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CONTINUITY
& CHANGE

THE COLLEGE
AS AN ADVOCATE OF
CURRICULAR
INNOVATION AND
DEBATE

JOHN W. BOYER

OCCASIONAL PAPERS
ON HIGHER
EDUCATION II

THE COLLEGE
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

C O N T I N U I T Y & C H A N G E :

The College as an Advocate of Curricular Innovation and Debate



warm welcome to the annual meeting of the faculty of the College. Last year was especially satisfying because of the impressive achievements of our students. On the interplanetary scale Johnathan Barnes contributed to designing the instrumentation used on the Mars Pathfinder expedition, while on the merely intercontinental level Jessica Sebeok and Mona Knock both won Marshall Scholarships to Oxford University this year, with Mona studying chemistry and Jessica studying Central European history. Jennifer Costello not only won the Josephine de Kármán Fellowship for outstanding academic performance, but she also served as president of the Women's Athletic Association and was named one of America's top ten college women of 1997 by *Glamour* magazine. Three of our students—Luz Cazares, Jacob Studley, and Trevor Oliver—served as mayoral interns under the new program we negotiated with Mayor Daley's office. All three students performed so impressively that our colleagues in city government can't wait for the next round of winners. Such stories are wonderful and numerous, and I wish I had time to tell all of them.

Four new policy initiatives, marking important milestones in the present and future life of the College, made last year especially noteworthy.

This chapter was originally delivered as the Dean's Annual Report to the Faculty of the College on October 21, 1997.

Through the generosity of several alumni and the hard work of Bob Riesman, his colleagues at CAPS, and numerous members of the College faculty, including Allen Sanderson and Tom Mapp, we dramatically increased the number of paid internship and research opportunities available to College students. Internships are important because they give students a chance to make use of their academic training and especially the analytical skills they have acquired in the College, whether in a job or in a research setting. I am therefore pleased to report that we offered over two dozen new internships during the summer of 1997, including five research internships at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. I am optimistic that we will be able to increase significantly the number of internships for 1998, and I pledge that the College will work aggressively to seek funding to support these initiatives.

Last year, under the leadership of Josh Scodel, a committee of faculty colleagues developed a clear and workable conception for the future of writing programs in the College. We now have a plan for growth that will make writing instruction more widely and regularly available at all levels of the College. We have begun to implement that plan by naming Lawrence McEnerney senior lecturer in the Humanities Collegiate Division and director of College writing programs, and by appointing a standing committee of faculty to work with Larry to develop new and imaginative writing initiatives. Included in this program will be not only the expansion and strengthening of the work of the Little Red Schoolhouse to include writing internship coverage of all sections in the Humanities Core and many sections of the Social Sciences Core, but also a much more visible cluster of creative writing courses and academic and professional writing courses for third- and fourth-year students in the College. I also look forward to the day when the College will be able to organize a writing center, which will integrate our various writing initiatives and, as the committee

put it, affirm “the centrality of writing instruction to the university’s pedagogic mission.” Our ultimate goal must be the development of a premier writing program across the four years of a student’s career in the College, instead of relying solely on writing instruction in the first-year Core courses.

We also made extraordinary progress in establishing and strengthening our various foreign-language study and other foreign-study programs. I am very proud of the fact that over the last five years we have quadrupled the number of our students studying abroad. We still have a considerable way to go toward encouraging many more of our students to gain on a voluntary basis genuine competency in, as opposed to a superficial acquaintance with, a foreign language. Our new program in Barcelona, which offers an intensive ten-week sequence in the history of the Mediterranean world and supplemental language instruction in Spanish, had a successful launch last year, and we anticipate the same for our new initiative in the history of French civilization in Tours, France, for this coming year. Plans are in progress to develop a third such program in Rome, concentrating on classical and Italian civilization. Nor have we been neglectful of other areas of the world. Russ Tuttle of our Anthropology Department, working with the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, has led the way in creating a fascinating new field research program on human evolution and ecology in Tanzania, combining field research in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, the Serengeti Plain, and the Olduvai Gorge with the study of Swahili and related coursework at the University of Dar es Salaam.

This year we encouraged our incoming first-year students to think about foreign study and foreign-language learning much more directly than ever before, and we have already seen the results in language-course registration and inquiries about foreign study. Indeed, after an initial College-wide meeting on Monday morning of O-week, in which we stressed to the whole freshman class the advantages of foreign-language

learning and foreign study, the Advisers have reported a substantial increase in inquiries about how to prepare for a foreign-study quarter. In short, the free market is alive and well at the University of Chicago, demonstrating that if one creates challenging opportunities for our students, they will certainly take advantage of them.

Last year we inaugurated a new program of competitive research grants for entering first-year students, the Dean's Grants. There are twenty-four Dean's Grant winners in the class of 2001. I have heard from a number of colleagues about the outstanding quality of this year's Dean's Grant winners. Each student will have access to a \$5,000 grant to use to support a special project during his or her College career. We awarded the grants to admitted students based on their achievements in science, mathematics, creative writing, journalism, music, theater, and community service. I am confident that the winners will use their grants in just as wide a range of endeavors, and that the grant, along with membership in the College itself, will encourage many of them to explore intellectual fields and cultural activities that they have hitherto not pursued. I am particularly grateful to Bob Fefferman—who helped me think through the original conception of the grants—and to Bert Cohler and the other members of the Standing Committee on Admissions and Aid, who helped to organize the selection and recruitment process, as well as to Ted O'Neill and his staff for expertly implementing the new program. I anticipate that we will want to expand considerably the scope of the program next year, and the College will be actively fundraising to support and expand this program in years to come. The Dean's Grant initiative is but one facet of a much larger initiative to expand and deepen the size and quality of our applicant pool and to afford us the opportunity to recruit many more top-ranked high-school students who are capable of excelling in and enriching our College.

Finally, the College was blessed with a number of faculty initiatives which led to exciting new courses, both on the level of general education and in the concentrations. In the biological sciences Harry Fozzard and Paul Schumacker developed an innovative new organismal physiology course and laboratory as a component of the professional track of the Biological Sciences Core, while in the physical sciences Stuart Rice provided the leadership to organize an impressive state-of-the-art computer laboratory facility in support of a new course in computational chemistry. On the south side of the quadrangles, Robert Kirschner, Rashid Khalidi, Michael Geyer, Jacqueline Bhabha, and a number of other colleagues have organized a fascinating year-long course on human rights, crossing the divides among the social sciences, the humanities, law, and the natural sciences. Happily, the list of new ideas and new ventures is longer than I can repeat here, but all of these projects again demonstrate that we are a faculty eager to innovate and to change in ways that will benefit the academic careers, the intellectual lives, and the personal development of our students.

There will be more to report about all of these topics next year at this time. They are exemplary of the larger and longer-term goals we should hold for the College and for ourselves. As I begin my second term as dean of the College, I thank all of you for your extraordinary support and commitment, and I look forward to an extremely bright future for the College, as it grows in size and becomes an even more central focus for the professional activity of the faculty. As I noted in a recent interview with the alumni magazine, we are the custodians of a wonderful tradition. That tradition has been constituted by different voices and by often quite divergent beliefs about our education. Our students are extraordinarily intelligent, ambitious, and energetic. Like our students, the College is dynamic. It comes out of a tradition, and it has to be responsive to tradition. But tradition will die if it doesn't change. Change happens.

We want to make it happen for us, rather than against us.

The theme of continuity and change brings me to the central part of my remarks this afternoon, which has to do with the history of the curriculum and particularly with the origins of our system of general education.¹ This is particularly appropriate, not only because of the current proposal regarding the curriculum, which the College Council will continue to discuss in November and take action on during the winter quarter, but also because this academic year marks the fortieth anniversary of the report of the Executive Committee on Undergraduate Education (April 1958), a report whose basic assumptions and provisions still shape the world in which we and our students live.

Not surprisingly, our curriculum has a long prehistory, one that predates the era of the incarnation of the College most often associated with

1. These remarks are based on research in the Presidents' Papers, series 1889–1925, series 1925–1945, series 1940–1946, series 1945–1950, and series 1952–1960; the Archive of the Dean of the College, 1926–1958; the Mortimer J. Adler Papers; the George Dell Papers; the Robert M. Hutchins Papers; the William T. Hutchinson Papers; the Charles H. Judd Papers; the Richard McKeon Papers; the Arthur Scott Papers; the Harold Swift Papers; the Records of the Board of Trustees; and the Records of the University of Chicago Press, 1892–1965; all in the Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library; and the Walter Dill Scott Papers in the Northwestern University Archives.

I dedicate the remainder of this report to the memory of a wonderful colleague and friend, Mark Ashin, Class of 1937, and eloquent witness to the efficacy of the College of the 1930s. A professor of English in the College from 1946 until his retirement in 1987, Mark also served as secretary of the faculties from 1980 until 1992. He died unexpectedly this past September. Last June Mark was kind enough to invite me to meet with a group of his classmates from the “New Plan” College who were celebrating their fifty-fifth and sixtieth reunions. The enthusiasm for and pride in the College that came through their various remembrances led to me think that here was a story well worth telling, a story that should be of interest to us as we think about the future of our College in the coming century.

general education—that is, the so-called Hutchins College of the late 1940s and early 1950s. The general theme of my remarks will be to show the dynamic and contested qualities that have informed our curriculum. I do this not to offer us a direct guide to what our future should be, but rather to liberate us from the sense that we have a single curricular past or a single curricular narrative. This, as we shall see, is far from the truth. My story comes in four parts, the last of which concludes with some reflections on our present and some thoughts about our future.

THE NEW PLAN AND ITS INITIAL SUCCESS

The 1920s were a time of introspection and debate about the future of undergraduate education at the University of Chicago. After a series of failed attempts to bring order out of chaos, pedagogically serious and politically plausible efforts began to emerge in the late 1920s among various faculty constituencies with the goal of making the undergraduate program better and more coherent. A faculty committee chaired by Dean of the Colleges Chauncey S. Boucher, a historian who wrote on nineteenth-century American history, issued a report in early May 1928 that called for a radical restructuring of collegiate education at Chicago. In a supplemental gloss to the actual report Boucher outlined some of the intellectual objectives he and his colleagues sought to accomplish, including giving “the student an opportunity, which he will gladly seize, to assume more responsibility for his own education, and thus give greater opportunity and encouragement for self-development and growth in power.” In a second, more private, memo circulated in January 1930, entitled “Bait, cut by C. S. Boucher,” he challenged his colleagues by arguing that American colleges needed “courageous leadership in launching a markedly improved educational program” and that Chicago, “a privately endowed and independently controlled institution, is free from political control and outside interference; a relatively young institution, it is free from traditions which, in some older institutions, are a source of pride, but are too frequently a handicap to progress.” A university known for “daring and yet wise leadership,” her tradition is one of “continuous pioneering, and her alumni not only boast of this tradition but expect faith to be kept with it.”

