the faculty agree so do the students; where the faculty are unsure the students disagree.

Not only are the agreement percentages about the same between the two populations, but the course rankings are about the same. The top seven general education requirements in the opinion of both populations are the same group—Foreign Language, Science/Math, English, Speech, Social Science, Western Heritage, Psychology/Sociology. Both faculty and students agree to about the same level that these courses are the best among the GE requirements in meeting their goals.

Both students and faculty agree on the courses that are least successful in meeting their goals. The lowest four GE requirements in terms of meeting their goals are (from high to low)

- PE
- Non-Western
- Religion
- Freshman Seminar

As with the student population, fewer than half the faculty agree that the seminar gives students a better understanding of the seminar's academic content area or that it gives them a better understanding of the culture and procedures of Seaver College.

Faculty Survey: Course Goals

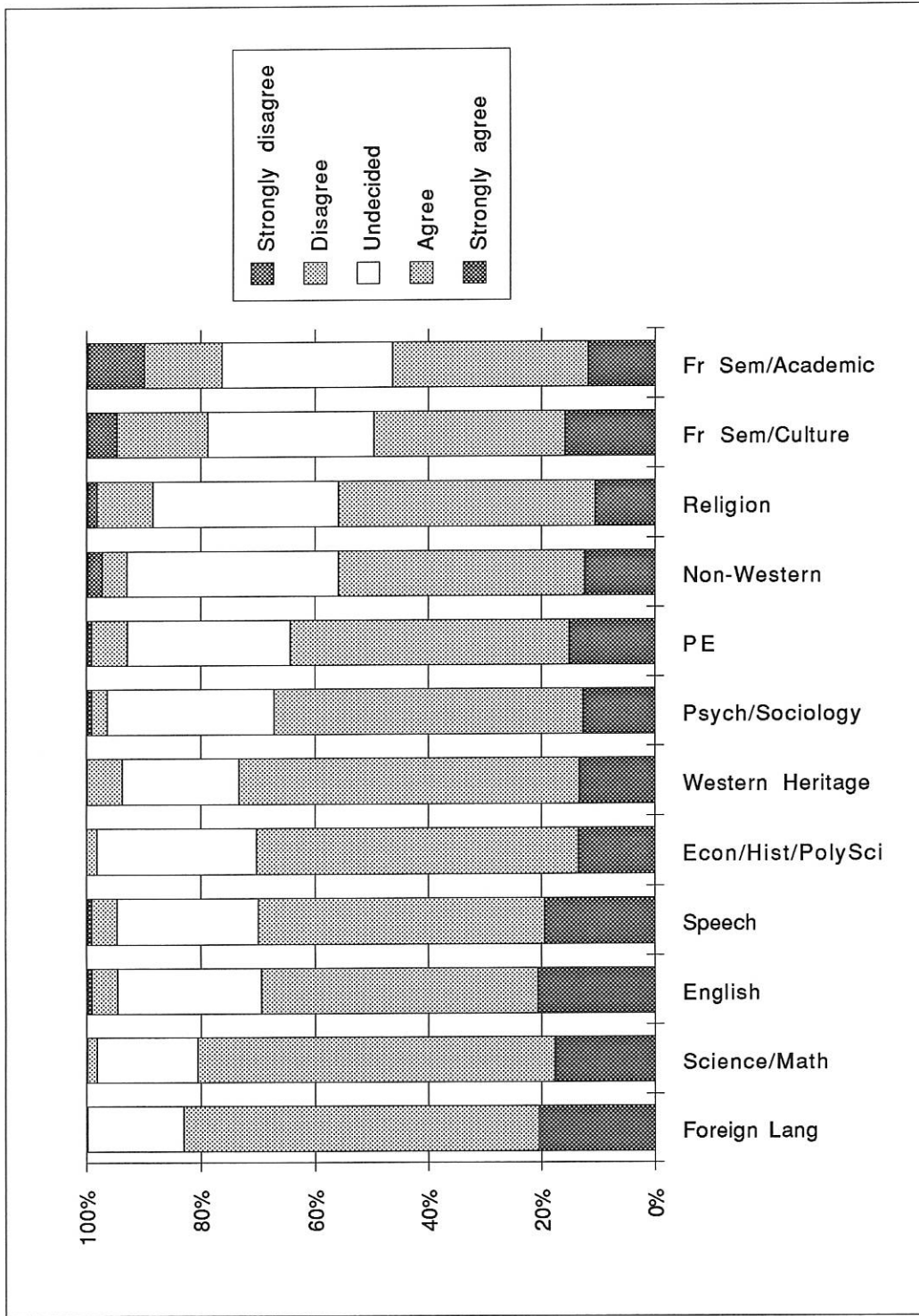


Figure 6

Figure 7 shows the response of the faculty to the middle group of questions on the survey and should be compared to Figure 4 for the students.

As with the students, the question that elicited the strongest response from the faculty was the statement, Incoming freshmen who know what they want to major in should have advisors from their major Divisions. 73% of the faculty agree with this statement, 47% strongly, versus 11% who disagree or strongly disagree.

The percentages for the statement, The quality of academic advising has been consistently high, are about the same for faculty and students. For both groups, about 60% agree or strongly agree and about one fourth disagree.

Both groups also rank the three statements concerning the goals from the Mission Statement in the same order. Agreement is highest for the student assuming responsibility for intellectual development, followed by being taught diversity of cultures, and then learning to make responsible moral choices. However, these questions have the highest level of uncertainty among the faculty of all the questions on the survey.

The faculty agree with the students, though not quite as much, that there should be more time in students' academic schedules to take electives. However, as for time in their academic schedules to take more courses in the major, the faculty are evenly split. Students would like more time for courses in their majors.

