

**Seek and Find:
The Search for General Education
at Texas Tech University
a Historical Perspective**

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Introduction:

This paper began as an attempt to examine the general education requirements at Texas Technological College/Texas Tech University during the 1960s and 1970s. The original aim was to determine if the era of student activism had any impact on general education. In reviewing the undergraduate catalogs (also called bulletins) it became clear that there was no impact on general education because there were virtually no general education requirements. Thus, the focus of this paper shifted to identifying what little general education requirements there were university wide and investigating a couple of colleges to see if there was a thread of general education type courses within the college programs. This examination spans into the 1980s. The inquiry continues into the 1990s when general education requirements evolve into a set of more specified (course wise) university wide requirements. This paper will present general education at Texas Tech University as it has changed from the 1960s through the twenty-first century.

Uniform Degree Requirements: Background and Overview

Texas Technological College was established in 1923 and opened to students in 1925. The college began with four schools and six buildings. By 1967, there were eight schools and 177 buildings (1967-1968 Catalog, pp.15-16). In the Bulletin of Texas Technological College: General Catalog 1967-1968, one finds under "Programs of the Undergraduate Schools" a section entitled "Uniform Degree Requirements". This section discusses in the following order: "Residence Credit, Quality Points, Application for Degree, Personnel Information Forms, Requirements for Government and History, Physical Education, Graduation Under a Particular Catalog, Commencement Exercises, and Second Bachelor's Degree" (1967-1968 Catalog, pp.76-79). In viewing this listing it is possible to tag the potential general degree requirements as the

"Requirements in Government and History" and "Physical Education". For government and history the catalog states:

Under state law all students who receive a bachelor's degree... must have... 6 semester hours in government, covering the Federal and the Texas constitutions, and 6 semester hours in American history; 3 semester hours in the history of Texas may be substituted for 3 of the American history hours (1967-1968 Catalog, p.77)

This section comprises about one-fourth of one page.

The description of the physical education requirement offers:

Completion of four semesters of physical education activity courses is a requirement for all bachelor's degrees, with the exceptions noted below. Normally, students will enroll in and complete these courses during their freshman and sophomore years (1967-1968 Catalog, pp. 77-78).

Additionally, the five exceptions are described:

1. ...band may be substituted...
2. Male students... may take the basic courses (four semesters) of the four-year ROTC program or the two-year (four semesters) ROTC program in place of physical education.
3. Any student who has been honorably discharged from the Armed Forces with a minimum of 90 days service may receive credit for 2 of the semester hours in physical education... With one year or more of active service he may receive credit for the 4 semester hours in physical education...
4. A student over 25 years of may substitute 3 semester hours of academic work in physical education for the required four semesters in physical education activity work.
5. Students who have a doctor's recommendation for limited physical activity must enroll in the appropriate physical education activity courses... (1967-1968 Catalog, pp.77-78).

The physical education requirement can be traced back to Texas Technological College's first catalog. In the October 1925 Catalog under courses, one finds the following sections: "Physical

Education for Women" and "Physical Education for Men". For women various course numbers and descriptions are given. Courses require three hours per week. For men, the catalog states, "One hour per week of physical training is required of all freshmen and sophomores except those taking military training and athletic work" (October 1925 Bulletin, p. 32). An all university physical education requirement continued into the 1990s.

The government (later political science) courses manifested as university wide requirement in the 1930s.

Students who enter state supported institutions of higher learning after September 1, 1930 are required to satisfactorily complete a minimum of two semester hours in courses in government and if their entrance is after September 1, 1937 the requirement is six semester hours in courses in government (1937-1938 Catalog, p.68).

The government requirement continued and in the 1950s a history requirement joined as a college wide general education requirement.

Students who receive a Bachelor's Degree from Texas Technological College after July 1, 1956, are required by action of the Texas Legislature to pass six semester hours of work in American history in addition to the six hours in government (1956-1957 Catalog, p. 91).

The political science and history requirements are still in effect today.

Looking from the beginning of the institution through the 1980s it appears that general education requirements were of little concern. Yet, upon further inspection one can see that this is not entirely true. In the 1937-1938 Catalog, Texas Technological College's second president Dr. Bradford Knapp wrote a "Foreword" in the bulletin which addressed general education. The two and one-half page discussion, in part, offers "A guide to a well-rounded education" (1937-1938 Catalog, p. 24). In this segment Knapp outlines seven factors which contribute to a "well-rounded education". He first promotes that students "should obtain skill and knowledge in the

