CURRICULAR RENEWAL IN HARVARD COLLEGE

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January 20, 2006

Dear Colleagues:

As you well know, three years ago our Faculty began a comprehensive review of the undergraduate educational experience at Harvard College. In April 2004 the Report on the Harvard College Curricular Review was issued, laying out a series of fundamental recommendations. Over the last year and a half, a further sequence of committees, comprised of faculty and students, have met to review more closely the heart of what we do here.

These reports are all now ready for the Faculty's deliberation. Please take the time to read them carefully. They are the collective work of more than one hundred of your colleagues and two dozen of our students. They have been discussed in Faculty Meetings and in other settings, and several of them have been revised in the light of comments from you and your colleagues. In all, nearly sixty final recommendations will have been made to the Faculty. They cover many fronts, but they share in common a guiding principle of the April 2004 Report.¹

[W]e seek to broaden the scope of a liberal education and to expand choices for Harvard College students, crafting an undergraduate curriculum that is defined less by the requirements that it places on students and more by the commitments that the Faculty makes to undergraduate education in the liberal tradition.

Let me comment briefly on the individual reports before returning to the larger picture. The Committee on General Education proposes to replace the Core Program with a curriculum at once broad and deep, opening up the entire Courses of Instruction for the general education of our students, empowering departments to craft curricula for broader audiences, while summoning the Faculty to mount a new set of foundational courses to serve as portals to large and important areas of knowledge.

The Educational Policy Committee has reviewed the purpose, structure, timing and scope of concentrations. Its several recommendations—for example, of later concentration choice and the creation of secondary fields—aim to make the Freshman year a time of true exploration, the upper-class experience one of multiple immersions, and all four years ones of meaningful student-faculty engagement.

The Committee on Writing and Speaking argues that the teaching of writing and speaking must be newly integrated into departments and degree programs. It calls for a major reorganization and renewal of our efforts in those domains. The Committee on Science and Technology has recommended a new set

of introductory courses in the natural and applied sciences, the first fruit of which debuted this autumn, to considerable praise: Life Sciences 1a and 1b. The Committee on Advising and Counseling addresses, in the most comprehensive report this Faculty has ever produced on the topic, our severe deficiencies in academic advising and suggests multiple paths to improvement, in the knowledge that greater freedom of choice only underscores the need for strong mentoring and advising.

The Committee on Education Abroad recommends that all Harvard College students pursue a significant international experience during their time in the College. Working with our Office for International Programs it has overseen a broad expansion of our programs abroad and has proposed standards for the forms of international study, research, internship and public service opportunities that would meet this expectation. The Committee on Pedagogical Improvement tells us how we can evaluate better teaching and learning across the College and how, as an undergraduate college at the center of a research university, we might further the development of communities of learning. And the Committee on a January Term imagines how, in the event of a change in calendar, this dark and cold month, in which our students currently pass weeks of unstructured time culminating in final examinations, might instead be a time of imagination and innovation.

What are the common principles underlying all these efforts? There are several, and they are important. From the beginning of this review, our most important aim has been to re-commit our Faculty to the central task of educating undergraduates. As Harvard grew into a major research university over the course of the past century, faculty time and energy has naturally been drawn also to graduate education and to professional activities beyond the Yard. Yet Harvard College remains at the heart of our enterprise, attracting the best students in the world, setting standards for excellence across and beyond the University. We take pride in the fact that so many colleagues and students have taken part in the Working Groups of our first year and the review committees of the past eighteen months; that faculty and students alike have produced substantial essays on education at Harvard; and that every department and concentration is now discussing curricular renewal.

Ours is a recommitment to liberal education. “Among the liberal arts,” wrote Montaigne, “let us begin with the art that liberates us.” Montaigne was referring to a process whereby previously unexplored beliefs and values are challenged as well as unsuspected dimensions of the self discovered and nurtured in order that students may become “wiser and better” for themselves and for society. Liberal education presumes that a broad education will liberate the individual by offering opportunities for foundational knowledge, reflection and analysis, artistic creativity and an appreciation for the precision of scientific concepts and experiments. It stresses Bildung over Ûbung, emphasizing disinterested knowledge for its own sake, resisting pressures for early specialization and professionalization. Professional education is in the proud tradition of many great universities, but it is not the mission of our undergraduate college. Our students will devote some significant part of their time to special and concentrated learning, but we aspire above all that they graduate having developed their intellectual, artistic, moral, and civic capacities as independent thinkers with a lifetime of learning still before them. That is what we mean when we welcome our graduates to the “fellowship of educated women and men.”

Our students will enter a globalizing world of national conflicts, of scientific advance and moral challenge, of political choice and economic uncertainty, of artistic imagination and cultural repression. There is no “one-size-fits-all” educational menu for such alternative futures, nor would one be appropriate for the enormously diverse talents that comprise the student body at Harvard College. Thus, while there

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2 See the thoughtful faculty Essays on General Education in Harvard College (2004); and the provocative analyses in Emily Riehl and Danny Yagen, eds., Student Essays: On the Purpose and Structure of a Harvard Education (2005).

are of course many curricular routes to liberal education, the one proposed in these reports sets out a curriculum of choice, incentive, and opportunity more than one of restriction and requirement. It aims to allow our students to shape their education, even as it gives departments and individual faculty greater responsibility in helping to shape it. It permits our curriculum to evolve, as areas of knowledge advance.

Required courses have captive audiences, and, as we have seen in our previous curricular reforms, short intellectual half-lives. If our new, foundational curriculum in the life, physical, and engineering sciences is to succeed, let it be because it is better conceived and better taught, not because any one part of it is compulsory. If new Courses in General Education are to make their mark in the lineage of great Harvard courses, let it be because they are great courses, not because they are mandated. If, as we expect, the study of the broader world and the languages spoken in it continues to expand, let this be not because of enlarged requirements (for true fluency no requirement could be large enough) but as a result of a new set of opportunities at home and abroad that will make every Harvard undergraduate degree one with a deeply international imprint.

The reforms proposed in our reports make it clear that a liberal education must be the shared endeavor of faculty and students alike. It is an education fostered not only in classrooms and laboratories but also by individual conversation and advising. Students and faculty must truly engage one another, close up, and not at a distance. The most consistent—and most accurate—criticism of a Harvard education today is that student-faculty contact is much too limited. Our current system of concentrations decants too many students, much too early, into too few concentrations that are too large. Our Core Program funnels too many students into too few courses that are on the whole too big. To be sure, large concentrations and big courses can be of outstanding quality—that is presumably one reason for their popularity; but in both concentrations and our current Core, our academic culture is too often one of mutual avoidance between student and professor. Taken together, our expansion of the Faculty, the growth of Freshman seminars, the opening up of general education, the delay in the timing of Concentration choice, and the proposal for secondary fields all have behind them the purpose of bringing our students and faculty together in intensive, inescapable ways, making it possible—indeed making it expected—that students and faculty can engage in small groups settings from the beginning of the Freshman year, and as the rule, not as the exception. After all, if we bring to Cambridge (we know) the best students and (we trust) the best faculty, should they not engage with each other, and learn from each other, rather more directly than they do? I am convinced that only if we succeed in this effort can we hope to contest the view that the better part of a Harvard education lies outside the classroom.

The history of our curricular reforms in the past century shows that Harvard has been better at making large curricular statements than it has been in improving the teaching of its undergraduates. We should be pleased for this Faculty to engage in a firm defense of the ideals of liberal education—vulnerable here as anywhere—but only if, in the same moment, we really improve what we do here. We should aspire that Harvard College prove itself to be the equal in teaching, mentoring, and inspiration to any of the great small liberal arts colleges in the American tradition, while setting itself apart by virtue of its position at the heart of a large and international research university.

This broad scrutiny of our collective teaching endeavor is now in its third year. The time has come to move forward with our formal deliberations and toward the legislation that we think appropriate in the light of the recommendations these reports incorporate. In the coming semester we will set before the Faculty the recommendations first on concentrations and then on general education. We will hear further on the recommendations on writing and speaking. We will bear in mind the implications of all of these for the recommendations on advising, which colleagues have already received. If, after we have discussed the broad outline of curricular change, the planets remain in alignment, we can then revisit the question of when we teach, that is, the matter of our academic calendar.
As we move from a time of consultation and recommendation to a term of formal discussion and decision, we should bear in mind how much we have accomplished already. We have made great progress in the expansion of the Faculty that I announced in the letter transmitting the April 2004 Report. A larger Faculty is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the improvement of undergraduate education. To foster small-group instruction, we have further expanded the Freshman Seminar Program to offer enough seminars to accommodate the entire freshman class. To give our students an education in the broader world in which they will work, we have expanded swiftly the opportunities and assistance for international study so that already today more than half of our students pursue a significant international experience before graduation. To promote a deeper level of scientific literacy, we are not only planning, but we have also begun to teach parts of a fundamentally new science curriculum, the first of our "portal" courses. To mentor and support our students more effectively, we are overhauling completely the structures of academic advising in the College. And of course we have continued to talk, argue, and engage with one another, ever more deeply, about the importance of undergraduate education.

I look forward to our continued discussion and our continued progress.

Sincerely yours,

William C. Kirby
LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

I. FROM THE REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADVISING AND COUNSELING

1. We recognize the critical role and importance of advising. Advising is an intrinsic and important part of the academic mission of the College, and needs to be improved. We believe that more engagement in advising, particularly by faculty, is essential to the success of any curricular innovations.

2. We recommend that all faculty participate in some way in undergraduate advising.

3. We endorse enthusiastically the establishment of a new dean of advising position in the College and have recommendations concerning role and function. We also recommend that an advisory board be established to assist the new dean. We prefer the title “Associate Dean of Advising Programs” to reflect the full scope of the position.

4. The new Office of Advising will need adequate staff support, space, and resources. Some of the recommended functions of the Advising Office can be listed as follows:

   a. Improving the consistency and coordination of Freshman, House, and Concentration advising utilizing the Advising Calendar (see below);

   b. Working with the Freshman Deans, Concentration and House advisers, the Office of Career Services, Bureau of Study Counsel, and Office of International Programs to organize, expand and improve the effectiveness of workshops and panel discussions for students prior to concentration choice;

   c. Improving the quality, consistency, and comparability of written and electronic information, particularly from concentrations;

   d. Improving adviser training programs in collaboration with the Freshman Deans, Concentration and House advisers, the Office of Career Services, Bureau of Study Counsel, and Office of International Programs;

   e. Serving as “prompter” for advisers and advisees, for example through developing simple reminders about important topics for advising conversations that can be sent to advisers and advisees at appropriate times;

   f. Developing tools to evaluate and assess advisers and advising systems, with a view to sharing best practices;

   g. As soon as possible, developing an Annual Report to the Faculty on the quality of our advising programs; and
h. The Committee recommends that it be reconstituted, perhaps as a smaller group, as an Advisory Board to the Office of Advising.

5. We recommend recruiting more academic advisers (faculty or administrators) for freshmen. These advisers would serve through the three terms prior to concentration choice.

6. We have drafted an advising calendar to clarify advising tasks and responsibilities for both advisers and students, for both pre-concentration and concentration periods.

7. Concentrations should engage more vigorously in developing advising programs for pre-concentrators.

8. Concentrations should ensure that every student has an identifiable concentration adviser.

9. We recommend ongoing evaluation of advisers and monitoring of advising programs, and the use of collected data to determine best practices in advising.

10. We recommend no change in freshmen assignment to Houses.

11. We recommend that the number of Assistant Deans of Freshmen be increased from 3 to 4, bringing the ratio of advisees to Assistant Dean close to the ratio of advisees to Senior Tutor in the Houses.

12. We recommend that every effort be made to increase the overall number of academic advisers, thereby reducing the maximum number of academic advisees per Proctor to a reasonable number. For example, we believe that the number of suitable and recruitable faculty is certainly higher than 39. The serious involvement of our Faculty leaders will be critical to successful expansion of this number.

13. We recommend establishing a comprehensive peer advising system covering all first-years, with a formal program name and adviser title to be approved at a later time. We recommend that every incoming student be assigned a specific peer adviser and be contacted and welcomed by that adviser before arrival on campus.

14. We also recommend the extension, organizational reform, greater support, and diversification of the several existing pre-orientation programs, such as the Freshman Outdoor Program (FOP), the Freshman Arts Program (FAP), and Freshman Urban Program (FUP).

15. We recommend therefore that the Dean of the College convene a series of meetings with the larger concentrations in which the dean of advising would be involved, to discuss ways of improving advising.

16. Success in improving our advising systems will depend to a considerable extent on strong and sustained leadership from the Dean of the College, Dean of the Faculty, and President, and we endorse and encourage their involvement.
II. From the Educational Policy Committee
Summary Statement on Concentrations

17. It is the view of the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) that delaying the timing of concentration choice by one semester, to late in the third term, will provide more flexibility for first-year students, create more time for intellectual exploration, and reduce some of the pressures that may make adjustment to college more difficult than necessary.

18. The EPC proposes that concentrations re-examine the number of courses they require, to ensure that their requirements can fit within a five-semester program, rather than a six-semester program. For many concentrations, this will require a reduction in the number of required courses.

19. The EPC proposes that all concentrations re-examine and, when needed, restructure their programs to ensure that there is appropriate sequencing and progression of courses for students’ effective learning and intellectual development.

20. The EPC proposes the establishment of formal structures to provide guidance and coherence to elective coursework in an area that lies outside the purview of a student’s primary concentration. The EPC has named this option a “secondary field,” and suggests that this optional course of study be noted on a student’s transcript.

21. The EPC also proposes to change the existing structures of joint concentrations. The EPC recommends that students declaring a secondary field have the option of pursuing an integrative thesis that combines the primary concentration and a secondary interest, but that this should not be considered to be a joint concentration.

22. As part of the overall curricular review, all concentrations should undertake a renewed examination of their own purpose and structure.

III. From the Report of the Committee on General Education

23. The Committee recommends that the current Core Curriculum be replaced by a distribution requirement consisting of nine courses, three in each of (a) the Arts and Humanities, (b) the Study of Societies, and (c) Science and Technology. We further recommend that the three courses used to fulfill an area distribution may not be taken in one department or program.

24. We expect that each department will be responsible for identifying existing courses and developing new ones that are especially well-suited for the goals and purposes of general education.

25. The Committee believes that the curriculum should assist students in shaping their education by providing discrete opportunities for more intensive, foundational courses in general education.

26. The Committee believes that we must highlight the importance of broad, synoptic courses that reach beyond the scope of individual departments and disciplines as an integral, but optional, component of a distribution requirement. We recommend the creation of new “Courses in General Education,” that are expansive in scope and integrative in approach, and which will be
listed in a separate section of the catalogue. These courses should be designed specifically to situate important texts, concepts, and discoveries in the context of larger problems and themes in ways that provide students with an intellectual introduction to broad areas of knowledge and inquiry.

27. The Committee re-affirms Harvard’s long-standing requirement that students complete a course dedicated to effective writing in the first year. We also support the current requirement that all students demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language. However, in order to provide first-year students with more flexibility, we will no longer expect that the language requirement be met in the freshman year. Rather, we recommend that the language requirement be fulfilled by the end of the second year. Further, we believe that all Harvard College students should be expected to participate in a significant international experience.

28. The Committee recommends the formation of a new Standing Committee on General Education, which will work with departments and with the deans to identify and to help develop departmental courses suitable for general education, and to review and approve proposed Courses in General Education.

IV. FROM THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ABROAD

29. The Committee endorses the recommendation of the report on the Harvard College Curricular Review that all Harvard College students should henceforth be expected to pursue a significant international experience during their time in the College, and that completion of such an expectation be noted on the transcript. The Committee believes that students should be able to fulfill this expectation through study abroad for credit as well as through research, internships, or service and will propose appropriate standards to the Dean of the Faculty in due course.

30. The Committee believes that the programs and activities developed for Harvard students and for which Harvard students receive recognition should reflect Harvard’s institutional commitment to understanding of and respect for the cultures and values of other societies and for different educational objectives and pedagogies; focus on academic quality and opportunities to build knowledge and skills while immersing students as far as possible in the host society to help them develop sensitivity to the cultural environment and tolerance of the unfamiliar; and ensure that financial constraints do not prevent access to every kind of opportunity to all our students.

31. The Committee endorses the recommendation in the report of the Curricular Review that the FAS expand financial aid for undergraduates to include summer grants and loans in order to make it possible for all students to pursue at least one international experience. The Committee recommends that future Harvard financial aid packages include financial aid in the form of reduced summer earnings expectations as well as direct aid for students who do not study abroad during the regular academic year but choose instead to spend a summer abroad in an approved program of summer study, research, internship, or service. The Committee recommends that financial aid only be given to students engaged in summer programs of sufficient seriousness as to qualify for mention on the transcript.

32. The Committee recommends increased merit-based support for summer activities through the area and international centers as well as other Harvard programs.
33. The Committee believes additional efforts should be made to insure that the range of summer opportunities and levels of aid in relation to cost are roughly comparable across all world regions.

34. The Committee also recognizes and applauds the importance of the language citation to our students, and recommends that, in order to facilitate study abroad as a way of fulfilling part of the four-course requirement for a citation that procedures be developed for pre-approving specific programs or courses abroad for citation credit. The Committee further recommends that the College provide encouragement to students’ engaged in rigorous interdisciplinary study of other societies and cultures through official recognition of area studies certificates, beginning with the Certificate in Latin American Studies that has been awarded to undergraduates by the FAS Standing Committee on Latin American and Iberian Studies since 1967. Official recognition would make it possible to mention this Certificate in official FAS publications, such as Courses of Instruction, and on student transcripts.

35. The number of course-based field trips, some supported by departments and centers, has also increased in recent years. Should the calendar reform free up time in January, whether a formal January-term is instituted or not, the Committee recommends that faculty be encouraged to develop January study abroad activities, especially where such programs can be linked as follow up to fall term courses or as introductions to spring term courses.

36. We recommend that the FAS support the development of new programs and activities through the creation of a special Innovation Fund to which faculty could apply. Funds would be allocated competitively by the Committee on Education Abroad.

37. The Curricular Review report recommended that the concentrations, in consultation with the Office of International Programs, identify study abroad programs in which Harvard College students may enroll for degree and concentration credit, and that all concentrations plan requirements and course sequences to accommodate one term of study abroad. This Committee endorses this recommendation.

38. The Committee recommends that all concentrations have designated advisers for study abroad, either a member of the faculty, or a member of the advising staff. Information and assistance for these advisers should, of course, be provided by OIP, and OIP should continue to serve as students’ primary source of advising on study abroad.

39. The Committee believes that special attention should be paid to enhancing international opportunities for science concentrators to engage in laboratory and fieldwork abroad. Such experiences can make invaluable contributions to enriching a student’s program by integrating a student into the scientific community of another society and by providing high-level engagement in basic or applied research activity not available elsewhere in addition to the other benefits of studying abroad. The Committee recommends that support be provided for the development, in consultation with the faculty, of such opportunities for concentrators in all fields, but with special attention given to developing programs for science concentrators in laboratories, field stations, and other sites in as many regions of the world as may prove feasible.

40. The Committee believes that Harvard alumni and their contacts throughout the world could play an invaluable role in connecting students to worthwhile endeavors and recommends that the OIP continue its efforts to work with other divisions at Harvard to develop a range of such opportunities, using existing networks and knowledge of the extended Harvard community whenever possible. Students can be guided towards these opportunities early in their time at
Harvard, when such experiences are formative and can thus lay the foundation for future international activity.

41. Since the Houses are a critical source of information and advice on all aspects of undergraduate life, the Committee recommends that every House designate a staff member to serve as resource person for study abroad and international opportunities. The study abroad resource person in each House would help to provide guidance on how to access information and refer students to the Office of International Programs, the regional studies centers, and the Office of Career Services for further help.

42. The Committee encourages initiatives within the concentrations as well as the Houses to engage returning students in analysis and reflection on their experience abroad, so that the impact of their experience is maximized.

V. FROM THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON A JANUARY TERM

43. The Committee on a January Term recommends:

a. a guiding principle of creative experiment and election;

b. courses based on the model of the Freshman seminar;

c. internships in the pre-professional sphere;

d. an office and staff devoted to the January term;

e. classes led by both students and faculty;

f. optimum use of the undergraduate Houses and their Common Rooms;

g. intensive study overseas;

h. public service opportunities;

i. activities of varying degrees of intensity and accreditation;

j. experiences supplemental to or in anticipation of existing courses;

k. negotiable accreditation and remuneration; and

l. a plan for students to take two (variously designed) January term units over four years.
VI. From the Report of the Standing Committee on Pedagogical Improvement

44. The College needs to improve evaluation of teaching and learning.

45. We urge the undergraduate deans to consult with assessment experts and with focus groups that include students, faculty, and graduate assistants to:
   a. refine the standard questions for clarity and relevance;
   b. offer a menu of optional questions from which instructors may choose;
   c. provide easier ways of breaking down the data so faculty can know what is and is not working with particular groups; and
   d. provide opportunities for faculty as well as teaching fellows to discuss results with specialists at the Bok Center.

46. We want to emphasize the importance of interpretation and analysis. We not only need better instruments for evaluating teaching but more help in assessing the data that we gather. Quantitative information is only one part of the process. With on-line evaluations, students will be able to include more comments. But if these are to be effective both students and instructors need to know how to use them.

47. The FAS needs to make existing support resources more visible and accessible to students, teaching fellows, and faculty. We urge the administration to consider these improvements:
   a. address the broader problem of competition and overlap among existing programs and identify ways that the constituencies they serve might become more aware of what they have to offer;
   b. establish an intranet for easy searching;
   c. expand the program begun this fall to orient junior faculty;
   d. give one person in each department or program responsibility for coordinating teaching resources and training teaching fellows. The recently created Lead Teaching Fellows program has been very helpful in some departments and might be a model for how to proceed; and
   e. build service to faculty and students into every expansion in computer services. Even more than software and power, people need well-trained individuals who can help them make use of the available resources.