The last statement in this group is, The large lecture classes provide a positive learning environment. Half of the faculty disagree or strongly disagree with this statement, and only one fourth agree or strongly agree. Students, however, are evenly split on this issue.

Faculty Survey: Miscellaneous Issues

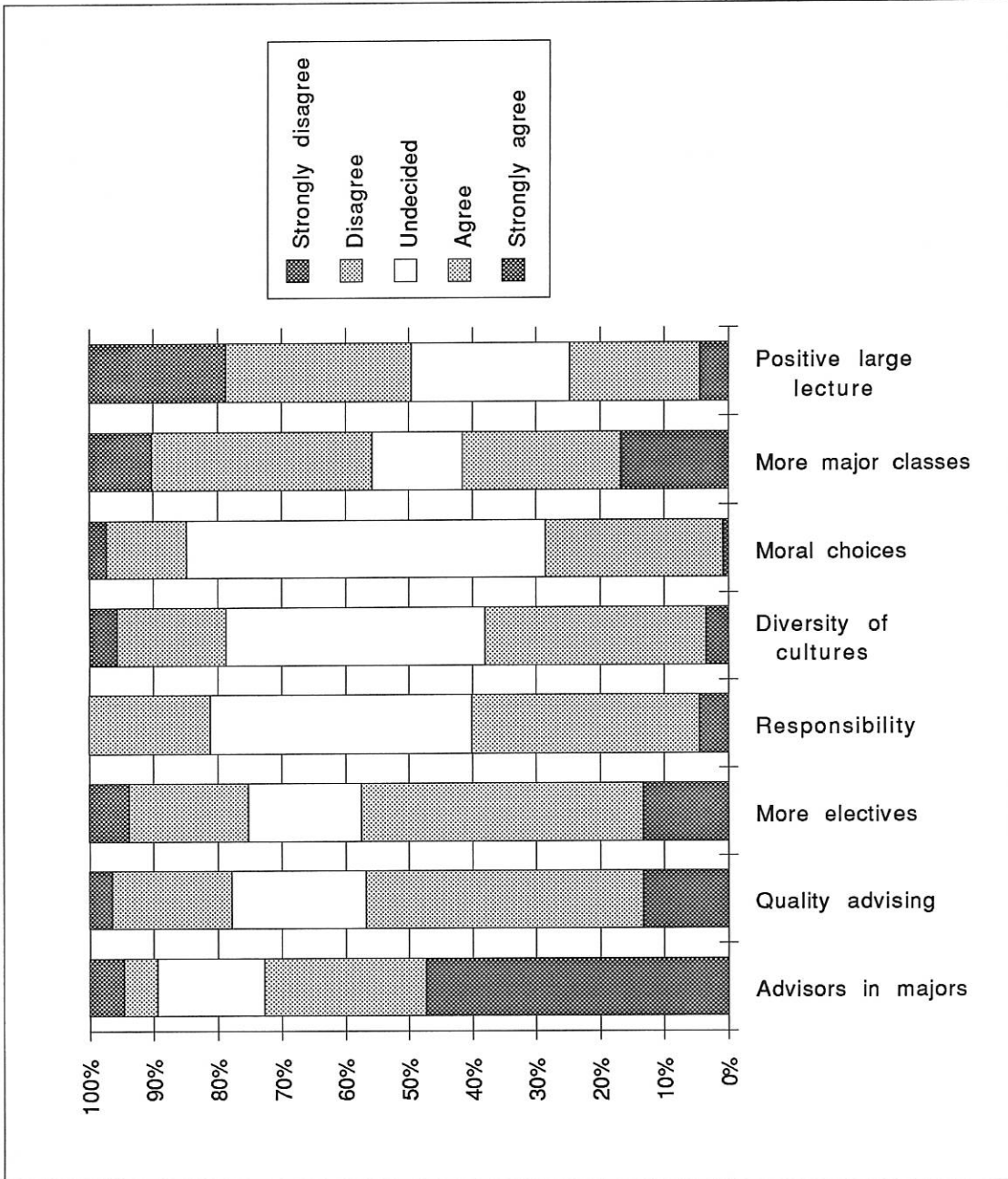


Figure 7

Figure 8 shows the Faculty responses for the group of questions that ask about the number of units devoted to the various general studies courses. It should be compared to Figure 5 for the students.

The general 65-unit GE requirement is seen as too high by 40% of the Seaver College faculty. 59% perceive it as about right and 1% as a little low.

While few students were undecided about these questions (never more than 6%) the number of undecided responses from the faculty is practically nonexistent. Individual faculty members have definite opinions about the number of units devoted to specific courses in the curriculum.

The requirement that is perceived by the faculty for which our GE program has the greatest deficiency is Science and Mathematics. One third of the faculty believe that the science and mathematics requirement is a little too low or way too low, while only 3% believe it is a little too high. Student opinion, however, is that the current requirement is about right, or perhaps a little too high.

The English requirement is perceived to be too low by 23% of the faculty versus 5% who perceive it to be a little too high. This was the one course for which a few more students thought the requirement was too low than the number who thought it was too high.

Faculty and students both see the Non-Western requirement to be about right with a few more faculty believing that the requirement is a little low. Faculty see the Foreign Language requirement as about right, and the speech requirement as perhaps a little high.

Social Science and PE are perceived by about a fourth of the faculty to be way too high or a little too high versus about 5% who believe the requirement is too low or way too low. The feeling of the students was about the same for Social Science, but substantially more thought the PE requirement was too high.

More than half the faculty perceive the Religion requirement to be too high versus fewer than 10% who think it is too low. Similarly, the Freshman Seminar requirement is perceived to be too high by about 37% of the faculty and way too high by 20% of the faculty.

