The University of Utah's Program of General Education

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*The concept of general education has been with us for decades, of course. On our campus, as on many, it involved a core of course material that every undergraduate student was expected to complete, in addition to the requirements of his major field. At Utah, the General Education Program was to be completed by the student usually within his first two years. In fact, the student was dually enrolled in both General Education and in his departmental major until he completed the General Education requirements. (We were very serious about it in those years—that would have been about 1948 up to about 1968.) This General Education Program consisted of two kinds of requirements, specific requirements and area requirements. The student needed to take specific courses in English Composition, Speech, Physical Education, and Health Education. He also had to meet the requirements in four areas—the Humanities, the Social Sciences, the Biological Sciences, and the Physical Sciences.

When this program was created in the early 1940's, it must have seemed a very rational solution to the elite young scholars who were then seeking admission to our campus country clubs. But by 1965 an uneasiness concerning general education was developing in our campus

* In order to present an idea of the course which the University of Utah has followed in regard to general education, Professor Gordon first read a portion of a paper which he had presented at a meeting of the American Association for Higher Education in 1970. See what he said in 1970, and then see what kind of prophet he was in terms of what is happening today.
community. The University's prestigious Policy Committee was wisely given the assignment to evaluate the General Education Program and make recommendations for its improvement. I say "wisely" because at this point in time there had not yet appeared the demonstrations of student unrest on campuses across the country. (This apparent wisdom may stem from over a century of almost defensive insistence at the University of Utah that it maintain academic excellence and freedom in a valley sometimes described as authoritarian.) For the next two years the Policy Committee conducted its study, including interviews with a cross-section of both students and faculty. They concluded that general education was here to stay, but they reported certain consistent complaints. In particular, the students felt that the General Education Program was merely a hurdle, requirements to be filled before one could really pursue the major course work which interested him. The courses seemed to carry the stigma of being merely introductions to special disciplines and hence were not seen as timely or relevant to the issues of the day. The program appeared to be parental and rigid with exemptions or waivers rarely granted. Finally, the program seemed to be staffed with leftover teachers—either regular faculty who were not alive to the research and publication push, or graduate students in need of support money. The Policy Committee made one specific recommendation for an administrative change, but proposed no specific curricular changes other than to recommend that a General Education Council be created to devise such changes.

The administrative change has proved to be an important one. The Director of General Education, as he had been called, was removed from a position in the College of Letters and Science and awarded the full status of Dean of General Education. The General Education Council was assigned to him and was to consist of faculty members from the University at large. Further, the Dean of General Education was no longer to be responsible for providing counselors for students' first two years. (This function was split off to a newly created Dean of Academic Counseling.) For the first time on our campus, then, there appeared a dean charged with the responsibility of creating an undergraduate curriculum in general education—and for the first time this curricular assignment was accompanied with a budget. So this curricular reform was to be backed with power, both administratively and budgetarily.

Let us now pause at the year 1967 and examine the forces at work to maintain the status quo versus the above-mentioned newly-found power of a Dean of General Education and his Council. The disciplinary departments were a strong force on our campus. During the preceding two decades, nearly every department had firmly established at least one of its introductory courses into the General Education Program, giving the course a guaranteed captive audience of students,
and giving the department an opportunity to recruit majors. Why should any department want to give up such assurances for the cause of creating new courses or meddling with the General Education requirements? Further, as student enrollment increased in these required courses, it gave the department job opportunities for its graduate students as teaching assistants and so forth. Another powerful force developing over the years resided in the four General Education area committees, inhabited mainly by department chairmen. Each of these committees determined which departmental courses were to be included in the area requirements. They had become comfortable with their decisions and saw no reasons to change. Still another force rested with the General Education counselors, who saw it as their duty to insist that students fill the requirements in the first two years.