48. The FAS needs to do more to develop communities of learning by:
   a. the establishment of a component of freshmen orientation that engages students from their first days at Harvard in the problem of how people learn;
b. the early development of several specific course proposals in general education that include librarians, museum curators, and specialists from the appropriate instructional centers (Bok Center, Writing Center, Instructional Computing Group, et al.) as part of the design team;

c. the development of an advising tool that will allow students and advisers to group courses around a theme or topic. We suspect that developing synergy in individual student programs might be more effective in the long run than launching a large number of co-taught courses. This system might or might not include some sort of integrative seminar; and

d. the provision of easier, more flexible ways of administering anonymous mid-term evaluations that will allow instructors and students to make mid-course corrections.

49. Encourage innovation:

   a. find ways to open up the schedule to make it easier for classes to be offered in different formats, such as hour and a half sessions that allow lectures to flow into discussion;

   b. link classroom planning to curriculum revision to provide better-equipped and more learning-friendly classrooms;

   c. encourage open sharing of course materials not only to make better use of resources but to deepen understanding of curricular options and approaches; and

   d. launch a series of seminars or workshops for faculty and teaching fellows on specific practical problems in teaching (such as designing and grading exams) where people can learn about new and better ways of doing things. This should not only be a forum where instructors can share ideas but where they can learn from research on best practices.

VII. FROM THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

50. We recommend the development of introductory science courses in the life and physical science divisions that demonstrate the connections between distinct fields and disciplines, and to generate real enthusiasm for the study of modern science. Undergraduates will be exposed to a broader range of science early on, which will allow them to make more informed choices about where their academic interests may lie.

VIII. FROM THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE TEACHING OF WRITING AND SPEAKING IN HARVARD COLLEGE

51. We recommend strongly that the College entirely regroup and coordinate the efforts of Expository Writing, the Harvard Writing Project (including Gordon Gray grants), individual departments, the Bok Center (Graduate Writing Fellows), the Writing Center (peer tutoring), and writing instruction offered by the Bureau of Study Counsel. Faculty in the Freshman Seminar program may also wish to participate in this coordination. The result of such coordination would
be a genuine center for all the functions these various entities now perform. This might be called the Keller-Adams Program in Writing and Speaking (KAP).

52. A required one-term course in academic writing should be taken the first year. We propose to call this not Expository Writing but the Freshman Writing Tutorial. We suggest that, while its assignments remain traditionally graded and while the College maintain and report to the student a record of the letter grade earned for the course, the transcript itself indicate Sat/Unsat and the student GPA be calculated without the letter grade.

53. There should be a maximum of 12 students in any first-year writing class.

54. First-year writing classes in the Freshman Writing Tutorial should reflect a diversity of academic training, intellectual disciplines, and subject matters.

55. The placement process in the Freshman Writing Tutorial should be reevaluated.

56. Those who teach classes in the Freshman Writing Tutorial should be appointed as Lecturers or ladder faculty, not Preceptors.

57. Oral communication should be taught as public speaking and also as debate and oral argument. A course or courses in rhetoric should be offered.

58. The College should hire faculty to teach these courses in rhetoric and public speaking.

59. The number of courses in creative writing should be expanded to serve all qualified students.

60. Courses in general education and Freshman Seminars that are writing intensive should be designated in all course listings.

61. In each concentration an individual faculty member should be designated responsible for the overall teaching of writing and speaking.

62. The training of Teaching Fellows to teach writing is inadequate. Some departments, the Bok Center, and the Harvard Writing Project make good, often outstanding efforts, but these are in general uncoordinated and voluntary. They tend to lapse over time. There are great inconsistencies. Certain departments and courses exemplify best practices. Those who assign and therefore also teach writing in departments and degree programs (including Teaching Fellows) should have an intensive orientation to the teaching of writing. Such training would fall under the responsibilities of the individual in the department responsible for writing and speaking.

63. Specific graduate student funding and fellowships might profitably be tied to writing instruction in the departments, degree programs, general education, and specific courses in writing and speaking.

64. Departments should explore the joint appointment of teaching personnel hired with the program in writing and speaking.

65. House Masters should encourage House writing tutors, other House tutors, and students to use the program in writing and speaking as a resource.
66. Staff members of the Harvard College Library provide invaluable research and writing assistance to students and faculty. In each concentration, the faculty liaison to KAP, in conjunction with the Head Tutor or DUS, should ensure that connections between students and appropriate library staff are established and maintained.

67. Pending the final report of the Committee on General Education, any courses offered in rhetoric or public speaking might be considered to fulfill part of the requirement in General Education.

68. The College should confer a certificate in writing and speaking on graduates who complete, over and above the one-term course required in the first year, three additional courses selected from the following: a writing-intensive freshman seminar, a course in creative writing, a course in rhetoric, a writing-intensive general education course, a course in public speaking. At least one of these three courses must be in either public speaking or rhetoric. Conferral of such a certificate should be recorded on the transcript.
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EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE

WORKING GROUP ON STUDENTS' OVERALL ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE 2003-2004

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WORKING GROUP ON PHYSICAL SCIENCES 2005-2006

LIST OF COMMITTEES AND PARTICIPANTS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADVISING AND COUNSELING 2004-2006


COMMITTEE ON A JANUARY TERM 2004-2005

Tom Conley (chair), Inge-Lise Ameer, John Dowling, Jane Edwards, Robert Lue, Reva Minkoff '08, Elisa New, William Todd III, William Wright-Swadel

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ABROAD 2004-2006


FACULTY ESSAYISTS—FALL 2004


STUDENT ESSAYISTS—FALL 2005

Christopher Catizone '06, Robert L. Cioffi '05, Paul B. Davis '07, Katherine Disalvo '05, Ethan L. Gray '05-'06, John Haddock '07, Josh Patashnik '06, Emily Riehl '06, Ryan Thorpe '08, Winn W. Wasson '05, Tom Wolf '05, Danny Yagan '06 CONTRIBUTORS TO THE APPENDIX OF STUDENT ESSAYS: Nicholas Josefowitz '05, Matt Mahan '05, Emily Riehl '06, Michael Schachter '05, Nathan Rosenberg '05

*Served 2004-2005
**Served 2005-2006
REPORTS OF THE CURRICULAR REVIEW
REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
ON ADVISING AND COUNSELING

Over the course of the 2004-2005 academic year, the Standing Committee on Advising and Counseling considered a number of recommendations from the 2004 Curricular Review report related to improving academic advising in Harvard College. Our findings and recommendations are detailed below. Perhaps most importantly, we realize that improving advising will depend on fostering a deep awareness among all stakeholders of the centrality of advising to the academic mission of Harvard College. We call on faculty and students alike to be actively engaged in giving and seeking advice, as a fundamental aspect of the intellectual exploration and growth that is the goal of our work together as a community, and we also call on the leadership of our Faculty to make the improvement of advising a high priority.

CHARGE

Of the dozen or more recommendations on advising in last year’s Harvard College Curricular Review report, our committee was charged with giving particular (although not exclusive) consideration to five:

Creating an office to coordinate all aspects of academic advising.

Separating pre-concentration academic advising from first year residential proctoring.

Involving more faculty in pre-concentration and concentration advising.

Assigning all concentrators to a concentration adviser.

Assigning freshmen to a House before the start of freshman year.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

We endorse enthusiastically the establishment of an Associate Dean of Advising Programs in the College and have recommendations concerning role and function. We also recommend that an advisory board be established to assist the new Dean.

We recognize the critical role and importance of advising. Advising is an intrinsic and important part of the academic mission of the College, and needs to be improved. We believe that more engagement in advising, particularly by faculty, is essential to the success of any curricular innovations.

We recommend that all faculty participate in some way in undergraduate advising.

We recommend recruiting more academic advisers (faculty or administrators) for freshmen. As often as possible, these advisers would serve through the three terms prior to the formal decision
about concentration choice. We endorse a more consistent role for House advising in the first semester of sophomore year.

We propose establishment of a formal peer advising program.

We have drafted an advising calendar to clarify advising tasks and responsibilities for both advisers and students, for both pre-concentration and concentration periods.

The quality of written and electronic needs improvement.

Concentrations should engage more actively in developing advising programs for pre-concentrators.

Concentrations should ensure that every student has an identifiable concentration adviser.

We recommend ongoing evaluation of advisers and monitoring of advising programs, and the use of collected data to determine best practices in advising.

We recommend no change in freshmen assignment to Houses.

Success in improving our advising systems will depend to a considerable extent on strong and sustained leadership from the Dean of the College, Dean of the Faculty, and President, and we endorse and encourage their involvement.

THE COMMITTEE

Committee membership is listed in Appendix 1. It included students, tenured faculty, current and former-House Masters, current and former-Allston Burr Senior Tutors, current and former-Head Tutors and Directors of Undergraduate Studies (along with Associates and Assistants), the incoming Dean of Freshmen, Associate and Assistant Deans of Freshmen, Deputy and Assistant Deans of Harvard College, and representatives of the Bureau of Study Counsel and the Office of Career Services. The committee was very ably assisted by John O’Keefe and Inge Amer, who participated fully in our work.

Soon after our first meeting on October 1, 2004 we broke up into four subcommittees:

Residential advising (Wendy Torrance, Jay Harris, Catherine Shapiro, Diane Weinstein, Tom Dingman, Inge Amer)

Academic advising (Anya Bernstein, David Borden, Marie Dahle, Daniel Donoghue, Donald Pfister, Gregg Tucci, Inge Amer)

Peer advising (Rory Browne, Sandra Nadaff, Stuart Shieber, Danny Yagan, Patricia O’Brien, John O’Keefe, Inge Amer)

Calendar (Anya Bernstein, David Borden, Rory Browne, Wendy Torrance, Danny Yagan, John O’Keefe, Inge Amer)

All committees met frequently throughout the year.
INFORMATION REVIEWED

We had available to us several reports documenting and analyzing data from various Freshman and Senior Surveys regarding satisfaction with the advising systems and advisers, along with other aspects of student life. We learned that student satisfaction levels were lower than in almost all peer institutions. Some analyses provided insight into those components of effective advising leading to higher levels of student engagement and satisfaction. We also had information on advising systems at a number of peer institutions, which was suggestive of practices that might be adopted at Harvard.

We met with undergraduates, including representatives of the Prefect Program and the Undergraduate Council, as well as other students, with the coordinator of the Freshman Outdoor Program, with Masters, with Senior Tutors and Assistant Deans of Freshmen, and with Jane Edwards, Director of the Office of International Programs. (An important task for the immediate future is to meet with representatives of concentrations.)

Professor Richard Light of the Harvard Graduate School of Education joined us at one of our meetings for a very profitable session. Professor Light, an authority on assessing educational programs, is the author of “Making the Most of College” which we read, enjoyed, and learned from.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF “ADVISING”

Many of the faculty think of “advising” as strictly academic, related rather narrowly to a particular discipline and focusing especially on concentration course requirements. The committee adopted a broader view, and tried to see advising through the eyes of a student.

Good advising addresses the academic (including international experiences, summer, and career options), extra-curricular, and personal interests and concerns of the student, and should be built on as long-term relationships as possible. Good academic advisers, although perhaps most comfortable with curricular aspects of advising, should also be able to engage with the whole student, and should be sufficiently knowledgeable about requirements and opportunities to be able to provide the necessary advice themselves or know where to direct a student.

Good advising requires clarity of expectations on all sides; students need to be as prepared to discuss and explore as they expect their advisers to be, and to see the advising relationship as interactive. Advising in College differs from that in High School. It is not prescriptive, but rather a collaborative form of teaching involving gathering and weighing information, planning, and making informed decisions. Just as faculty should see advising as a form of teaching, students should see advising as a part of learning.

Although it might seem ideal to have a single person as one’s adviser throughout one’s student career, this is both impractical and to an extent even undesirable. There are inevitable divisions of labor between the more academic and more personal, between pre-concentration and concentration, and a reasonable degree of redundancy in an advising system is valuable for everyone and indeed should be seen as a strength. We encourage each student to assemble, with our assistance, the informal equivalent of a “board of advisers.”

Good advising also requires that we streamline and simplify as far as possible information about advising, and this would include rather more standardization of adviser titles than we currently present to students. It also includes continuing to work towards greater simplification, or at least clarity, of our
curricular requirements, to make it possible for advisers and students alike to know with confidence that they are exploring the available options while doing the work necessary to earn a Harvard degree.

FACULTY ROLE IN ADVISING

As noted earlier, we would like the Faculty to endorse the expectation that all faculty participate in some way in the undergraduate advising system. We would like this expectation to be encouraged and reinforced as often as possible by the Dean of the Faculty and Dean of the College.

We heard from a variety of sources the suggestion that all faculty should serve as official academic advisers. We believe this may be unrealistic—perhaps some faculty’s advising talents are not best suited to one-on-one advising—yet we believe that all faculty are able to be part of our advising efforts, broadly understood, and urge the faculty to affirm that goal. We all have our strengths; we all have our weaknesses. Many of us are or would make good one-on-one advisers. We need the help of others though, as we broaden advising opportunities (in a coordinated and rational way) to meet our students’ needs. Faculty can serve on informational panels, or participate in workshops for future concentrators, or have lunch with students in their courses, or be available to advise on particular topics.

CURRENT ADVISING SYSTEMS

We devote considerable resources to undergraduate advising, and have an overall system that is highly decentralized. We would not wish or expect this decentralization to change radically, but we should aspire both to make sure that each component functions as well as possible, and that each is effectively coordinated with other components. The main components of our advising system today are as follows.

Freshman year

The Dean and Associate Dean of Freshmen oversee advising programs for first-year students, as well as working with concentrations to help students define their future interests. Three Assistant Deans of Freshmen, one for each of the Yards into which the class is divided, are resident deans serving as links between various members of a student’s advising team. Proctors are resident freshmen advisers responsible for the full range of a student’s academic and personal interests. There are 62 Proctors, each serving as residential adviser to between 20 and 30 freshmen. Although numbers vary from year to year, this year there are around 232 non-resident freshmen academic advisers, advising on average 2 students each. This means that most freshmen (around three quarters of the class) receive their academic advice, as well as their more personal counseling, from their Proctor. Prefects are upperclass students assigned to particular entryways, who help integrate freshmen into the Harvard community both socially and academically.

The Houses

As students move into the House system, they also currently join their concentration. Detailed advising about courses and concentration requirements becomes the responsibility of the academic departments, complemented by House advising systems directed at more general academic questions and personal issues. The Allston Burr Senior Tutors serve as resident academic deans for the students in their Houses, and oversee academic and personal advising in the residential setting. Houses have between 18 and 27 Resident Tutors, depending on the size of the House. These tutors are usually graduate students in Arts and Sciences or one of the professional schools, who help with advising in their specific area of
academic expertise. Each of these tutors also provides advice and oversight to 20 to 30 students living in their entryway or on their floor. In collaboration with the Office of Career Services, each House provides pre-law, pre-medical, and fellowship advising, with tutors (resident and non-resident) dedicated to these tasks. Each House also provides a system of non-concentration advising, although these programs differ from House to House. Houses also provide a base for some concentration advising, since some departments assign specific advising tasks (including study card signing) to resident and non-resident tutors in the Houses.

The Concentrations

Advising systems in the concentrations vary, but all are overseen by a Head Tutor or Director of Undergraduate Studies. This officer is often, but by no means always, a tenured faculty member. Some of these Head Tutors and Directors of Undergraduate Studies, along with others with Assistant, Associate, Deputy, or Executive labels, are so-called Dedicated Advisers. These are concentration advisers who may have teaching appointments but whose principal responsibilities involve advising and who are well trained and motivated as advisers. Several concentrations rely on the help of graduate students in the field for advising duties, including the signing of study cards; in some cases, these are organized by House. Some concentrations include their own concentrators as Peer Concentration Advisers, most frequently used at the freshman concentration fairs and in panel discussions.

Supporting the backbone of departmental and residential advising are several other places where students can seek advice on specific topics or get general help. Some of the more heavily used include:

Bureau of Study Counsel

This counseling center provides a wide range of academic, psychological, and consultative services to undergraduates. The Bureau consults with advisers (Proctors, resident deans and tutors, faculty) when there are concerns about a particular student, and is involved (and will continue to be involved) with various training programs for advisers. It is also the authorized source for Harvard College on-campus peer tutoring, and is responsible for training Peer Tutors.

Office of Career Services

The Office assists students with career exploration and planning as part of academic and career development, including summer jobs, internships, fellowships, sources of funding, international experiences, and graduate and professional school applications. The Office also works through the Houses to coordinate pre-med, pre-law, and fellowships advising.

Office of International Programs

The Office works with students through all stages of planning and preparation for study abroad.

PROBLEMS WITH CURRENT SYSTEMS

In our discussions, five key problems surfaced that should be addressed as part of any serious effort to provide more effective advising, which in turn can help students be more engaged with and satisfied by their work at Harvard. Our recommendations seek to address these problems:

Students often find our highly decentralized advising systems difficult to navigate.
Advisers can be hard to identify. Although concentrations may have procedures to assign students to advisers, students often do not understand the system and may fail to identify their adviser.

Expectations for both advisers and advisees may be unclear or confusing.

Quality of advice is too variable.

Electronic and written information can be overwhelming, and too variable in quality and clarity.

Advisers are not as well supported as they should be through training and dissemination of best practices, nor accountable with regard to their performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We assumed that the timing of concentration choice will shift to the end of the third semester, decoupling what are currently coordinated changes: concentration choice and the shift from Yard to House.

Our recommendations reflect our belief that advising systems should be clearer, simpler, and better coordinated, and advisers better supported. We believe that during what will probably be the first three pre-concentration semesters every student should have identifiable, knowledgeable, and available academic advisers, and no adviser should have an excessive number of academic advisees (ideally, no more than ten and preferably far fewer). After the third semester, every concentrator should also have an identifiable, knowledgeable, and available adviser. We endorse a role for peers in both pre-concentration and concentration advising systems.

ADVISING DEAN

We endorse the recent appointment of an Associate Dean of Advising Programs in the College Dean’s Office, and hope it is clear that, although the position may deal primarily with academic advising, it will do so in the broadest possible context and with the understanding that the academic, extra-curricular, and personal aspects of student life are fundamentally inseparable. The position is “Dean of” and not “Dean for” Advising Programs because we do not see this as an office to which students will go for advice (although some certainly will), but as an office which will, over time, help to improve the effectiveness of all our advising.

We recommend that the Associate Dean of Advising have regular access to and meetings with both the Dean of the College and the Dean of the Faculty, as well as the Academic Deans, for example being consulted when dossiers are reviewed on commitment to and effectiveness within advising programs. As we have already noted, success in improving advising will depend to a considerable extent on the degree of involvement, support, and encouragement for the Dean, and in sending a clear message that advising is important.

The new Office of Advising will need adequate staff support, space, and resources.

Some of the recommended functions of the Advising Office can be listed as follows:
Improving the consistency and coordination of Freshman, House, and Concentration advising utilizing the Advising Calendar (see below);

Working with the Freshman Deans, Concentration and House advisers, the Office of Career Services, Bureau of Study Counsel, and Office of International Programs to organize, expand and improve the effectiveness of workshops and panel discussions for students prior to concentration choice;

Improving the quality, consistency, and comparability of written and electronic information, particularly from concentrations;

Improving adviser training programs in collaboration with the Freshman Deans, Concentration and House advisers, the Office of Career Services, Bureau of Study Counsel, and Office of International Programs;

Serving as “prompter” for advisers and advisees, for example through developing simple reminders about important topics for advising conversations that can be sent to advisers and advisees at appropriate times;

Developing tools to evaluate and assess advisers and advising systems, with a view to sharing best practices;

As soon as possible, developing an Annual Report to the Faculty on the quality of our advising programs; and

The committee recommends that it be reconstituted as an advisory board to the Dean of Advising.

ADVISING CALENDAR

Attached as Appendices 2 and 3 are Advising Calendars, one for advisers and the other for advisees. Our goal in preparing these is to spell out what we believe to be the minimal acceptable level of advising, including its frequency, content, and medium. (For example, we propose a reasonable minimal expectation at least three meetings per year for students once in a concentration.) We believe that regular reminders to advisers and advisees can help, and we are also agreed that students need to take more responsibility in preparing for and seeking advice, just as individual advisers and the advising systems have responsibility to provide timely, accurate, and thoughtful advice.

These calendars will undoubtedly undergo modification. To have their desired effect, they will depend upon the active cooperation of all components of our advising system. Appendix 4 (“Harvard Advising Page”) is presented as an example of how an over-arching advising web-page might look, using the advising calendar as its backbone, taking a student (and adviser) to ever increasing levels of specificity. As a specific (“Who”) example, we show the Senior Tutor link.

CHANGES TO THE FIRST THREE SEMESTERS

We have assumed that concentration choice will fall at the end of the third semester, and that the roles of academic and residential adviser should be separated, when feasible. We have also paid attention to the third semester (first semester of sophomore year), which now becomes a time in which, although living in a House, students are not yet formally in a concentration.
We emphasize that, even were concentration choice timing not to change, we would still make the recommendations that follow. Of particular importance to us are pre-concentration advising as delivered by the concentrations themselves, the role of House advising in sophomore year, and attention on the part of all advisers to non-concentration coursework.

The current structure of freshman advising can be briefly summarized as follows.

There are 3 Assistant Deans of Freshmen, the Yard resident dean equivalents of the House Allston Burr Senior Tutors. Each has responsibility for almost 550 students (in contrast, Allston Burr Senior Tutors are responsible for between 330 and 450 students, depending on the House).

Every first year student has a resident adviser, called a Proctor. Proctors have a variety of educational backgrounds and future plans, and some are graduates of Harvard College. There are 62 Proctors, and each is responsible for on average 26 students (the actual number of proctees varying from around 20 to more than 35).