The result of Boucher's labors was the so-called New Plan that was officially announced in the late autumn of 1930 and implemented in the fall quarter of 1931. The basic logic of the plan derived from Boucher's own educational theorizing between 1927 and 1930, although contributions by Charles Judd, Julius Stieglitz, T. V. Smith, L. C. Marshall, Anton Carlson, and many other senior members of the faculty shaped the final version. That Boucher's labors came to fruition concurrently with the new administrative reorganization of the University into four graduate divisions and an undergraduate college, which President Robert M. Hutchins formally proposed to the Board of Trustees in November 1930, was extremely fortunate. Boucher's plan had two innovative features. First, it presumed that the four-year undergraduate experience (what I will call, for reasons that will later become apparent, the experience of grades thirteen through sixteen) should be divided into two broad parts, the first two years of which would be primarily devoted to general education, the second primarily devoted to more specialized training. The College as an official ruling body of the University assumed direct academic responsibility over grades thirteen and fourteen, the Divisions over grades fifteen and sixteen. The College was now mandated to "do the work of the University in general higher education" for which a student could receive a certificate, whereas each of the four Divisions (and several of Chicago's professional schools as well) would award the bachelor's degree.

General education in the College was to be accomplished by five year-long survey courses, with each of the four Divisions sponsoring a collaboratively taught survey of the domain it represented (the humanities survey, for example, combined a survey of the history of Western civilization with the study of various facets of European literature and art) along with a fifth course devoted to English composition and writing. The total general-education course package of the New Plan thus consisted

of fifteen quarter courses. Students proceeding to the third year of study entered a divisional concentration program. During both the first two-year segment managed by the College and during the subsequent two-year segment controlled by the Divisions, undergraduates were also allowed considerable flexibility in selecting blocks of elective sequences and elective courses. That is, during the first two years a student began to take departmentally based sequences in addition to general education courses, which would prepare him or her for further advanced study, while in the second two years at least one-third of the student's courses were expected to be in fields outside his or her divisional concentration program. If the former provision allowed the student to begin to "specialize" early in his or her College career, the latter provision guaranteed the continuation of a breadth of educational experience, albeit of a higher and more focused sort.

The New Plan's architects were clear that they wanted the new year-long general education courses to offer to students a portrait of the work of each of the Divisions as a whole, but also to provide them with learning skills that would constitute what Boucher called "the early stages of independent thinking," the latter a precondition both for successful education in the Divisions and for success in life thereafter. Since throughout the 1930s membership in the College faculty largely coincided with membership in a divisional faculty, it proved to be possible to obtain the cooperation of the departments in releasing selected faculty members to organize the new courses.

The other truly remarkable innovation of the New Plan was the abandonment of quarterly quality grades in favor of a student's self-pacing through the system, based on the use of comprehensive field exams as opposed to specific course credits or grades. Boucher was confident that this feature would help engender in the student a sense of "self-responsibility in his educational development." Boucher asserted that "[e]ach

student should be made to realize as early as possible that he is the person whose business it is to be most interested in, most vitally concerned with, his own education. . . . No one can successfully force him to develop in himself the power and mastery which alone constitute what in any field is rightly termed an education.”

This plan was meant to redress the chaos and triviality of the free-elective system by prescribing divisional general-education courses and by cutting the tie between course credit and degree requirements. At the same time, it was designed to give students maximum benefit of the research university by allowing them to begin to specialize even in the first two years of their university careers, and to provide the faculty with adequate motivation to stay engaged in undergraduate education. Although it is difficult to assign a specific intellectual anchor to Boucher’s work, given Boucher’s instrumentalist combination of generalism and specialism undertaken for the purpose of encouraging “independence and self-reliance,” as well as his strong emphasis on the individual development of each student according to his or her capacities, I believe that we can plausibly assign him to that broad tradition of progressive education in early twentieth-century America which found its greatest advocate in John Dewey. During his tenure as dean of the College, Boucher regularly participated in the meetings of the Progressive Education Association’s influential Commission on the Relation of School and College.² Moreover, Boucher’s vision gained the strong support of William S. Learned, a senior staff director at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and a supporter of progressive educational reform in his own

2. Founded in 1919, the PEA became, in Lawrence Cremin’s words, the “principal voice of the [progressive educational] movement during the period between the wars.” John Dewey served as honorary president of the association from 1927 to 1952.

right. In March 1928 Learned wrote to Boucher about the latter's plans for the new curriculum, commenting that "[f]ew things have ever crossed my path that seemed to me more significant than this, either in themselves or in the promise that they contain of authoritative guidance for American education at a moment of great uncertainty. Leadership that is firm, courageous, and unbewildered by doing the right but revolutionary thing in a simple way is so rare that it was a profound pleasure to discover how far your plans had already taken shape."

Boucher spent much of his time between 1930 and 1934 expounding the rationale and virtues of Chicago's first experiment in general education. He argued that "the functions of the College are to provide appropriate opportunities for each student to acquire the minimum essentials (and as much more as he may desire) of a general education, and to prepare himself adequately for the work in the division or professional school in which he may elect to pursue his advanced study." Boucher believed that this union of general and specialized education in the first two years of undergraduate life was especially possible at the University of Chicago since "[e]ach member of the College Faculty is [also] a member of one of the four upper divisions." He thought that "[t]his is one of the notable advantages of a college in a great university. The Faculty is not segregated and no stigma of inferiority will be attached to membership in the College Faculty, since many full professors and departmental chairmen will continue to participate in College instruction." Finally, Boucher argued that "[t]hrough the part of the student's college program devoted to rounding out his general education will in a sense be a continuation of his secondary education, it should be permeated with the tone and the temper of University performance; and the part of his College program devoted to the specific prerequisites for advanced work in a Division should be geared quite definitely to fit the tempo of real University work."

By combining a significant commitment to general education in the first two years of college with a parallel commitment to more specialized, elective sequences, the New Plan was consciously designed to introduce students to the work of specific departmental concentrations in their first and second years of study. The fundamental logic of the plan was thus predicated on a view of the first two undergraduate years as an integral part of a larger four-year project, going from grades thirteen through sixteen of a student's educational career.

The implementation of the various year-long general-education sequences was reasonably efficient, and by 1932 each Division had organized a year-long lecture course that stressed breadth of interdisciplinary knowledge. At least one Division also used the New Plan as a chance to undertake reforms on the level of the concentrations—the Social Sciences Division devised a particularly interesting plan that required all divisional concentrators to use at least six of their elective courses to work up a general social-science field in addition to their concentration field, thus ensuring broad exposure to a variety of social-science disciplines in addition to the student's specialization in one particular discipline.

The New Plan was met with considerable approbation and public approval, and it certainly constituted the birth of the Chicago Core. Throughout the 1930s College authorities surveyed students and alumni about the effects of the New Plan and found that the plan enjoyed considerable esteem. A young freshman by the name of Charles H. Percy wrote to Hutchins in June 1938:

I came to the university after four years of high school still seeking for facts as a means of education; after one month I was seeking for ideas. I came with the belief that my text book should think for me, not *me* along with *it*; during this past year I have gained

just an inkling of how to think for myself. . . . And as for the results . . . I do not think that they have been too disastrous. I have not become a communist, anarchist, socialist, or fascist, as I had been warned I would if I came to this University. Moreover, I believe that I have acquired the potentialities of a “thinking” democrat. In other words, I should like to express my appreciation as an undergraduate for the New Plan under which I have worked for the past year and hope that it shall continue to spread throughout the educational world in future years.

Percy’s support for the New Plan can be confirmed ethnographically sixty years later if one talks with alumni of the College of the 1930s and early 1940s about their experiences. These men and women affirm with truly remarkable passion and conviction the educational value and the integrity of the New Plan curriculum. The plan also had an exemplary impact on other colleges and universities, whose deans, presidents, and other officials often wrote to the College asking for information and copies of the course syllabi.

The New Plan seems to have attracted well-prepared students to the College, even during the midst of the Depression. Doubtless, this was due to the strenuous efforts at publicity undertaken by Boucher and other officials, including Robert Hutchins himself. Hutchins’s motives in doing so were in part idealistic, but also in part ruthlessly practical, for a financially healthy, well-attended undergraduate program had become essential to the University’s budgetary security. This is borne out in a private exchange in March and April of 1935 between Hutchins and William Dodd, the former chairman of the Department of History who had left Chicago to become the American Ambassador to Germany. Dodd wrote to Hutchins that “I think it unwise for a large endowed

institution to continue to offer undergraduate work, especially in a region where there are four State universities not far away. . . . The one thing which modern civilization needs is absolutely free university work on a research level.” Dodd then urged that the University “slowly but certainly abandon undergraduate work and make every effort to obtain the first scholars in the world as writers and teachers.” Hutchins replied that “I agree entirely with you that Chicago has the opportunity to become the leading university in the world. I believe, however, that if it fails to become the leading university the reason will be financial and not the one that you advance. At present undergraduate work, by which I mean the first two years, more than pays for itself. Actually research at the University of Chicago is supported by the undergraduate college. The New Plan has reduced and ought to further reduce the cost of undergraduate instruction. Solely from the point of view of research, therefore, the College is indispensable at the present time.” This in 1935.

HUTCHINS AND THE FRONDE OF THE 1930S

S till, in spite of the apparent success of the New Plan and its general support, or at least toleration, among the divisional faculties, it was a semi-open secret among the faculty by the mid-1930s that Robert Hutchins had serious reservations about it and that he in fact wanted a different kind of undergraduate program for the University of Chicago. Mortimer Adler goes so far as to argue that Hutchins considered the plan to be a “poor compromise” and an “unmitigated defeat,” in large part because it allowed students the opportunity to take departmentally based electives in addition to prescribed general-education courses during

their first two years of study. Adler's assessment is borne out by Hutchins's confidential reports to the Board of Trustees between 1935 and 1937. Although he accepted the New Plan—some of the final discussions on its curricular details were actually conducted in the president's house in early February 1931—and although he even made it famous in a series of speeches given in the early 1930s, Hutchins had different dreams.