Fortunately, the administrative change recommended by the Policy Committee, then approved by the all-powerful Faculty Council, removed the power of the General Education counselors by placing them under another dean. The new Dean of General Education and his Council simply dissolved the area committees by never reappointing them. This left the departments and their chairmen to be dealt with, hopefully in a manner which would elicit their cooperation and not their condemnation. The General Education Council began its deliberations with the assumption that there now really was no general education program and a new one was to be invented. They called a meeting of all department chairmen and asked them to be thinking creatively—to propose to us the wildest courses they had ever imagined or wanted to construct. In the meantime, the General Education Council asked itself if there was any specific course that was absolutely necessary for every undergraduate student. We finally decided that English Composition was the only such course, and we weren't too convinced that it was absolutely necessary for every student. This meant the elimination of requirements in such specific areas or courses as Speech, Health Education, and Physical Education. (As could be expected, these particular departments promptly became our opponents when we later submitted our new program to the Faculty Council for its approval.)

Then the General Education Council began to examine the concept of area requirements. The four areas in past use still had a certain logic, even if only a logic of tradition. Yet to retain the original four areas might also mean retaining the rigidity of the past course offerings. We tried creating our own new bins and sorting the varied academic material of the University into these bins. We soon became engaged in what C. P. Snow would term the conflict of two cultures—the hard sciences versus the humanities. Need the student in one of these be exposed to material in the other? We finally compromised. We created five areas of subject matter with the stipulation that the
student must do work in four out of the five. Actually we split the
traditional Humanities area into two parts, Western Civilization and
Fine Arts. The remaining three areas were enlargements of the tradi­
tional remaining three areas—Social and Behavioral Sciences, Life
Sciences, and Physical Sciences. By allowing a student to satisfy his
General Education Program with the completion of work in only four
of the five areas, we essentially endorsed a slight specialization in gen­
eral education. We expected that a student would complete at least
one of the four areas by the work done in his major (and had no
problem with that), leaving three more areas, one of which might
still be quite closely related to his major. Yet, even if a student opted
out of the Physical Sciences, he would still catch the essence of the
hard sciences through his work in the Life Sciences area. Similarly,
if a student opted out of Western Civilization he would still catch an
historical perspective in either the Social and Behavioral Sciences area
or the Fine Arts area. Most importantly, such a plan was removing
some of the rigidity complained of by the students. Now at least they
could leave something out.

Having not yet heard anything very imaginative from the depart­
ment chairmen (in fact, hearing practically nothing), we called for
five half-day meetings with department chairmen during the summer
of 1968. Each of these half-day meetings was devoted to a separate
one of our five new areas. Every department head was invited to
every session since we wanted to break down the traditional barriers
felt by departments and supported by the former area committees.
Ideas for new courses and interdepartmental sequences began to
emerge from these summer meetings. It seemed we had convinced them
that the old program was indeed finished, and that the old barriers
were dissolved.

Another debate within the General Education Council was now
beginning to develop around the best procedure for a student to re­
cieve material within an area. It was agreed that an area should be
considered complete when the student had taken three courses within
it—but three courses how chosen? One could argue that the three
courses should be planned and taken sequentially by the students. One
could also argue that each student should pick his own three courses
from a cafeteria assortment. In either case, how would good teaching
be guaranteed? We compromised in a bicameral fashion by providing
both solutions—two alternative routes for satisfying the three courses
in an area. Route A was to be a three quarter sequence, hopefully
interdepartmental, and funded by the Dean of General Education.
Route B was for the student to pick three instructors from a list pro­
vided in each area and to take a course from each of them. We
planned to place only our best general-education-type faculty in each
of the area B lists. I might as well confess in advance that this pro­
posed listing of star instructors turned out to be politically impossible. We finally settled for placing in the B list the names of the courses they taught instead of listing the actual faculty names themselves—getting agreement in advance that there would be no changes in who taught certain courses. Again we had reached a solution which provided further flexibility for the student in choosing his own pathway. In addition, we had opened the door for the development of a new interdepartmental effort in the creation of relevant courses to be financed by new money from the Dean of General Education. Further, we had our foot in the door for using only the better faculty in these undergraduate courses.

To give today's student even more freedom in choosing his general education program we formed two additional policies. First was a policy for awarding credit in General Education areas by satisfactorily passing a well-standardized examination in the area. We chose the examinations in the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). The policy declared that a student could earn up to 48 hours of credit by such examination, which could be accomplished if he passed with a sufficient score in four areas. We would also allow a waiver in one or more areas for a less satisfactory score. The second policy encouraged students to write their own programs if they had something better in mind. This could consist of relevant work done off-campus or abroad, or it could consist of courses already available on campus. The student would be required to submit his proposal for the approval of the Dean of General Education, who was instructed by the General Education Council to act as grand lama with as liberal an attitude as possible.