About 55% of the faculty believe the Western Heritage requirement is too high versus 45% who believe it is about right.



Faculty Survey: Number of Units Required

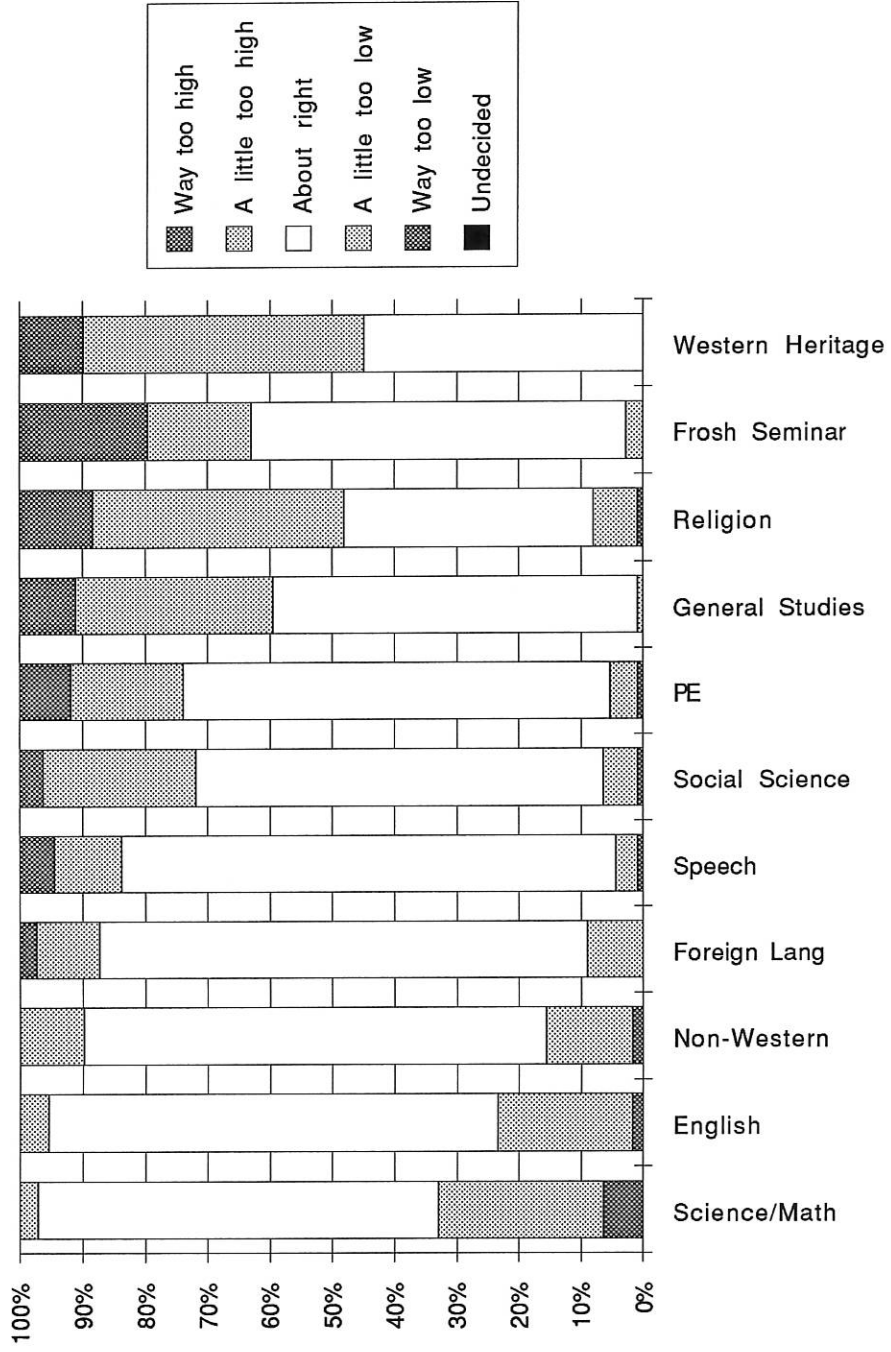


Figure 8

### 3. Other Data

Appendix D contains four memos by faculty members that were forwarded to the Committee. The first contains observations about the message we are sending to students by “pampering” them. The second asserts that the twin goals of academic rigor and filling personal needs are impossible to achieve in a traditional classroom setting. The third proposes that the speech and English requirements would be better for the student if they were integrated into a major-specific senior seminar. The fourth addresses the allocation of resources between the GE requirements and the major requirements.

Appendix E is a memorandum from a faculty member in the Natural Science Division that proposes an increase in the percentage of the GE requirements devoted to natural science. The memo documents the low percentage of natural science required at Seaver College in comparison with other schools and with an AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) liberal education report. It proposes to redistribute the fixed pie of GE units by making all courses specifically designed for general studies 3 units of credit. It also outlines the course content of the proposed addition to the GE requirement.

## C. Divisional Chair Perceptions

### 1. Divisional Chair Interviews

To determine the Divisional Chairpersons’ perceptions of the GE requirements, the Committee interviewed the chair of each Division responsible for a primary component of the GE program (all except the Business Division). Six questions were submitted to each chairperson in advance of the interview. Appendix F contains the transcripts of the interviews. Following is a summary.

*Question 1.* Have the curriculum changes in the General Studies requirements been beneficial to the students? To your Division?

Communication—mixed; plus includes smaller discussion sections in Heritage, more writing, depth in speech requirement, more rigorous foreign language, non-western requirement; minus includes loss of breadth in old Comm and Culture course, continuation of some large lecture courses in Soc Sci, flat-rate tuition system.