Hutchins's reservations about the New Plan centered on three areas: the timing of undergraduate education, the larger purposes of learning in a college, and his predilection for humanistic education based on "great books," together with an ambivalence about the place of empirical science in undergraduate general education. Hutchins was convinced that the proper role for the College was to straddle the last two years of high school and the first two years of college (often called the junior college) which, in turn, would necessitate a rather different kind of curriculum than the New Plan represented. He also believed that the New Plan was seriously flawed in that it accorded the natural sciences near parity (forty percent of the total general-education requirement) with the humanities and social sciences, a pedagogical balance that Hutchins felt to be both unnecessary and unwise. To the Board of Trustees he observed confidentially in 1935 that "[t]he curriculum is seriously overweighted on the side of the natural sciences. Just because two Divisions of the natural sciences are necessary for administrative purposes, it does not follow that two natural science courses are necessary for a general education." Finally, the New Plan left the Divisions with far too much intellectual and political control of the College's curriculum for Hutchins's taste. This meant that the general-education survey courses, while an improvement over undergraduate education in the 1920s, functioned not only as devices to encourage intellectual skills and analytical competencies and thus as means to "train the mind for intelligent action"—which Hutchins

viewed as the fundamental purpose of general education—but also as introductions to the substantive research work of the Divisions, which in Hutchins’s view smacked too much of professional or para-professional education. Again, to the Board he wrote: “I had hoped that the general courses would deal with the leading ideas in the various areas of knowledge. Although some progress has been made in this direction, the great weakness of the curriculum is still its emphasis on current information.” Hutchins’s positive personal experiences in teaching a small great-books seminar with Mortimer Adler in the College in the early 1930s—a seminar that elicited effusively positive evaluations from outside examiners like Richard McKeon and Scott Buchanan—must have convinced him that a different genre of general-education pedagogy was both plausible and expedient.

At first Hutchins moved gingerly. This was perhaps because the dustup over his attempts to impose several of Mortimer Adler’s friends on the Philosophy Department in 1930–1931 had left bad feelings among the faculty. But Hutchins’s uncertainty about the long-term strategic future of undergraduate education on the south side of Chicago must have also played a role. It is not widely appreciated that the negotiations between Robert Hutchins and President Walter Dill Scott of Northwestern University over the possible merger of the two universities (as a new “The Chicago Universities on the Foundation of Northwestern University and the University of Chicago”), which Hutchins initiated in May 1933, were actually quite serious. In late 1933 our Board of Trustees constituted a negotiating committee specifically to consider the merger. Although the negotiations with Northwestern collapsed in late February 1934 (because of opposition from Northwestern faculty, alumni, and trustee leaders, as well as from angry medical-school students who staged a rally and burned effigies of both Scott and Hutchins), it is

important to remember that if the merger had succeeded, the University of Chicago per se would have borne much less responsibility for undergraduate education, since Hutchins wanted to transfer most collegiate-level instruction to Northwestern's Evanston campus.³ Once the possibility of transferring undergraduate education from the Quadrangles to Evanston had evaporated, Hutchins was forced to focus more intensively on the prospects for a reasonably large, yet also reasonably revolutionary, collegiate program that would be appropriate and feasible at the University of Chicago.

If Robert Hutchins had reservations about the New Plan, many senior faculty reciprocated with expressions of distrust about what the new president was up to. When Hutchins persuaded the University Senate in

3. Hutchins's plans were intentionally elusive, but the records of the negotiations contained in the Walter Dill Scott Papers suggest that he hoped to consolidate a major part of the doctoral and research programs from Evanston to Hyde Park, shifting approximately nine hundred graduate-student positions to the Quadrangles. At the same time (according to Addison Hibbard, the dean of liberal arts at Northwestern) only a "small experimental college" of four- to five-hundred students was to remain on the Quadrangles, while the preponderant share of college teaching would be given over to Northwestern's Evanston campus. This remarkable division of labor (and financial profits) might have resulted in a University of Chicago confirmed in its historic mission as a premier graduate research university with an early version of St. John's College charmingly attached to it, while Northwestern would dutifully serve as the primary site of "standard" undergraduate education. Understandably, many senior arts and sciences faculty at Northwestern found the deal less than appetizing. As Dean Hibbard reported to President Scott in October 1933, he found among his colleagues at Northwestern "a very general feeling that no matter how sincerely the plan may be outlined at this time, eventually the two campuses would grow apart and we would have a *graduate* faculty on the South Side and an *undergraduate* faculty in Evanston. . . . Obviously, should this division later become rigid, the best interests of the undergraduate school in Evanston would suffer since we would not enjoy the benefits from having prominent scholars come into contact with undergraduate classes."

November 1932 to authorize the idea of a four-year program that combined the last two years of the University High School and the first two years of the College for local Laboratory School students, the normally reserved Boucher wrote to him reporting the faculty's "resentment" and "lowering of morale" because they were convinced that "the Senate action necessitates an immediate and complete scrapping of the present program before they have had an opportunity to develop it satisfactorily, in order to design a completely new program." Although faculty fears turned out to be unfounded—the so-called "four-year College" (grades eleven through fourteen) was largely restricted to Laboratory School students and even the full implementation of that plan was delayed by several years—Boucher's comments are suggestive nonetheless.

As a follow-up to the Senate's action of November 1932 a College Curriculum Committee was constituted in 1934 to plan an "ideal" four-year (grades eleven through fourteen) College program. By 1936 it had endured dozens of meetings and come up with desultory results. The plan that the committee finally issued in March 1937 (and which applied primarily to students in the last two years of the University's Laboratory School) was a hodgepodge of compromises, largely because of the mutual suspicions between high-school leaders and University faculty and because of the insistence of the faculty representatives—and especially colleagues from the natural sciences—on keeping the essential elements of the New Plan intact in whatever scheme might come forward. Arthur Rubin, who was close to Adler and to Hutchins in the 1930s, reported disparagingly in March 1936 that "if one wanted to make impossible the development of a four-year College devoted to 'general education', more effective Committees than the present one on the College and the Curriculum could not be organized." According to Rubin, this state of affairs was owing to obstreperous and vested faculty interests,

especially in the natural sciences: “[i]n number, prestige, sophistication, and oratorical skill the representatives of the ‘sciences’ far outweigh the representation of the ‘humanities’. . . . Carlson, Lemon, and Schlesinger are awesome spokesmen for the natural sciences.”

Against what Rubin resentfully branded as the “oligarchy” of the divisional interests, however, another faculty group set out to plan countervailing strategies. This was an informal group of colleagues convened by Hutchins himself and led by Ronald Crane and Mortimer Adler who began to meet in the autumn of 1933 to discuss ways to transform the undergraduate curriculum into something more intellectually congenial to President Hutchins. In his autobiography Adler presents himself as being the intellectual leader of the *fronde*, but Crane also seems to have played a significant role, since he was a renowned scholar who had senior standing in his department and division (Crane became the chair of the Department of English in 1935).

The motives that brought each of these actors to the table of curricular revolution were slightly different. Adler’s background as a self-styled public intellectual and teacher of the great books at Columbia led him to make sweeping and highly controversial statements about undergraduate education. In March 1931 a slightly perplexed Chauncey Boucher would confide to Hutchins that “[n]early every day I encounter an expression of distrust or fear regarding the selection of men to be put in charge of the four general divisional courses provided in the report of the Curriculum Committee—namely, that Mr. Adler will be put in charge of the Humanities Course, and that others of his ilk will be brought in for the other courses. In each instance I think that I have convinced the person that such fears are unwarranted.”

Crane was a distinguished literary critic and editor of *Modern Philology* as well as a self-proclaimed Aristotelian formalist, committed

to an in-depth analysis of ideas and literary structures. David Daiches, who knew him in the later 1930s, characterized Crane as “one of the most intellectually stimulating people I have ever talked with.” In contrast to Adler, who was primarily interested in the rightness of great ideas qua great ideas, Crane was interested in close, theoretically informed, and sophisticated readings of texts. That is, he was much more concerned with training students to understand the character and structure of ideas *in action*, and less with the putative ahistoric or universal validity—the “rightness” or “wrongness”—that might be ascribed to such ideas. This was (and is) an important operational distinction, and it was to become more important in the late 1940s as Ronald Crane grew disillusioned with Hutchins’s and Adler’s visions.

For Crane a general education program could not solely or even primarily be justified by the amount of substantive knowledge anchored in the “great fields of human thought” that was conveyed to the student. Rather, the real essence of general education was the development of what Crane called basic intellectual habits. As he put it eloquently in a private letter to Chauncey Boucher in 1931:

There is also the problem of forming or developing what may be called basic intellectual habits—basic in the sense of being fundamental to all more advanced and specialized intellectual effort whether within the University or without. The ability to see problems, to define terms accurately and clearly, to analyze a question into its significant elements, to become aware of general assumptions and preconceptions upon which one’s own thinking and that of others rests, to make relevant and useful distinctions, to weigh probabilities, to organize the results of one’s own reflections and research, to read a book of whatever sort reflectively,

analytically, critically, to write one's native language with clarity and distinction—the development of these powers . . . would seem to me to be no less the business of “General Education” than the communication and testing of knowledge, and I am not sure that they are not, in the long run, the most important and valuable fruits of a well considered “General Education.”

Crane believed that the best way to engender such habits was through active learning by students in small groups. This required more discussion-based teaching and learning, more focused participation, and more regular feedback and criticism than the general lecture courses of the New Plan could provide.