There are currently around 232 Non-Resident Academic Advisers (the number varies from year to year), advising on average 2 students each. Most Non-Resident Academic Advisers are non-ladder faculty, administrators, and others in the Harvard College community. This year, 65 Non-Resident Academic Advisers are ladder faculty.

This means that barely 460 of our freshmen have Non-Resident Academic Advisers, the remaining 1200 or so having their Proctors as academic as well as residential advisers. Number of academic advisees (as opposed to proctees) per Proctor ranged this year between 11 and 24, with the average a little below 20.

We have identified some weaknesses in the first year advising experience, and the paragraphs that follow try to address them. These weaknesses would include mismatch of interest between adviser and advisee, insufficiently effective training for advisers, too little time for all the advising needs, and the need for more involvement and input from the concentrations.

We recommend first, that the number of Assistant Deans of Freshmen be increased from 3 to 4, bringing the ratio of advisees to Assistant Dean close to the ratio of advisees to Senior Tutor in the Houses.

Currently Proctors act as both academic and residential advisers to a group of between 20 and 30 students. For most freshmen, their Proctor is also their academic adviser, but in those instances where a freshman has a non-resident academic adviser, their Proctor has fewer academic advisees. Proctors currently average almost 20 academic advisees. We would not recommend separating totally the groups of academic and residential advisers because this would reduce the attractiveness of the Proctor position, making it totally unlike a House Resident Tutorship. Rather we would like to reduce the number of academic advisees per Proctor (to no more than ten, preferably many fewer) by increasing the number of non-resident academic advisers. The quality of the Proctor pool needs to be maximized and we should of course make every effort to ensure that all Proctors are fully knowledgeable about the Harvard College curriculum. In turn, we need to consider ways of improving the attractiveness of the Proctor position to make it more equivalent to a House resident tutorship, both by making the academic advising load lighter and, for example, by improving housing conditions.

We recommend that every effort be made to increase the overall number of academic advisers, thereby reducing the maximum number of academic advisees per Proctor to a reasonable number. For example, we believe that the number of suitable and recruitable faculty is certainly higher than 65. The
serious involvement of our Faculty leaders will be critical to successful expansion of this number. We also believe that there are other underutilized pools of possible effective advisers throughout the Harvard community. Training and support for all these advisers needs to be thoroughly reviewed in order to make both training and operation as efficient as is compatible with good advising.

Non-Resident Academic Advisers are normally assigned to provide as close a match as possible to the expressed academic interests of incoming freshmen. We believe that it is worth considering the feasibility of adopting the same criterion for Proctors. We propose that, once it is possible to reduce the number of academic advisees per Proctor to an acceptable number, Proctors be assigned as academic advisers as far as possible matching the academic interests of students, whether inside or outside of their own Proctor group.

If we can reach an acceptable number of academic advisers, we propose that they continue as often as possible as official advisers into the third semester, and would therefore work with the Allston Burr Senior Tutors as they did with Assistant Deans of Freshmen during freshman year (it may be that the Senior Tutor would designate a representative, perhaps an Assistant Senior Tutor with enhanced role to monitor advice for these third semester students). In some cases, the freshman academic adviser may not be available for a student’s third semester, in which case the existence of good House-based advising will become critical. We anticipate that many students will already have made decisions concerning concentration choice by the time they join a House, but some will still need guidance in choosing courses to help in narrowing choices. There is a clear role for the Dean of Advising to work with the various academic advisers, particularly the Houses and concentrations, as well as with the Office of Career Services, the Bureau of Study Counsel, and the Office of International Programs to improve the consistency and coordination of advising both prior to and after concentration choice. And we emphasize again the importance for all advisers to pay attention to non-concentration as well as concentration course planning (especially as the structure of both concentration and general education requirements change).

Over the course of these first three semesters the issue of concentration choice grows increasingly important, and the active cooperation and involvement of concentrations is critical. We have heard some complaints about the quality of pre-concentration advising during freshman year. To a considerable extent the solution to any problems that do exist will require more thoughtful participation by the concentrations themselves. We discuss this more fully in the section below on concentrations.

PEER ADVISING

We discussed peer advising with a number of students, including representatives of the Prefects and the Undergraduate Council. We recognize the great importance of contact between freshmen and upperclass students, and have a number of proposals to strengthen them.

We understand that peer advising systems cannot supplant, replace, or cover the deficiencies of current or future systems of academic or residential advising. But new students often find other students more approachable than faculty and administrators, and seek them out anyway; they have confidence in their opinions and perspectives. Further, many upper-class students are eager to participate and have a unique perspective on the undergraduate experience that cannot be readily supplied by other forms of advising. Advising about academic requirements and course choice is properly the responsibility of the concentrations, the faculty, and other accredited residential and non-residential advisers. However, students are uniquely placed to talk to their newly arrived peers about the challenges and opportunities presented by life and learning in a residential undergraduate college within the wider context of a research university, and to help them navigate, both literally and metaphorically, within the academic calendar and around the many and therefore often confusing advising resources.
We recommend establishing a comprehensive peer advising system covering all first-years, with a formal program name and adviser title to be approved at a later time (see Appendix 5). We recommend that every incoming student be assigned a specific peer adviser and be contacted and welcomed by that adviser before arrival on campus.

The proposed peer advisers would replace and augment the integrating and introductory functions performed by participants in such existing programs as the Prefect Program. The new system would be centrally supervised and managed through the Dean of Advising office to ensure consistency and coverage. Upperclass students would, however, play an integral part in the recruitment, selection, and training of each generation of peer advisers, and would work closely with, and be consulted by the dean of advising office.

We further recommend that Concentrations be strongly encouraged to recruit and use upperclass students to serve as Peer Concentration Counselors (as many currently do). It would be sensible to integrate them into one new unified program (Appendix 5). To provide material assistance to the concentrations in the task of organizing, recruiting, and advertising a peer concentration counselor program, we propose that the advising dean’s office, which would oversee the peer advising program, also be involved in planning and coordinating with the concentrations. (Collaboration with the Freshman Dean’s office and the Bureau of Study Counsel would also continue.)

We also recommend the extension, organizational reform, greater support, and diversification of the several existing pre-orientation programs, such as the Freshman Outdoor Program (FOP), the Freshman Arts Program (FAP), and Freshman Urban Program (FUP). The structure of the programs should maintain and further emphasize their role in achieving the social integration and adaptation to college life that at their best they perform so well. More incoming students should have the opportunity and the inclination to participate in any one of a number of different experiences that provide them with a peer support structure, even before they arrive on campus (and which will continue into their first term here).

CONCENTRATIONS

Concentrations and their representatives have critically important roles to play in advising students. Students often comment on both the disappointing as well as the satisfying engagements they have with individual advisers in their concentrations, which highlights the importance of supporting and enhancing the connection of adviser and advisee on a personal level. Other steps will help improve the overall impression of advising efforts in departments across the College.

We reviewed reports and analyses of student satisfaction levels with concentration advising, noting some general trends. Satisfaction tends to be modestly inversely correlated with number of concentrators, and with concentrator/faculty ratios. (We need to be mindful of the fact that low satisfaction levels are also occasionally found in a few smaller concentrations.) We noted that, when these variables were held constant, the presence of a Dedicated Adviser often had a positive influence on satisfaction. Such advisers work well not because they substitute for faculty but because they provide predictable presence and continuity and facilitate a range of contacts between concentrators and faculty members.

The larger concentrations in particular face a number of challenges with advising. In addition to large numbers of concentrators and high concentrator/faculty ratios, with the best will in the world they face challenges in organizing teaching in such a way as to ensure that a student can take small classes from and get to know the faculty. We recognize that student-faculty classroom contact, which can lead to
conversations unrelated to course content (that is, advising), plays a major role along with advising in overall satisfaction. However, we recommend that as a reasonable expectation there should be at least three meetings per year for students with an identifiable adviser, once they have declared a concentration.

Almost 50 percent of concentrators are in only 6 of our more than 40 concentrations. Perhaps more attention could focus during freshman year, not on dissuading students from concentrating in the larger concentrations, but on the many opportunities available in the smaller concentrations. But we know from student surveys that concentration choice overwhelmingly reflects intellectual (as opposed to career) interests, so we need to redouble our efforts to increase student satisfaction with advising in larger concentrations.

We recommend therefore that the Dean of the College convene a series of meetings with the larger concentrations in which the Dean of Advising would be involved, to discuss ways of improving advising. One option would be to increase the involvement of Dedicated Advisers. However, problems of scale need also to be recognized here. A concentration with 70 students may function well with one ladder faculty and/or a Dedicated Adviser as Director of Undergraduate Studies/Head Tutor. Expecting a concentration an order of magnitude larger to function equally well with one ladder faculty or a Dedicated Adviser is quite unrealistic. It might, for example, be useful to consider ways of subdividing larger concentrations into potentially more manageable subgroups for advising purposes. Larger concentrations need proportionately more resources, and perhaps considerably more resources than they currently receive.

We found that concentration websites varied considerably in format, content, and quality. We recommend that the dean of advising work with concentrations to raise overall quality and clarity, making websites sufficiently similar in organization as to make comparative analysis easy for students. We also found great variability in the way the structure of advising is described across concentrations, and can imagine how confusing this might be to freshmen trying to navigate their way through our complex systems. Again, the Dean of Advising can be of help in improving this situation.

The Science concentrations already make presentations during freshman week. Comparable presentations from Social Science and Humanities concentrations worked well this year, exposing students to disciplines they may be unfamiliar with. For each Division we also encourage panel discussions throughout the first three semesters, in which thoughtful comparisons of the various concentrations can be presented and discussed. (For example, what are the differences between Social Studies and Government, or between Biochemistry and Chemistry?) Versions should be available in electronic formats.

Along these lines, a booklet briefly articulating the philosophy and goals of each concentration, and logical grouping of concentrations, would be useful. Such a booklet might include very brief essays on each concentration, organized by Division, along with brief overview essays for each Division, recommendations on how to think about planning a course of study, and perhaps some suggestions on course choice. A similar booklet on General Education could be produced once decisions are made about structure.

Outreach from concentrations to freshmen and first semester sophomores needs to be proactive and regular, and we recommend that each concentration designate an adviser or group of advisers specifically to contact and interact with potential concentrators. We also encourage all concentrations to consider the appropriate use of peer concentration advisers. We learned from conversations with students that such advising is important to them when done well, but that degree of involvement of students and the quality of their training varies greatly. As noted above, we recommend that peer concentration
advisers become part of an integrated peer advising system (Appendix 5). The dean of advising has a useful role to play in exploring with concentrations the best use of students as peer advisers.

We repeat here our original expectation that all faculty should be involved in some way in the advising process. Whether this is acting as a concentration adviser, serving in a “pool” of faculty advisers, appearing on panels and in discussion groups and workshops, participating in social events, or joining students in a course for lunch, we all have an obligation to recognize that, great research institution though this is, we are all also faculty of Harvard College. At the same time it is equally essential that students recognize their responsibilities to be active participants: to attend each advising session fully prepared; and to follow Professor Light’s advice, as described in his book, to get to know at least one faculty member every semester.

Finally, we acknowledge need for concentration advisers to be at least aware of the non-concentration course planning of their advisees. A reduction in the number of concentration requirements will increase the responsibilities of both students and advisers in this area. The dean of advising can play an important role, along with concentrations and the Freshman Dean’s Office, in organizing all of these activities.

HOUSES

We spent relatively little time reviewing advising in the Houses, and noted that students are generally very satisfied with their House experiences. The House Masters, Allston Burr Senior Tutors, Resident Tutors and Non-Resident affiliates advise on a range of topics, academic and non-academic. It would be timely to examine the extent to which variability in House advising practices needs some adjustment. We believe that there needs to be a reasonable amount of consistency in at least the third semester phase of pre-concentration advising, and recommend a role for the advising dean in convening workshops to explore ideas maximizing efficiency and consistency.

PRE-ASSIGNMENT OF FRESHMEN TO A HOUSE

Our final charge was to examine the possible value of assigning freshmen to a House prior to arrival on campus. The 2004 Curricular Review report had recommended such pre-assignment, along with housing students assigned to particular Houses together in their Yard dormitories, as part of an improved advising system. This would also facilitate interaction with upperclass peers. Accordingly, we considered the extent to which pre-assignment would strengthen both academic advising and peer contact. Over the course of our discussions, we also became mindful of the stress felt by some students during the “blocking” process. As students form groups (up to 8 in number) prior to entering the housing lottery, decisions about and reactions to inclusion within and exclusion from blocking groups can be potentially devastating for students. So we approached our analysis with a view to understanding if pre-assignment would have a positive impact on three issues: academic advising, peer contact, and blocking stress.

In order to do justice to these important questions we need to weigh pros and cons, and to do this we needed to have some idea of what a pre-assignment system might look like. We tried some simple modeling. There are many different possible pre-assignment models, and we developed just two. These are explained more fully in Appendix 6, but can briefly be characterized as the “Yale” and “Princeton” models. We concluded that neither would improve advising as well as would our recommended changes. The geography of the Harvard campus, very different from Yale’s, would make the operation of a Yale-type system extremely difficult, and could, in our view, have a potentially negative effect on advising. Peer contact we believe can be most efficiently effected through the development of an integrated peer
advising program, as outlined in Appendix 5. However, as planning for Allston continues, pre-assignment could be considered again. If it is, it should be considered early in any planning for new Houses, because geography will be critical to the success of any change.

We also discussed blocking stress and, although not directly related to our task of reviewing academic advising, concluded that this is a topic worthy of further careful consideration. (We began developing some tentative suggestions for modifying the current system. For example, emphasizing to students that forming blocking groups of 3 or 4—closer to the size of actual future rooming groups, should be seen as quite acceptable and “normal.”) We recommend that the Dean of the College convene a small group to develop suggestions for improving current procedures.

FINAL COMMENTS

Advising is vitally important to any academic enterprise, and especially to Harvard College as it enters a period of curricular innovation and change. Harvard is fortunate to have outstanding faculty, but without better advising the advantages they offer students will be dissipated. Good advising can only enhance what students gain from their college years.

To bring adequate focus to its importance, we urge the leadership of the Faculty and University to make clear in all possible ways the seriousness with which the institution is going to take advising. We can evaluate advising systems, and advisers, as we do courses. We can be asked to discuss our role in advising in our Annual Reports to the Dean. Performance of advising systems can be a prominent part of annual departmental staffing meetings. Involvement in advising can be considered along with teaching ability in appointments and promotions. Complementary to these initiatives, we must provide better training, support, assistance, and guidance for advisers.

The state of student-faculty relations at Harvard College has sometimes been caricatured as a “culture of mutual avoidance.” Changing this aspect of academic culture cannot be treated as an insurmountable challenge. We must be aggressive in finding ways of making students fully active partners in our advising systems, helping them to recognize that advising is an integral part of learning. But we must take the lead.

APPENDICES

1. Committee membership
2. Advising calendar (adviser version)
3. Advising calendar (advisee version)
4. Advising Website
5. Peer advising
6. Pre-assignment
APPENDIX 1

MEMBERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADVISING AND COUNSELING

Chair:  
David Pilbeam  
Henry Ford II Professor of the Social Sciences  
Curator of Paleoanthropology in the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

Members:  
Any Bernstein  
Director of Undergraduate Studies in Social Studies  
Lecturer on Social Studies

David Borden  
Economics '05  
Student Representative

Rory Browne  
Associate Dean of Freshman  
Lecturer on History and Literature

Marie Dahleh  
Assistant Dean for Academic Programs in the Division of Engineering and Applied Sciences

Daniel Donoghue  
John P. Marquand Professor of English

Jay Harris  
Harry Austryn Wolfson Professor of Jewish Studies  
Master of Cabot House

John Hutchinson  
Associate Dean for Academic Programs in the Division of Engineering and Applied Sciences  
Abbott and James Lawrence Professor of Engineering and  
Gordon McKay Professor of Applied Mechanics

Sandra Naddaff  
Director of Freshman Seminars  
Senior Lecturer on Literature  
Master of Mather House

Donald Pfister  
Asa Gray Professor of Systematic Botany  
Curator of the Farlow Library and the Herbarium

Catherine Shapiro  
Allston Burr Senior Tutor in Leverett House  
Lecturer on Government
Stuart Shieber  
James O. Welch Jr. and Virginia B. Welch Professor of Computer Science and Harvard College Professor

Wendy Torrance  
Assistant Dean of Freshman  
Lecturer on Social Studies

Gregg Tucci  
Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies in Chemistry and Chemical Biology  
Lecturer on Chemistry and Chemical Biology

Diane Weinstein  
Counselor in the Bureau of Study Counsel

William Wright-Swadel  
Director of the Office of Career Services

Danny Yagan  
Economics ’06

Ex Officio:  
Thomas A. Dingman  
Dean of Freshmen

Patricia O’Brien  
Deputy Dean of Harvard College  
Co-Master of Currier House

John O’Keefe  
Assistant Dean of Harvard College  
Lecturer on History and Literature

Staff:  
Inge-Lise Ameer  
Assistant Dean of Harvard College
## Harvard College Four-Year Academic Advising Calendar

### Adviser Version

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE-FROSH Calendar/Meeting</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>ISSUES DISCUSSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April/May</td>
<td>Freshman Dean's Office</td>
<td>Introductory Information</td>
<td>Students receive introductory mailing from FDO Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July/August</td>
<td>Freshman Dean's Office in conjunction with Assoc. Dean of Advising</td>
<td>Preparing to study on campus</td>
<td>Students receive advising materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Advising Calendar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Directed to advising website and other resource webpages within the college</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Advanced standing qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Information on how the advising system works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of August - Email</td>
<td>Academic Adviser and Proctor</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>Email by Proctor and Academic Adviser before arrival in Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introducing him/herself and role in the first 2 weeks and 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early September</td>
<td>Freshman Dean's Office and Pre-Orientation Groups</td>
<td>First-Year Outdoor Program</td>
<td>Orientation to life at Harvard</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>First-Year Arts Program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>First-Urban Program</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other First-Year Orientation Programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar/Meeting</td>
<td>SEMESTER 1</td>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>TOPICS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Freshman Week   | Assistant Deans of Freshman | Curriculum structure and advising system | Large group meeting with students to discuss curriculum and advising structures, including:  
  • Philosophy and overall goals of the Harvard College curriculum  
  • Overall requirements  
  • Who to get information from and when  
  • Print/web references to learn whom to go to for info at any time  
  • Obligations of advisers and advisees |
| Associate Dean of Advising and Directors of Undergraduate Studies | Overview of divisions | Information about concentrations | Panels featuring representatives from the Sciences, the Social Sciences, and the Humanities  
  Suggestions of courses to take to prepare for various concentrations, emphasis if possible on courses for several related concentrations (e.g., Social Analysis 10 prepares students for Economics, Government, and Social Studies)  
  • Provide initial information about study abroad, public service, careers, & pre-med options |
| Writing Center/Bureau | Writing Resources | | Hold Information sessions on the writing program and related resources available at Harvard |
| Proctors | Group sessions reviewing upcoming one-on-one meetings with Academic Advisers | | All basics of choosing courses  
  • Freshman yr. requirements (General Education/Expos/language/quantitative)  
  • Time management & life balance - academics, jobs, extracurriculars, athletics, arts, etc.  
  • Placement tests  
  • Reading the course catalog/CUE Guide  
  • Shopping period: why it exists; online tool; minimum # recommended  
  • Add/drop  
  • How to sign up for classes  
  • What are Freshman Seminars? Why apply?  
  • What is a lottery?  
  • Pass/Fail  
  • Sections  
  Help students seeking specific and personal advice  
  • Review advising calendar  
  • Provide guidance as to whom they should go to for what and when this week |
| Proctors | one-on-one life/academic meeting | | Questions proctor will discuss with student:  
  • What are your academic, extracurricular, and other goals for your time at Harvard?  
  • How do you anticipate handling the transition from high school to college?  
  • What are you looking forward to this year?  
  • What are some of the things about Harvard, Cambridge, and Boston that you hope to take advantage of?  
  • Are you prepared for your upcoming meeting with your Academic Adviser?  
  • The Bureau  
  • The Writing Center  
  • The Language Resource Center  
  • Math Question Center  
  • Peer Tutoring Program |
| Freshman week | Academic Adviser | First meeting one-on-one meeting with Academic Adviser | Questions to ask:  
- What is your background and life story in brief?  
- College goals  
- What concentrations are you considering? Why?  
- What subjects would you like to explore at Harvard College? Why?  
- What are other things you hope to get out of the curriculum?  
- What extracurricular activities are you interested in?  
  (Provide advice for balancing academics and extracurriculars)  
- Are there any experiences you hope to have while at Harvard? Any skills you hope to acquire?  
  (e.g. improve my public speaking, learn a new language, play a club/IV sport, gain appreciation for a field I probably won't concentrate in, travel throughout New England)  
- Just say a word about potential careers - introduce resources of OCS  
Review up to 10 courses student is considering shopping  
- Which Freshmen Seminars are they thinking of applying to?  
- The relative merits of each considering student's academic goals/decisions  
- Are these courses going to help you choose a concentration?  
  (At least one of final courses should help guide concentration choice)  
- How to go about deciding between equally good classes  
- Do midterms and finals all fall at the same time?  
- Placement concerns  
Other options  
- Are you considering advanced standing? Why?  
- Are you considering pursing a citation?  