use of the English language...because it is the first and most important means of communication". Second, Knapp confers that students should "obtain a good knowledge of the history of our civilization". For Knapp this was the key to understanding the "human races... present state of development". Third, Knapp encouraged the study of government so that students could understand citizenship and its responsibilities. Fourth, the president offered that studying economics and sociology was a must because "everyone's life will be influenced greatly by economic and social forces". Fifth, Knapp wrote that students "should be prepared for life with some knowledge of health, hygiene, foods, nutrition, diseases and their preventions". Sixth, President Knapp suggests that one should take courses for reasons other than the "utilitarian value". He continues, "You should avail yourself of every opportunity to acquire training in your college courses through knowledge and appreciation of art, literature, languages, and the esthetic side of life". Seventh, Dr. Knapp tells students to "train yourself for a life work ...which will fit you to perform a real service in an organized society". Knapp concedes that although college is an opportunity, it is up to the student "to learn, to reason, to know, to understand, and to create". The "Foreword" concludes with:

Be a seeker for the truth and, above all, develop your common sense so that when you have finished college you will not only be educated, but well-balanced and thus able to take your place in a busy world...(1937-1938 Catalog, pp. 24-25).

Knapp is not course specific, but it is clear that he is promoting a type of general education. Yet, the "Foreword" is merely that, a precursor to degree requirements which offer little in the way of college wide requirements.

Even though college/university wide requirements for general education were not the standard for the first seventy years of the school, general education type courses were part of

school/college and department degree programs. In the 1960s the School of Agriculture required specific courses for the freshman year. Courses included not only were from within the school, but also consisted of six hours of English, three hours of math, four hours of biology, and four hours of chemistry. The school considered these courses "basic training" necessary (1967-1968 Catalog, p. 145). The School of Arts and Sciences during the 1960s also had a prescribed freshman year. It included six hours of English and twenty to twenty-two hours of mathematics, foreign language, science, or history (1967-1968 Catalog, p.184). Interestingly, both schools mandated that students who delayed freshman year courses until the senior year could not count the courses toward total degree hours, but the freshman courses were still required. Also, the selection of specific classes (for both schools) was, in certain disciplines, such as mathematics, dependent upon what a student had completed in high school. In the 1960s the college wide requirements were minimal, but schools were at least somewhat attentive to the need for basics generally encompassed in general education courses.

By the 1970s Texas Technological College had become Texas Tech University. College wide requirements became university wide requirements and continued to be two semesters of history (American), six hours of political science (including Texas constitution and government), and two semesters of physical education. The College of Agriculture continued to outline a freshman year, including English, science, and math, but the specific classes were usually dependent on departmental program. In the 1977-1978 Catalog, the College of Arts and Sciences freshman year was just as it had been ten years earlier: six hours of English, twenty to twenty-two hours of mathematics, foreign language, science, or history. Within the College of Arts and Sciences departmental requirements guided the program, but for degrees such as the Bachelor of Arts, departments had to utilize the college degree requirements. The BA degree

in the 1977-1978 Catalog required the following "Specific Requirements":

- English - 12 hours
- Foreign Language - 6-14 hours (minimum 6 hours sophomore)
- Mathematics - 0-6 hours (depending on high school)
- American History - 6 hours
- Political Science - 6 hours
- Physical Education - 2 hours

There were also "Distribution Requirements" which included:

- Humanities - 6 hours
- Fine Arts - 6 hours
- Science - 8-14 hours (depending on high school)
- Social Science - 6 hours (1977-1978 Catalog, pp.119-120).

These requirements reflect the liberal arts influence of general education. For the Colleges of Agriculture and Arts and Sciences there were little changes regarding requirements into the 1980s.

The university wide "Uniform Undergraduate Degree Requirements" in the 1980s, continued as they had for the past thirty years: six hours of history (U.S.), six hours of political science (including Texas government), and two hours of physical education. Within the colleges requirements were much like they had been in the previous decade. Agriculture still suggested "Courses for the Freshman Year" which could be departmentally driven. Arts and Sciences "Specific Requirements" were the same in the 1987-1988 Catalog as they had been in the 1977-1978 Catalog. Among the "Distribution Requirements" there was a change in categorizing. Instead of separate humanities and fine arts requirements, the two were merged in the 1987-1988 Catalog into one humanities category requiring twelve hours. The twelve hours were split into six hours from group A (humanities) and six hours from group B (fine arts). So in essence, the requirements were the same (1987-1988 Catalog, p. 142). Thus, when examining an overview of general education at Texas Tech from the 1960s through the 1980s it is clear that there was no

change in the university wide requirements and very few changes within the school/colleges. It is not until the 1990s that general education requirements go through a metamorphosis.