Crane kept Hutchins closely informed of the progress the group was making in fashioning a new curriculum that would stress the reading of original texts and great books. A provisional outline of the curriculum prescribed a heavy diet of the liberal arts and the classics of Western Europe, organized in a rigorous two-year reading cycle. Smaller segments of the curriculum were allotted to history and to science, but under the rubric of science Crane combined social science as well as natural science. Crane further insisted that “[n]either the history nor the science course need to be concerned with ‘method’, since ‘method’ will be discussed in the liberal arts, and this includes ‘experimental method’ and ‘measurement’.” In justifying this scheme Crane asserted that “the most important function of general education is (a) the provision of a basic intellectual organon for the understanding and evaluation of all forms of human thought and expression and (b) the disciplining of students in the use of it. . . . It insists that, apart from this, the proper cultivation of the individual's taste and reason is best secured through the reading and interpretation of the classical works of literature in all fields from the beginnings of our

Western tradition.” Thus, under Crane’s scheme both the natural sciences and the empirical social sciences had at best a rather derivative role to play in a student’s general education. Crane further argued that this curriculum was “a complete rejection of the prevailing assumption that the content and method of general education should be determined solely or largely by the ideal of ‘conditioning’ students to meet the social situations characteristic of contemporary life and on an explicit repudiation of the whole anti-intellectualist ‘philosophy’ on which this assumption rests. It involves a rejection of the belief that the main concern of general education should be the assimilation by students of as much as possible of the present factual content of all the various specialized fields of learning.” It was as if Ronald Crane wanted to pin a big “D” for Deweyism on the breasts of Chauncey Boucher and his associates.⁴

The circle around Crane was substantially enriched the following year by the addition of Richard McKeon, a young professor of philosophy at Columbia University and a close friend of Mortimer Adler. Following Adler’s suggestion, Hutchins had hoped to hire McKeon in 1930–1931, but that idea collapsed amid the revolt of the Philosophy Department against Hutchins’s attempts to impose Adler on them. Finally, in 1934 Ronald

4. Adler subsequently recounted to Richard McKeon in 1933 the genesis of his collaboration with Ronald Crane, whom Adler described as “a power in the Humanities Division”: “He was one of Bob’s and my bitterest opponents two years ago. . . . He told me he now understood what I was driving at, and what Hutchins was driving at, and that he realized we were both reactionary in education instead of progressive, and that he agreed with us, and would like to help us. . . . He even went so far as to say that he could now see that Hutchins and I were trying to free Chicago from pragmatism, and he thought there was no more delicious piece of irony than to make Chicago the center of an attack upon American pragmatism.” Adler also surmised that good connections with Crane might serve the cause of bringing McKeon to Chicago: “This is all to the good for Bob’s plan to make you Dean of the Humanities Division.”

Crane was able to negotiate a visiting professorship in the Department of History for McKeon. McKeon subsequently became a permanent member of the Department of Greek in 1935–1936 and was soon selected by Hutchins to be dean of the Humanities Division as well. Immediately after arriving in Chicago, McKeon and Crane began to teach a joint seminar, a collaboration that must have further influenced Crane in the direction of a neo-Aristotelian approach to literary criticism.

The emanations from the Crane Group, from Mortimer Adler, and, most importantly, from Robert Hutchins's own increasingly bold public statements on the purposes of higher education provoked substantial faculty opposition. In December 1933 Hutchins delivered a convocation address in which he offered such comments as "The gadgeteers and the data-collectors, masquerading as scientists, have threatened to become the supreme chieftains of the scholarly world" and "The three worst words in education are 'character', 'personality', and 'facts'. Facts are the core of an anti-intellectual curriculum." Several months later, in February 1934, a packed house in Mandel Hall heard Mortimer Adler debate Anton Carlson on the apparently conflicting virtues of facts versus ideas. In April 1934 the College Curriculum Committee unanimously passed a motion defending the mixture of general-education courses and free electives that marked the New Plan ("We definitely reject the view that the sole or even primary purpose of the College is experimentation on students in the field of general education. We regard the College as experimental only as education at the University of Chicago has always been experimental, namely in demanding constant self-criticism on the part of the faculty, open-mindedness for the future as in the past to proposed changes, and a keen sense of responsibility to our students"), and blasted the neo-Aristotelian scholasticism that they feared was dominant in faculty circles around the president ("[w]e believe that any form of rationalistic absolutism

which brings with it an atmosphere of intolerance of liberal, scientific, and democratic attitudes is incompatible with the ideal of a community of scholars and students”). It is perhaps a measure of faculty opinion that when rumors circulated around campus in October 1934 about Hutchins’s impending departure, the historian William T. Hutchinson would record in his private diary:

Main talk on campus, as I found emphasized this noon when I lunched at the Quadrangle Club, is of Hutchins’ apparent intention of taking a year’s leave of absence to accept a government job. Although he deserves much better, I haven’t heard any regret expressed over his going. On the contrary, the few who express a judgment seem afraid he won’t go.

Of course, Hutchins did not leave the University of Chicago. Quite the contrary—Hutchins stayed and elaborated his educational vision in *The Higher Learning in America*, published in 1936. In 1935 Hutchins had quipped to the Board of Trustees that “[t]he whole course of study [in the College] suffers greatly from a disease that afflicts all college teaching in America, the information disease.” *The Higher Learning* was Hutchins’s attempt both to diagnose and to provide a cure for the “information disease.” His diagnosis centered on the claim that only in the university does our society have a hope of pursuing truth for its own sake. We ask universities to do this, but we also ask them to train their students for productive work beyond the academy. Hutchins argued that this vocationalism tends to drive out the pursuit of truth, substituting the gathering of useful information for genuine inquiry. As a cure he recommended a sharp separation between what he called general education and vocational education, including graduate education. With vocationalism removed universities

could devote themselves to the cultivation of the intellectual virtues for the sake of the pursuit of truth through direct study of mankind's greatest achievements. The program was highly intellectualist because Hutchins adopted the neo-Aristotelian view of man as a rational being. He insisted on a highly intellectualist university because, he believed, that was what a university and only a university had the resources to be. Training for contemporary life and the professions had to come later. The separation of the vocational and the educational was to be complete. This would redound to the benefit of both, and to democratic society as a whole, Hutchins believed. The vocational trainers would have well-prepared students to work with, mature twenty-two-year-olds with broad learning and good intellectual habits. The university would function more effectively because it would be unified around the single purpose of the cultivation of intellectual competencies via study of mankind's most exemplary achievements, without the conflicting loyalties created by academic departments or a mixture of vocational (read graduate) and true students.

This vision is driven by a conviction that the alternative was truly dangerous: a university without a guiding purpose, forever lobbied by commercial and specialized academic interests and forever neglecting the intellectual for the sake of the useful. Such a university might claim that it was devoted to learning and research, but Hutchins thought that in practice it would simply do the bidding of professions, corporations, and governments, sacrificing culture to the main chance.

A representative response came in Harry Gideonse's *The Higher Learning in a Democracy*. An associate professor of economics and one of the founding members of the social science general-education survey course, Gideonse's views were characteristic of many faculty at the time. Whereas Hutchins argued for a higher learning unified by a common pursuit of truth based on the study of humanistic texts and a refusal to

engage in vocational education (even for the learned professions), Gideonse believed such views were tantamount to a punitive, anti-scientific, and ultimately undemocratic hierarchization of knowledge:

Fundamentally, the entire proposal is based upon an unproved assumption about the transfer of learning. It is taken for granted that participation in practice requires no special training, a brief apprenticeship under technicians will suffice to make a superior practitioner of the theoretical product of the higher learning. This easy faith arises out of a prejudgment as to the inferiority of the practical to the intellectual. Such a view involves a fallacy as to the transfer of training, indeed a most difficult transfer—that from theory to action. It is precisely the mutual cross-fertilization of theory and action that is the hardest task of all.

In place of Hutchins's faith in humanistic practice, Gideonse then counterpoised the empiricism of modern science:

We must meet the present on its own terms. If there is confusion in our present situation, there is also unparalleled promise. In place of the metaphysical orientation of the classical academy, the theological orientation of the medieval university, and the literary orientation of the Renaissance university, modern higher education must put its main emphasis on the method of science.

Finally, Gideonse openly applauded the criterion of relevance for living in society in the construction of a collegiate curriculum: "Other things being equal, the test for deciding the inclusion or the exclusion

of a given subject matter in the curriculum must be its significance for living the life of our society.”

The distinction between education as a way of conveying the formal grounds of knowing as opposed to education as a way of conveying information for life in society preoccupied much of Hutchins’s thought. His statements on the issue earned him a rebuke from John Dewey in *Social Frontier* in 1937. Dewey praised Hutchins’s account of the situation of higher education and he agreed that education in America was driven too much by the “love of money”—in the sense that the students pursued their education for the sake of lucrative careers, the administration pursued students for the sake of tuition dollars, and the government funded industrial progress and universal access, but not necessarily genuine learning. Dewey also agreed that under these circumstances the academy was dedicated only partially and haphazardly to the pursuit of truth and that higher education was divided in its loyalties and purposes. But Dewey strongly objected to the dramatic opposition that Hutchins claimed between the empirical and the intellectual and between vocational education and the pursuit of truth for its own sake. Dewey, in contrast, regarded the principle of unity that Hutchins proposed as philosophically indefensible; he also thought that the institutional reforms that Hutchins advocated in light of his philosophical program were both authoritarian and isolationist. In Dewey’s opinion Hutchins’s educated man was likely to be both disengaged from the democratic community and a threat to its political principles and processes.

In spite of (and also perhaps because of) faculty unrest, Hutchins pursued his vision with patient fervor throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. Still, he was realistic enough to know that without a major new faculty constituency his plans would sink into political inactivity. His one attempt to force feed such a constituency by creating a committee

on the liberal arts and importing hired guns like Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan ended in disaster by 1937. Such collisions must have strengthened his conviction that the University should create a separate College faculty that would have little or no formal overlap with the Divisions. Indeed, as early as 1936 Hutchins reported to the Board of Trustees that “[t]here is no remedy for this condition except time and the gradual substitution of men interested in general education for those interested in advanced work.”⁵

**I N T O T H E W I N D :
T H E R E V O L U T I O N O F 1 9 4 2 – 1 9 4 6**



In spite of the intellectual turmoil of the mid- and late 1930s, little change occurred in the College’s education programs. The New Plan continued to function as an accepted body of educational practices and seems to have earned the general approval of most faculty in the departments. Radical change only came in August 1941, when Hutchins replaced the ineffective and rather hapless Aaron Brumbaugh—who had succeeded Boucher as acting dean of the College in 1935 when the latter left Chicago to become president of the University of West Virginia—with a bright, energetic associate professor

5. During the negotiations with Northwestern University in December 1933 about a merger with Chicago, Northwestern’s business manager, William Dyche, asked Hutchins about the effect that the removal of graduate research and teaching from Evanston would have on Northwestern’s undergraduate liberal-arts college. According to Dyche, Hutchins replied that “[t]he association of college students with faculties engaged in research and graduate work is not desirable and the more miles that separated the two the better.”

of English, Clarence Faust. Faust was a graduate of our own Department of English, having completed a Ph.D. dissertation on Jonathan Edwards in 1935. While still a graduate student in the early 1930s, Faust had served as an instructor in the College. Soon after Faust joined the faculty as an assistant professor in the Department of English in 1935, the new divisional dean, Richard McKeon, appointed him to the post of dean of students in the Humanities Division, a role that gave him sundry opportunities to collaborate with McKeon and to appreciate McKeon's educational beliefs about the value of disciplined practice in the arts of appreciation, analysis, and criticism. McKeon became a sometime intellectual mentor to Faust, with Faust sending McKeon drafts of work in progress for advice and comment. Equally important, however, is the fact that among Faust's most influential teachers had been Ronald Crane. To the extent that Faust brought a vision for the College to his deanship in 1941–1942, this was also informed by the curricular ideas of the “scholastic” ginger group centered around Crane and Adler from a few years earlier. Indeed, Mortimer Adler reports in his autobiography that “among the young instructors who attended the sessions of the Crane Group [in 1933–1934] were men who many years later became pivotal figures in the educational reforms that Clarence Faust, who was one of them, instituted when he became Dean of the College in 1941.”