**It's ok for the student not to know all the answers! We want them to explore.**

| Student | Student should email Academic Adviser his/her shopping list by first day of classes |
| Peer? | |

| Wed-Mon shopping period | Academic Adviser/Instructors/ Course Heads | Course questions | Email or meet with students and answer questions such as:  
- How to make final course decisions  
- How to approach Add/Drop if still unsure which class to take  
- First thoughts on adapting to college work (time management, available support) |

End of shopping period | Academic Adviser | Study Card | Meet to discuss courses, and issues regarding requirements and possible concentrations |
| Advising Dean/The Bureau | Study Rhythm | Sign Study card |
| Academic Adviser | Time Management |
| Peer? | |

| Weekend of shopping period | Proctor | Adapting to college work | How are things going?  
Offer suggestions about adapting to college work |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freshman Year</th>
<th>SEMESTER 1 (CONT'D)</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>ISSUES DISCUSSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calendar/Meeting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Week 4 - Email | Academic Adviser    | College work/papers/exams | Email student regarding:  
|                |                     |     |        | • Upcoming mid-term exams and assignments  
|                |                     |     |        | • Time management issues  
|                |                     |     |        | • Forms/Details of adding/dropping a course; Implications of doing so.  
|                |                     |     |        | • What is the significance of Pass/Fail? Implications of doing so.  
|                |                     |     |        | Adviser may later need to follow-up by email with regarding progress  
| Week 5 - Email (add-drop deadline) | Academic Adviser | Add-Drop/Pass-Fail | If necessary, help student with Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms and discuss implications  
| Week 6 - Email | Assoc. Dean of Advising Bureau, Registrar? | Struggling students | Develop a system where adviser can be notified if a student is struggling/not showing up to class  
| Week 7 - Email (withdrawal deadline) | Academic Adviser | Withdrawing from a course | If necessary, help student with Withdrawal forms and discuss implications  
| Week 8, Week 12 | Academic Adviser | Midterm review; remaining course work | Meet one-on-one with student to discuss progress and issues such as:  
|                |                     |     |        | • How to overcome bad midterm or assignment grades  
|                |                     |     |        | • Preparing for home stretch in coursework  
|                |                     |     |        | • Should student do course work over winter break?  
|                | Summer Options      |     |        | While there is little pressure, begin to discuss possibilities for the summer:  
|                |                     |     |        | • Explain options including jobs, summer travel, internships, family vacation, etc.  
|                |                     |     |        | • Direct students to OCS as a helpful resource to ask questions related to resumes, interviews, and definition of terms such as "grants," "first round interviews," and "fellowships."  
| Beginning of reading period | Proctor | Meeting - Orientation to reading and exam period | Hold an Orientation Session covering:  
| | | | | • Advice about preparation and thriving during the Reading and Exam Periods  
| | | | | • Staying positive and balanced  
| | | | | • Supplementary Material  
| First week of reading period | Academic Adviser | Preparing for exams | In person, or via email, review reading and exam period preparation schedule with student  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freshman Year</th>
<th>SEMESTER 2</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>ISSUES DISCUSSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calendar/Meeting</td>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>TOPICS</td>
<td>ISSUES DISCUSSED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before Shopping Period</td>
<td>Academic Adviser</td>
<td>Selecting Classes</td>
<td>Discuss course selection and thoughts regarding possible concentrations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student should email Academic Adviser his/her shopping list by first day of classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Shopping Period</td>
<td>Academic Adviser</td>
<td>Sign Study Card</td>
<td>Meet to go over any issues regarding requirements and possible concentrations</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Discuss how student is considering using electives</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sign study card</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4 - Email</td>
<td>Academic Adviser</td>
<td>Check-in</td>
<td>Check in with student via email</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Study Abroad Deadline</td>
<td>Make sure student is aware of the Week 5 Add/drop deadline</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Make sure student is aware of the March 15 deadline for summer/fall study abroad applications</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5 - Email (add-drop deadline)</td>
<td>Academic Adviser</td>
<td>Add-Drop/Pass-Fail</td>
<td>If necessary, help student with Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms and discuss implications</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6 - Email</td>
<td>Assoc. Dean of Advising Bureau, Registrar?</td>
<td>Struggling students</td>
<td>Develop a system where adviser can be notified if a student is struggling/not showing up to class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Proctor</td>
<td>Midterm conversation</td>
<td>Discuss how term/year is going and summer plans</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7 - Email (withdrawal deadline)</td>
<td>Academic Adviser</td>
<td>Withdrawing from a course</td>
<td>If necessary, help student with Withdrawal forms and discuss implications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout Semester</td>
<td>Assistant Deans of Freshman and Associate Dean of Advising Directors of Undergraduate Studies</td>
<td>Email Reminders</td>
<td>Prompt students to go to concentration meetings and meet with concentration advisers and to speak with peer advisers in concentrations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Concentration Information</td>
<td>Group meetings for freshmen and meet one-on-one with interested students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Give overview of concentration, answer questions, provide advice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Courses to take and ways to think about the concentration (e.g. Social Studies - thinking about interest in studying theory)</td>
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<td>• Consider how study abroad &amp; career opportunities might work with concentration interests</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• After attend meetings students should report back to Academic Adviser</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8, Week 12</td>
<td>Academic Adviser</td>
<td>Choosing a Concentration</td>
<td>Meet and Discuss concentrations with advisee</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Listen to and guide advice</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Explain requirements, options, encourage taking wide range of classes</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Student should explain verbally and in writing, which concentrations he/she is interested in and why he/she is considering particular fields</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summer Options</td>
<td>Continue to discuss summer plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar/Meeting</td>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>TOPICS</td>
<td>ISSUES DISCUSSED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start of Shopping Period</td>
<td>Academic Adviser</td>
<td>Shopping List</td>
<td>Student should email Academic Adviser shopping list by first day of classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Shopping Period | Senior Tutor Peer (from house) | House Life Adjustment | Introductory Session to address House Life Questions:  
  - What is my place in the House?  
  - Who are all the different tutors? Can I talk to any of them?  
  - What do the Housemasters do?  
  - How are entryway dynamics the same and different from freshman year?  
  - Academics in the Houses |
|                  | Directors of Undergraduate Studies | Concentration Overview | Hold meeting at beginning of term.  
  - Provides an overview of the concentration, answer questions  
  - Provides suggestions for courses to take before making final decisions  
  - Discuss ideas related to study abroad opportunities and summer/career plans |
| End of Shopping Period | Academic Adviser | Study card, concentration ideas | Meet for a one-on-one appointment to discuss course selection, concentration options  
  - Discuss how student is considering using electives  
  - Discuss how to balance extracurriculars and leadership roles while not over-committing  
  - Begin thinking about fellowship/public service/summer job deadlines (most due Nov-Jan)  
  - Sign study card |
| Early in Semester | Associate Dean of Advising Panelists would include: Faculty, Head Tutors, Students, OCS and OIP reps | Concentration Questions | Panel Discussions  
  - Choosing a Concentration  
  - Being Undecided  
  - Special Concentrations  
  - How can I explore concentration X if I can’t fit one of its intro courses into my schedule?  
  - Panels on honors concentrations, pre-med concentrations, etc.  
  - Students should consider attending Study Abroad information sessions if interested |
| Throughout Semester | Directors of Undergraduate Studies and Colleagues | | Hold regular informational meetings regarding concentration and requirements |
| Week 4 - Email | Academic Adviser | Email Check-in | Check in with student via email and make sure they are thinking about concentrations  
  - Make sure student is aware of the Week 5 Add/drop deadline  
  - Make sure student is aware of the October 15 deadline for spring study abroad applications |
<p>| Week 5 - Email (add-drop deadline) | Academic Adviser | Add-Drop/Pass-Fail | If necessary, help student with Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms and discuss implications |
| Week 6 - Email | Assoc. Dean of Advising Bureau; Registrar? | Struggling students | Develop a system where adviser can be notified if a student is struggling/not showing up to class |
| Week 7 - Email (withdrawal deadline) | Academic Adviser | Withdrawing from a course | If necessary, help student with Withdrawal forms and discuss implications |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sophomore Year</th>
<th>SEMESTER 1 (CONT’D)</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>ISSUES DISCUSSED</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calendar/Meeting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Week 8 | Academic Adviser | Check-in | Second of three one-on-one meetings over term.  
• Assess assignments and midterms. Discuss home-stretch of coursework.  
• Discuss important details for joining a concentration  
• Pre-med related decisions  
• While there is little pressure, begin discussing fellowship/summer job deadlines |
| Week 11-12 | Academic Adviser | Check-in | Final one-on-one meeting  
• Discuss upcoming exams.  
• Final concentration questions/issues. |
| End of Semester | Academic Adviser  
Asst. Senior Tutor | Joining A Concentration | Students join a concentration, fill out a plan of study, & are assigned Concentration Advisers  
• Concentration Advisor may be a faculty member, a dedicated adviser, or a member of his/her staff  
• Academic Adviser, Concentration Adviser (?), and Senior Tutor (or representative) signs plan of study |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar/Meeting</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>ISSUES DISCUSSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Shopping Period</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Selecting Classes</td>
<td>Student should email Concentration Adviser his/her shopping list by first day of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Shopping Period</td>
<td>Concentration Adviser</td>
<td>Sign Study Card</td>
<td>Go over any issues regarding concentration requirements and concentrations Sign study card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5 - Email (add-drop deadline)</td>
<td>Concentration Adviser, Senior Tutor</td>
<td>Add-Drop/Pass-Fail, Study Abroad Deadline</td>
<td>If necessary, help student with Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms and discuss implications Make sure student is aware of the March 15 deadline for summer/fall study abroad applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6 - Email</td>
<td>Assoc. Dean of Advising Bureau; Registrar?</td>
<td>Struggling students</td>
<td>Develop a system where adviser can be notified if a student is struggling/not showing up to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7 - Email (withdrawal deadline)</td>
<td>Concentration Adviser, Senior Tutor</td>
<td>Withdrawing from a course</td>
<td>If necessary, help student with Withdrawal forms and discuss implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout term</td>
<td>Concentration Adviser</td>
<td>Regular Meetings</td>
<td>Student &amp; adviser meet at least 3 times a year for 1/2 hour Adviser contacts at mid-term and additionally as needed Initial meetings emphasize requirements, courses, &amp; intellectual interests Discuss general questions regarding the concentration Update, go over and discuss the plan of study form regularly, keeping honors &amp; non-honors tracks in mind Give attention to summer plans and long-term goals and interests Discuss the opportunities available for international experience/study abroad Advisers expected to be generally available to answer questions, meet with, and get to know their students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint-concentration advisers (waiting for recommendations from Educational Policy Cmte)</td>
<td>Concentration Advising</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinate advising of students in joint-concentrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated Concentration Rep</td>
<td>General Help</td>
<td>In addition to own advisees, be available to answer questions for all students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration Administrators</td>
<td>Tracking Requirements</td>
<td>Track requirements and regularly inform students of progress towards graduation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors of Undergraduate Studies/Concentration</td>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
<td>Hold meetings to discuss academic work &amp; international experience/study abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>Advising Website</td>
<td>Website &amp; regular emails keep students up to date about requirements, news from the concentration, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Year</td>
<td>SEMESTERS 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>TOPICS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calendar/Meeting</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping Periods</td>
<td>Concentration Adviser</td>
<td>Course Selection/Study Card</td>
<td>Meets with student to discuss course selection and for study card signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss the possibilities of independent research/study</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Begin thinking about fellowship/summer job deadlines (most due Nov-Jan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5 - Email (add-drop deadline)</td>
<td>Concentration Adviser</td>
<td>Add-Drop/Pass-Fail</td>
<td>If necessary, help student with Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms and discuss implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Tutor</td>
<td>Study Abroad Deadline</td>
<td>Make sure student is aware of the October/March 15 deadline for study abroad applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6 - Email</td>
<td>Assoc. Dean of Advising Bureau; Registrar?</td>
<td>Struggling students</td>
<td>Develop a system where adviser can be notified if a student is struggling/not showing up to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7 - Email (withdrawal deadline)</td>
<td>Concentration Adviser</td>
<td>Withdrawing from a course</td>
<td>If necessary, help student with Withdrawal forms and discuss implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Tutor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Throughout Semester</td>
<td>Concentration Advisor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet with advisee three times a year to gauge progress and discuss:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• General questions regarding the concentration</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Thoughts about and/or progress toward writing a thesis or having a capstone experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Opportunities available for international experience/study abroad and fellowships/grants</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Winter and/or Summer plans and long-term goals and interests</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Life after college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By end of Semester One</td>
<td>Thesis/Capstone Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet once with student to specifically discuss writing a thesis or capstone experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout Semester</td>
<td>Concentration Administrator</td>
<td>Tracking Requirements</td>
<td>Track requirements and regularly inform students of progress towards graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OCS, OIP, FAO, PBH</td>
<td>Summer &amp; Career Plans</td>
<td>Attend meetings to discuss summer and career plans with OCS, OIP, FAO, and PBH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester Two</td>
<td>Concentration Adviser</td>
<td>Thesis/Capstone Experience</td>
<td>Work on details for thesis/capstone experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Honors Track:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Help advisee find the support, resources, and means to accomplish goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Discuss non-thesis resources and options available (e.g. 91 independent research courses,</td>
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<td>internships, public service opportunities, research opportunities, extracurricular interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honors Track:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Help advisee find thesis supervisors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Help advisee set up support systems to pursue thesis research</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Help advisee find affiliation with laboratory groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Year</td>
<td>SEMESTERS 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>TOPICS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Calendar/Meeting | Shopping Periods | Concentration Advisor | Course Selection/Study Card | Meets with student to discuss course selection and for study card signature  
• Discuss the possibilities of independent research/study  
• Begin thinking about fellowship/summer job deadlines (most due Nov-Jan) |
| | Week 5 - Email (add-drop deadline) | Concentration Adviser, Senior Tutor | Add-Drop/Pass-Fail, Study Abroad Deadline | If necessary, help student with Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms and discuss implications  
Make sure student is aware of the October/March 15 deadline for study abroad applications |
| | Week 6 - Email (withdrawal deadline) | Assoc. Dean of Advising, Bureau, Registrar? | Struggling students | Develop a system where adviser can be notified if a student is struggling/not showing up to class |
| | Week 7 - Email (withdrawing deadline) | Concentration Adviser, Senior Tutor | Withdrawing from a course | If necessary, help student with Withdrawal forms and discuss implications |
| | Throughout Year | Concentration Administrator, Concentration Advisor | Tracking Requirements, Various | Track requirements and progress toward graduation  
• Focus on completing the degree, the transitions of senior year, & future plans  
• Discuss resources available to help with thesis writing, research, a capstone experience, etc.  
(e.g. Bureau of Study Council, Writing Program, House Writing Tutors, Peer Writing Counselors) |
| | | Concentration Administrator, Concentration Adviser, Thesis Adviser | Non-Thesis Concentrators | Non-Honors Track:  
Provide resources and support to non-thesis writers  
• For example, encouraging students to take graduate seminars, participate in other capstone experiences, or participate in public service projects/internships  
• Seek to ensure that all students have an engaging and meaningful senior year. |
| | | Thesis Progress | | Honors Track:  
Work closely with your thesis advisee  
• Stay aware of thesis deadlines  
• Some concentrations may provide thesis writers with a group seminar in addition to one-on-one advising  
• Others may connect students to research groups or establish more informal thesis writing groups  
• Seek to ensure that all students have an engaging and meaningful senior year. |
| | End of Year | Concentration Reps | "Exit Interviews" | Discuss experiences in the concentration & overall experience at Harvard. |
## Harvard College Four-Year Academic Advising Calendar
### ADVISEE VERSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>What Happens</th>
<th>Where to Find More Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April/May</td>
<td>You will receive a mailing with introductory information from the Freshman Dean's Office</td>
<td>FDO Website (<a href="http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~fdo/">www.fas.harvard.edu/~fdo/</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FDO Website (<a href="http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~fdo/">www.fas.harvard.edu/~fdo/</a>) FDO Advising Website</td>
<td>Advising Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July/August</td>
<td>You will receive additional materials from FDO including:</td>
<td>FDO with Associate Dean of Advising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Advising Calendar</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Directions to advising website</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Advanced standing qualification information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Information on how advising system works</td>
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<tr>
<td>End of August</td>
<td>You will receive an email from your Academic Adviser and Proctor introducing themselves</td>
<td>Academic Adviser Proctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early September</td>
<td>You may choose to attend a Pre-Freshman Week Orientation Program including:</td>
<td>FDO Website</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• First-Year Outdoor Program</td>
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<td>• First-Year Arts Program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• First-Year Urban Program</td>
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<td>You may also consider other Pre-Freshman Week programs or activities including:</td>
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<td>• Dormitory Crew Clean-Up</td>
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<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>What Happens</td>
<td>Where to Find More Info</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Freshman Week    | At a large-group meeting, the Assistant Dean of Freshman will inform you about the curriculum structure and advising system including:  
• Philosophy and overall goals of the Harvard College Curriculum  
• Overall requirements  
• Contact Information (both print and web)  
• Group sessions with peers regarding communication  
• Obligations of advisers and advisees  

Attend panels featuring representatives from the Humanities, Sciences, and Social Studies, who will introduce you to, and advise you regarding preparatory courses for various concentrations,  
• Look for preliminary information about study abroad, careers, and pre-med options, if interested  

Attend information sessions on the writing program and related resources available at Harvard College  

Proctors conduct group sessions reviewing upcoming one-on-one meetings with Academic Advisers, including basics for choosing courses:  
• Freshman year requirements (general education/expos/language/quantitative)  
• Time management & life balance - academics, jobs, extracurriculars, athletics, arts, etc.  
• Placement tests  
• Reading the Course Catalog/CUE Guide  
• Shopping period: why it exists; online tool; minimum # recommended  
• Add/drop  
• How to sign up for classes  
• What are Freshman Seminars? Why apply?  
• What is a lottery?  
• Pass/Fail  
• Sections  
• Review Advising Contract and advising contacts  