This new program was approved by the Faculty Council and placed in operation in the autumn of 1969. We now need to analyze the politics of that approval and subsequent failure or success of this curricular innovation. The battle in Faculty Council for the approval of this program lasted for two half days of five hours each. The specific departments whose courses had been eliminated as no longer being required for every student were the first to lose their battle. But they went down like gentlemen. Generally their course enrollments have not been seriously affected (and I can still say that in 1973). Students still opt to take their courses, even though they are not under the umbrella of General Education. These departments have been invited to submit courses in any of the areas and have done so. The larger and longer battles whirled around the issue of the General Education Council approving only B list courses which were taught by faculty with a proven flair for general education. The departments challenged our right and ability to choose such faculty. We settled on a double veto. The General Education Council could not name a departmental faculty member without the approval of the department and the de-
partment could not name a faculty member to the General Education Program without the approval of the General Education Council. This has continued to be a touchy issue with one or two departments. It is indeed difficult to determine who are the best faculty for teaching general education courses. What criteria? Popularity? The humorous lecturer? An easy grader? Fortunately, we did have some basic data to work with. Our student government had already initiated a course evaluation program where at least once a year every instructor is rated on a short questionnaire by the students in his classes. In addition, we have built a longer rating sheet which we have been using off and on. With such data we hope to build a solid base for these difficult decisions that will be agreed upon by both the department chairmen and the Council.

But have any new courses come forward? Indeed they had by 1970. Gratifyingly so. This had been mostly true in the A list, the sequence courses in each area. This was probably a function of the support money that the Dean of General Education had available for such courses. Here’s what was coming up in 1970. In the Western Civilization area there were two three-quarter sequences in operation. The first, *Intellectual Tradition of the West*, was lifted almost entirely from the old Humanities program where it had been the only successful interdepartmental sequence in the University. The second was an interdepartmental effort between Economics and History on the topic of *Revolution and Continuity in Western Tradition*. In the Fine Arts area one new sequence was in operation—and it was an exciting one. Titled *The Artist in Each of Us*, it incorporated the team teaching efforts of six faculty representing the departments of Architecture, Art, English Literature, Modern Dance, Music, and Theater. It included a laboratory experience each week where the students rotated through the six faculty experts and were encouraged to do their own thing in each field. The Social and Behavioral Sciences area contained a new sequence course titled *Man: The Individual, Social Groups and Culture*, and a second sequence, *Richlands and Poorlands: Problems of Development*. The first of these was an interdepartmental effort between Psychology, Sociology, and Anthropology, and the second involved Economics, Political Science, and Geography. The Life Science area involved two sequences. The first was lifted from the old Biology program and was rather traditional. The second sequence was built primarily for juniors or seniors in the hard science area. It was actually a bio-engineering sequence, including faculty from Biology and Engineering. The Physical Science area contained a new sequence entitled *Earth and Man*, involving the departments of Geology, Geophysics, and Geography. Another sequence which had not yet gotten off the ground was to involve a philosopher, an historian, and a physicist.

The B list of departmental individual courses sprouted a few in-
novations. The College of Law started offering undergraduate courses for the first time, one called *Law and the Social Process*. The College of Engineering started offering a course on the impact of technology on society. The Psychology Department introduced a new course on the psychology of social issues. The Sociology Department offered a course on *Understanding Minorities in Utah*. At that time, we also had on the drawing board a course in film study, but weren't quite sure which area it belonged in. And we were also working on a sequence on the non-Western world.

That's the way things stood then as, at the end of that speech in Chicago in 1970, I said, "In summary, can we analyze why this curricular innovation worked? One factor is certainly the creation of a dean whose position parallels that of other college deans and who has a budget to offer departments who will participate in sequence courses. Second was the creation of a General Education Council consisting of faculty who were not committed to their departmental loyalties. To this Council have been added two students at large whose contributions have been particularly valuable. Third, the time was ripe. The time for relevant courses, better instructors, and less rigidity was upon us. The forces at work to maintain the status quo—and those forces were represented by admirable men—were balanced against the above factors. Change won out. My hope is that the new program and the forces which brought it about will not themselves become jelled into the status quo. They must contain their own capacity for continual change. If the General Education Council and I decide that our work is perfect and completed, we are in trouble."