Faust moved quickly both to advocate and to implement his vision for the College's curriculum. At a meeting of College course leaders to discuss the future of the curriculum in late December 1941, Faust announced firmly that he did “not believe that electives belong in general education.” Faust thus believed, following Hutchins, that the College's curriculum should be primarily devoted to general education, that it should be almost completely prescribed, and that its fundamental structure should be premised on a framework of grades eleven through fourteen—

that is, encompassing the last two years of high school and the first two years of college. In espousing these assumptions, he immediately provoked heated opposition from faculty who esteemed the greater flexibility of the New Plan.

The first battle took place between January and March 1942. Early in January 1942, in the aftermath of the declarations of war on Japan and on Germany, Hutchins suddenly and with considerable drama proposed to the University faculty that the B.A. degree be transferred from the jurisdiction of the Divisions to the College, and that it be conferred upon completion of a four-year program in general education beginning with grade eleven. After some considerable discussion, the Senate approved this action on January 22, 1942, necessitating that a new curriculum be designed for the four-year college. Work on the curricular proposal was centered in a twelve-person committee, four members of which were young scholars from the Department of English (including Clarence Faust, David Daiches, Louis Landa, and Arthur Friedman—the latter two, like Faust himself, having been charter members of the Crane-Adler curriculum cabal in 1933–1934).⁶ The committee instantly failed to achieve consensus, particularly on the requirements for students entering the College after completing a conventional four-year high-school program (that is, those entering grade thirteen).

Instead, the committee produced a contested document that included a majority report arguing that such students should be held to a full load of general-education courses, including two full years of humanities

6. Several of the most important innovations in the history of the College were the work of relatively young or at least younger faculty leaders. Chauncey Boucher and Clarence Faust were each forty when they became dean of the College; F. Champion Ward was thirty-seven. Robert M. Hutchins was, of course, only thirty when appointed president of the University.

sequences and two years of social-sciences sequences, and a minority report signed by five committee members asserting in a New Plan–like refrain that “[t]he common core of general education expected of every student should not be expanded beyond the point which in the experience of the college advisors has proven to be the optimum. Beyond that optimum students derive more benefit from courses freely chosen than from those prescribed in fields which may be unrelated to their particular interests.” The majority report also encountered stiff resistance from senior faculty leaders of the humanities, physical sciences, and biological sciences, many of whom wrote protest letters urging greater flexibility for post–high-school entrants. Finally, on March 19–20, 1942, at a marathon meeting of the College faculty that lasted nearly five hours over two days, Faust had to settle for a political compromise mediated by Joseph Schwab and Merle Coulter that created two undergraduate degrees: an A.B. that would be the result of the prescribed general-education curriculum, and a Ph.B. that would allow students entering the College after having completed high school to take a program that included departmental electives in addition to a (now reduced) number of prescribed general-education sequences. The Ph.B. of 1942 was thus essentially the continuation of the New Plan, shorn of its former luster and innovative élan.

A last-ditch effort in early April 1942 by senior faculty in the University Senate led by Bernadotte Schmitt, Ernst W. Puttkammer, George Bogert, and several others to rescind the Senate’s earlier acquiescence in the transfer of the baccalaureate degree from the Divisions to the College failed by a 58-to-58 vote, with Hutchins himself breaking the tie. Clarence Faust and his allies were not content, however, with what they felt to be a clumsy compromise, and in 1945–1946 they tried again. This time the ground had been better prepared through changes in the regulations governing membership in the College faculty. In November 1943 Faust

obtained Hutchins's approval to interpret the statutes of the University in a way that made membership in the College faculty contingent on a person's teaching throughout all three quarters of the academic year. This led to the automatic disenfranchisement of a number of divisional faculty members who had formerly also been members of the College faculty.⁷ In addition, with Hutchins's encouragement and under the exigencies of wartime, Faust began to take advantage of the previously little-used proviso of 1932 that the College could appoint its own faculty members without divisional co-appointments. By February 1946 Ralph Gerard, a distinguished physiologist who had regularly taught biological sciences in the College, summarized the results of these two convergent processes: "In 1937 a majority of the College was composed of men who were teaching in the Divisions as well as in the College. In 1943 slightly fewer than half the members were in the Divisions and in the College. In 1946 fewer than 20% of the men who are teaching in the College belong to the Divisional Faculties."

The second and final struggle took place between February and April 1946. Having set in place the new structure of a four-year baccalaureate degree program spanning (in theory) grades eleven through fourteen and run solely by the College, having articulated the goal of a four-year

7. The idea seems to have emerged during a meeting between Faust and Hutchins in March 1942, in the aftermath of the compromise that Faust had been forced to accede to in regard to the Ph.B. degree. The effects of this change were much debated at the time. Faust's opponents viewed it as tantamount to vote rigging, whereas his supporters insisted that the changes in membership rules were both immaterial to the final outcome and unrelated to the specific initiative. Still, the whole process left a bad taste with many faculty in the Divisions. Sewell Wright, the distinguished geneticist, went so far as to question the basic legality of the 1946 proposal, based on what he felt had been the manipulation of the voting lists.

curriculum focusing almost exclusively on general education as the educational telos toward which the College should move, and having begun to construct an autonomous faculty to assume the proprietorship of that program, Faust's final step was to try to kill off the vestiges of the New Plan by eliminating the Ph.B. degree.

This fateful decision engendered passionate support and equally passionate opposition across the University. The conflict that followed led to one of the most divisive constitutional struggles that ever occurred at the University of Chicago, culminating in a collision between the University Senate and the president of the University and a subsequent appeal to the Board of Trustees. Leading the fight were senior faculty from two of the four Divisions. Ironically, among those prominent in the opposition was none other than Ronald Crane, whose thinking about the undergraduate curriculum had certainly changed since the heady meetings of the Crane Group of 1933–1934. In the face of the possible elimination of free electives for students in grades thirteen and fourteen it was now “perfectly clear” to Crane that “the action of the College does increase the obstacles in the path of College students who may wish to become scholars or scientists. . . . I am inclined to think that if the action of the College goes into effect unmodified, we should be saying that we conceive of the content and method of general education in a highly rigid and inflexible way.” While acknowledging the value of a systematic program of general education, these critics challenged both the philosophical and organizational assumptions that undergirded the plan, arguing that the normal undergraduate program in grades thirteen and fourteen should take cognizance of individual students’ interests beyond general education, and that it should provide opportunities for both general and more specialized learning. The latter point seemed to be on Norman Maclean’s mind when he asked his colleagues to distinguish between “what is indispens-

able and basic, and what is desirable and admirable” in a general-education program. For Maclean the indispensable and basic had to remain, but colleagues might honestly differ about what was desirable and admirable. Maclean believed that “originally the problem with the College was one of having too many courses; now it is a problem of too few; and under the [1946] proposal the student would be given no choice to develop his gifts or special interests.”

The fundamental issues at stake during the constitutional crisis of 1946 were, thus, not merely issues of the autonomy of the College vis-à-vis the sovereignty of the Divisions. More basic intellectual and pedagogical issues were in play as well. These issues were nicely summarized in a pair of contesting memoranda submitted in February 1946 by Clarence Faust and Hermann Schlesinger, a professor in the Department of Chemistry, the one representing Hutchins’s vision of prescriptive general education, the other defending the spirit of flexibility in Boucher’s New Plan. Faust’s most emphatic argument was one of structural integrity: a program of general education had to be both internally coherent and consistent in its purpose. That is, the various elements should work with and reinforce each other. Hence, the Ph.B. with its optional departmental courses harmed the integrity of the program by substituting courses that could not possibly provide sound general education: “[t]he general courses of the College differ from the elective sequences in origin and intent. They differ in subject matter and scope, in staff formation and operation, and in practice they differ in the location of responsibility for them and in their responsiveness to the needs and plans of the College.”

Schlesinger rejected the basic premises of Faust’s arguments in three crucial ways. First, he insisted that there must be continuity between the first two College years and the last two years, as opposed to the sharp break sanctioned by Faust, which necessitated a student’s beginning specialized

education only in grades thirteen and fourteen. Second, Schlesinger went even further and insisted that election was a valid part even of general education: “some degree of election is an integral part of a general education. . . . [A]n educational program should not be rigid, but should be flexible enough to be adaptable to the students’ individual interests and talents as well as being related to his future activities. . . . [A]s the student matures, he should be expected to assume more and more responsibility for his own education.” Finally, Schlesinger invoked the importance of seeing the work of the College as a component of the work of the Divisions and vice versa, warning that “to eliminate the Ph.B. endangers the unity of the University,” since it would encourage “the separation of the College from the rest of the University.”