Attend a one-on-one meeting with your proctor  
In preparation you should ask yourself the following questions:  
• What are my academic, extracurricular, and other goals for my time at Harvard?  
• How do I anticipate handling the transition from high school to college?  
• What am I looking forward to this year?  
• What are some of the things about Harvard, Cambridge, and Boston that I hope to take advantage of?  
• Am I prepared for my upcoming meeting with my Academic Adviser? | Advising website  
Calendar of Opening Days  
(Online & hard copies available)  
Advising website  
Departmental Websites  
The Writing Center  
Advising website  
Proctor  
Guide to Student Life  
Calendar of Opening Days  
The Bureau of Study Counsel  
Advising Website |
| **Freshman Year**  
| **Semester One**  
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>When</strong></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| You will attend a meeting with your Academic Adviser. In preparation you should ask yourself the following questions:  
• What concentrations am I considering? Why?  
• What subjects would I like to explore while at Harvard?  
• Which Freshmen Seminars am I thinking of applying to?  
• What are up to 10 courses I’d consider shopping? Why?  
• How are these courses going to help me choose a concentration?  
• Am I considering advanced standing? Why?  
• Am I considering pursuing a citation? Why?  
• What are my course placement concerns?  
• Do my midterms and finals come all at once?  
• What are my extracurricular interests? How will I balance my academics and extracurriculars?  
• Are there any experiences I hope to have during my four years? Are there any skills I hope to acquire?  
(e.g. improve my public speaking, learn a new language, play a club/JV sport, gain appreciation for a field I probably won’t concentrate in, travel throughout New England)  
• What are my potential careers? What resources are available to help with exploration?  
Email your online shopping list to your adviser by the first day of classes. | Academic Adviser  
Advising Website |
| **Weekend of Shopping Period** | Meet with your proctor if you have questions about adapting to college work. | The Bureau of Study Counsel  
The Writing Center  
Language Resource Center  
Math Question Center  
Peer Tutoring Program |
| **End of Shopping Period** | Meet with your Academic Adviser and have him/her sign your study card. Go over any issues regarding requirements and possible concentrations. Possible questions might be:  
• How can I make final course decisions?  
• How should I approach Add/Drop if I am still unsure about which classes I want to take?  
• What questions do I have about adapting to college work? (e.g. time management, available support) | My Harvard online shopping tool  
Advising Office website |
| **Week 4 (due dates)** | In preparation for upcoming midterms, you should send an email to your Academic Adviser regarding time management issues. You may wish to follow up with a response showing your progress. | Academic Adviser  
Registrar's Office |
| Your adviser will email you prior to Add/Drop in order to make sure you understand:  
• Forms/Details of adding/dropping a course, Implications of doing so.  
• What is the significance of Pass/Fail? Implications of doing so. | | |
<p>| <strong>Week 5 Add/Drop Deadline</strong> | If necessary, hand in Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms after discussion with Academic Adviser | Registrar's Office |
| <strong>Week 6 Midterm Preparation</strong> | Email your Academic Adviser, proctor, and/or peer advisers regarding any questions or concerns you may have regarding upcoming assignments, papers, or midterms. | Advising Website |
| <strong>Week 7 Withdrawal Deadline</strong> | If necessary, hand in Withdrawal Forms after discussing ramifications with Academic Adviser. | Registrar's Office |</p>
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| Week 8 and Week 12          | Meet with your Academic Adviser to discuss midterm and assignment grades, preparation for remaining course work, and winter break course work as necessary. While there is little pressure, begin to discuss possibilities for the summer:  
  * Explore a variety of options including jobs, summer travel, internships, family vacation, etc.  
  * Use the Office of Career Services as a helpful resource and ask questions related to resumes, interviews | Academic Adviser  
  Office of Career Services  
 (www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/) |
| Beginning of Reading Period | Your Proctor will hold an Orientation Session covering:  
  * Advice about preparation and thriving during the Reading and Exam Periods  
  * Staying positive and balanced  
  * Supplementary Material | Proctor                               |
<p>| First Week of Reading Period| In person, or via email, Review your reading and exam period preparation schedule with your Academic Adviser                                           |                                       |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Shopping Period</td>
<td>Meet with your Academic Adviser to discuss course selection and possible concentrations. Email your online shopping list to your adviser by the first day of classes</td>
<td>Courses of Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My.Harvard online shopping tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Shopping Period</td>
<td>Meet with your Academic Adviser and have him/her sign your study card. Go over any issues regarding requirements and possible concentrations. Discuss how you are considering using your electives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5 Add/Drop Deadline</td>
<td>If necessary, hand in Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms after discussion with Academic Adviser</td>
<td>Registrar's Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>Deadline to apply for study abroad opportunities in summer/fall semesters</td>
<td>Office of International Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Discuss how term/year is going and summer plans with your Proctor</td>
<td>Proctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7 Withdrawal Deadline</td>
<td>If necessary, hand in Withdrawal Forms after discussing ramifications with Academic Adviser</td>
<td>Registrar's Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout Semester</td>
<td>You should receive email reminders from Assistant Dean of Freshman/Assoc Dean of Advising regarding concentration meetings, and meetings with concentration advisers and peer advisers</td>
<td>Advising Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attend group meetings for freshmen and meet one-on-one with Directors of Undergraduate Studies or a concentration representative for concentration overviews</td>
<td>Departmental Websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Get an overview of concentrations you are interested in, ask questions and receive advice</td>
<td>Assistant Dean of Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Research courses to take and ways to think about the concentration</td>
<td>Associate Dean of Advising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consider how study abroad and career opportunities might work with your concentration interests</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8, Week 12</td>
<td>Meet and Discuss concentrations with your Academic Adviser</td>
<td>Academic Advisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss the concentration meetings you attended.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Explain verbally &amp; in writing, which concentrations you are interested in and why you are considering particular fields</td>
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<tr>
<td>When</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before Shopping Period</td>
<td>Meet with your Academic Adviser to discuss course selection and possible concentrations Email your online shopping list to your adviser by the first day of classes</td>
<td>Courses of Instruction My.Harvard online shopping tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Shopping Period</td>
<td>Meet with your Academic Adviser and have him/her sign your study card. Go over any issues regarding requirements and possible concentrations. Discuss how you are considering using your electives</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5 Add/Drop Deadline</td>
<td>If necessary, hand in Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms after discussion with Academic Adviser</td>
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<td>March 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Discuss how term/year is going and summer plans with your Proctor</td>
<td>Proctor</td>
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<td>Throughout Semester</td>
<td>You should receive email reminders from Assistant Dean of Freshman/Assoc Dean of Advising regarding concentration meetings, and meetings with concentration advisers and peer advisers</td>
<td>Advising Website Departmental Websites Assistant Dean of Freshman Associate Dean of Advising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attend group meetings for freshmen and meet one-on-one with Directors of Undergraduate Studies or a concentration representative for concentration overviews • Get an overview of concentrations you are interested in, ask questions and receive advice • Research courses to take and ways to think about the concentration • Consider how study abroad and career opportunities might work with your concentration interests</td>
<td>Directors of Undergraduate Studies Office of International Programs Office of Career Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8, Week 12</td>
<td>Meet and Discuss concentrations with your Academic Adviser • Discuss the concentration meetings you attended. • Explain verbally &amp; in writing, which concentrations you are interested in and why you are considering particular fields</td>
<td>Academic Advisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</table>
| Beginning of Shopping Period| Email your Academic Adviser your shopping list by first day of classes  
Attend a House Life Introductory Session that answers some of the following issues:  
• What is your place in the House?  
• Who are all the different tutors? Can you talk to any of them?  
• What do the Housemasters do?  
• How are entryway dynamics the same and different from freshman year?  
• Academics in the Houses  
Attend Concentrations Overview Meetings that:  
• Provide an overview of the concentration and answer student questions  
• Provide suggestions for courses to take before making final decisions  
• Discuss ideas related to study abroad opportunities and summer/career plans | Online shopping tool  
House Senior Tutor  
Assistant Senior Tutor  
House Resident Tutors  
Advising website  
Departmental Websites |
| End of Shopping Period      | Meet for a one-on-one appointment with your Academic Adviser to discuss course selection, concentration options, discuss how you are considering using your electives, and get your study card signed  
Discuss how to balance extracurriculars and leadership roles while not over-committing yourself  
While there is little pressure, begin thinking about fellowships/public service/summer job deadlines (most applications due Nov-Feb) | Academic Adviser  
Office of Career Services  
Phillips Brooks House |
| Early in Semester           | Attend Concentrations Panel Discussions organized by Associate Dean of Advising  
Choosing a Concentration  
Being Undecided  
Special Concentrations  
How can I explore concentration X if I can't fit one of its intro courses into my schedule?  
If interested, attend Panels on honors concentrations, pre-med concentrations, etc.  
Consider attending Study Abroad information sessions | Advising website  
Office of Academic Programs  
Office of International Programs |
| Throughout the Semester     | Attend regular informational meetings on concentration decisions and academics                                                                                                                                 |
| October 15                  | Deadline to apply for study abroad opportunities in spring semester                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Week 4-5                    | Stay in touch with your Academic Adviser over email regarding your thoughts about concentrations, coursework, assignments, and midterms.                                                                                                                                     |
| Week 5 Add/Drop Deadline    | If necessary, hand in Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms after discussion with Academic Adviser                                                                                                               |
| Week 7 Withdrawal Deadline  | If necessary, hand in Withdrawal Forms after discussing ramifications with Academic Adviser                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Week 8                      | Meet with your Academic Adviser for the second of three one-on-one meetings over the course of the term  
• Assess assignments and midterms. Discuss home-stretch of coursework  
• Discuss important details for joining a concentration and, if necessary, pre-med related decisions | Registrar's Office  
Registrar's Office |

**Sophomore Year**  
**Semester One**
### Sophomore Year
#### Semester One (continued)

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<th>When</th>
<th>What Happens</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| End of semester | Join a concentration and fill out a plan of study. You will be assigned a Concentration Adviser  
• Your Concentration Adviser may be a faculty member, a dedicated adviser, or a member of his or her staff  
• Your Academic Adviser, Concentration Adviser (?), and Senior Tutor (or representative) signs plan of study |                         |

### Sophomore Year
#### Semester Two

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<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>What Happens</th>
<th>Where to Find More Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study Card Deadline</td>
<td>Fill out your Study Card with the Assistance of your Concentration Adviser</td>
<td>Concentration Adviser</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Regular Meetings | You and your Concentration Adviser will meet at least 3 times a year for one-on-one check-ins  
• Initial meetings emphasize requirements, courses, & intellectual interests  
• Discuss general questions regarding the concentration  
• Discuss how you are considering using your electives  
• Update, go over and discuss your plan of study form regularly, with honors and non-honors tracks in mind  
• Give attention to summer plans and long-term goals and interests  
• Discuss the opportunities available for international experience/study abroad  
It is your responsibility to stay in touch with your concentration adviser by email regarding your progress | Concentration Adviser   |
| March 15        | Deadline to apply for study abroad opportunities in summer and fall semesters                                                                                                                                   | Office of International Programs |
| Week 5 Add/Drop Deadline | If necessary, hand in Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms after discussion with Concentration Adviser                                                                                                           | Registrar's Office      |
| Week 7 Withdrawal Deadline | If necessary, hand in Withdrawal Forms after discussing ramifications with Concentration Adviser                                                                                                           | Registrar's Office      |
| Throughout Term | Watch for emails from your Concentration regarding:  
• Your requirements and progress towards graduation  
• Important news, deadlines, and events                                                                                                                          | Concentration Administrators |
**Junior Year**  
**Semesters One and Two**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>What Happens</th>
<th>Where to Find More Info</th>
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| **Shopping Periods**      | Meet with your Concentration Adviser to discuss course selection and for study card signature  
• Discuss the possibilities of independent research/study  
• While there is little pressure, begin thinking about fellowship/summer job deadlines (most due Nov-Jan) | Departmental Websites  
My.Harvard Online Shopping Tool                               |
| **October 15/March 15**   | Deadline to apply for study abroad opportunities in spring/summer/fall semesters                                                                                                                               | Office of International Programs                             |
| **Week 5 Add/Drop Deadline** | If necessary, hand in Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms after discussion with your Concentration Adviser                                                                                                             | Registrar's Office                                             |
| **Week 7 Withdrawal Deadline** | If necessary, hand in Withdrawal Forms after discussing ramifications with your Concentration Adviser                                                                                                   | Registrar's Office                                             |
| **Throughout both Semesters** | Track your requirements and progress towards graduation in consultation with your Concentration Adviser                                                                                                          | Undergrad Department Administrator  
Department Handbook                                              |
|                           | Attend meetings to discuss summer and career plans in conjunction with the Office of Career Services (OCS), the Office of International Programs (OIP), the Fellowship Office (FAO), and Phillips Brooks House (PBH) | Fellowship Office  
Office of Career Services  
Office of International Programs  
Phillips Brooks House                                             |
|                           | Meet with your Concentration Advisor three times during the year to gauge progress and discuss:                                                                                                               |                                                               |
|                           | • General questions regarding the concentration  
• Thoughts about and/or progress toward writing a thesis or having a capstone experience.                                                                                                                    |                                                               |
|                           | • Opportunities available for international experience/study abroad and fellowships/grants                                                                                                                |                                                               |
|                           | • Winter and/or Summer plans and long-term goals and interests                                                                                                                                                |                                                               |
|                           | • Life after college                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                               |
| **By end of Semester One** | Discuss the details and deadlines for a thesis/capstone experience with your Concentration Adviser                                                                                                          |                                                               |
| **Semester Two**          | **Non-Honors Track:**  
Meet with Concentration Adviser to discuss details for possibly working on a capstone experience  
• Discuss non-thesis resources and options available (e.g. 911 independent research courses, internships, public service opportunities, research opportunities, extracurricular interests  
• With your concentration adviser find the support, resources, and means to accomplish your goal | Departmental Websites                                        |
|                           | **Honors Track:**  
Meet with concentration adviser to discuss details for thesis/capstone experience  
• With concentration adviser find thesis supervisors  
• With concentration adviser set up support systems to pursue thesis research  
• With concentration adviser find affiliation with laboratory groups | Departmental Websites                                        |
### Senior Year
#### Semesters One and Two

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<tr>
<th>When</th>
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| **Shopping Periods**      | Meet with Concentration Advisor to discuss course selection and for study card signature  
  • Discuss the possibilities of independent research/study  
  • While there is little pressure, begin thinking about fellowship/summer job deadlines (most due Nov-Jan) | Departmental Websites  
  My Harvard Online Shopping Tool |
| **October 15/March 15**   | Deadline to apply for study abroad opportunities in spring/summer/fall semesters                                                                                                                           | Office of International Programs            |
| **Week 5 Add/Drop Deadline** | If necessary, hand in Add/Drop and/or Pass/Fail forms after discussion with your Concentration Adviser                                                                                             | Registrar's Office                           |
| **Week 7 Withdrawal Deadline** | If necessary, hand in Withdrawal Forms after discussing ramifications with your Concentration Adviser                                                                                      | Registrar's Office                           |
| **Throughout Year**       | Track requirements and your progress towards graduation in consultation with Concentration adviser  
  • Meet with Concentration Advisor three times a year to gauge progress and get advice  
  • Focus on completing the degree, the transitions of senior year, & future plans  
  • Discuss resources available to help with thesis writing, research, capstone experience, etc. | Concentration Administrators  
  Bureau of Study Council  
  Writing Program  
  House Writing Tutors  
  Peer Writing Counselors |
| **Non-Honors Track:**     | Have an engaging senior year academically by taking advantage of research resources and support  
  • For example, take graduate seminars, participate in other capstone experiences, or participate in public service projects/internships | Concentration  
  Bureau of Study Council  
  Writing Program  
  House Writing Tutors  
  Peer Writing Counselors |
| **Honors Track:**         | Have an engaging senior year academically, particularly as you work closely with your thesis adviser  
  • Stay aware of thesis deadlines  
  • Some concentrations may provide thesis writers with a group seminar in addition to one-on-one advising  
  • Others may connect students to research groups or establish more informal thesis writing groups | Concentration  
  Bureau of Study Council  
  Writing Program  
  House Writing Tutors  
  Peer Writing Counselors |
| **End of Year**           | Attend Concentration "Exit Interview"  
  • Discuss experiences in the concentration & overall experience at Harvard. | Concentration Adviser  
  Departmental Websites |
ACADEMIC ADVISING AT HARVARD COLLEGE: WHO, WHAT, WHERE AND WHEN

Who:

There are many sources of advice to help students plan their academic experience to take the best advantage of the opportunities found at Harvard. Many different people help with specific areas of advising, including

- Academic Advisers
- Allston Burr Senior Tutors
- Assistant Deans of Freshmen
- Assistant Senior Tutors for Sophomore Advising
- Associate Dean for Advising Programs
- Directors of Undergraduate Studies
- Head Tutors
- PALs (Peer Advising Links)
- Proctors
- Resident Tutors

What:

Over their time at Harvard, students will seek advice on many topics, including most generally:

- Course selection
- Concentration selection

Some more specific areas of interest include:

- Academic Requirements
- Academic Honors
- Academic Honesty
- Advanced Standing
- Career Planning
- Core Requirements
- Degree Requirements
- Examination Policies
- Fellowships
- Grades and Honors
- Graduate School
- Internships
- Pre-Law Planning
- Pre-Medical Planning
- Registration
- Science Courses and Concentrations
- Senior Thesis Advising
- Study Abroad
• Study Cards
• Summer School

Where:

Advising at Harvard happens in academic and residential settings as well as in other parts of the campus, including

• Academic Departments
• Area centers
• Bureau of Study Counsel
• Core Program
• Expository Writing
• Freshman Dean’s Office
• Freshman Seminar Program
• Houses
• Office of Career Services
• Office of International Programs
• Office of the Associate Dean of Advising Programs

When:

Important questions of academic advice can come up at any point in a student’s time at Harvard. Some natural moments for advising conversations include

• Start of each term (for general academic planning)
• Study Card Day (for questions about specific course enrollment)
• End of the academic year (for reflecting on past achievements and planning for future work)

Advising conversations vary according to a student’s time at Harvard, and there are particular matters to deal with in each student’s four years in Cambridge:

• Freshman Year Advising Calendar
• Sophomore Year Advising Calendar
• Junior Year Advising Calendar
• Senior Year Advising Calendar

For help in formulating questions and topics for discussion with your advisers, please see the Four Year Advising Calendar.

Allston Burr Senior Tutors

Allston Burr Senior Tutors are the resident academic deans of Harvard College. Each of the thirteen upperclass Houses is served by a Senior Tutor, who is responsible for the overall academic progress and the individual well-being of each student affiliated with their House. The Senior Tutors are resident in the twelve residential Houses, and all thirteen share fully in the social and academic life of their House. They are available for general questions about academic requirements, including degree requirements, and also can help resolve specific questions and problems, whether of an academic or personal nature. The Senior Tutors oversee the work of the Assistant Senior Tutor for Sophomore Advising, who coordinates one-on-one advising relationships in the House. The Senior Tutors also oversee pre-law and pre-medical advising, as well as fellowships opportunities. As members of the Administrative Board, the
Senior Tutors work with students on necessary exceptions to academic rules and regulations, and they are always eager to speak with students about their academic goals and how to make the most of their time at Harvard College. Students are invited to meet with their Senior Tutor at any time, but especially at the start of sophomore year when students are joining their House community and can benefit most from an orientation to the opportunities of the House advising system.
APPENDIX 5

HARVARD PEER ADVISING PROGRAM

In order to provide greater opportunities for peer advising, the College could support a program along the following lines.

Every entering first-year student would receive the name of an upperclass student who is part of a Harvard peer advising program. A first-year’s peer adviser would be available to answer questions about the nature of life at Harvard, and in particular can be useful in orienting a new student to the academic environment. Peer advisers can describe how to shop, when to buy books, how to think about concentrations and courses, and many other matters, along with giving advice about social life and extracurricular activities. The peer adviser would ideally contact the incoming student over the summer, and be in touch to welcome them soon after their arrival on campus. They could provide crucial support, particularly during the first six weeks on campus, and help the first-year student make those initial contacts with advisers and faculty that can lay the groundwork for success.

The program could be named in a way that would emphasize the importance of these tasks and would convey that participation in the program is highly valued by the College (this could help recruit students to participate in this enterprise).

Peer advisers would be coordinated by the advising dean, although the energy for the program must come from students themselves. Training would be provided to help peer advisers understand the nature and limits of their role, and the range of resources available for detailed questions about the curriculum and other matters. An important part of their function is to link first-year students to the rest of the campus. They should not be the only source of advice for students, nor a source of curricular advice. A major part of a peer adviser’s responsibilities would be in ensuring that the first-year understood the roles of these and other advisers, knew where and when to meet them, and was also introduced to other more specialist academic advising opportunities during both Freshman Orientation and term-time.

In addition to general advice for first year students, some peer advising groups could fulfill more specific tasks, notably as what we now call Peer Concentration Counselors. These peer advisers would work closely with their departments to carry peer advising into a more specific realm. But their work would complement that of the peer advisers working with incoming students, and so there may be value in coordinating these groups together and calling them versions of the same name.

Peer advising assignments might be made, for example, according to broad and mutual divisional interests, and an individual peer adviser’s several advisees could be located with the same entryway or proctor group to facilitate cohesion and communication, but such finer points of administration could be left for later decision. Similarly, if assignment is with first-years within the same entryway, it would be possible for the individually-assigned advisers to function as team and to consult and refer to one another if and when their own individual advisees’ academic interests change and evolve. The peer adviser would certainly be part of the individual first-year’s advising team along with the resident proctor and the academic adviser (peer advisers would, for instance, participate in many of the entryway meetings but would have meal privileges in Annenberg too and could use that as a forum for individual meetings throughout the year).
APPENDIX 6

PRE-ASSIGNMENT: PROS AND CONS

From *A Report on the Harvard College Curricular Review*, April 2004:

“We recommend that freshmen be assigned to a House before the start of freshman year and be housed together in dormitory entries affiliated with their House.”

PROS AND CONS OF PRE-ASSIGNMENT

Reasons to consider pre-assignment are:

*Improving academic advising.*

*Improving contact with upperclass students.*

*Reducing blocking stress.*

Before considering pros and cons we summarize proposed changes to our current freshman/pre-concentration advising programs.

*Appoint an Associate Dean of Advising Programs in the College Dean’s Office: primary role would be to assess and evaluate advising programs, work with the Freshman Dean’s Office (FDO), Houses, BSC, OCS to further develop training programs for advisers, share best practices, coordinate and improve written materials including websites, organize workshops, panels, symposia, etc.*

*Make available to advisers and students an advising calendar laying out suggested topics and meeting times for advising conversations and other advising activities.*

*Recruit more academic, non-resident advisers with the goal of providing such an adviser for every freshman. Should concentration choice be shifted to the end of third semester, advisers would serve for three semesters.*

*Work with FDO to maximize quality of Proctor pool.*

*Appoint a fourth Assistant Dean of Freshmen (bringing the ratio of students/Resident Dean closer to that in the Houses).*

*Work with Concentrations to improve pre-concentration advising, particularly in ways making it easier for freshmen to make informed, comparative decisions.*

*Work with Houses to improve coordination of pre-concentration sophomore advising.*

*Improve current Peer programs bringing freshmen and upper class students together for various purposes. Encourage concentrations, where appropriate, to develop Peer concentration advising programs.*
PRE-ASSIGNMENT MODELS

In order to address the pros and cons of pre-assignment, we need to model a “pre-assignment” system. Multiple models exist that fall within the parameters of the Report’s recommendation, from ones that merely permit freshmen to attend House advising nights and open houses to ones in which all academic and non-academic advising for freshmen is organized, implemented, and/or supervised via the Houses.

For the purposes of discussion, we consider two possible general models:

*Pre-assignment Model A*

This can be loosely characterized as the “Yale” system.

Freshmen would be pre-assigned to Houses but still live together in the Yard, clustered geographically by future House assignment. All students would have Proctors, although the position of Assistant Dean of Freshman would probably not continue. Ideally, all students would also have academic (non-resident) advisers.

Academic advising for freshmen, after the orientation period, would be formally the responsibility of the Allston Burr Senior Tutors. Proctors (resident Yard advisers) would become essentially House resident tutors who live in the Yard, and they would continue to handle residential and extra-curricular advising for freshmen.

To make this model work best would require reorganizing supervision of the freshman year advising system in various ways. One option would be to have two Allston Burr Senior Tutors in each House and have each responsible for advising two classes; for example, freshmen and juniors advised by one Senior Tutor, sophomores and seniors by the other. Alternatively, there could be one “academic” Dean and a second “student life” Dean in each House. Either system would replace the 15 Senior Tutors plus Assistant Deans of Freshmen with 27 (or 28) Senior Tutors plus (3 or 4) Assistant Deans of Freshmen. These House Tutors would not be resident in the Yard.

Freshmen would be invited to all House events and take as many meals in the House dining hall as could be accommodated (one/week?).

Peer contact would be improved to the extent that freshmen were engaged in House activities. This would probably vary reflecting geography.

Although the size of the choice pool would be greatly reduced, the expectation would be that most rising sophomores would choose to room with others heading to the same House, reducing stress associated with blocking. Students who wished instead to live with students not pre-assigned to the same Houses would enter a lottery together for a new House affiliation.

*Pre-assignment Model B*

This could resemble the (future) “Princeton” system. All students would live in four year Houses. Possibly there might be an “academic” Dean and a “student life” Dean in each House (as at Princeton), although from our perspective it would be best not to separate the roles. Depending on the number of students in a House, advising could be effectively conducted by the same person(s) over the four years.
(Although perhaps far-fetched [and expensive], one could imagine moving to this system now by making four new Houses out of the current Yard dormitories.)

Peer contact would be greatly facilitated.

The expectation would be that most rising sophomores would choose to room with others in the same House.

COMMENTS ON THESE MODELS

Pre-assignment Model A

The Yale campus is considerably more compact than Harvard’s. Of the four most distant Colleges, two (Timothy Dwight and Silliman) are four year residences, and the other two, Morse and Stiles, are only as far from Old Campus as Leverett is from the Yard. The other eight Yale Colleges are as close or closer to Old Campus as Adams is to the Yard.