Now, three and one-half years later, as I said, I have resigned, somewhat frustrated, somewhat bored. What happened? Let's look at the areas. Remember, one of the options was that you could be an 80% man instead of a 100% man. Just finish four of the five areas and we'll put our stamp on your forehead. What happened with that? Did students simply redistribute themselves across the board? And did any of the areas suffer when the students were allowed to choose their courses? You can probably guess which area started losing students—Physical Science, at least that's the way it was at Utah. Their enrollments went down—but they didn't go out of business. They tried very hard to invent some courses in physics and chemistry that they thought would be exciting but, nevertheless, enrollment in the physical sciences has dropped. Overall enrollment did not simply spread out randomly.

On that same topic, the English requirement is probably on its way out—I would say by next year. The English department seems to be coming to the conclusion that it may still be that students don't
perform in composition the way they should when they leave high school, but that whatever we’re doing about it isn’t helping much.

What about the testing-out option? Has anything happened there? Oh boy, did something happen there! You may know that the University of Utah suddenly became the largest user of CLEP examinations in the nation, a reputation for which we’re not exactly sure we’re proud. Things had just been dribbling along when I mentioned this in 1970. We were having maybe ten or fifteen students a term show up to see if they could test out in CLEP. By the spring of 1971 it looked as if there might be some increased interest. I had a chance to go to Europe that fall to teach for our Business School—and when I got back I found we had a revolution on our hands. There had suddenly been 4,000 freshmen take the CLEP examination. Great panic set forth, and when I got back a sort of inquisition took place in the Senate with me and the Dean of Admissions and Registration about, “What in the world are you guys doing?” They had approved the idea of students using CLEP, but they had never intended for it to be taken seriously. We had always stated it in the catalog, but it wasn’t until 1971 that anybody read it—and suddenly “somebody” read it, and started taking the tests. We now have had about 8,000 students take the CLEP examination.

The arguments involved in this are the arguments you probably have had on your own campuses. Yes, people ought to be able to test out. We’ve always had a University policy that students could test out of an area. But the arguments we began to hear were: “Multiple choice tests could never replace essay information” and “Nothing can ever replace my class” and “The 35 percentile is obviously too low” (we had set it at that point, which is equivalent to “C” performance, on the basis of a national sample of college sophomores) and, finally, “A ‘C’ may be passing in a course, but ‘C’ is not passing on examination.” These were the kinds of emotional arguments we were hearing. This was not even a matter of data. What was not being said, and of course what was really hurting, was that some of the departments were starting to lose students from the classroom. But this you couldn’t argue about. It was an emotionally charged time. Also, nobody could dare discuss the question of: “What are the criteria for having succeeded in general education?” How would we go about proving that a person who had a good score on the CLEP test was indeed well-informed in general education? What would you compare it with? There was really no way of solving the issue. So the emotion was taken care of through politics—by back-patting, by compromise, and so forth—in order to keep the program, because most of us felt it was probably still worth keeping. But we decided not to let as many students through. We lifted the cutting scores on the three different levels. This satisfied everybody. A certain cutting score would clear
a person for four hours, but he would still need two more courses. Another cutting score would clear him for eight hours—and he would need only one more course. Another cutting score would clear him for all three courses, or give him twelve hours in an area. This was purely compromise—no rational decision involved at all.

Since then I've had a chance to look at some data to see what effect CLEP is having on the performance of our students in General Education. This is still not the right kind of data, but it's something anyway. For instance, I was curious not about the mistakes in CLEP—but let's take the students who were really bright and received high scores on CLEP. How did it affect their behavior at the University? I went to the 1971 students that we could pursue through the following year, and I picked a sample from that group of 4,000 who had not only gotten some credit by CLEP, but who had also scored above a 23 on the ACT. These are highly correlated, incidentally. It doesn’t mean it’s highly correlated to what you do late in life—but grades do predict grades, test scores predict test scores, and so forth. But I wanted to make sure that we weren’t just getting accidents, so I chose a group of students who had scored well in both instances. Then I wanted to find a comparable group—but you couldn’t find a comparable group in 1971. Every kid who had a brain in his head had taken CLEP. So I went back to the year before, where it was the same as far as “intelligent” students, but where I could find a control group, since virtually nobody had taken CLEP in 1970. I picked out a comparable group of students who could have passed CLEP, who were above the ACT of 23. So I had two equally “bright” groups (If that’s “brightness.” Again the problem is that that’s “academic brightness.” It’s not creative brightness, it’s not planning brightness, it’s not forecasting brightness—but at least it’s academic brightness,) to check out to see what had happened to them. How did they perform?