Faust’s opponents also argued that curricular flexibility was actually *preferred* by most College students. According to Schlesinger, eighty percent of students matriculating between 1942 and 1946 chose the Ph.B. rather than the B.A. because it allowed more free electives, and an informal poll of student opinion by the *Maroon* showed fifty-eight percent of College students favoring the retention of the Ph.B., with a minority of forty-two percent favoring its abolition. But in the end, with no one wanting the Board of Trustees to impose a solution, a compromise was cobbled together in May 1946 under which Hutchins and Faust essentially prevailed, and the new curricular framework became officially operational in the autumn of 1947.⁸

8. A compromise was patched together in May 1946 that, among other concessions, placated the scientists by allowing College students to substitute an introductory general-physics course for one of the interdisciplinary science sequences. This deal was noteworthy, since it is the ancestor of our current system, whereby science majors are permitted to take entirely different kinds of core science courses as opposed to those taken by non-science majors. Another significant

Victorious in the 1946 showdown, Faust soon resigned from the deanship, exhausted by what Lawrence Kimpton called the “terrific administrative grind” he had endured since 1941.⁹ His successor, F. Champion Ward, aggressively continued the process of assembling a separate College faculty, with the result that by the early 1950s a significant number of arts-and-sciences tenured or tenure-track faculty members had appointments only in the College. As late as 1958, sixty-eight percent (108 of 160) of the faculty with membership in the College had appointments only in the College. Their presence was to have a considerable impact on the history of the University. The tensions involving the College’s relations with the

concession was an agreement to modify the original Faust curriculum—which had suppressed history as a distinctive (and professional) discipline—by including a general-history course. The debates in January and February 1948 between Richard McKeon and his integration-oriented supporters on the one side and the “naively empirical” historians like Sylvia Thrupp and Louis Gottschalk on the other over the content and purpose of the History of Western Civilization course offered a remarkable witness to the fragility of the larger intellectual architectonic of the Faust-Ward College. In the end, McKeon lost and the discipline-based historians won. Ironically, nowadays Western Civilization is often viewed as one of the last surviving totems of the Faust-Ward College (along with Soc 2), but in fact this presumed offspring was by no means supportive of the original ideology.

9. It says much about the intramural tensions among the Chicago neo-Aristotelians by the later 1930s that Hutchins confessed to Mortimer Adler in August 1941 that he had offered Faust the job of dean of the College only after “warning him against McKeon,” to which Adler replied, “I suppose Faust was the best bet, but he won’t be able to shake off McKeon’s heavy hand. It makes no difference anyway. Our only hope is a separate institute.” After leaving Chicago for Stanford and then the Ford Foundation, Faust would fondly recall his intellectual collaboration with McKeon. He wrote to the latter in November 1951 that “[i]t was great fun seeing you at the time of Larry’s [Lawrence Kimpton’s] inauguration. Gladys remarked that when we sat down together at lunch, we seemed in five minutes to be in communication as of the early 1940s. I thought so too and enjoyed it enormously.”

Divisions (and vice versa), which stretched well into the 1980s, derived in part from the frustration experienced by those who were appointed as faculty members in the autonomous College and who thought themselves authorized to create a unique curriculum, but then saw both the political mandate and the demographic logic of that effort being worn away over time. At the same time, the existence of a separate College faculty engendered what can best be called mixed emotions in the Divisions. Many divisional colleagues admired the tenacity, the vision, and the dedication of the (new) College faculty. But others were more skeptical, especially regarding the perceived scholarly credentials of the College appointees and the kind of work they sought to undertake. One such voice was that of Marshall Stone, chair of the Department of Mathematics, who wrote to Lawrence Kimpton in 1952 that “[i]t can be stated categorically that . . . no mathematician of superior creative powers will entertain a post on the College Staff, or remain with it, if he can obtain employment under normal academic circumstances. . . . The narrowness of the tasks assigned to the College Staff cannot in the long run help but have a stultifying effect on the intellects and talents of its members.” We would be wrong to assume that Stone’s unusually candid comments were not quietly shared by other members of the divisional faculties.

The result of Faust’s and Hutchins’s efforts was a general-education curriculum designed for the last two years of high school and the first two years of college that offered magnificent claims and impressive accomplishments, but that continued to face deep suspicion among several of the Divisions and in many of the departments, and, perhaps more importantly, failed to sell itself to the public as a viable alternative in American higher education.¹⁰

10. At its high point in the early 1950s the curriculum included fourteen general-education comprehensive exams, including Humanities 1, 2, 3; Social Sciences

When Hutchins left the University in 1951, the College as then constituted lost its most vital patron and protector. Facing serious fears that the applicant base for a grades-eleven-through-fourteen, general-education College was profoundly unsteady (by 1953 enrollments in the College had nose-dived to fourteen-hundred students), Lawrence Kimpton, who as secretary of the Faculties had sat through and objectively recorded the bitter fights over the curriculum that had transpired in the mid-1940s, decided to launch a counterrevolution. In so doing Kimpton was forced to confront a newly autonomous, relatively large, and deeply resentful group of College-appointed professors who since the late 1940s had come to feel themselves to be a genuine faculty and who acted as such. The result of Kimpton's counterrevolution was the Filbey Report of May 1953 and, subsequently, the Report of the Executive Committee on Undergraduate Education (ECUE) in April 1958, each of which helped to destroy both the curricular autonomy and, eventually, the autonomous status of the faculty of the Faust-Ward College.

The curricular structures that emerged from the civil wars of the mid- and late 1950s were by default what David Orlinsky has characterized as a two-plus-two arrangement. In his charge to the Executive Committee in May 1957 Kimpton had explicitly called for "a considerable loosening up of the pattern of general education that would make programs more flexible and easier to construct," proposing that the College's general-education requirements be reduced to three comprehensive exams—one each in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences—

1, 2, 3; Natural Sciences 1, 2, 3; History; Foreign Language; Mathematics; English; and OII (Observation, Interpretation, and Integration), the latter course perhaps the most characteristic symbol of the Faust-Ward College and the one most indebted to the intellectual proclivities of Richard McKeon and his protégés like Joe Schwab.

and that students be allowed to use different patterns of courses to prepare for the exams. But that idea went absolutely nowhere. Indeed, the final report of the committee issued in April 1958 reassured the College faculty that their general-education interests were entitled to exactly half of the total undergraduate curricular pie. What is truly remarkable about the ECU debates that ran from the spring of 1957 to the early winter of 1958 was that there was so little productive discussion about the actual (numerical) structure of the curriculum, for this was an issue on which both sides had already talked themselves into exhaustion over the past decade. Not surprisingly, the committee agreed on the two-plus-two formula largely as a way out of the larger political impasse between the College and the Divisions, rather like dividing up Germany after the Second World War. The most sensitive and focused discussions in the committee centered on issues of governance and authority and on the constitution, shape, and future recruitment of the ruling body that was to control the new A.B. degree—specifically, how many divisional faculty members would be given appointments in the new College faculty so as to allow the Divisions to reclaim some substantial control of the curriculum from the autonomous College faculty (this was clearly Kimpton's covert aim). No serious thought seems to have been given to a return to the more flexible arrangements of the New Plan, even though College faculty members suspected (in my judgment, quite accurately) that such a return was precisely the covert goal of some of their divisional colleagues.

One important reason why the issue of greater flexibility could not be reopened in the 1950s was the empirical fact—admitted openly by Champ Ward in May 1952—that those students who entered the College after 1947 and who had graduated from a four-year high school ended up, on average, having to take three years, as opposed to two years, of general-education courses. The de facto programmatic expectation of a three-

year course of study for high school graduates came to be an accepted operational policy on the part of the College faculty. The rub came when Lawrence Kimpton made the decision in 1953 to begin to recenter the demographic basis of the College from grades eleven through fourteen to grades thirteen through sixteen. This meant that in the future the high-school graduate would become the normal, if not exclusive, client of the University's undergraduate programs. Now the crucial question became, to how many years of college study would the normal high-school graduate be held accountable? With College faculty insisting on the necessity of almost three years of general-education course work and with most of the Divisions wanting close to two years (or at least more than one year) of specialized and elective course work, something had to give. In view of *that* stark fact, even to have been able to compel the College faculty to accept a two-plus-two structure was a major victory for Kimpton and the divisional forces and a major defeat for the faculty of the College.

The two-plus-two paradigm (i.e., that fully half of a student's education at Chicago should be devoted to general-education-level courses, with the remainder divided between a student's concentration and free electives) that emerged from the late 1950s continues to shape in profound ways how we do business even today. But with the perspective of forty years behind us, two important facts about this diplomatic settlement should be stressed. First, and most obvious, it was driven not only by pedagogical considerations but also by constitutional timing and powerful political pressure to cobble together a deal to end the bickering and intra-faculty fighting of the 1950s. That is, it was the result of contingent circumstances as much as grand pedagogical design. Second, the settlement of 1958 was partly constructed in reference to the intellectual interests of a defeated ruling body—the then-existing College faculty—whose long-term future was bound to be profoundly affected by the ECUE

report's prescriptive institutionalization of joint departmental-College appointments as the normal paradigm for the future faculty appointments in the arts and sciences, a paradigm that in turn repudiated Robert Hutchins's conviction about the necessity of an autonomous College faculty. Indeed, the very rationale for the two-plus-two settlement grew out of the dedication of College-only faculty members, steeped in the professional and pedagogical values of the Faust-Ward era, to their collectively organized and staff-taught general-education sequences, which, in turn, were anchored in the special interdisciplinary, generalist ethos that marked the Faust-Ward College at its high-water mark. Would the new College faculty, based on a system of joint appointments with the graduate Divisions, be able to sustain a commitment to the generalist teaching ethos? This was a crucial question, and one about which many colleagues in the College in 1958 were deeply uncertain.¹¹

11. The leaders of the Faust-Ward College were confident that the College would be able to continue to recruit generalist professorial faculty interested in general education. Champ Ward wrote to Hutchins in February 1947, "As the theory and practice of general education widen in the nation, we may anticipate a lessening of the difficulty of finding prospective teachers of ability who already possess some interest in and experience with the problems of general education."

Yet by the 1960s at the latest, given trends in the professionalization of young faculty and forces in the academic marketplace relating to incentive structures, it was clear that Ward's assumption was problematic. By 1975 Richard McKeon was forced to admit privately that "One of the things that we were convinced of was that the faculty giving this education [in the 1940s] didn't have this kind of education . . . [but that] in the future the faculty would have this kind of education and it would be easier. We were wrong about that. This was one of the reasons we got into difficulty. When we recruited junior faculty we would get Ph.D.'s from Harvard, Yale, or Columbia, and they would come and they thought it would be a monstrous job to learn how to do this. . . . With each new set of faculty it eventually got to be a campaign against the programmed course, and a plea for freedom. Freedom to do what you do best."