Fine Arts—major problem in additional “hidden requirements” of new GEs; problem with emphasis on completing GE during first two years and concentrating on major later, since fine arts are developmental.

Humanities—plus includes changes in Heritage and freshman composition, and smaller class size in HIST 200.

Natural Science—classes better, smaller size better, new math requirement ok.

Religion—REL 101, 102 distinct benefit; REL 301 is a struggle; notes student complaints about too much religion in GE, but defends it.

Social Science—good move to eliminate AI&I.

*Question 2.* How adequate are the resources provided to you for the implementation of the General Studies requirements?

Communication—major problems in funding new speech and language requirements (documentation provided); exacerbated by growth in International Studies.

Fine Arts—small responsibility for GE requirement, so minimal impact.

Humanities—now have very heavy dependence on adjunct faculty for fresh composition.

Natural Science—not at all adequate; shortages in faculty and lab space (note: lab space has since changed).

Religion—no problem other than space.

Social Science—only able to implement the new program because of willingness to retain some large lecture classes, and is an ardent supporter of this idea.

*Question 3.* In some situations, instruction by adjunct professors is desirable. Excluding those cases, if you were to meet the requirements of the new General Studies curriculum with full-time Seaver College Faculty how many full-time faculty members (FTE's) would you need? (Exclude the freshman seminar requirement.)

Communication—languages 6 to 7, speech 3 to 4; but with no contract guarantee of third-semester course.

Fine Arts—only 1 FTE.

Natural Science—1 to 2.

Religion—no problem; practically all classes now full-time PhD's.

*Question 4.* Do the costs to your Division of the General Studies requirements impact the quality of your other academic programs?

Communication—yes; full-time faculty diverted to GEs, class size in major increased, problem of either/or situation from limited resources.

Fine Arts—yes; intense pressure to justify our courses based on tuition revenue we must generate; Dean's requirement to cancel class with fewer than 8 students means qualified adjunct professors cannot be hired.

Humanities—yes; new GE requirements so high it impacts the quality of major.

Natural Science—yes, major impact; documents 26% decrease in classes offered by major; cites negative impact of Dean's 8-student requirement.

Religion—just the opposite; new GEs allowed us to hire new people.

Social Science—not as long as we can continue to offer some large lecture classes to offset the increased cost.

*Question 5.* The Freshman Seminars are taught by Faculty from all the Divisions. What is your assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the Seminars taught by your faculty?

Communication—good idea but fails in practice; problems in advising, staffing, and academic content.

Fine Arts—uneven quality, some not academically sound.

Humanities—problem in assigning students to seminars they do not want.

Natural Science—most of our faculty are critical; too much “fluff”; sends the wrong message to the student; uneven quality.

Religion—not much comment; seems to be uneven; should be continued.

Social Science—mixed; plus includes better advising, good for frosh when the best teachers teach it; minus includes recruiting the best teachers, students do not like the program as well as the administration does; ideas for improvement include offering seminars in Winter as well, bonus pay for teaching seminar, “young scholars” idea, let Great Books series (as currently constituted) count as frosh seminar.

*Question 6.* What other comments would you like to make about the GE requirements?

Communication—exit interviews indicate Heritage and speech beneficial; need enforcement of two years of high school foreign language for admission.

Fine Arts—big problem in frosh seminar with our majors; no longer advised by professor in major causing bad academic advice; too much “hand holding.”

Humanities—exit interviews critical of speech adjuncts; need better control on size of freshman class.

Natural Science—new GEs are tremendously expensive; e.g. 4 units pay for 3 units of frosh seminar, three 3-unit religion courses can count as full load, inefficient use of Elkins Auditorium.

Religion—current 50-50 split between GE and major is pretty good; should consider PE noncredit, a common practice.

Social Science—SPE 180 and ENG 101 with many adjuncts needs to be studied.

## **2. Other Data**

Also included in Appendix F is a three-page document by the outgoing chair of the Social Science Division addressed to the Committee. It contains cogent arguments for offering a few large lecture GE classes and for teaching freshman seminars in the Fall and Winter.

## **D. General Studies Cost**

The charge to the original (pre-1986) Faculty Curriculum Committee was to design a General Studies program without regard to its cost. The Committee, however, completed a

preliminary cost estimate for the proposed change in the requirements. The increase in FTEs was estimated as follows (from the report of the Committee):

Pre-1986

LA 099, 14 sections @ 22 students	14	courses
LA 101, 28 sections @ 22 students	28	courses
8 core lecture courses, 16 sections @ 300 students	48	courses
5 seminars, 30 sections each @ 20 students	<u>150</u>	<u>courses</u>
Total:	240	courses = 30 FTE

Proposed

Western Heritage, 6 @ 300 with 12 discussion sections	36	courses
English Composition, 28 @ 22 (times 2)	56	courses
Remedial Composition, 2 @ 22	2	courses
Religion I, 2 @ 300 with 24 discussion sections	12	courses
Religion II, 15 @ 40	15	courses
Freshman Seminar, 30 @ 20	30	courses
Upper Division Seminar, 30 @ 20	30	courses
Foreign Language, 24 @ 25	24	courses
Math/Computer Science, 20 @ 30	20	courses
Laboratory Science, 15 @ 40	15	courses
Behavioral Science, 15 @ 40	15	courses
American Heritage, 15 @ 40 (times 2)	30	courses
Speech, 30 @ 20	<u>30</u>	<u>courses</u>
Total:	315	courses = 39.4 FTE

Hence, the original Faculty Committee estimated that the new program could be implemented for an additional cost of 9.4 FTEs. As noted previously in this report, however, the General Studies curriculum actually adopted differs from that proposed by the original Committee. The primary differences are the 3-course requirement for Religion as opposed to the 2-course recommendation, the Non-Western requirement, which was not part of the original proposal, and the upper division seminar which was recommended but not instituted. Two of these differences increase the cost of the program beyond that estimated by the original Committee, and one decreases the cost.