One of the things that you might expect, of course, is that the people who had passed CLEP would move on into the more advanced courses more quickly. No such evidence. In studying both these groups across four quarters, which would be a year and a third, I found no evidence that those people who got the CLEP “shot in the arm,” as you could call it, started out in any higher classes than the students from the year before who had not had the CLEP booster. So it doesn’t seem to be affecting this area. I don’t know yet whether or not they graduate any sooner.

Another thing we looked at then was how it affected the enrollment of those students in our General Education Program. Well, as could be expected, anybody who got credit for English did not take freshman English. But a couple of other things were not so expected. For instance, in the Fine Arts area an equal number in both groups—the 1970 group, and the 1971 “shot in the arm” group—chose to take
a course. There was still the interest in the Fine Arts area. The CLEP group usually took one course, but they didn't often go on to take two or three courses—whereas in the Social Science area they did. You couldn't tell the difference in the enrollment in Social Science courses at our school. It's as if CLEP credit didn't exist. There's something about the Social Science classes that attracts students anyway. Also in the Life Science area it doesn't seem to affect enrollments. But we do find that the Fine Arts and Physical Science areas are being hurt somewhat by the CLEP examinations. These are the areas that people at our school will stay away from if they receive any kind of CLEP credit.

The last thing I looked at, and didn't anticipate at all, involved staying in school for the four quarters that we were watching them, through the freshman and into the sophomore year. Would having received CLEP credit make any difference in whether a person stayed at the University? Would this give him some sort of a feeling about himself? And this appeared predictable just looking at the English performance. Of those students who got English credit and didn't have to take the course, only about 18% dropped out by the end of the fourth quarter. Those who failed the CLEP English test (remember, they were all bright; that is, they all had above 23 on the ACT) dropped out at nearly double the rate, about 35% leaving the University in the same period of time. This might suggest that not having received CLEP credit in English may have been a little discouraging to these people, who were presumably fairly bright; and that therefore we have a bit of a drop-out situation. But isn't that what you'd expect? Doesn't CLEP correlate with staying? But that isn't the entire case. When you get to the Fine Arts and Social Science areas at our school, it's just the reverse. That is, among students who found out that they were "good" in either the Fine Arts or the Social Science areas by having received CLEP credit, more of them were gone by the end of the fourth quarter. Those who found they weren't so good in Fine Arts or Social Science were still here.

What kind of meaning does this information have? Does it mean that these students are transferring? Does it mean, as my assistant suggested, that they have found that their interest in the arts or social sciences are simply not going to be met at our school? Have they found out that they're bright and are choosing to do their work or study somewhere else? I don't know. When you get back to the hard sciences, there is no difference. Having received credit or not having received credit by these bright people didn't seem to affect their drop rate. These are some of the intriguing things that we hadn't expected.

Moving to another area, how about this business of students having their own choice? Well, I have yet to have a freshman walk into my office and say, "I'd like to write my own general education program."
I don't suppose the day will ever come. We state this option in our catalog every year. Our freshman advisors tell every class that comes in (and we handle this in very small groups), "Remember, you can go over and ask to write your own program." But it hasn't happened. It does happen, though, by the time they get to be sophomores or juniors. And we do now have a trickle of students going to Europe, spending a year there, working on general education in a sort of independent way. It does happen in the advanced years. In fact, the University now has a Write-Your-Own-Major program, besides the Write-Your-Own-General-Education program. And we also offer a Bachelor of University Studies degree in which a person can write his own requirements—and that has an even looser General Education Program.