Geographical differences will make operating such a system at Harvard considerably more challenging. Students are currently quite reluctant to travel to “distant” Houses (this includes some of the River Houses as well as the Quad), which would reduce the impact of changing the current system.

Whether leaving freshman advising responsibilities as they are and unchanged, or changing them as we will recommend, raises a number of problems relating to lines of authority and information sharing. The number of students advised by Senior Tutors would change from an average of around 400 to over 530. The actual advising of freshmen would continue to be done by Proctors and academic advisers, and it is not clear that having them supervised by what would inevitably be a distant Senior Tutor would effect any significant improvement. (Further, increasing the number of Senior Tutors/Assistant Deans of Freshmen from 15 to 27 or 28 Senior Tutors/Deans would be expensive.)

Houses are already crowded, and regularly accommodating significant numbers of freshmen in dining halls and at other events (adding over 30 percent) is a concern raised by House Masters and Senior Tutors.

Although peer contact might increase in some cases, structured Peer Advising Programs as recommended in our report are unlikely to be affected.

Blocking stress may be removed, but the stresses associated with rooming assignments, repeated each year, would remain. Choice as to future blocking and rooming arrangements would be considerably limited, the pool being reduced to one twelfth its current size.

Pre-assignment Model B

The two main objections to this model would be the costs of immediate implementation (even if Yard real estate could be appropriately modified), and the loss of a common freshman year experience.

Blocking stress may be removed, but the stresses associated with rooming assignments, repeated each year, will remain.
There certainly would be more opportunity for peer contact, and one might anticipate some improvement in Peer advising, but we believe that a set of structured Peer Advising Programs will work equally well under any system.

FINAL COMMENTS

Masters, Senior Tutors, Freshmen Deans, and students are more opposed to than supportive of changing the current system to pre-assignment.

The Advising and Counseling Committee believes that its recommendations concerning Academic and Peer Advising will address problems in these areas.

It further will recommend that more study be given to the blocking process with a view to exploring possible ways of reducing stress.

Finally, it recommends that, as part of planning for Allston, further detailed consideration be given to the range of issues discussed here.
The Educational Policy Committee (EPC) supports the long tradition of combining breadth and depth in an undergraduate education that is firmly grounded in the liberal arts and sciences. All students at Harvard College should be broadly educated while spending some part of their intellectual energies concentrated in a particular area or discipline. In keeping with the principles expressed in *A Report of the Harvard College Curricular Review* (April 2004), the EPC believes that work in a concentration should facilitate the development of rigorous and critical thought as well as fostering an understanding of a particular body of knowledge. These goals are possible only with sustained and focused inquiry.

The recommendations herein are related to changes in the structure of concentrations. They are intended to enhance the experience of students before and after they choose an area of specialization. First-year students at Harvard are constrained by the need to fulfill requirements, take prerequisite courses in technical fields, and also choose an area of specialization by the end of their second semester. As a whole, the recommendations in this report will provide more time for intellectual exploration, while also easing the real and perceived pressures on students to make important decisions about their futures so soon after beginning their college careers.

These recommendations are also designed to provide flexibility to students further along in their academic programs. Reducing the number of concentration requirements, for example, can provide opportunities for exploration of intellectual interests that emerge during the course of students’ academic work, or for undertaking more in-depth work in a particular area of interest or specialty. Fewer requirements can also allow more flexibility for study abroad or cross-disciplinary work, as well as make changing concentrations easier. While many students do change concentrations now, options are sometimes limited by the number of requirements and the rigidity of sequenced courses. Taken as a whole, this group of recommendations will provide flexibility and new opportunities, without sacrificing intellectual rigor, to students at all stages of their academic careers at Harvard.

**I. Choosing a Field of Concentration**

Since 1924, students in Harvard College have chosen a field of concentration at the end of the first year. Harvard’s peer institutions do not ask their students to do so until almost a year later. The early date by which a concentration must be chosen at Harvard means that students have relatively little time for the curricular exploration that might lead them to discover new areas of intellectual interest, few opportunities to take courses that might deepen or test existing interests, and little time to make this important decision. As noted above, the need to fulfill requirements in the first year adds to the sense of inflexibility, as do perceived pressures to fulfill certain general education requirements and/or prerequisites. We are encouraged by the recommendations of the *Report of the Committee on General Education* (November 2005) that may also ease some of these constraints. However, under the current system many students are not adequately prepared to make an informed concentration choice by the end

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1 Some institutions require an earlier declaration date for specific areas of study.
of the freshman year. Furthermore, those who change their minds over the summer do so without the benefit of testing other avenues, so that there is no guarantee that their second choice will suit them any better than their first might have done. A later declaration of concentration in no way necessitates a delay of vigorous preparation in one or more subject areas. The courses chosen by students in their first three semesters should lay the groundwork for at least one field of concentration. We expect that a delay of concentration choice will encourage students to strike a balance between exploration and preparation. In some fields—including, but not limited to, the natural and applied sciences—students may need to take preparatory courses in order to keep their options open to enter relevant concentrations later. At the same time, we do not want students to lock themselves into premature choices or tracks.

There has been considerable concern expressed in the EPC about the effectiveness of advising in the first year: the weakness of pre-concentration advising is frequently cited as an important reason not to change the timing of concentration choice. Early concentration choice has the merit of bringing students into the domain of concentration advising, which is often more focused and more informed than the advising structures that currently exist for first-year students. With a change of the timing of concentration choice, it is even more important that students plan well and receive accurate and informed advice about the expectations and preparation necessary for entry into various concentrations. Concentrations, in addition, will need to be more directly involved in pre-concentration advising. The Report of the Committee on Advising and Counseling addresses these issues, and is particularly attuned to the need to improve pre-concentration advising.

The EPC debated whether to recommend that students have the option of declaring their concentration within a flexible window of time, up until the beginning of the second semester of their sophomore year, or whether there should be a specific moment at which all students declare their concentration. Some students will be certain of their concentration choice early, and they should be encouraged to take courses, talk to advisers, and informally affiliate themselves with their chosen program. Others students, however, may feel pressured to choose early if such an option is available. In order to preserve the goal of promoting intellectual exploration in the first year, therefore, the EPC favors a fixed time frame when all sophomores would declare their concentration.

It is the view of the EPC that delaying the timing of concentration choice by one semester, to late in the third term, will provide more flexibility for first-year students, create more time for intellectual exploration, and reduce some of the pressures that may make adjustment to college more difficult than necessary.

II. Reconsideration of Concentration Requirements

Concentrations currently require between 9 and 17 half-courses (20 for the S.B. in Engineering Sciences). If concentrations are not simply to become more "concentrated," more intensive, and less flexible, a change in the timing of concentration choice must be accompanied by a reduction in the number of courses required. Furthermore, the EPC believes that concentrations should view requirements as entailing a minimum set of courses intended to provide a strong foundation in a field for an undergraduate liberal arts degree. Thus, in order to further facilitate flexibility for intellectual exploration and opportunities for cross-disciplinary study, the EPC proposes that concentrations re-examine the number of courses they require, to ensure that their requirements can fit within a five-semester program, rather than a six-semester program. For many concentrations, this will require a reduction in the number of required courses. Ordinarily, students should be able to enter a field at the end of their third term, complete all concentration and general education requirements, and have space in their programs to pursue electives, an optional secondary field (as described later in this document), and potentially a term of study out of residence.
The EPC asks that all concentrations re-examine their programs with an eye towards keeping their requirements to a minimum, while providing opportunities for advanced and additional work for students who wish to broaden or deepen their studies, and flexibility for those who wish to study out of residence, to change fields, or to pursue coursework in a second or related area. Efforts to revise the structure and content of concentrations could also benefit faculty by creating opportunities in the curriculum for the development of cross-disciplinary courses at the foundational and advanced levels, and for team teaching within and across departments.

In the course of discussions with faculty in a wide range of programs, it has become clear that a “one-size-fits-all” model of concentration requirements is not appropriate to an institution as intellectually and structurally varied as Harvard. Certain fields require foundational coursework in a range of disciplines or require specialized knowledge and skills that may make a higher number of requirements necessary. Similarly, a thesis might sometimes require additional preparatory coursework, or extra courses in the form of a senior tutorial or equivalent. Each concentration will have to examine its own requirements carefully and critically. Without the imposition of an artificial cap on the number of requirements, the process of reducing concentration requirements is a process that will require the goodwill and collective effort of the Faculty in order to succeed.

III. SEQUENCING AND PROGRESSION IN CONCENTRATIONS

The EPC proposes that all concentrations re-examine and, when needed, restructure their programs to ensure that there is appropriate sequencing and progression of courses for students’ effective learning and intellectual development. Any change of the timing of concentration choice necessitates such a re-examination, as does the desire to provide more flexibility for students who want to study abroad or change concentrations. More importantly, however, concentration requirements should be linked clearly to intellectual goals and criteria. While many concentrations review and revise their requirements on a regular basis, all will need to re-examine their assumptions in the context of a five-term program of study.

Prerequisites: Prerequisites, especially those deemed necessary to begin work in a field, should be examined carefully. Ideally, introductory courses should provide a base of knowledge and skills that is sufficiently broad to enable students to pursue a range of different interests. They should not channel students into rigid sequences that may make a change of field or subfield difficult. Ordinarily, prerequisites should be included in the total number of courses required to graduate in a concentration. With the approval of the EPC, a very limited number of courses may be required in addition to the regular concentration requirements, if these prerequisites provide proficiency in skills and knowledge that are necessary for successful study in the field. Some appropriate criteria for prerequisites might include that the courses cover material and concepts that most Harvard College students have mastered in high school, or that the courses reside outside the home concentration (for example, introductory calculus courses for science concentrators).

The EPC accepts that coursework is structured and sequenced differently across fields, but recommends that there be more flexibility and reciprocity in terms of prerequisites and introductory courses, especially within divisions. All concentrations should consider offering one- or two-semester courses that introduce students to a field, provide a foundation and intellectual framework for more advanced study, and count for concentration and general education credit. New introductory courses, intended as broad introductions to several related fields, could enhance flexibility. In some cases, the redesign of introductory courses could reduce the number of courses required by the concentration.
**Small-Group, Ladder-Faculty-Led Instruction:** Tutorials have a long history at Harvard, and exist in various forms in different programs. The purpose, structure, and staffing of tutorials should be reviewed closely by every program with the intention of examining the pedagogical rationale for their continued existence. Sophomore-level foundational courses may need to be reconceived in order to fit with a later date of entry into concentrations. Junior-year courses should be flexible enough to permit students to study abroad if they wish. Junior seminars taught by ladder faculty may be a more appropriate use of resources and a more effective model for intensive pedagogy than individual tutorials taught by graduate students.

**Capstone Experiences:** Capstone experiences can serve important integrative and synthetic functions in a student’s academic career. The senior thesis is one successful type of capstone experience, but it may not be the best model for all students or all programs. Project-oriented capstone experiences, which rely on the expertise of many members of a team, may be appropriate in some fields, while advanced and cross-disciplinary proseminars of students with similar intellectual backgrounds may be more worthwhile in others. Some concentrations provide opportunities for students who are writing theses to share their intellectual, research (and personal) experiences with each other. Ordinarily, all students should have the opportunity to participate in a capstone or culminating experience of some kind, either in a primary concentration or a secondary field (as defined below).

**Honors:** Given the recent change in the way that honors are awarded by the College, concentrations should re-examine the specific criteria for making departmental honors recommendations. Concentrations should review the expectations that they have for students, as well as the definition of what constitutes honors work in the particular field. Information about the criteria for awarding honors within a concentration should be made clear to students before they embark on an intensive program of study.

Currently, the difference between “basic” and “honors” tracks is often based on the inclusion of senior tutorials, in which a student researches and writes a thesis or completes equivalent advanced work. The existence of separate tracks, however, supports the belief held by many students that if they complete the requirements for the “honors” track, their work is deserving of honors by definition. The EPC believes that concentrations should decouple the thesis and other advanced work from the expectation of honors. Students must understand that the requirement of a thesis should not imply that they will automatically receive some form of honors, nor should the completion of a thesis be the only type of advanced work that is worthy of honors. Eligibility for departmental honors may rightly depend on the successful completion of a senior thesis or other advanced work, and concentrations should continue to require a thesis as a condition for departmental honors if it is an appropriate form of advanced work for that field. We want to encourage our students to pursue additional and advanced work in their respective fields, and we want to award honors for deserving creative, advanced, and original work. However, students should not embark on such a path with the expectation that extra work will in itself earn honors from the concentration or from the College.

In many concentrations, students declare themselves to be on an “honors” track too early in their academic careers. The EPC believes that there should be no separate “honors” track that students declare at the time they enter the concentration. The decision to pursue honors should occur well after a student is already in a concentration and has completed enough preparatory coursework to be able to embark on a program of intensive or advanced study, which may or may not include a thesis. This is already the case in some concentrations, but not all, and is certainly not the case in the so-called “honors only” concentrations. The EPC further believes that the designation “honors only” is a misnomer. Under the new system of honors many students in these programs will not graduate with honors from the College, although they may receive departmental honors. These programs may continue to require an application and a thesis, but should no longer be referred to as “honors only” concentrations.
Finally, we have already argued for the need for concentrations to reduce the number of course requirements in order for students to successfully complete their requirements in five semesters instead of six. This is especially true of concentrations that currently require more coursework for honors. Thus, the criteria for honors eligibility should be reviewed with the dual aims of clarifying their intent and of reducing the total amount of coursework expected.

IV. SECONDARY FIELDS AND JOINT CONCENTRATIONS

Currently, cross-disciplinary coursework is often restricted to formal joint concentrations with integrative theses, or relegated to a few courses in related fields that do not necessarily add to the coherence and focus of a program of study. The EPC encourages the practice of setting aside a small number of concentration requirements for focused work in a related field, if a student wishes to pursue this option. While the authority to decide what courses would count for such a focus resides with the concentration, there should be flexibility for students to make a convincing case for the relevance of certain fields or courses.

Many students, however, find themselves with interests in fields that cannot appropriately be pursued under the auspices of their chosen concentrations. In some cases, the secondary field is unrelated to the student’s concentration: for example, a student who concentrates in English might have a secondary interest in Economics. In other cases, the secondary field is related to the student’s concentration, but is best overseen by a different concentration or coordinating committee: for example, a student who concentrates in Government, with a focus on Europe, might have a secondary interest in German. In still other cases, the secondary field is multi-disciplinary and links to multiple concentrations: a student who concentrates in Linguistics might have a secondary interest in Mind, Brain and Behavior, and a student who concentrates in History might have a secondary interest in Latin American Studies.

In order to facilitate cross-disciplinary work, the EPC proposes the establishment of formal structures to provide guidance and coherence to elective coursework in an area that lies outside the purview of a student’s primary concentration. The EPC has named this option a “secondary field,” and suggests that this optional course of study be noted on a student’s transcript. Departments, concentrations and interdisciplinary coordinating committees are thus encouraged to discuss and debate the benefits and drawbacks of offering a set of requirements (perhaps 4-6 courses) that would provide a focused and coherent program of study as a secondary field.

The EPC considers the existing Foreign Language Citations to have a distinct pedagogical purpose and thus views them as separate from secondary fields; programs that offer a language citation may also wish to offer a secondary field and are encouraged to do so. The existing “certificate programs” that currently function without official recognition from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences should come under the umbrella of secondary fields, as would proposals for new interdisciplinary (and potentially inter-faculty) programs. Some departments might consider offering more than one secondary field. All proposals will be subject to review and approval by the EPC, and all must be sponsored by new or existing Standing Committees of the Faculty.

The EPC also proposes to change the existing structures of joint concentrations. The original intent of joint concentrations was to provide students with an opportunity to combine two existing fields into a single coherent program of study that enlisted the participation and cooperation of both departments or concentrations. Ordinarily, joint concentrations are initiated by students and are honors programs that require an integrative thesis. In recent years, some concentrations have come to overlap in ways that allow students to be granted a joint concentration without additional courses or integrative work. Others
have required almost the equivalent of a double concentration in which integrative work is all but impossible, but still required.

The majority of existing joint concentration programs require integrative work, usually a thesis, that will be evaluated by faculty members in two different programs. In many cases, students find themselves inadequately prepared for such cross-disciplinary work, and caught between different—and sometimes incommensurable—expectations about what constitutes acceptable work in each of the fields. In order to avoid this recurring problem, the EPC recommends that students declaring a secondary field have the option of pursuing an integrative thesis that combines the primary concentration and a secondary interest, but that this should not be considered to be a joint concentration. Approval for such a project should not be given before the junior year, after the student has demonstrated by reason of coursework and academic performance that he or she is qualified to undertake an integrated thesis that combines the two fields at an appropriate degree of competence and sophistication. The application process should include the agreement by faculty members in each of the two fields that they will together supervise the integrated thesis. Ordinarily, theses requiring such an advanced degree of integrated work should not be supervised by graduate students. If the application for an integrative thesis is not accepted, the student would proceed to a degree in the main field of concentration, with work in a secondary field as indicated above.

The EPC believes that a secondary field option will be preferable to the existing model of joint concentrations for most students, and that joint concentrations should be limited to a few coordinated programs that are sponsored and supervised by two concentrations. We acknowledge that there are several existing programs that have the support and on-going participation of two instructional programs. If the respective departments or concentrations wish to continue their collaboration, or if new such collaborations emerge in the future, they should be allowed to do so. Some combinations might function best as a specialized track within one concentration. For others, the EPC will consider and review proposals for the formal recognition of joint concentrations that provide a single, coherent, and integrative program of study that is sponsored by two instructional programs willing to commit faculty and advising resources to the endeavor.

The intent of the proposal to establish secondary fields is to provide students with flexibility to pursue multiple interests, or to balance the sometimes competing pressures of intellectual curiosity with more practical concerns. An increasing number of students are concentrating in a smaller number of fields that they may believe will lend them credibility in the marketplace. We believe that a secondary field option could provide opportunities for students to pursue their intellectual passions while gaining more limited academic experience in an area of potentially practical use. More importantly, secondary fields will also provide opportunities to many Harvard students who have multiple intellectual talents and interests. Sometimes the secondary field will enhance the concentration interest directly; for other students, the two interests are simply divergent. The EPC has discussed the benefits and drawbacks of providing recognition for focused work, and believes that formal recognition of secondary fields will encourage students to explore new intellectual areas while bringing opportunities for guidance and coherence to these explorations.

No instructional unit would be required to offer such a secondary field, nor would any student be required to pursue one. Furthermore, no student would be permitted to pursue more than one secondary field. The EPC recommends that no more than one course should count towards the fulfillment of a secondary field requirement and a requirement in general education, a concentration, or a language citation. While the sponsoring curricular unit would have the authority to determine the specific requirements for this type of program, the EPC would evaluate and approve qualified proposals, whether they come from departments or multi-disciplinary initiatives.
The EPC proposes that students formally declare a secondary field. Some secondary field programs may require a declaration relatively early in their career; others may permit a student to declare the secondary field at any time before graduation. In no case, however, may a student declare a secondary field before the date of concentration choice in the sophomore year. The EPC recommends that students who are formally pursuing secondary fields should have access to relevant advising and, when deemed appropriate by the department, to courses that are ordinarily limited to concentrators. The processes by which relevant instructional, advising, and staff resources are allocated by the Dean should take these students into account. Since the establishment of secondary fields may have unintended consequences that we cannot foresee, the EPC further recommends that the program be re-evaluated after a period of five years.

V. Reviews of Concentrations

As part of the overall curricular review, all concentrations should undertake a renewed examination of their own purpose and structure. This process might begin with an examination and justification of the intellectual purpose of each undergraduate concentration. Regardless of the relationship to a departmental structure, the EPC encourages each concentration to articulate its purpose and mission as a field of undergraduate study. In light of the proposals in this document, the structure and sequence of course offerings should be reviewed and refined, including a re-examination of introductory or foundational courses, prerequisites, tutorials (or other small-group, faculty-led instruction), opportunities for original research and advanced work, opportunities for international study and cross-disciplinary work, and capstone experiences. The criteria for awarding departmental honors should also be reviewed, and proposals for new “secondary fields” should be considered in the context of the overall undergraduate program.

Finally, advising structures and staffing should be reviewed and revised as necessary. Students will benefit from the availability of pre-concentration advising provided by departments as well as enhanced concentration advising for students already in the program. Published and digital materials should be readily available, and may need to be re-written to enhance clarity. In addition to formal structures for advising about concentration requirements, programs should facilitate interactions between faculty members and students to enhance opportunities for individual intellectual mentoring.

Since its inception, the EPC has participated in a regular and periodic review of concentrations. Over the course of the coming year, the EPC will develop a set of revised guidelines and expectations that will aid concentrations in their self-evaluation.
MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE

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Susan Lewis (Director of the Core Program)  
Theda Skocpol (Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; Government)

Staff: Stephanie Kenen (Assistant Dean of Harvard College)
INTRODUCTION

The Committee on General Education believes that a responsible education must help students develop their capacities for reasoning and for responsible judgment; it must nurture their informed responsiveness to the arts and literature and their own creative capacities; it must provide a broad introduction to the knowledge needed in an increasingly global and connected, yet simultaneously diverse and fragmented world. As our report documents, the belief that undergraduates should receive a broad education in a range of areas has been important to American education for a century or more. And it has remained at the center of the philosophy of general education from its inception through our current discussion. The specific means by which our students will attain that breadth of education have been the center of the Committee’s discussions—which we believe have reflected the range of expertise, experience, and educational philosophies that are represented on our Faculty as a whole.