University Wide General Education in the 1990s:

The last catalog for the 1980s still carried the same "Uniform Undergraduate Degree Requirements" (history, political science, and physical education) (1989-1990 Catalog, pp. 77-78). But in the 1990-1991 Catalog there is a significant change in the requirements. There appeared five areas which each student had to complete. The areas included:

1. Basic Skills – Communication, Language, and Mathematics (15 hours).
2. Science and Technology – Understanding the Natural World and Modern World Technology (11 hours).
3. Understanding Societies and Cultures (15 hours).
4. Humanities and Fine Arts – Appreciation of Humanities and Visual and Performing Arts as Expressions of Human Living (6 hours).
5. Health and Physical Fitness (2 hours). (1990-1991 Catalog, p. 80).

The history and political science requirements stayed the same, but fell under the area "Understanding Societies and Cultures". As evident, the physical education requirement also remained. How did the new requirements come about?

Quite simply, they were mandated by the Texas State Legislature and enforced by the Coordinating Board.

The first legislative initiative to define "core curriculum" was House Bill 2183 passed in 1987 by the 70th Texas Legislature. That bill provided for the adoption and evaluation of general education core curricula by Texas public colleges and universities to ensure quality in undergraduate higher education (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board).

Although the bill was passed in 1987, the requirements did not appear at Texas Tech for another three years. The arrival date of this push for a "core curriculum" is perhaps significant. During

the 1980s, there were several works which questioned the state of education in the United States. Works such as E. D. Hirsch's Cultural Literacy and Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind were critical of education in the United States. Bloom's work was highly critical of higher education. Other works such as Cheney's 50 Hours: A Core Curriculum for College Students and Bennett's To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education were more constructive pieces trying to offer aid or possible solutions for higher education. Although not clearly evident, it is not unlikely that the Texas Legislature's promotion of a "core" was influenced by literature and reports such as those above. Surely, the timing is not mere coincidence. In any event, the Texas Legislature's action changed the requirements at Texas Tech. Yet, this would not be the end of changes.

The 1991-1992 Catalog mirrored the 1990-1991 Catalog, but the 1992-1993 Catalog brought in changes to the "General Education Requirements" university wide. Whereas before the five areas were broad descriptions, the 1992-1993 Catalog specified that "The following courses have been approved for the General Education Requirements" (1992-1993 Catalog, p.81). Under each area there appeared a list of applicable courses. History (U.S.), political science (Texas), and physical education remained as components. It is important to note that the 1990s catalogs give two explanations for the "General Education Requirements". First, "General Education Requirements are designed to give all students who graduate from the University the opportunity to acquire a general knowledge of areas of study that have traditionally been regarded as basic to a university education". Second, "It [General Education Requirements] complies with the 1987 Texas legislation requiring each state-supported institution to establish a 'core curriculum'..." (1992-1993 Catalog, p.81). It is clear that the new general education of the 1990s were externally driven.

University wide general education continued to change throughout the 1990s as courses were deleted and added from/to the five areas. In the 1995-1996 Catalog only four areas appeared. The physical education requirement, which had been a part of college/university wide requirements since the institution's opening, was deleted. It did remain as a requirement for degrees in the college of Arts and Sciences where the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation resides (today the department is called Health Education and Sports Sciences). In the 1997-1998 Catalog there was another change. All students are required to take "one 3 hour multicultural course" (1997-1998 Catalog, p. 86). This course can also be used to fulfill a General Education Requirement. Also in 1997, the Texas State Legislature again acted regarding the public state wide core.

Senate Bill 148 was passed by the 75th Texas Legislature in January 1997 and repeals all earlier legislation concerning either lower-division transfer or core curriculum. This statute continues the state-level focus on facilitating the transfer of lower-division course credit among public colleges and universities throughout the state. One of its provisions allows the transfer student to use a successfully completed group of lower-division core curriculum courses and/or a successfully completed group of lower division "field of study" courses to substitute for similar groups of courses at the college or university to which they transfer (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board).

Furthermore, the Coordinating Board must "adopt rules that include 'a statement of the content, component areas, and objectives of the core curriculum,' which each institution is to fulfill by its own selection of specific courses" (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board). Also, the core is to consist of forty-two hours. At this point, it is evident that the 1987 legislative act geared toward establishing a basic or foundations core has been eliminated by an act which is more concerned with the transferability of the core.

Through the end of the 1990s to today, Texas Tech general education is encompassed in

“All university Programs” which includes the “Core Curriculum”. The requirements now include seven areas:

1. Communication – 9 hours
 2. Mathematics – 6 hours
 3. Natural Science – 8 hours
 4. Technology and Applied Science – 3 hours
 5. Humanities – 3 hours
 6. Visual and Performing Arts – 3 hours
 7. Social and Behavioral Sciences – 15 hours
- (2001-2002 Catalog, pp.101-113).