**BEYOND KIMPTON'S
COUNTERREVOLUTION —
OUR HISTORY AND OUR PRESENT**



Under the guise of the default settlements of 1953–1958 the colleagues who survived Kimpton's counterrevolution and who esteemed the comprehensive, prescriptive aura of the early 1950s Faust-Ward version of general education sought to salvage as much as possible. In a private letter to Kimpton in 1958 the historian William McNeill called for a complete rethinking of the College's general-education curriculum, but in fact this was not to happen. Rather, the understandable reaction of all concerned was to try to cram as much of the 1946–1953 comprehensive curriculum into a general-education core of two years, a process that began with a curricular review initiated in 1955 by Dean of the College Robert Streeter. Not surprisingly, Streeter encountered defensiveness and, in the case of one staff, near rebellion. The humanities staff candidly admitted in January 1956 that "no staff is going to believe that, within the projected limits, it will be able to accomplish as much as it now attempts. Each staff is more likely to wish that, for many students at least, it had more time than is even now allotted to it." Christian Mackauer, speaking for the history staff, rightly termed the process "necessary retrenchment" and it certainly was marked by fear and resentment. Edward Levi was later to characterize the whole situation as traumatic. When a friend asked David Riesman in April 1955 why the College did not resist more aggressively the incursions of the Divisions, Riesman replied that "I tried to explain that it was hard to expect a beaten group to fight very hard."

These tensions also took their toll on collegial cooperation and on curricular innovation. By September 1962, Dean of the College Alan

Simpson was complaining about what he felt to be the College's unsolved problems, including "the rigidity of the general education requirements," "the inadequacy of some upper-class offerings," and a "lack of inventiveness in a college which prides itself on being experimental." In response Simpson urged that "[w]e ought to face the future on the basis of diversity—in the proportions of general and specialized education required of different students and in the ways in which general education is offered. . . . We can surely safeguard our traditions of general education without insisting any longer that there is only one right plan."

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, different versions of a possible two-year core were put forward, perhaps the most ingenious being Edward Levi's and Norton Ginsburg's efforts to decentralize and federalize the system by allowing the faculties of the Collegiate Divisions to control part of what the Core would consist of—the so-called common-year and second-quartet system that was institutionalized in 1966–1967. The latter system had the effect of restoring some flexibility to the second-year academic programs of many students in the College (for example, the SSCD was allowed to create a two-civilization-sequence rule for its concentrators, which many senior social-science faculty still recall with considerable fondness). The curricular review of 1984 abolished those differences and, in my judgment, properly restored a uniform curriculum to the College based upon a commitment to the empowerment of our students in the various worlds of human knowledge. This was an extraordinary achievement that should be enthusiastically acknowledged. But it did so by creating what we now, in everyday language, refer to as the Common Core, which for some students can amount to as many as twenty-two of their forty-two required courses and which some of our students find virtually impossible to complete during their first two years

of residence.¹² Unfortunately, this is also a Core that has failed to capture the imagination of and to merit the sustained participation of a number of tenured colleagues in a number of departments. Finally, in the view of some colleagues, by emphasizing a Faust-Ward-like spirit of prescriptiveness and peremptory order (ideals which, in and of themselves, are certainly defensible) the final version of the new curriculum also lacked sufficient elective opportunities beyond the requirements of the Core and of the concentrations to encourage our students to take substantial responsibility for the shape and direction of their own educations.

When I came to Chicago as a graduate student in 1968 the College had twenty-five hundred students. Thirty years later we have over thirty-seven hundred students. The growth of the College has been paralleled by a slow, steady disappearance of the autonomous College faculty, colleagues whose formidable presence was a crucial variable both in the construction of and the justification of the settlement arrived at in April 1958. It is not at all surprising to learn that for the fifty-five percent of the current arts-and-sciences faculty who have joined the University of Chicago since 1983 (and who therefore now constitute a majority of faculty), the rhetoric of an autonomous College with interests arrayed apart from those of their departments (and their Divisions) is often rather puzzling. We have seen a powerful trend toward professional specialization in our faculty culture over the last thirty years, and that, coupled with the slow

12. The 660 seniors who entered in the autumn of 1993 and graduated in June 1997 generated almost three thousand general-education course registrations during their third and fourth years in the College. The current publication issued by the College for parents has had to address the issue of why students are still taking Core courses as juniors and seniors, informing parents that “after completing some of the Core courses, students explore possible areas of concentration, often while simultaneously continuing to take Core courses.”

but certain reduction in normal faculty teaching loads and the equally slow but certain elimination of a separate College faculty, has had powerful cultural consequences on the work of the College as a whole.¹³

Thus, the history of the last forty years of our curriculum has seen ongoing efforts to rearrange the menu of 1940s-style general-education courses into a more confined space, and at the same time to sustain the aura of prescriptive general education as the *primary* trademark of the Chicago College. What has been lost in the shuffle of all this curricular maneuvering is the original, progressive tendency of Chicago's New Plan toward individualization and individual responsibility; toward encouraging students to take more, rather than less responsibility for their own education; and toward a balance between systematic general-education requirements and an open approbation of elective sequences, *both* of which were key features of the first program in general education created in the College's history. Chauncey Boucher was quite clear about the intent of the original New Plan: university education involved responsibility and freedom on the part of the student, as well as prescriptive guidance and control imposed by the faculty.

13. The normal teaching load of many College faculty members in the 1950s was nine quarter courses a year, all on the undergraduate level. When I joined the faculty as a joint appointee of the Social Sciences Division and the College in 1975, my letter of appointment specified an annual six-course teaching load, at least four of which were to be on the undergraduate level and three of which were to be in the Common Core (which meant that, in my case, I taught all three quarters of the History of Western Civilization sequence each year). A normal teaching load in the social sciences and humanities today is four quarter courses per year, two of which are expected to be on the undergraduate level (and only one of which is expected to be in the Common Core). At the same time, it should be emphasized that such trends in teaching loads have certainly not been peculiar to the University of Chicago.

What significance does this wonderfully complex and complicated history have for our time? I believe that the New Plan of the 1930s and the Faust-Ward College proper of the late 1940s present us with two rather different conceptions of the Core and of general education. These differences came clearly to light in the skirmishing that took place in the early 1950s when the departments and Divisions sought to regain some of the curricular space ceded (however unwillingly) to the Faust-Ward College. In March 1953 the departmental chairmen of the Division of the Humanities prepared a memorandum for the Council of the Senate in which they urged a restoration of the older pattern under which the College would be responsible for the first two years of a student's career at Chicago, with the Divisions obtaining control of the second two years as well as the authority to award the B.A. degree, and then recommended still further that "in view of the not too clear line between general and specialized education, some of the specialized work of the Division might [be allowed to] serve the purpose of general education and that some of the College courses should prepare the student for specialized work. Therefore the possibility should not be excluded that a student may begin divisional work while still enrolled in the College." Clearly, from the perspective of the College, this was nothing less than a covert demand for the restoration of the New Plan.

In the style of a rival diplomatic power, the faculty of the College also submitted a statement to the Council of the Senate declaring that "we believe that the distinctive achievement of the University in general education is attributable to the fact that the College Faculty has been enabled and encouraged to develop a curriculum which is not confined to introducing students to various subjects and preparing them for further study. Restriction of the College's task to these functions would remove the ground on which the present excellence of the University's work in

general education rests.” Of course, both sides were correct, even if they were also talking past each other. But, to be fair, in this minor rhetorical skirmish lay two rather different notions of general education and its relation to the mission of an undergraduate college embedded in the midst of a large research university. For many faculty in the Divisions, general education was part of a total four-year program of education and a means to an end, whereas for the faculty of the College general education was the fundamental, exclusive purpose of the College and an end unto itself. The question can be put thus: do the qualities of critical thinking, writing, and analysis—which seem to lie at the heart of *both* of our historical conceptions of a liberal education—derive primarily from general-education courses, or can we see the whole four years of a student’s career at Chicago as leading to and resulting in those same qualities and capacities?

Today, I believe that the College and its students continue to profit from Robert Maynard Hutchins’s revolution in two significant ways. First and foremost, Hutchins and Adler, McKeon, Crane, and Faust, for all their many individual differences, called upon the faculty to develop truly interdisciplinary general-education courses taught collaboratively by means of seminar-style discussions and emphasizing the analysis of primary sources with the purpose of helping students attain some competence in the fundamental disciplines of learning. That is a wonderful and powerful heritage which we should esteem and defend. To put the matter a bit differently, I am convinced that courses like *Self, Culture, and Society* and *Wealth, Power, and Virtue* are both different from and preferable to the *Social Science Survey* course of the 1930s; and I am equally convinced that courses like *Reading Cultures and Human Being* and *Citizen* are different from and preferable to the *Humanities Survey* course of the same time period.

We should also value a second component of Hutchins’s legacy, which is to think about general education as a complex process for the

acquisition of critical skills and intellectual habits, a process which should be both internally coherent and reflexively self-critical, but which is also terribly dependent on our own capacity as a faculty to constitute a real intellectual community, a community in which specialists are willing to interact with each other and understand what others are doing. Chicago's project of general education has nothing to do with various interest groups grabbing turf in order to stuff "information" and "facts" into the heads of allegedly ignorant eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds; it also has nothing to do with the College functioning as a labor exchange. It has everything to do with the faculty's willingness to plan and to teach a realistic program that will give our first- and second-year students what Bob Hutchins late in his life called "some general understanding of the world."