How about the courses, the options we were giving in each area, the B list versus the A list? The B list, you will remember, are the courses that already exist, but which get on the list because they're taught by men we want. It's that star list idea. The only problem that's come up there—or we'd still be doing quite well—is that it's been difficult to get the student ratings. In 1971 we decided that too many of us were trying, so the General Education department withdrew to let the students do the whole thing. But in 1971-72 the evaluation information was somehow lost in the computer, and the whole year's ratings were gone. So in 1972-73 we decided to take control again and do our own evaluating. We generated a grand short questionnaire—but we're still debating how to best get the information back from the students. We mailed it to the students' homes with the idea that it would be returned to us—and after waiting through the entire fall quarter we finally had a 33% sample back by Christmas. Discouraging to say the least. This year the students have said they're going to try it again. I'm hopeful that this time they will come through on this and will get us the ratings we need.

Of the A list, those interdepartmental sequences I was so excited about in 1970—what happened there? Well, the Intellectual Tradition one, the one we borrowed from Humanities, is stronger than ever. We can't provide enough sections a year to keep the sequence going. It is a beautifully integrated effort between Philosophy, History, English, Foreign Languages, and so forth. But then it always was good. We can't claim credit for it—we just stole it. And it's simply getting better. But the Revolution and Continuity course? Gone. The departments could not stay together on it. Some History sequences have come in. In the Fine Arts area, the Artist in Each of Us course that I was so tickled about is now gone. We had the six creative people from the different areas there, and the students were doing such things as moving in dark rooms, feeling, listening to music and that sort of thing. But it was way too frightening. (Plus the fact that the
man who had pulled the thing together left campus. A conclusion that I'm beginning to come to as I look at our sequences is that those that remain strong sequences have strong people coordinating and pulling them together. The sequences that have dissolved have been sort of "partnerships"—and the partners have agreed to disagree and abandon ship.) Also in the Fine Arts area we do now have a film study sequence put together by one man. It's existing beautifully—no trouble with it. In the Social and Behavioral Science area, that wonderful thing on man, the combined Anthropology/Psychology/Sociology course, is gone. We could never get those three departments to agree on who was running it. And they simply quit. The Richlands/Poorlands course (which was Economics, Geography, and Political Science) was another case in which I could not get the three departments to agree on who was running it, and it was dissolved. In the Life Science area both sequences are still doing well. (They both have single people heading them.) In the Physical Science area, the only sequence still existing is the one on Earth and Man which again has a single person running the amalgamation.

What really has become exciting since 1970 is that because we had the right to create courses that didn't exist in any department, and to put the General Education label on them, we have turned out to be the best inventor of single courses in the University. For instance, when along came the black students, we created General Education courses in "blackness," single courses, not sequences. Chicano courses, Indian courses, women's courses, environmental courses, survival courses. These are the things that we're proud of. We seem to have been the vessel for the creating of things that you might not call general education—but because we have had the entity for creating the courses, we've done so. It also has helped our poorly-predicted-student area, the students we are not quite sure are going to make it, by the creation, for instance, of new math courses that the Mathematics department didn't want to touch, but which they didn't mind having us do. And we've seen the creation of courses in concepts of self for minorities that feel they're not quite ready to handle the society of college. Also one day I got to thinking that every department has a course called Independent Study in which students sign up with an instructor and study on their own. Why shouldn't General Education have one? So I sneaked it by the Senate one year, at the end of a report, and it's turned out to be a tremendous blossoming area in General Education.

So we began to have a feeling of innovative power. ("Maybe some of these other things didn't work but, by George, we can create courses!") The "new education" was obviously upon us. We were all aware of the things that suggested changes in classes, changes in times, and this sort of thing. So we were ready to implement all the new
ideas that were floating around—and General Education seemed to be the place to implement them.

When the College of Letters and Science dissolved, broke up into three separate colleges, they gave up the right to conduct the liberal education program. So we said, "We'll do it!" In our conceit and with our new-found power, we were ready to try anything. During 1971-72 we proposed the Inter-College of Undergraduate Liberal Education, "Inter-College" meaning that we wanted it to be that thing which fit between the various colleges. We wrote up quite a proposal on undergraduate liberal education, on how we planned to take care of the "liberal" problem, the fact that undergraduate liberal education hadn't really been handled well (it seemed to be simply general education with a broadened concept), that it ought to take care of very specific things. We presented our program to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and got nowhere. He simply felt that the time was not right.