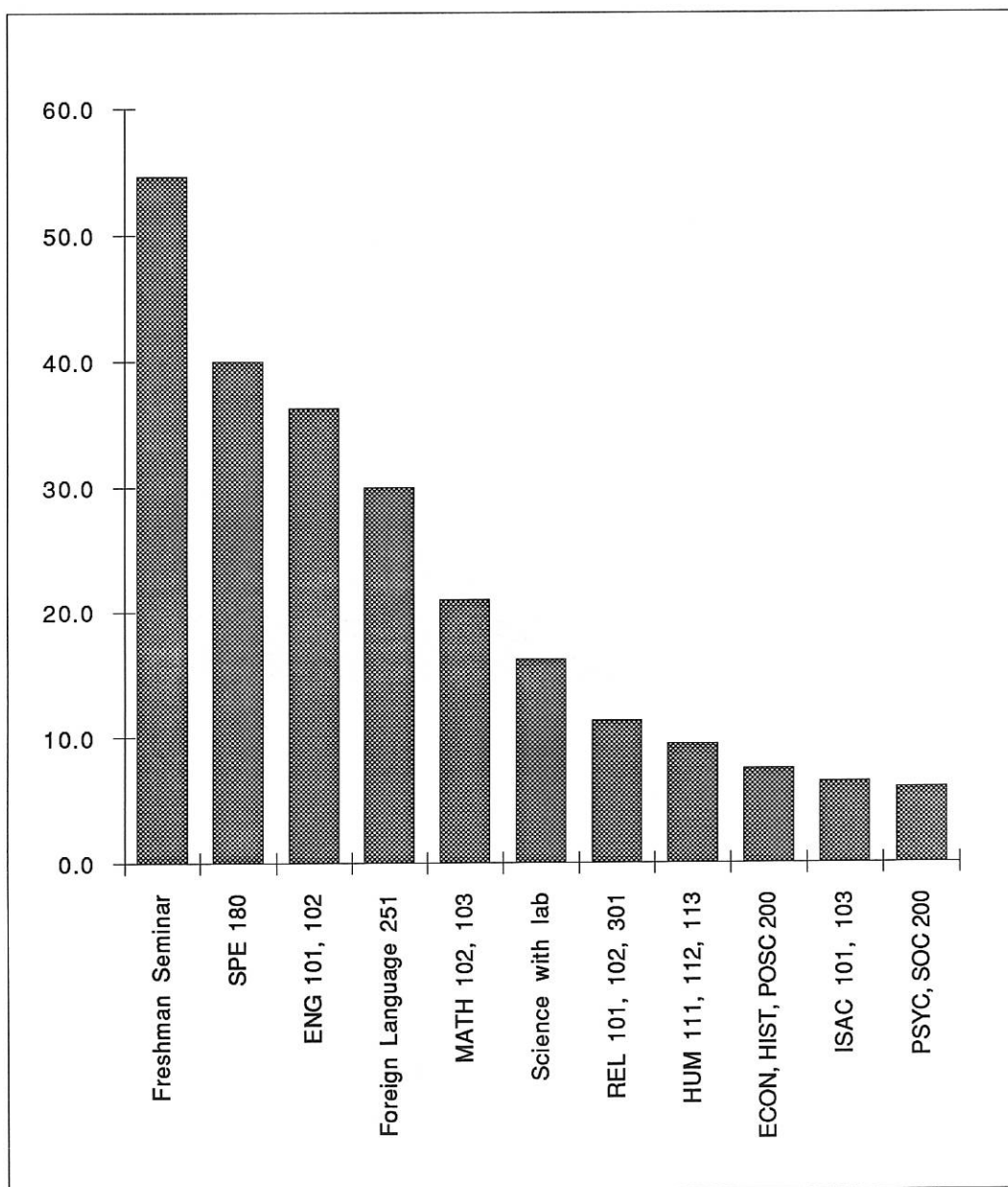
This Committee gathered data for the 1990-91 academic year on the cost of providing the GE requirements as measured by faculty units of instruction. For each GE course (excluding PE) the number of faculty units paid to offer the course during the Fall and Winter semester was tallied. The cost/benefit ratio for each group of courses was then computed as the ratio of faculty units paid divided by student units received toward the GE requirement. The results are shown in Figure 9. The following points should be kept in mind when interpreting this data:

The data does not include the Summer semester. Assuming that the same ratio of faculty units paid to student units received applies in the Summer as it does during the regular semesters, the ratio will be unaffected. To the extent that this assumption is not true, the ratios will be affected, but the difference would probably be slight.

These cost figures do not include the Great Books series which satisfy several GE requirements. The sequence is taken by 60-90 students and it satisfies GE requirements in several different areas.

**GE Cost / Benefit**

<b>GE Course</b>	<b>Cost (Fac units paid)</b>	<b>Benefit (Units toward GE)</b>	<b>Cost/Benefit (Ratio)</b>
Freshman Seminar	164	3	54.7
SPE 180	160	4	40.0
ENG 101, 102	254	7	36.3
Foreign Language 251	120	4	30.0
MATH 102, 103	63	3	21.0
Science with lab	65	4	16.3
REL 101, 102, 301	102	9	11.3
HUM 111, 112, 113	114	12	9.5
ECON, HIST, POSC 200	60	8	7.5
ISAC 101, 103	26	4	6.5
PSYC, SOC 200	18	3	6.0



*Figure 9*

The math requirement is especially difficult to quantify for two reasons. First, many students with good math backgrounds from high school test out of the requirement altogether, so fewer sections of GE math courses are required. Second, math is a component of all the business and science major requirements. These more advanced courses satisfy the GE math requirement. To account for the second factor, MATH 214 (for business majors) and MATH 210 (for science majors) were included in the cost figures, prorated since they are 4-unit courses while the GE math requirement is 3 units.