We now face some irreducible facts. First, we have no independent College faculty. The faculty of the College today, like the College of the early 1930s, is with a very few exceptions constituted by colleagues who have joint appointments between the departments and the College. In assessing future faculty appointments, the University must insist that a capacity for and a dedication to excellence in undergraduate teaching be a profoundly important value. At the same time we must recognize that scholarly productivity and scholarly renown, plus a substantial commitment to graduate education, including teaching in our innovative M.A. programs such as MAPSS and MAPH, are inevitably of equal co-relevance. Just last month the Provost wrote to the deans and department chairs encouraging them to reaffirm our commitment to "build and maintain a faculty of the highest distinction." This is another way of saying that we cannot privilege teaching over scholarship—as Champ Ward and his colleagues could openly and proudly do in the later 1940s and early 1950s. At the same time, it will be extremely important for the University to reaffirm that we will continue to take our special traditions of exemplary collegiate

teaching most seriously and that in the future the College will have both the necessary resources and the opportunities to recruit as its teachers colleagues who are and will continue to be great scholars. The ideal of the distinguished scholar-teacher, exemplified in the new endowed College Professorships initiative that I announced last year, should serve us well in this regard.¹⁴

Second, we are a university college with a liberal-arts mission. By “university college” I mean that the College has long ago ceased to have as its sole mission the provision of general education for students in grades thirteen and fourteen. The first two years of our College should be designed in ways that are integrated with the work of the last two years, and in ways that are integrated with the professional culture of the professorial faculty. We do not have to return to the days of the New Plan, but I do believe that we should design a curriculum for grades thirteen to sixteen that parallels the kind of integrated logic and the kind of structural interrelationships that the New Plan so crisply articulated. This is probably

14. The fact that the University has opted to entrust both undergraduate and graduate instruction to a single faculty makes it all the more important that we recognize the variety of professional contributions needed to sustain a superior liberal-arts college. Chauncey Boucher, himself a firm proponent of a single, integrated faculty for the arts and sciences, argued in a very candid report to the central administration in December 1928 that “[i]f the University administrative authorities expect to have the various types of university work successfully performed, they must assure faculty members that every type of work which faculty members may be asked to do is regarded as important, worthy of a faculty member’s best thought and efforts, that successful performance in curriculum building at all levels, junior college instruction, senior college instruction, graduate instruction, important committee service, administrative work, and research productivity, will all be given due recognition in the determination of promotions in rank and advances in salary; and that it is not true that the only way to secure promotion and advances of significance is through calls to other institutions, which are likely to come only as a result of research productivity.”

the most difficult task before us—to understand that the Common Core is not an end unto itself, but that it must be sized, designed, and taught in a way that is harmonious with our goals for the totality of the academic experience of our students in our four-year college, for that totality is the best guarantee of a truly liberally educated man or woman.

Third, we are a faculty-taught college with very high standards. Much has been written recently about our academic rigor and our traditional standards. I do not believe that that rigor and those standards derive from the raw numbers of required elementary courses that we demand of our students. I do believe that our rigor and our standards derive from the ever vigilant presence of the faculty of the professorial ranks in designing and teaching well both general education and more specialized courses. This tradition of rigor across the College means that, as John Mearsheimer rightly observed in his recent Aims of Education address, we have no gut courses and no places to hide from disciplined hard work. In the world of contemporary American higher education that situation is a rather unusual luxury which, in turn, should encourage us to be more creative about the where and the how of our students' self-negotiation of their educations. And that is why I am personally opposed to sizing the Common Core beyond the capacity of ourselves—we, the faculty—to teach and teach well that Core. True, other universities have been and continue to be prepared to use substantial adjunct and graduate-student teaching to sustain their general-education programs. I believe that in the long run such a strategy would be a disaster for the University of Chicago, not because marketing specialists tell us that "faculty teaching" sells (in truth, it does sell), but because a faculty-taught college is the best and safest guarantee of the long-term survival of those rigorous values and standards of excellence that we feel to be so special about Chicago.

To paraphrase Lenin, what is to be done? We need a curriculum that is rigorous, challenging, and workable for a College with a permanent population of approximately forty-five hundred students and for an arts and sciences professorial faculty who by the year 2005 may not be substantially larger than the faculty of today. We need a curriculum that is balanced between our venerable tradition of prescriptive general education—although I hope that I have demonstrated today that those traditions were intensely contested in the past and that it is therefore quite legitimate for you to contest them in the present—and our tradition of innovation, as well as our now somewhat forgotten tradition of encouraging self-responsibility on the part of our students. We need a curriculum that will bring out the best in our students by challenging them to excel through a logical and structurally coherent academic program, building from the general to the specific, and then using the specific to reinterpret and gain new insights about the general. We need a curriculum that openly and proudly designates the concentrations and the free electives as equally valid and valuable components of our students' educations, and that seeks to link the work of the Core with the work of the concentrations and the electives in carefully articulated ways. Finally, we need to operationalize that curriculum in ways that will make certain that all students in the College obtain sustained training in expository writing and that as many students as possible undertake substantial research projects during their final two years of residence.

I personally believe that we should structure the Core in such a way that our students can be expected to complete all of its components during their first two years of study and that they should also have sufficient opportunity to take a number of departmental courses as well during those years, so as to help them make sensible choices about their intended concentrations. I therefore strongly recommend to the faculty that we revisit Edward Levi's conception of the first year as the Common Year and that

we make the Common Year a truly *common* experience by designating it as that period when all of our students are expected to take the great majority of their general education courses.

I also believe that we should encourage our students to use their electives (whose numbers I hope will be increased) in their third and fourth years of residence to continue to broaden and deepen their educations in knowledge areas beyond their specialized concentrations, much as the Social Sciences Division tried to do with its concentrators under the New Plan in the 1930s; and we should do so by thinking about specialized courses and course clusters as having a broader, more integrative mandate. Thirty years ago, Edward Levi rightly observed that “[i]n my own judgment the distinction between general education courses as liberal arts courses, on the one hand, and specialized courses as non-liberal but graduate on the other, has been stultifying to the College and to the Divisions. It avoids the major aspect of one basic problem of undergraduate education today, the necessity to see and develop specialized courses so that they do indeed reflect the astonishing wonders of reality within a larger intellectual setting. The failure to develop such courses will result in the failure of general education courses as well.”

We should take Levi’s admonition seriously. Indeed, I believe that we should move to fulfill one of the most important, but largely ignored, recommendations of the ECUE report of 1958, which called for the “imaginative development” of new elective courses by “the agencies responsible for constructing programs.”¹⁵ In doing so we can be confident

15. The injunction of 1958 was repeated by Dean Wayne Booth in September 1965, when he urged the faculty to think about “[a]s rich a program of ‘general electives’ as possible, to be available to those students who, though not ‘majors’, have developed a strong secondary interest in a given area. Students often complain now that having an interest aroused in a general [Core] course, they find no way of pursuing that interest short of entering a field of concentration.”

that the habits of mind engendered by the Core sequences, and indeed by life in this College as a whole, are precisely those that make our students good at taking advantage of electives. And this seems to me to be a strong argument in favor of making electives a more visible part of the College curriculum. The intellectual maturity of our students, which we help to create, is what we are honoring and further encouraging by taking electives seriously as a key part of a College education.

Some of the courses that students can and should avail themselves of as electives are already on the books, and it will be the patterning or clustering of such courses around individual students' topical or conceptual interests that will be of greatest import. But the departments and Collegiate Divisions can also play an important role by organizing new programmatic ventures that would attract student elective interest. The new Foreign Language Proficiency Certificate program launched recently is one example of an imaginative way of providing our students with new elective opportunities to master a foreign language and gain in-depth knowledge of a foreign culture. A new cluster of courses on various modes of creative and professional writing, which will be co-ordinated by the Humanities Collegiate Division and the College Writing Program, is a second example of an ensemble likely to be very popular with second- and third-year students from across the College. A third possibility would involve an effort to organize a cluster of trans-divisional tutorial courses that seek to integrate the work of the College on the model of the old OII course of the Faust-Ward College. Such courses would likely encounter lively interest from many of our fourth-year students, and it would be especially valuable if they could focus on big intellectual problems that bridge the natural sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences. Yet a fourth example would be a set of new 200-level courses on the cusp between the biological and the physical sciences, exploring new intersections based on the latest scholarly

research. Given the central fact that the College can draw upon the resources of a major research university, the options and possibilities for such interdisciplinary clusters are really quite astounding.

Finally, I believe that we should combine a conception of the Core as an intrinsic but manageable first step in the totality of our students' educations with an implementation of that Core that sustains faculty-taught, interdisciplinary sequences whose primary aim is to educate students in what Ronald Crane called the intellectual habits of inquiry. In other words, I think that we should combine the best of the work of Boucher and of Faust by adopting more flexible structural arrangements akin to those of the New Plan, but infusing those structures with the strong ethos in favor of skills-oriented, interdisciplinary learning characteristic of the Faust-Ward College. Such a synthesis might also do final justice to the historic rivalry that marked these two visions of undergraduate education.¹⁶

To think about the totality of the education we offer is to think about the most precious gift we can give to our students—a mind enlivened by creativity and curiosity, a person strengthened by self-confidence and confidence in the world, and a life enriched by the love of learning. We have much work to do, but the cause is worthy of our highest, our most patient, and our most creative efforts. I wish you a happy, productive, self-confident, and collegial academic year, and, as always, I thank you for your strong support of the work of the College.

16. There is some poignancy in the fact that Chauncey Boucher and Champ Ward each sought to justify, publicize, and defend their respective curricular projects with ambitious books published by the University of Chicago Press. Boucher proposed his book to the Press as a way of publicizing the New Plan as early as October 1932. When *The Chicago College Plan* was published in 1935, it generated an array of positive, enthusiastic book reviews. Comments like "Here is one of the most exhilarating publications on American higher education

to come off the press in many a year” were quite typical. Yet by the time a second edition was published in May 1940, Hutchins was poised, soon with Faust’s assistance, to begin the dismantling of the New Plan. When the then Assistant Director of the Press, Rollin D. Hemens, asked Clarence Faust what to do with the 629 unsold copies of Boucher’s book in April 1944, Faust told him that “he has no need for additional copies of this book and that we may as well declare it out of print and destroy the remaining stock.” The books were thereupon thrown out as wastepaper.

A no more kindly fate awaited Champ Ward’s *The Idea and Practice of General Education*, a collaborative project involving seventeen authors which Ward initiated in June 1948 as a way to articulate and to justify Clarence Faust’s and his vision of the totally prescriptive College. There is surely considerable irony in the fact that Ward’s book was finally published after numerous delays only in October 1950, just two months before Robert Maynard Hutchins announced his resignation as Chancellor of the University of Chicago, thus opening the way for the dismantling of the Faust-Ward College.

A modest, if unhappy commentary on the disjunction represented by the two books came from Carey Croneis, the President of Beloit College, who, upon receiving a complimentary copy of Ward’s book in 1950 from W. T. Couch of the Press, wrote back observing “I think it pertinent to suggest that some of those many University of Chicago faculty members whose heroic labors actually gave birth to the entire ‘New Plan’ [of 1931] may very well consider it strange that in a 333-page book their efforts are memorialized in a single paragraph on page 53.” Perhaps the larger moral of both stories is to counsel those who wish to put forward revolutionary curricular initiatives not to write books about them.

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