The “Multicultural Requirement” remains as it was originally. History (U.S.) and political science (Texas) comprise twelve of the fifteen hours of “Social and Behavioral Sciences”.

Within the core listing for the seven areas there are approximately 300 classes listed. Those courses acceptable for the “Multicultural Requirement” number over 100. Only three of the 300 courses are specifically required of every student; the two freshman English courses and the freshman level political science course. One has to question – what type of a core is this?

Conclusion:

Today’s core is clearly a cafeteria choice of courses available for transfer and selective use by colleges. The 2001-2002 Catalog warns students to “...choose only those Core Curriculum courses that follow their degree plans” (2001-2002 Catalog, p. 101). This leads one to question the function of the core. What type of a core is it if it can be overridden, expanded, or limited by college degree programs? This leads one to conclude that the core is not really a university wide set of foundation/basic courses. Additionally, 300 courses are too numerous to provide the same “general knowledge ... basic to a university education” necessary for each student (2001-2002 Catalog, p.101). General education in this cafeteria, mixed approach to a core appears to be skewed toward satisfying a legislative act instead of serving as a foundational support for providing basic knowledge. The initial “Uniform Degree Requirements” of the

1960s, 1970s, and 1980s were minimal (history, political science and physical education), but the objective seemed to be to provide students with some basics which could promote good citizenship (why else the emphasis on U.S. and Texas and the 'a sound body supports a sound mind' approach?): Yet, in this study there has been one apparent constant. General education at Texas Tech has been ultimately influenced by acts of the Texas Legislature.

It is difficult to determine what factors have influenced the legislature. Perhaps the literature of the 1980s (such as Cheney's report) impacted the Texas Legislature's decision to support House Bill 2183, but the support for Senate Bill 148 was undoubtedly the effect of other outside factors (perhaps a push by community colleges since the act is more concerned with transferability). This paper has attempted to trace the history of general education at Texas Tech over the past four decades. As the research for this paper proceeded, various questions arose which are not tackled in this effort, but instead might offer a basis for future research. Two questions that stand out are:

1. What external factors impact general education?
2. What internal factors influence general education?

The paper has touched upon some external factors such as the Texas Legislature (and Coordinating Board) and literature (and reports) regarding general education, but at least two other factors need to be evaluated. In what way has public K – 12 education influenced what occurs in higher education? Have changes in K – 12 forced changes in higher education? One way to approach this is by checking the high school admission standards over the decades. This offers a chance for further research. The second external factor not explored in the paper concerns accreditation. Further research could investigate if any actions of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools dictated or directed the appearance of the "Core Curriculum" in the 1980s in Texas. Regarding internal factors, it would seem that faculty

governance and administrative functions/influences should be considered. Although this paper does not delve into these agents, it should be noted that departmental determinants (such as specific course curriculum) and university wide committees (which approve courses for general education) both play a role in general education. One could examine the roles played by these agents and to what extent they impact general education within the current cafeteria, mixed core. Again, these external and internal factors which might impact general education are not the focus of this paper, but rather avenues for further study.

The overall emphasis of this paper has been to present a historical sketch of general education at Texas Tech merely as an illustration of one institution's attempt at university wide general education. If the early years are held up for scrutiny it is clear that the "Uniform Degree Requirements" (history, government, and physical education) were promoted by the state legislature to encourage good citizenship (although this is not clear regarding physical education). As the "core" emerged at the end of the 1980s, it appeared to promote a foundations or basics, almost scholarly, approach to general education. Yet as the "core curriculum" evolved it became a mix of basics (such as English) with overwhelming choices to fulfill the seven areas. The "core" is not really a core, but rather a cornucopia designed to satisfy transferability and perhaps offer disciplines a chance to contribute to the general education cafeteria. Interestingly, the six hours U.S. history and the six hours of government (Texas) have survived. But unfortunately, the institution itself has not seemed to have taken any initiative regarding general education, rather it has merely followed state mandates as they were doled out. This may be an unfair assessment, but given the lack of a significant emphasis on university wide general education during the school's first seventy years, the assertion may not be completely unwarranted. Texas Tech had an opportunity in the 1930s to establish institution wide general

education requirements. This opportunity was provided by President Knapp's "Foreword" in the 1937-1938 Bulletin which outlined the prescription for "a well-rounded education". If Knapp's words had been heeded perhaps there would be a different general education system in place today. Of course, one can never answer the historical "if" question.

Sources

Texas Technological College/Texas Tech University, Bulletins/Catalogs, various years.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: on-line, November 12, 2002 at:
http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/Ctc/ip/core11_00/backgrnd.htm