One concern that surfaced during the Committee's investigation was that the new 251-level language requirement necessitates remedial work by many students with inadequate preparation. The foreign language 251 course requirement does not reflect the hidden requirement, and hence the hidden cost, of their prerequisites. The actual cost of the foreign language requirement is higher (some would say much higher) than that shown in Figure 9.

The Religion Division decided this year (1991-92) not to offer REL 301 in Elkins Auditorium as it did last year when the data for the other courses was collected. The data on page 15 reflects the (more expensive) numbers for the smaller classes as currently taught.

This cost/benefit ratio assumes no difference in faculty units paid as a function of faculty rank. Obviously, adjunct faculty are paid less than tenure-track faculty, so those GE courses that depend on high numbers of adjunct instruction have relatively lower cost. To give two extreme examples the religion requirement, which is taught primarily by full-time professors, is relatively more expensive than reported here, while the speech requirement, which is taught by many adjunct professors is relatively less expensive than reported.

Faculty members who teach a 3-unit section of the Freshman Seminar receive 4 units toward their teaching load. The cost figure was therefore calculated at 4 units while the benefit was calculated at 3 units.

The benefit as defined here is strictly the number of units completed toward the GE requirement. There are obviously many other benefits of various GE courses that are not quantifiable. For example, the benefit of small classes in English composition and public speaking that allow for individual instruction toward mastering these skills should be considered in assessing the high relative cost of these requirements.

With the above caveats in mind, the data in Figure 9 show an extremely wide range of cost for the different GE requirements. The Freshman Seminar is by far the most costly requirement. The cost disparity between it and the speech requirement is even greater than shown here because of the high number of full-time professors teaching the Freshman Seminars compared to the high number of adjunct professors teaching speech.

The cost distribution is not surprising when you consider that the four lowest-cost requirements have at least one large lecture in their group and the four highest-cost requirements are predicated on small student/teacher ratios. It is perhaps surprising that the Heritage sequence is as efficient as it is, considering the many small discussion sections it has. Their cost is offset by the low cost of the large lecture component. Perhaps this course model should be considered for other areas in the GE program.

The Committee also noted the negative academic benefit of relying on large numbers of adjunct professors. We reviewed one report from Institutional Research on the number of courses Freshman students have with adjuncts. Excluding PE, Music, and courses with three or fewer freshmen, 189 course sections were taught in Fall, 1989. Of these sections, 130 were taught by full-time faculty and 59 were taught by adjuncts. In other words, slightly over 30% of courses with freshmen were taught by adjuncts.



## IV. Recommendations

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data we have collected and analyzed, the Committee believes that overall the current general studies program is a significant improvement over the pre-1986 program. In particular, the increased emphasis on English, foreign language, and mathematics has given Seaver College a better balance in these fundamental liberal arts disciplines. Strengthening the communication requirement to give students practical skills in public speaking is also an improvement over the old program.

Several problem areas remain in the current program, however. The Committee identified a list of issues that emerged from our data collection efforts. Some of these issues resulted in recommendations that were easy to agree on. Other issues were more difficult to resolve. This section lists the issues that we considered and the recommendations that resulted from them.

### A. Resources for GE

The Committee found widespread evidence of inadequate resources necessary to implement the new General Education program. The two ways to remedy the problem are (1) cut costs and (2) increase resources. The following recommendations are in increasing order of cost:

*Large lectures*—Adopt the approach that requiring some large lecture classes in the General Studies program is necessary. It is more efficient to use Elkins Auditorium to lecture to a full house than to fill it sparsely as we are now doing. (See the rationale given by the Social Science Divisional Chair for this approach in Appendix F)

*Lecturers*—Continue to reduce the number of part-time adjunct faculty teaching General Studies courses by converting part-time adjunct positions to full-time lecturer positions. Lecturers generally will have an M.A. rather than a Ph.D. degree. Lecturers should receive salaries commensurate with their education and experience, and their salaries should become part of the regular operating budget of Seaver College. Contracts should be renewable. Lecturers should receive the same percentage salary increases that tenure track faculty receive, and every effort should be made to integrate them into the life of the University.

*Adjunct faculty*—Continue to reduce the number of part-time adjunct faculty teaching General Studies courses by converting part-time adjunct positions to full-time tenure track positions and by giving high priority to meeting the demands of the General Studies program in new faculty hires.

*Endowed chairs*—Immediately begin fundraising to endow one academic chair a year at \$1 million a year for the next ten years. Incentives of a reduced teaching load and reward for a job well done would attract internal candidates. The money freed in the budget would be applied to the hiring of new Assistant Professors in line with the RTP Task Force Report approved last year by the Seaver College Faculty.

The above measures are necessary to alleviate staffing problems in the current GE program, regardless of any changes that we plan for the future. The Committee recommends that Seaver College adhere to a policy of “no changes without resources.” That is, rather than institute change based on anticipated resources, the College should wait until resources are delivered before instituting changes. In particular, any of the recommendations of this report requiring additional resources should be contingent on securing those resources first.

## **B. Freshman Seminar**

A majority of the Committee believes in the concept of the Freshman Seminar. However, the evidence is clear that this program should be modified if it is going to meet its goals. We found the following problems.