We begin, in Part I of this document, with some background on general education. We describe the historical moments that have come and gone when educators believed they could identify a common body of knowledge that all students should master, or when they believed that no particular body of knowledge could be privileged over others and thus that exposure to “ways of knowing” could substitute for the knowledge itself. Recognizing this history of debate, how do we construct a new set of general education requirements for our students to fulfill, and for our faculty to teach? In Part II of this document, we answer this question with a proposal that requires some measure of breadth to counter the trends of over-specialization without prescribing what that breadth of knowledge should look like. The Committee recommends that the current Core Curriculum be replaced by a distribution requirement consisting of nine courses, three in each of (a) the Arts and Humanities, (b) the Study of Societies, and (c) Science and Technology. In response to faculty discussion, we further recommend that the three courses used to fulfill an area distribution may not be taken in one department or program. An extensive rationale for this requirement, as well as the role of departments in meeting these goals, is set out below.

While the Committee debated whether to include sub-requirements within these categories, it decided to err on the side of simplicity and of trust. A straightforward distribution requirement is easy for students and their advisers to navigate and understand. Furthermore, the Committee trusts that departments will provide an exciting range of courses suitable for general education, and trusts that our students will be enlivened by the possibilities presented to them by the full range of faculty offerings.

At the same time, the Committee believes that the curriculum should assist students in shaping their education by providing discrete opportunities for more intensive, foundational courses in general education. These courses would provide integrative and synoptic introductions to important knowledge and texts as well as orienting conceptual frameworks in each of the broad divisional areas articulated above. Without prescribing a common body of knowledge for all Harvard College students, they could contribute to a common set of intellectual and academic experiences in which large numbers of students might engage in debate, discussion, and disagreement about important issues in the realms of art, culture, politics, science, and technology. The courses would reside outside of any specific departmental home and would be listed in a separate section of the catalogue called “Courses in General Education.” They would also count towards the fulfillment of distribution requirements.
By proposing that these courses reside outside of departments, we do not wish to imply that similar and equally valuable courses might not exist in or emerge from departments. We do, however, wish to create a vehicle explicitly to encourage the development of courses of broad scope that counter the increasing academic specialization of the Faculty. We also wish to provide a place where students can easily find such courses, which may then serve to guide them in the development of their own intellectual interests.

Together, the distribution requirement and the Courses in General Education provide our students a combination of freedom and focus. The distribution requirement encourages intellectual exploration by allowing students to take advantage of the full complement of opportunities in Courses of Instruction. The Courses in General Education provide the opportunity for foundational study that could lead to more advanced work in a variety of fields without tracking students into narrow specialties too early in their college careers.

Finally, in order to round out the general education in Harvard College, the Committee reaffirms Harvard’s long-standing requirement that students complete a course dedicated to effective writing in the first year. We also support the current requirement that all students demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language. However, in order to provide first-year students with more flexibility, we will no longer expect that the language requirement be met in the freshman year. Rather, we recommend that the language requirement be fulfilled by the end of the second year. Further, we believe that all Harvard College students should be expected to participate in a significant international experience.

In short, the Committee affirms Harvard’s commitment to the ideals of a general education that provides a breadth and variety of study. It likewise reaffirms the goals of a liberal education that aims to develop self and citizen in contrast to studies aimed primarily at the preparation for a specific profession or occupation. Our recommendations aspire to engage the energy of the entire Faculty towards meeting these goals. The distribution requirement gives departments a fundamental responsibility for the general education of Harvard College students, and the possibility for extra-departmental courses invites faculty colleagues to think imaginatively about their subjects and to devise broad educational journeys across departmental boundaries.

It is our hope that the recommendations described in this document will give greater depth and meaning to a crucial segment of every Harvard undergraduate’s education, as well as providing students with more freedom to follow their own particular interests. Together, the distribution requirement and the optional Courses in General Education aim to provide future graduates with the personal resources, as well as the information and tools, necessary to face the challenges of the twenty-first century with intelligence, responsibility, and self-reflection. We submit these proposals, finally, in the belief that they provide an opportunity for faculty to reflect on the purposes of a Harvard College education.

**PART I—GENERAL EDUCATION: PAST AND PRESENT**

**THE CENTRAL ROLE OF GENERAL EDUCATION**

General Education is an ambiguous term, fraught with meaning but difficult to define. It overlaps with the concept of liberal education and with the idea of learning that transcends specialization in a particular discipline. General education is a program of learning and teaching that aspires to an overview of knowledge and insists on the value of learning in more than one discipline or specialization. Liberal education is a process of learning and teaching that postulates the value of “disinterested” learning—
knowledge for self-development—aside from any specific informational or use value the learning may also supply. The two ideals share much in common even if they are not congruent. They both presuppose that a broad and fundamental education will transform and liberate the student by insisting on the importance of foundational knowledge, of reflection, of artistic creativity and analysis, and on the precision of scientific concepts and experiment. Liberal and general education share the conviction that dialogue between student and teacher and among students is an especially appropriate way of arriving at these benefits. Both are inspired by ideas of paideia that go back to Greek antiquity and which have been episodically revived as the notion of humane letters.

Cardinal Newman and Wilhelm von Humboldt both offered eloquent defenses of liberal education for the purpose of personal development (Bildung), and in different ways they each sited the enterprise in the university. American tradition in particular focuses on the four years of undergraduate education during young adulthood as the strategic time for acquiring liberal education and identifies the college as the appropriate site, that is, one that is removed to a degree from worldly concerns and yet prepares students to look toward them.

Our task has been to propose the ways in which the College can meet this challenge at the turn of the twenty-first century. We do this by situating ourselves in the historical trajectory of general education in the American context, by confronting the limitations of our current structures for general education, and by identifying the appropriate balance of the new and the old that will serve our students best.

GENERAL EDUCATION: A SHORT HISTORY

General education is a concept with many foster parents. It emerged, in the United States, in the same period as the modern research university, between 1880 and 1920, and it was adopted by almost every faction in the higher education community that found something wanting in that new dispensation. The entire curriculum of the old college had been, essentially, a general education curriculum: all students took a prescribed set of courses that covered the major fields of learning, and that were taught by methods believed to instill mental discipline and moral character. To its critics, the modern research university represented the abandonment of that practice. It was a system of concentrations and electives, designed for specialists interested in only one subject, and for dilettantes interested in four years of intellectual grazing.¹ (Half of the members of the Harvard class of 1900 had taken nothing but introductory courses in their four years in the college. “Dilettantism,” wrote Samuel Eliot Morison, who was a student in those years, “received the same countenance and credit as premature and excessive specialization, provided the grades were the same.”²)

“General education” became the name for what specializations and electives failed to provide, the necessary supplement to the courses offered by departments. But there were different ideas about what was missing, and about how to provide it. Sometimes the supplement was imagined as “liberal culture,” a cultivation of values distinct from, or opposed to, those of the professions; sometimes it was imagined as background or foundational knowledge, the prerequisites to specialized study. Sometimes general

education referred to what was permanent or universal in human culture, and sometimes it referred to an awareness of public issues and the contemporary world. It has meant courses designed to promote personal and moral development, and it has meant courses whose purpose is to introduce students to methods of inquiry. The confusing genealogy of the idea helps to explain why almost every time a university has attempted to devise and implement a new scheme of general education, it has taken its faculty several years to reach agreement. All of the disparate and sometimes incompatible goals associated with the concept cling to it today. A brief look at general education in two colleges, Columbia and Harvard, suggests that there are many motives for creating general education requirements, and many ways to implement them.

Columbia’s famous core courses—Contemporary Civilization, and Humanities A and B—arose independently of one another, but they were both responses to changing conditions at the university and in the world. Contemporary Civilization began as a course called War Aims, taught by Frederick Woodbridge, a philosopher who was by then dean of the graduate school. War Aims was part of a program designed at the request of, and for students who were members of, SATC, the Student Army Training Corps. Columbia’s president, Nicholas Murray Butler, was a firm supporter of Woodrow Wilson’s war policies—he had two professors dismissed for anti-draft activity—and War Aims was, as the university’s historian, Robert McCaughy, puts it, “a course in Allied apologetics, with no pretense at objectivity or balance.” After the Armistice, Peace Aims was given consideration as a new title for the course, but Contemporary Civilization was chosen instead. Contemporary Civilization was a one-year course which all freshmen were required to take. The distinctive character of the course—what made it general, rather than departmental, education—was its emphasis on the contemporary world. The syllabus for 1919 explained that “We are living in a world in which there are great and perplexing issues on which keen differences of opinion have arisen; and it is important now, no less than during the war, that men should understand the forces which are at work in the society of their own day.” In its first ten years, no material before 1871 was covered in the course, and the students did not read historical documents. In 1928, the economist Rexford Tugwell persuaded the university to add a second full-year required course called Today’s Problems. (Tugwell left Columbia to work in the Roosevelt administration in 1933.) The extra year allowed the course to expand its historical coverage, but students did not read primary texts in Contemporary Civilization until after the Second World War.

Columbia’s curricular response to the First World War was by no means unique. Dartmouth and Stanford both instituted courses called Problems of Citizenship around the same time. Williams created a course on American National Problems. These were general education courses: they provided students with instruction in matters that—because they were either too general or too current—fell outside of the purview of the disciplines. The title of University of Missouri’s wartime course is an unusually bold instance of the sort of pedagogical bundling that non-departmental curricula encourage: it was called Problems of American Citizenship, Including English Composition. The name of Stanford’s Problems of Citizenship was changed, after a little more than ten years, to Western Civilization.

The figure behind the Columbia Humanities course always imagined it as a great books course. He was John Erskine, an English professor, who was concerned that Columbia was attracting large

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6 Carnochan, 71-72.
numbers of undergraduates who were immigrants or the children of immigrants. He was particularly worried, as his comments reveal, about Jewish students, and he proposed a course on “great Anglo-Saxon writers.” The purpose was socialization, not conversion, an attempt to provide young people from different backgrounds with a common culture. Erskine’s course has a tangled history. He first proposed it before the War, but he was not allowed to teach it until 1920, when it was offered as an honors course. It was a hit with the students, and by 1925, there were eleven sections, most of them team-taught. In 1928, Erskine resigned—he had published a bestselling potboiler, The Private Life of Helen of Troy, and he left academia, to which his attachment had never been strong. His honors course was revived in 1932 as the Colloquium on Important Books, and it became one of the most famous courses in the history of the college: it was team-taught for thirty years by Jacques Barzun and Lionel Trilling. A faculty debate over whether to establish a similar course for all students was carried on for three years, until, in 1937, two courses, Humanities A, on Western literature, and Humanities B, on music and the arts, were introduced. Both were made requirements in 1947.

The longevity of the Columbia general education scheme speaks for itself, but it is worth noting that the courses were opposed from the start by many members of the faculty, and that after 1945, and especially after the 1960s, staffing them was a problem. The faculty who taught them in the early years—Erskine, Barzun, Trilling, Tugwell, Joseph Wood Krutch, Mark Van Doren, Mortimer Adler—were public intellectuals and thought of themselves as such. Colleagues who considered themselves to be more rigorous scholars condescended to them, and they returned the compliment. When Adler and Richard McKeon left Columbia for Chicago, the general education curriculum they instituted, under Chicago’s president, Robert Maynard Hutchins, was far more canonical—more “great books” oriented—than Columbia’s, but even at Chicago there was faculty resistance. This led Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan to leave Chicago for St. John’s College, in Maryland, where they established what is the purest of the great books curricula.

Resentment at Columbia over the attention paid to Harvard’s General Education in a Free Society, published in 1945, continues to this day. But Harvard’s path to general education was (like most things at Harvard) idiosyncratic to the institution. Its origins lie in the presidency of Charles William Eliot, who took office in 1869 and remained in it for forty years. The reform Eliot is most commonly associated with is the free elective system—the elimination of all requirements for under-graduates. In fact, Eliot had opposed electives before he was hired; evidently, he changed his views after learning that the Corporation looked on them favorably. But Eliot did bring an original and revolutionary idea with him when he came into office. This was to make the bachelor’s degree a prerequisite for admission to professional school. Before Eliot, students entering higher education could choose between college and professional school. In 1869, Eliot’s first year as president, half of the students at Harvard Law School and nearly three-quarters of the students at Harvard Medical School had not attended college and did not have undergraduate degrees. These were, comparatively, respectable numbers in American education. Eliot had published an article in the Atlantic Monthly about this state of affairs, which he regarded as scandalous, and although he set about changing them, it took him many years. A college degree was not required for admission to Harvard Medical School until 1900. Eliot’s reform compelled the rising class of professionals to pass through college on their way to their careers, thus institutionalizing his deep belief in the value of liberal education. He insisted that undergraduate education remain disinterested, anti-utilitarian. “The practical spirit and the literary or scholastic spirit are both good, but they are incompatible,” he explained. “If commingled, they are both spoiled.”

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7 Levine, 333; McCaughey, 296.
8 See http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/oasis/history0.php.
This helps to explain Eliot’s commitment to the elective system: it sustained the culture of liberal inquiry. By the end of Eliot’s tenure, though, reaction set in, and it was the mission of his successor, A. Lawrence Lowell, to introduce rigor into the curriculum. Lowell, like Eliot before him, did not waste time. The system he instituted was referred to as “concentration and distribution”; it went into effect in 1910. Students were required to concentrate at least six of their sixteen year-long courses in one division, and to take at least six in the three general groups of studies outside their fields of concentration. Students were also required to pass general examinations in each division. In order to enrich the undergraduate academic experience, Lowell introduced the tutorial system, which was then staffed by professors, not graduate students or lecturers. In 1939, a committee of undergraduates proposed adding introductory courses to the curriculum that would cover major areas of knowledge—a refinement of Lowell’s scheme rather than a repudiation of it. Although the recommendation was not adopted, it was an impetus for the formation, in 1943, of a committee of faculty, led by the Dean, Paul Buck, and charged with devising a curriculum that would give students, in the words of President James Conant, “a common . . . understanding of the society which they will possess in common.”

The famous production of Buck’s committee, General Education in a Free Society, widely referred to as the Red Book, recommended three full-year general education courses to be taken by all students: one in the humanities, one in the social sciences, and one of two offerings in the sciences. It was not far from the 1939 undergraduate committee’s recommendation, and not far from Lowell’s system, either, except that the general education courses were set up off departmental shores—and this proved to be the worm in Conant’s apple. Conant was not completely happy with the Red Book. He was disappointed that a separate faculty for general education was not proposed, because he was also not optimistic about relying on a faculty of disciplinary specialists to teach general education courses. On this he was proved right. The Faculty of Arts and Sciences overwhelmingly approved the committee’s recommendation (the vote was 135-10), but it restricted the number of courses that could be offered under the rubric of General Education, and, at the same time, it began shaking off its responsibility to staff tutorials. The Red Book was highly successful; by 1950, it had sold more than forty thousand copies. It was widely discussed and debated, and it continues to be admired and discussed today. But so far as Harvard College was concerned, it in some respects undid the system Lowell had set up by freeing departments from the business of providing non-concentrators with appropriate general courses and tutorial supervision. It ratified specialization, and it did not address what, from the student point of view, was, even then, the chief weakness of education in the College: the dominance of the lecture format. The student response is suggested by a little book entitled Harvard Education 1948: The Students’ View, written by a committee of the Harvard Student Council. The Red Book, the authors complain, gave no attention to pedagogy. “A serious deficiency in a Harvard Education is also a serious deficiency of the GE report,” they write; “it is a failure to focus on method and on the problem of eliciting active student participation. . . . The means to achieving a real and communal interplay of minds, both in the classroom and in the College community are inadequately discussed in the report and inadequately realized at Harvard.”

Conant’s vision went beyond Harvard. General Education in a Free Society is a Cold War document, and its conclusions are in many respects parallel to those reached by President Truman’s

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10 See Morison, 446-47.
commission on higher education, headed by George Zook, which released its report in 1947.\footnote{See, President's Commission on Higher Education. \textit{Higher education for American democracy: a report of the President's Commission on Higher Education} (Washington: U.S.G.P.O., 1947).} Conant saw two dangers in postwar America. One was increasing socio-economic diversity, which carried the risk of class stratification and resentment—fertile ground for subversives. The other was intellectual relativism, a lack of commitment to a common set of beliefs, which was exacerbated by increased mobility, and the declining authority of traditional institutions, such as church and family, which made Americans susceptible to indoctrination and fanaticism. Conant, and his committee, which consulted widely inside and outside the academy, believed that the educational system needed to provide a common culture that would serve as a unifying agent in a diversified society (a hope inherited from Matthew Arnold) and as a kind of benign national ideology in a nation wary of ideology. They wanted Harvard students to be aware of and to identify with the Western liberal and democratic traditions: hence an emphasis on canonical texts. Harvard did at the start of the Cold War what Columbia had done at the time of the First World War: it supplemented its curriculum with courses specially designed to meet contemporary exigencies.

The implementation of the Red Book recommendations, the full General Education program, went into effect with the class of 1955. It required that students take at least one two-term course in Humanities and one in Social Sciences. These courses were designated as elementary and students were not ordinarily allowed to receive credit for more than one of the general education courses in each of these areas. In addition students had to take one full-year course from either the Physical Sciences or Biological Science, which were offered as separate sub-divisions of the Natural Sciences. In addition to these elementary courses, students completed their general education requirement with three upper level courses which could be chosen from upper-level General Education offerings, which were often one-term offerings. Students also had the option of choosing instead ordinary departmental half and full courses. The catalogue published a list of departmental offerings that the General Education Committee deemed particularly appropriate for meeting the upper-level requirement.

Some of the titles of these courses should evoke their purpose: Humanities 2: Epic and Novel; Humanities 3: Crisis and the Individual—in drama and biography, and in history and fiction; Humanities 4: Ideas of Good and Evil in Western literature; Humanities 5: Ideas of Man and the World in Western Thought; Humanities 6: Interpretations of Literature. Social Studies 1: Western Civilization; Social Studies 2: Western Thought and Institutions—perhaps the most celebrated long-term course, taught by Samuel Beer, which confronted major social science texts with important episodes of western history. The Natural Science courses included differing approaches to elementary physics, or physics and chemistry, and biology. This was the structure that was finally overtaken a generation later by exceptions, entropy, and general restiveness.

"During the twenty-five years after 1945, Harvard’s Red Book General Education Program underwent an almost satiric distortion of its objectives," writes Phyllis Keller in her study of curricular change at Harvard.\footnote{Phyllis Keller, \textit{Getting at the Core: Curricular Reform at Harvard} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 17.} The chief problem was the multiplication of courses designated as satisfying the general education requirement. Keller reports that between 1963 and 1969, the number of approved general education courses rose from 55 to 101, and included courses on The Scandinavian Cinema and The Health Care Crisis.\footnote{Ibid., 19.} Committees of faculty members began investigating the deficiencies of the program, suggesting reforms in 1963. But the 1960s was not a fertile era for prescriptivism in American higher education. In 1966, the sociologist Daniel Bell, at Columbia, made an ambitious attempt to counteract what he referred to as "the intellectual provincialism bred by specialization," and proposed an
elaborate set of requirements meant to reflect “the philosophical presuppositions and values that underlie all inquiry.”

His proposals were swallowed up by the events of 1968. In the early 1970s, a Study Group of Yale College, appointed by Kingman Brewster and headed by the political scientist Robert A. Dahl, proposed the development of non-departmental programs of concentration, in acknowledgement of the fact that less than ten percent of Yale graduates went on to academic careers. The Dahl report, too, was never adopted.

The development of the Core Curriculum at Harvard began with the appointments of Derek Bok as president, in 1971, and Henry Rosovsky as dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, in 1973. Rosovsky had made his dissatisfaction with the College curriculum known before he became dean, and his mission was not simply to patch up a system that had been victimized by permissiveness, but to articulate a fresh vision of liberal arts education. Many prominent members of the Faculty, among them notably James Q. Wilson and Bernard Bailyn, were active in spelling out the nature of general education and in specifying the system by which it would be made available to Harvard students. Reaching a consensus was an arduous process: undergraduates did not begin registering for Core courses until the fall of 1979, six years after Rosovsky had become dean. The program was not fully in place until 1984.

From one point of view, the Core’s key rationale—the belief that the academic disciplines represent distinctive approaches to understanding—was a way of reaffirming the importance of the disciplines at an institution whose excellence was, and still is, based on a highly meritocratic conception of scholarly achievement. Unlike most general education programs, the Core no longer draws a bright line between departmental and non-departmental courses; on the contrary, it has become a program in which almost any specialist can teach, with the proper adjustments in focus. It also avoids the dangers of prescriptivism, which, after the 1960s, loomed over any system of requirements. In 1968, a Stanford committee appointed by the university’s president, J. E. Wallace Sterling, and chaired by its vice-provost, Herbert L. Packer, concluded that “the faculty member should be free to pursue his intellectual interests wherever they lead him. The student, other things being equal, should be similarly free,” and found that “the general educational ideal is totally impracticable as a dominant curricular pattern in the modern university.”

This was the academic culture in which Bok and Rosovsky developed the Core.

The move away from content and toward methodology at Harvard was consonant with trends in higher education generally. In 1969, Brown introduced optional “modes-of-thought” courses, designed to “place major emphasis on the methods, concepts, and value systems required in approaching an understanding of a specific problem, topic, or issue in a particular field of inquiry,” and in 1974, the University of Michigan provided, as part of a general education program, an Approaches to Knowledge curriculum, which specified four approaches: analytical, empirical, moral, and aesthetic. Like the Red Book, the Harvard Core was a response both to conditions at Harvard—the growing dissatisfaction with its own general education program in the 1960s—and to a larger shift in the understanding of what the foundations of learning really are.

Since the 1970s, pressure has been put on that understanding by many developments. One is the relatively rapid and extensive demographic transformation of both student and faculty populations in American higher education. What was, at the elite level, a predominately white and male professoriate

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19 Quoted in Carnochan, 97-98.
and a majority male student body became integrated in proportions that now approach those of the population as a whole. And the population in American higher education has also become more international. This has led to a notion of “perspectives” of a kind not contemplated by or recognized in “approaches to knowledge” and “modes-of-thought” curricula. Using the phrase “the common culture,” a phrase that came easily to educators of Conant’s generation and even of Bell’s, has become a way of inviting an argument.

