

# Vick report adds requirements

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The main problem the College of Engineering faced because of the Vick report was adding eight foreign language hours to its degree programs, says Charles Sorber, associate dean for academic affairs of the college.

In the 1981 report, the University Council's Committee on Basic Education Requirements, chaired by James Vick, assistant dean of the College of Natural Sciences, recommended for all undergraduates a new core curriculum.

That curriculum includes courses in foreign language, English, natural science, math, arts/humanities and social science.

The new basic education requirements presented a problem for several colleges whose catalogues had to be brought in line with the Vick recommendations: how to fulfill the requirements without eliminating electives or increasing degree program hours.

Sorber said: "We didn't object to anything the University Council was trying to do pedagogically. We did have a problem with indiscriminately adding hours to the curriculum."

When hours are added to degree programs, "it changes the numbers upon which accreditation are based," Sorber said.

In the College of Engineering, for example, the Accreditation Bureau for Engineering and Technology insists that a minimum amount of course

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## The Vick Report creating a core curriculum

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work be offered in selected areas before a degree program is accredited.

For example, ABET might say the college must provide one-half year of a certain subject area before a degree program is accredited. The 132 hours in that degree program are divided by eight semesters, equalling 16.5 semester credit hours, or one-eighth of a four-year program. A one-half year then would be equivalent to 16.5 semester credit hours.

But if eight hours were added to a 132-hour degree program, making it a 140-hour program, then, by the above formula, a one-half year would equal 17.5 semester credit hours. Therefore, the number of semester hours required by ABET for degree program accreditation would increase in virtually all areas.

The College of Engineering, as well as some other colleges, circumvented the accreditation problem by stipulating that students entering the University with less than two high school units of foreign language credit must take the first two semesters in a language without degree credit.

"I find it distressing that we aren't forcing students to take a course in computer literacy," Sorber said. "The computer messed up" — that's a lot of

baloney. Wouldn't it be nice to know how a computer really worked?"

Although Vick agrees students should have some knowledge of computers, he said the committee did not recommend a computer science requirement because the University has neither the staff nor the hardware to teach computer courses to all undergraduates.

Some core curriculum opponents question shoving a variety of requirements down the throats of students unlikely to use such knowledge in their highly specialized professions.

However, UT President Peter Flawn said: "No one can be that sure of the future. That shows a preoccupation with tomorrow instead of next week."

Vick agreed, saying that in today's society it is not uncommon for people to change professions. "With a broad base of training you're much more adjustable to change," Vick said.

Vick calls views opposed to basic requirements "defensible" and uses a child-rearing analogy in describing the importance of certain course requirements. "How do you avoid coming across as a domineering parent telling a child what to do? But if you don't have some requirements, things go to pot ... standards fall in almost all cases," Vick said. "I think students perform better when you provide some structure. I think students need some guidance. It's hard; it's like raising kids."

*Thursday: The new English requirements.*