*Student perception*—Of all the GE requirements, students felt that the Freshman Seminar was the least successful in meeting its goals. 50.4% agreed that the seminar gave them a better understanding of the seminar’s academic content area and 41.6% agreed that it gave them a better understanding of the culture and procedures of Seaver College. These low levels of agreement about the seminar filling its goals are especially distressing when compared to the relatively high level of agreement for all the other GE requirements.

*Faculty perception*—As with the student population, fewer than half the faculty agree that the seminar gives students a better understanding of the seminar’s academic content area or that it gives them a better understanding of the culture and procedures of Seaver College.

*Inconsistency*—A common complaint from students is that the requirements of the seminar vary widely from section to section. Some professors try to be more rigorous than others with the academic component, and students resent having to work hard in one section while their friends have little demanding work in another section. This inconsistency is despite heroic efforts by the Dean’s office to control course content.

*Faculty recruitment*—Although some of our most respected professors teach the seminar, many do not. A large number of faculty simply do not perceive the seminar as a desirable assignment, as evidenced by the difficulty in recruiting enough teachers for the program. The original intent of the seminar was to select a limited number of proposals from all the faculty who would want to teach a seminar. Instead we must consistently recruit administrative personnel. Even though a faculty member gets four units of credit for teaching a three unit class, the advising and registration components of the seminar dissuade many prospective teachers.

*Cost*—Despite the above problems, the Freshman Seminar is the most costly GE program on a per unit basis.

Although a minority on the Committee argued for structural changes in the seminar (for example, eliminating the academic content and reducing the number units) we felt that any structural changes would go against the original goals of the seminar. Therefore, our recommendation is:

- Additional resources should be allocated to the Freshman Seminar.
- Otherwise, the Freshman Seminar should be discontinued.

If the Freshman Seminar is continued, we recommend the following changes:

*Resources*—Recognizing the current high cost of the program, the success of the program cannot be established without additional resources. The reward for teaching in the program must be viewed by the faculty as commensurate with the effort. Incentives could take the form of extra stipends, reassigned time, or reduced teaching load.

*Scheduling*—Seminars should be offered during the fall and winter semesters so that the best faculty members will be able, should they choose to do so, teach a freshman seminar each semester.

*Great Books*—The Great Books courses should satisfy the Freshman Seminar requirement. Faculty members who teach in the Great Books program should be given the option of advising their students.

We believe that the program cannot be made successful without our recommendation of additional resources. Unfortunately, as noted in IV.A., additional resources are needed for other components of the General Studies program as well. Hence, we do not recommend shifting resources from other programs. If new resources are forthcoming and the program is continued it should be under a trial period to be reassessed in several years.

The Committee recognizes the strong feeling of both faculty and students that incoming freshmen who know what they want to major in should have advisors from their major Divisions. Such a change, however, does not fit the current Freshman Seminar structure. To respond to these concerns, we recommend emphasizing the current policy that those freshmen who have declared a major meet with an adviser in his or her declared major field. The Freshman Seminar instructor will retain primary responsibility for advising and registering all freshmen students.

### **C. Distribution Requirements**

The Committee spent much time debating whether to recommend a change in the distribution requirements of the GE program. Our debate was not influenced by any single piece of evidence, but instead was affected by

- the data on faculty and Division Chair perceptions
- the data on student perceptions
- philosophical issues

The philosophical issues included the nature of the College as reflected in its Mission Statement and its ties to the churches of Christ. Also, there was not unanimity among the members of the Committee as to how much weight we should give to the data on student perceptions. Some members thought we should minimize the student data. Others thought that the data on student perception was significant and should be considered, along with the other data that the Committee collected.

Aside from the philosophical issues, different members of the Committee interpreted the same data differently. For example, the fact that one third of the faculty believe that the

science and math requirement is a little too low or way too low was seen by some as strong evidence for recommending an additional science course but was seen by others as a mandate for the status quo.

This Committee was unable to pass by a simple majority vote any recommendation on the distribution requirements of the GE program. We considered several alternatives and eventually settled on the following three models.

- A: Status quo
- B1: Change, except Religion
- B2: Change, including Religion

The models are described in the table on the following page. The only differences between models B1 and B2 are the number of courses and units allocated to the Religion requirement. Model B1 leaves the current Religion requirement (3 courses, 9 units) intact, whereas model B2 reduces the Religion requirement by one course and one unit.

The primary intent of models B1 and B2 is to add a science requirement along the lines of that proposed by a Natural Science faculty member while at the same time decreasing the total number of GE units by reducing several 4-unit courses to three units.

The proposal for the new course, “Science as a Way of Knowing” is in Appendix E, which contains data in support of the requirement. It would be a 3-unit lecture course with no formal laboratory component. Class demonstrations would be extensively used, and discussion groups would be desirable. It would be a required core general studies course in Natural Science. In addition, each student would continue to take the current 4-unit laboratory course of his or her choice.

The emphasis in the course would be on science as a process rather than on the accumulation of detailed information. A strong historical approach would stress the debt we owe to the Greeks for our view of the natural world as a system that can be studied rationally and understood by means of careful observations, thoughtful reflection, and the testing of predictions based on those reflections.

Although many details are to be determined a summary of possible content includes Astronomy (observations, ancient cosmology, modern cosmology), Physics (motion, forms of energy, relativity), and Atomic Theory (atoms, quantum theory, radioactivity).