It was along about then that I was beginning to get discouraged. I began to feel that the answer wasn't going to be in General Education, that our Vice President, our administration did not view General Education as the place where all these innovations ought to take place.

At that time we were looking for a Dean of Continuing Education (I'd been on the search committee), and we'd picked two or three great people for the job, but none of them would come. So I said I would take over the Division of Continuing Education (which is the same way I got to be Dean of General Education), because to me, once again, it looked as if here was the place to start the "open college." So I sort of set General Education aside and I started getting a proposal ready for the Open College—open to anything, open to all kinds of ideas about classes, open to any kind of students, sort of the experimental college, turning Continuing Education into that. I submitted some plans to the Executive Committee of the Senate, but they looked at them glumly and several of them whispered to me afterwards, "Now is not the time." Utah had been facing a threat from the State Board of Higher Education about tenure, and the Senate was uptight as it could be. So I decided to back off on that and look at General Education again.

Still trying to do something with liberal education, we brought together the ten members of the General Education Council, the three most powerful deans, four people from the Policy Advisory Committee—in other words, a very involved group—and said, "All right, the Dean of General Education is going to quit. Now what are we going to do? What will you recommend in the way of general education? What will it look like, who will run it?" etc. And so they wrote a proposal. After months of arguing about what it should look like, they finally agreed on certain things. They decided it was time that General Education became a larger thing, that instead of there being
a General Education Council, there should be a Council on Undergraduate Liberal Education. They weren't sure who ought to lead it—whether it ought to be another dean among deans, an associate vice president, or perhaps the Vice President for Academic Affairs. But at any rate, they took the proposal to the Senate last summer—and it was tabled, with the excuse that since the University would soon have a new president, it would be best to “wait until he gets here and let him solve the problem.” So we had to let that sit.

Back in the Division of Continuing Education I have now taken over. I have seen that our campus is not yet ready for a separate experimental college. But there is agreement that Continuing Education can become the agent for the best of the University to be carried to the non-traditional student. So, in my way there, I'm going to try to focus on the kinds of tasks that are necessary for the non-traditional student of today—the one who isn't from 18 to 21, and who isn't going to sit on our campus for four years—and hope that, through my subtle devices, I can do for general education over in Continuing Education what I couldn't do in General Education.

In the meantime, the Council of Academic Deans met once again on my successor. And they've decided that maybe now is the time to decentralize general education, to put it into each college where it can be better integrated with the major—that what really is needed is careful advising for every student. Then they can individually plan for each student what the best general education program for him would be. You can't argue with the philosophical position taken, that it would be better to have general education make the most sense for the major a person is in, or that the best kind of advising that ever happens, as Hodgkinson said, is in an individualized program. But I think we all chuckle when we realize some of the problems they're up against. They're going to have difficulty trying to get interdisciplinary efforts going. I had enough trouble—but dean vs. dean, trying to buy people back and forth? Also, students don't enter one college and stay there for four years and graduate. What's going to happen to the student who doesn't know what he wants to major in when he first enters? What's going to happen to the student who, typically, changes majors two or three times? Which general education program will he be completing? And faculty are never rewarded, let alone trained, for doing this kind of advising. Where are they going to get them? Well, they've created a sub-committee of the deans to help our committee come up with the final resolution. That's where they seem to be at the moment.

They did state one philosophy which intrigues me that I'd like to end with. It was particularly well-phrased by Sterling McMurrin, who's sort of Old Resident Philosopher on our campus. He used to be Commissioner of Education in the Kennedy days. Sterling said, and
the others seemed to agree with him, that probably the time has come to stop acting as if general education is the same as liberal education. He said, "I'm becoming more and more convinced that simply spreading out and getting generalized in content doesn't necessarily open the mind for more coping options." So it may be that the solution they come up with will not necessarily involve some sort of a distribution requirement in generalizing, that they may try to aim more towards a liberalizing—opening the mind, better coping, and so forth—which might be different than generalizing. I think they want this, and I wish them luck.

Oakley J. Gordon