### Distribution Requirements

A: Status quo

B1: Change, except  
Religion

B2: Change, including  
Religion

Committee vote: 2

Committee vote: 2

Committee vote: 4

ENG 101 (3)	ENG 101 (3)	<i>Same as B1</i>
ENG 102 (4)	ENG 102 (3)	
REL 101 (3)	REL 101 (3)	Religion sequence (4, 4)
REL 102 (3)	REL 102 (3)	
REL 301 (3)	REL 301 (3)	
HUM 111 (4)	Humanities	<i>Same as B1</i>
HUM 112 (4)	sequence (3, 3)	
HUM 113 (4)	Fine Arts (3)	
Non-Western (4)	Non-Western (4)	
ECON 200	ECON 200	
HIST 200 (4, 4)	HIST 200 (3, 3)	
POSC 200	POSC 200	
PSYC 200 (3)	PSYC 200 (3)	
SOC 200	SOC 200	
Foreign Lang 251 (4)	Foreign Lang 251 (4)	
Science with lab (4)	Science with lab (4)	
	New Science (3)	
MATH 102 (3)	MATH 102 (3)	
SPE 180 (4)	SPE 180 (3)	
PE (4)	PE (3)	
Freshman seminar (3)	Freshman seminar (3)	

Total units: 65	Total units: 60	Total units: 59
Total courses: 18	Total courses: 19	Total courses: 18

Numbers in parentheses are semester units.

Each of these proposed curricula was considered in relation to the problem of resources, interpretation of the data, nature of proposed changes, and philosophical concerns. The case for A (status quo) is summarized as follows.

*Resources*—In the face of our current shortage of resources it is not advisable to propose changes that by any reckoning will require even more resources. For example, changing so many GE requirements from 4-unit courses to 3-unit courses raises the issue of what constitutes a full faculty load. Although four 3-unit courses equates to the same number of class contact hours as three 4-unit courses, the increased work load is substantial. The only arrangement acceptable to the faculty would be to establish a uniform policy of three courses equating to a full teaching load. That policy would require substantial additional resources, in addition to the resources required for the new Science course. We have identified the weaknesses in the current program related to the large number of adjunct professors and should concentrate on strengthening our program in these areas.

*Interpretation of data*—Neither students or faculty felt strongly that the number of units required for the GE courses are excessive. Although Western Heritage and Religion showed some perception of excessive requirements, the proposed changes in B1 and B2 require cuts in areas such as English and Speech where no changes are mandated. Only one third of the faculty think the science requirement is too low, which means that two thirds think it is fine or too high.

*Nature of proposed changes*—Proposals B1 and B2 are not just a small adjustment to the present curriculum, but are major changes that will have a substantial impact on the GE program. Making cuts in current courses that seem to be functioning well is not warranted.

*Philosophical concerns*—Our tradition as a Christian university mandates a strong religion requirement. In spite of the perception among both students and faculty that the religion requirement is too high, its decrease in model B2 is a step backwards. Our requirement is less than the religion requirement of our “sister” church of Christ schools and less than that in many Roman Catholic schools. The data shows that problems in the delivery of REL 301 are being solved, which should give students a more positive experience with the requirement in the future.

The case for B1 and B2 (change) is summarized as follows.

*Resources*—It is true that the proposed changes will require more resources. However, the problem of resources is separate from the problem of an ideal GE program. Although the faculty in the Natural Science Division are near unanimous in their belief that science is underrepresented in the curriculum, many of them have strong reservations about the requirement because of the lack of resources. This proposal, however, is contingent on the Division first determining the additional resources necessary and then acquiring them before instituting the requirement. The same problem exists in the Fine Arts Division, which would have new responsibility for its own Fine Arts requirement.

*Interpretation of data*—While it would be foolish to let student opinion dictate the curriculum, the data show that substantial numbers of both student and faculty believe that the GE requirements are too high in general and too high in Religion and Western Heritage in particular. Furthermore, many model curricula (for example, from the National Endowment of the Humanities) call for more science and math than we require. Appendix E presents further data in support of the view

that Seaver is weak in this area. The problem with the current GE program is one of balance. Models B1 and B2 are responsive to students', faculty, and chairpersons' concerns.

*Nature of proposed changes*—Several faculty in the Humanities Division who are responsible for the Heritage sequence expressed a desire to change the Western Heritage format to a more traditional sequence. The transfer credit problem would be greatly simplified, scheduling would be easier, and problems of variation in grading between sections would be alleviated. Reducing the number of units from 4 to 3 in the other courses does not constitute a major change and will give students time in their academic schedules for more electives.

*Philosophical concerns*—Model B1 reflects the belief that philosophical concerns outweigh the perceptions of faculty and students that the Religion requirement is too high. Model B2 reflects the belief that we can return to the pre-1986 requirement and still be true to our heritage.

Even if Seaver College maintains the status quo, we recommend that the faculty in the Fine Arts Division be free to develop courses similar in philosophy to the Heritage sequence which, upon approval by the Academic Council, can substitute for one of the Heritage courses. This option will give students more flexibility in their general studies program and will allow students to choose to explore one of the Fine Arts in more depth than would otherwise be possible. We believe this diversity is healthy and does not compromise the strong core of the GE program.

## **V. Conclusion**

The Committee could not reach consensus on all the issues it addressed. It is perhaps to be expected that consensus was not always possible with so many differing viewpoints represented on the Committee. The diversity of viewpoints on the Committee might reflect the diversity of viewpoints in the academic community at Seaver College. The common desire that unites us is to provide the best education for the student. We sometimes differ about what the best education should include.

This Committee has sought to carefully, systematically, and fairly assess the General Studies program adopted in 1986. We believe that such assessment is vital to the improvements of the curriculum of Seaver College. We further believe that, irrespective of the recommendations of the Committee, the information presented in this report will allow students, faculty members, administrators, and external agencies to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the General Studies program.



## **VI. Appendices**

- A. Student/Faculty Quantitative Survey**
- B. English Assessment Interviews**
- C. Faculty Qualitative Survey**
- D. Faculty Memoranda**
- E. Science Requirement Proposal**
- F. Divisional Chair Interviews**