Second, there has been a general shift in the values and vocabulary of scholarship. Talk of universalism and “greatness” has been replaced by talk of diversity and difference. There is a new emphasis, in American liberal arts education, on multiculturalism (meaning exposure to specifically ethnic perspectives and traditions) and values (an emphasis on the ethical implications of knowledge); a renewed interest in service (manifested in the emergence of internship and off-campus social service programs) and the idea of community; in what is called “education for citizenship”; and a revival of a Deweyite conception of teaching as a collaborative process of learning and inquiry.\textsuperscript{21} These values are not easily instantiated in a specific set of required courses.

Finally, skepticism about disciplinariness has become part of the subject matter of many disciplines themselves. Interdivisional tension of the kind complained about in C. P. Snow’s \textit{The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution} (1959) is chronic in higher education because it is one of the tensions of modernity. With the proper administrative mix of arm-twisting and \textit{laissez-faire}, exposure to the rival “cultures” of humanists and scientists can be a healthy and productive feature of liberal arts education, as can the tensions among disciplines in the same division—between anthropology departments and economics departments, for example, or philosophy departments and literature departments. It is now common, in colleges, to highlight the differences in assumptions and approaches and make the debates themselves into subjects of study. There has also been an increase in the number of interdisciplinary courses and concentrations available to undergraduates. But since the 1980s, the question whether there should be such things as departments and disciplines at all has come to seem urgent to many professors, and this, too, has eroded the philosophical basis for programs such as Harvard’s Core. All these developments are distributed unevenly across the university: they affect different departments differently, and this just intensifies the long-term trend in higher education toward diversification and specialization, the trend that it has been the role of general education, from the beginning, to address.

\textbf{THE CORE CURRICULUM TODAY: THE NEED FOR REFORM}

The case for replacing the Core should begin with an appreciation of its virtues. At a time when General Education had lost its intellectual energy, the Core reengaged the faculty in undergraduate education and generated scores of new and outstanding courses addressed to non-concentrators. One measure of any program of general education is its ability to recruit top professors to the undergraduate classroom with courses that reach beyond their specialized fields. By this standard, the Core has been a great success. It accomplished this feat in part by tapping the eagerness of many faculty members to teach their subjects to students outside their areas of specialization; it also created a governance structure by which faculty in various fields collaborate to recruit, review, and assess new course proposals. While some faculty chafed under the unaccustomed level of scrutiny that greeted their course proposals and

\textsuperscript{21} These changes are well documented in Ernest Boyer, \textit{Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate} (Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990), and Bruce A. Kimball, \textit{The Condition of American Liberal Education: Pragmatism and a Changing Tradition} (New York: College Entrance Examinations Board, 1995).
syllabi in the hands of the Core subcommittees and Standing Committee, the Core’s system of review represented an ambitious and largely successful process of peer review for general education courses. (In the early years of the Core, the peer review extended to the teaching of the courses, as members of the Standing Committee actually visited Core classes. In recent years, the Standing Committee’s role has been limited to recruitment and review of Core course proposals.)

Few programs of general education can sustain their energy and vitality for more than a generation. Intellectual outlooks change, as do the compositions of the faculty and student body. The clarity of purpose that animates a new curriculum can erode with time, worn down by the accumulated effects of choices and compromises that blur boundaries that once seemed self-evident. The design of the Core Curriculum made it especially vulnerable to this tendency. As described above, the categories that defined the Core were not based on content or subject matter, but on “approaches to knowledge” and ways of thinking. This choice reflected skepticism about the possibility of ranking certain academic subjects, texts, and concepts as more fundamental than others for the purposes of undergraduate education, or at least doubt about the prospect of achieving consensus on such a ranking. It also reflected a widely shared confidence in the 1970s, not only at Harvard but in the academy at large, in the integrity and distinctiveness of the disciplines as organizing principles for intellectual inquiry.

One practical advantage of the focus on “approaches to knowledge” was that it did not exclude any particular subject as a Core course, nor did it in the end require faculty to mount courses of broad coverage or scope. This feature of the Core eased the task of course recruitment and increased the pool of potential faculty participants. A course on almost any subject could be included, provided it addressed non-specialists and included attention to the “approach to knowledge” or “way of thinking” employed in studying the subject. The result, over time, was that some areas of the Core Curriculum accumulated a disparate set of courses whose shared intellectual objectives are far from obvious. The Core guidelines published in Courses of Instruction assure students that all courses within each category serve the same educational mission: “The courses within each area or subdivision of the program are equivalent in the sense that, while their subject matter may vary, their emphasis on a particular way of thinking is the same.” But, to take three examples of Core courses in Social Analysis, it is difficult to argue that “Principles of Economics,” “Psychological Trauma,” and “Urban Revolutions: Archaeology and Investigation of Early States,” all teach the same way of thinking. It is even more difficult to see how the educational purposes they collectively serve set them apart from most other courses within the social sciences.

In recent years, student dissatisfaction with the Core has mounted. Senior exit surveys reveal substantial unhappiness with the Core, even though students count some Core courses among their most memorable at Harvard and enroll in more Core courses than necessary to fulfill the Core requirement. This pattern is reminiscent of public opinion surveys showing that voters dislike the Congress but like their own Representative or Senator. It suggests, in the case of the Core, that students appreciate many of the Core courses they take, but dislike and resent the structure of requirements taken as a whole. To some extent, this may reflect a time-honored undergraduate distaste for requirements as such. But student dissatisfaction with the Core also reflects a deeper, legitimate complaint: the rules that constrain their choice of courses lack a compelling educational rationale. Students increasingly ask what Core courses contribute to their general education that departmental courses in similar subjects do not. The Faculty can no longer answer this question with confidence or conviction. Not only Core courses, but also most departmental courses expose students to “approaches to knowledge.” So it is not clear why student choice should be restricted on the basis of this principle alone.

It is sometimes argued that Core courses, unlike many departmental courses, are geared to non-concentrators and are therefore accessible to students without prior background in the subject. It is
important that a program of general education provide such courses, but accessibility as such is not an adequate basis for defining a set of requirements. What of the student who has the background to take a more advanced course and wishes to do so? There is no good reason to insist that such a student must meet his or her general education requirement with a course designed for those who lack this background. In recent years, the Faculty has addressed this problem by amending the Core program to allow a limited number of advanced, non-Core courses to count for Core credit. But this partial step leaves unanswered the broader question of why any departmental course that conveys approaches to knowledge characteristic of the field should not count.

One way of addressing student complaints about unduly constrained choice would be to replace the Core with a distribution requirement based only on existing departmental offerings. But simply requiring students to take a certain number of courses distributed across existing departments or divisions, without offering other opportunities, might not suffice to meet the broader goals of general education. Students' real educational choice depends not only on the number of requirements they must fulfill but also on the number and kind of courses available that meet the needs of general education. It is worth noting, in this connection, that the undergraduate members of the 2004-2005 General Education Committee were among the most vigorous advocates of a new set of required general education courses specially designed to integrate important bodies of knowledge.

In a research university that prizes specialized scholarship, there is no guarantee that, left to their own devices, departments will generate a sufficient number of the integrative courses that undergraduates want and need for the sake of their general education—courses of bold and ambitious scope that explore big themes, important texts, and fundamental questions. Indeed, one weakness of the Core curriculum as it exists today is that it provides too weak a counterweight to the specializing tendencies of the concentrations. If breadth of vision was an implicit norm of the early Core, it did not persist over time. An unintended consequence of housing all general education courses in an extra-departmental program left the departments in an awkward position. Faculty interested in teaching a course designed for non-concentrators were natural recruits for the Core—which meant that departmental offerings tended to be tailored more and more specifically to meet the needs of concentrators. An awareness that isolating general education courses from the rest of the curriculum can actually increase the level of specialization played an important role in the Committee's thinking.

The strengths and weaknesses of the Core, together with the changing shape of academic disciplines, point to the principles that should inform a new system of general education: (1) greater flexibility for students in drawing upon the richness of the Harvard curriculum to fulfill their general education; (2) greater responsibility for departments in providing courses accessible to non-concentrators on themes of broad significance; (3) the establishment of a group of new, non-departmental courses designed to serve the needs of general education. Such courses should not be defined by method or discipline, but by their ability to expose students to the large themes, fundamental questions, and important bodies of knowledge that will prepare them to live reflective, purposeful lives in the twenty-first century.

**Part II—The General Education Requirement**

The Committee believes that while the Core Curriculum revitalized general education goals a quarter century ago, its basic approach no longer serves undergraduate education to best advantage. To replace the Core Curriculum, we recommend a straightforward distribution requirement that opens new possibilities for student choice within the rich variety of departmental offerings. The Committee proposes that students take three terms of course offerings in each of three areas: *Arts and Humanities*, the *Study of...*
Societies, and Science and Technology. The three courses used to fulfill a distribution requirement may not be taken in a single department or program. Such a distribution requirement ensures that our students will engage with knowledge, methods, and instructors in three academic areas that are broadly defined, yet still intellectually and pedagogically coherent. The breadth of the categories allows flexibility for students to pursue established interests or to discover new ones. It encourages students to take intellectual risks without requiring them to do so in prescribed ways. The categories are also deliberately capacious, in order to allow the disciplines to continue to transform in ways that have rendered the overall structure of the Core Curriculum intellectually obsolete.

We further propose the creation of new, optional, courses that will expand on the opportunities for students to fulfill the goals of a general education and for faculty to offer courses of broad scope and ambition that may not fit neatly into departmental boundaries. The possibility for extra-departmental courses allow faculty to collaborate in new ways, and to offer new kinds of integrative and imaginative courses that are not constrained by departmental—or even divisional—borders. They also provide students with new opportunities for common intellectual experiences that support and strengthen connections among themselves.

In addition to the distribution requirement and new extra-departmental opportunities, we propose a set of requirements that support the foundation of a general education. Students will be required to complete a course during their first year that teaches effective writing and to demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language by the end of their second year. Finally, the Committee supports the recommendation of the Committee for Education Abroad that all students be expected to participate in a significant international experience.

DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT AND THE ROLE OF DEPARTMENTS IN GENERAL EDUCATION

The Rationale for a Distribution Requirement

Since the introduction of concentrations into the Harvard College curriculum under President Lowell in 1910, students have been required to study one discipline in depth rather than simply to complete a sampling of courses across the College. Concentrations have clearly been a success. Whether students continue in the field or not, concentration study enriches the student through its cumulative learning and gradual development of skills in reasoning and analysis. Students also experience the challenges and joys that are inevitable in the course of sustained intellectual inquiry.

Still, to be well educated, students need more than concentrated study in a single discipline. Students should gain an understanding of the different but sometimes interwoven paths of study represented across the university. Students of science should experience the interpretive challenges of poetry and the quantitative analysis of economics; students of literature should have some understanding of the statistical analysis employed in the sciences and the theoretical underpinnings of political regimes; students of sociology should become acquainted with the cultural roles of music and the science of genetics. This exploration across disciplines is essential to being broadly educated. It also gives students a sense of the inter-relations among fields of inquiry today, including the relations between their own concentration discipline and others. Students cannot become expert in all things, but they can and should have some appreciation for the wide variety of ideas, works, and theories on offer in the College. Connections are forged in surprising ways and in surprising places. Only by exploring a variety of disciplines will students make new and creative connections where previously there were none. We therefore propose that a distribution requirement be instituted as the primary means of ensuring that
students receive a broad and varied education during their tenure at Harvard, and that all departmental courses count towards this requirement, with the exception of tutorials and introductory and intermediate level language classes.

The need for a distribution requirement is perhaps especially important at Harvard, where students often arrive prepared to become the best at something or other. We should encourage students to take intellectual risks, to try out new ideas, to investigate foreign intellectual waters. A distribution requirement will urge our students to try new things without prescribing that they enroll in any particular class. While one student might benefit from taking complementary courses that provide different perspectives on a single theme, another student might benefit from tasting intellectual offerings on widely divergent topics or approaches. With appropriate guidance and advice, a distribution requirement affords the opportunity to tailor the general education requirement to the intellectual needs of individual students. Distribution also encourages students to find their own highest level of interest and abilities, and respects their desire to do so. It therefore allows for a considerable amount of flexibility and creativity, which is something we hope to facilitate with the current reform.

The Distribution Categories

The Committee spent several weeks considering different categories by which Harvard might structure a distribution requirement. Some proposals envisioned entirely new categories:

The Person: Words; The Person: Sounds and Images; In Society: Here; In Society: Elsewhere; Embedded in the Material World: The Stuff of This World and Others; Embedded in the Material World: The Stuff of Life

Moral and Political Philosophy; Physical Science; Life and Mind; Deep History; Culture and Art

Political Philosophy; Statistical Reasoning; Critical Theory; Human Biology and Psychology; Political and Economic History since 1945; The Arts Today.

Some modified the Core categories:

Foreign Culture; Visual and Aural Arts; Literary Studies; Moral Reasoning; Historical and Social Analysis; Natural Sciences

Mathematical and Information Sciences; Pure and Applied Physical Sciences; Pure and Applied Life Sciences; Foreign Languages and Cultures; Historical, Philosophical and Social Studies; Literature and Arts.

Others started with the traditional tripartite categories of the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences, but then added further articulation within the three categories:

\[ n \] courses in the Natural Sciences, at least one of which is in the biological sciences; \[ n \] courses in the Humanities, at least one of which is in the non-verbal arts; \[ n \] courses in the Social Sciences, at least one of which is in history.

After much discussion, we recommend a simple and familiar category structure for the distribution requirement: students should be required to take three courses in each of the three traditional areas of the College, \( \textit{viz.} \), the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences. Pedagogically, these
general categories make good sense. There are still recognizable differences in the subjects and general methodologies of the three divisional categories, and all three remain vitally important. These areas have, more than departments, remained relatively stable over time and enjoy a broad but certain internal coherence. We propose, however, to alter the names of these categories to better reflect the range of studies they encompass. We recommend that the Humanities category be called Arts and Humanities to make explicit that the study of human culture includes not only its literature and philosophy, but also its artistic culture in the forms of visual arts, music, and dance. We recommend that the Social Sciences category be called Study of Societies, a title sufficiently expansive to include both experimental or quantitative and interpretive or historical approaches to the subject. Finally, we recommend that the category in the Natural Sciences be called Science and Technology to make explicit that in the twenty-first century it is not only pure science but its technological application that is important. Furthermore, in many areas, it is increasingly difficult to draw clean lines between the pure and applied sciences.

We had several reasons for reverting to this simpler scheme of categories despite the many interesting suggestions proposed. While there are many subcategories worthy of our students' time, effort, and attention—many of which would add to the foundations of our students' education—we found our own efforts at parsing these categories to be counter-productive. As members of the Committee suggested adding a sub-requirement in, for example, foreign cultures, moral reasoning, or biological science, our set of requirements began to grow, with no clear principles by which to limit them criteria by which to preference some subcategories over others. In the end, we concluded that the fewer categories we have organizing the distribution requirement, the more choice students will have in selecting courses across the College. An increase in student choice and flexibility was one of the desiderata we were handed by the 2003-2004 Working Group on General Education, and we endorse it as well. Fewer categories will also make the requirement easier to understand, which will be an advantage to the students and to their advisers.

The coarse grain of this category structure also has intellectual advantages. We recognize that the boundaries between disciplines today are porous and shifting. It is less clear than it was thirty years ago where chemistry stops and biology begins, where literary theory stops and art history begins, where computer science stops and linguistics begins, where economics stops and government begins, where neuroscience stops and psychology begins, where mathematics stops and philosophical logic begins. Research today is not only multidisciplinary, but transdisciplinary. Given the fluid and porous nature of the disciplines today, the more coarsely grained our category structure, the more it will accommodate the changing relations among the disciplines. Of course, some courses will still sit awkwardly among even these three categories: where, for example, does a course in bioethics belong? What about the philosophy of set theory? The economics of disease? In these cases, instructors may be called upon to determine whether the course is best suited to fit into one category or another, or possibly in two.

Disciplines in Science and Technology study the natural world through observation, experiment and quantitative analysis. There is little question that the role of science and technology in the twenty-first century will be a significant one; the discoveries of science have cascading effects on how we view ourselves and the world in which we live. Scientific literacy is therefore necessary today for competent and informed citizenship. This is clear enough when it comes to applying knowledge of basic scientific facts, such as knowing that switching from petroleum to biofuels cannot, by itself, solve the problems of energy shortages or greenhouse gas emissions. But it also applies to the analytical tools that drive scientific inference and that can profitably be applied to problems of policy and everyday life: for example, the statistical principle that exceptional cases will regress to the mean.

Disciplines in the Arts and Humanities study human culture through the interpretation of texts, works of art, and the processes of musical and artistic performance. There is little question that in the
twenty-first century it is important for students to acquire a reflective understanding of cultures at home and abroad in order to prepare for life in a world where cultures meet, and sometimes collide, with increasing ease and speed. What is more, many of the challenges that twenty-first century science and technology pose are themselves humanistic challenges: What are the criteria of personhood and personal identity? Is cloning morally acceptable? What is the relation between reason and faith, and is Intelligent Design a matter of one or the other?

Disciplines in the Study of Societies examine human interactions in the context of organized societies. They do this through experiment and quantitative analysis, and also through interpretive and historical analysis. The twenty-first century world is an increasingly global one in which cooperation between societies is critical. Understanding the economics of global markets, the changing bases of social stratification, and also the histories and theories of different political structures is essential for our students to grapple with the many international and national questions that will face them in the future.

The Essential Role of Departments in a Distributed General Education

Course offerings in departments are often designed to train future physicists, literary theorists, psychologists, philosophers, sociologists, musicologists, and so on, through the transmission of knowledge and development of discipline-specific skills. In keeping with this conception of academic departments as institutions for training specialists, Harvard’s current general education curriculum, the Core Curriculum, has placed the task of providing general education courses almost entirely outside the purview of departments. This separatist structure has the unfortunate, if unintended, effect of suggesting that general education is primarily the job of Harvard College rather than the job of departments. We hope to reverse this troubling suggestion. The goals of general education, after all, are not the goals of Harvard College considered as a mythical super-department. They are the goals we all assume as members of departments that contribute to the overall mission of the College. This new distribution requirement will mean that all departments, and the entire Faculty, must be cognizant of and contribute to general education, rather than permitting a large but nevertheless limited percentage of colleagues to shoulder its burden. We all have an interest not only in training specialists, but in preparing all of our undergraduates for active, intelligent, and open-minded engagement with the world they will face when they leave Harvard College.

If we are to have a successful distribution requirement that meets the aims of general education, it is essential that we offer departmental courses that are designed with the non-concentrator specifically in mind, though they might benefit concentrators as well. At the moment, many introductory departmental courses are aimed primarily at the potential concentrator: they are structured to initiate students in the methods and culture of the discipline so that they can become concentrators if they choose. The committee recommends that departments develop more courses aimed at the generalist, that is, courses that enable the student who will take only one course in the field to understand a subject of importance to the field and to appreciate why we think it is important.

These departmental courses need not be cut from whole cloth. We expect that many will emerge quite naturally as current Core courses are reabsorbed into departments. Many of the Science Core courses aimed at the generalist can easily be taught within departments. Thus, for example, the Astronomy Department might offer Matter in the Universe among its general education course offerings. History of Science might offer The Einstein Revolution. Psychology might offer The Human Mind. Philosophy might offer Deductive Logic and Self, Freedom and Existence.

Still, we want to encourage departments to create new departmental courses for general education. Development of these courses might begin with the guiding question: If a student were to
take only one course in your field, what ought she to learn about it? There are many ways in which such a course might be structured. It might be a survey course offering a panoptic view of the discipline, or it might focus on an iconic work (say, the Sistine Chapel or the Qu’ran or Black Holes), exploring the wealth of knowledge we have about the work, competing theories about it, and numerous questions it raises. As an illustration, we suggest a variety of hypothetical courses that departments might offer for general education:

Plato’s Republic. A Philosophy department course that centers around Plato’s Republic, but that also considers the various issues it raises in ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, politics, and aesthetics, in conjunction with ancillary modern readings.

The European Novel from Cervantes to Kafka. A course in Comparative Literature that teaches influential novels of European writers in translation.

The U.S. Constitution. A History or Government department course that explores the content and context of the U.S. Constitution.

Sources of Indian Civilization. A Study of Religion course that explores the ideas, ethics, narratives, and religious movements that have shaped a complex civilization from the Indus Valley to Mahatma Gandhi.

The Italian Renaissance. A History of Art and Architecture course that covers the art and cultural context of the Italian Masters.

Time. (Current Science-A Core Course). A physics course that studies the evolution of our concept of time from Newtonian mechanics to Quantum mechanics.

Vision and Brain. A psychology course that explores the mechanisms by which the brain interprets the visual world.

We recognize, of course, that the boundaries between the disciplines are changing, and that faculty may want to develop courses for general education that will not fit neatly into a single department. Interdisciplinary courses that are constructed to introduce students to a significant subject matter in a way that crosses disciplinary boundaries, for example, a course on human cognition that illustrates the combined efforts of physiology, psychology and philosophy in our current understanding of cognition, would certainly be encouraged. These courses might be cross-listed in more than one department and more than one division.

Administration of the Departmental General Education Courses

We recommend that each department generate a list of courses appropriate for general education. These may include current Core courses, current departmental courses, and newly developed courses. We also recommend that a Standing Committee on General Education be assembled, consisting of members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, that will work with departments and the deans of the Faculty and of the College to assure that sufficient courses be offered that are particularly appropriate for general education. We also propose that approved departmental general education courses be offered the sort of generous administrative and TF support that current Core courses receive.

We propose that departmental general education courses be specifically identified in the course catalogue by a symbol as courses that are especially suitable for the non-concentrator. We do not recom-
mend that we require students to take these, rather than more specialized, courses to fulfill their distribution requirement. Our intention in flagging these courses in the catalogue is to make it easier for students to identify courses that the faculty have deemed especially suited for the non-concentrator. It is a way to give advice to students looking for such courses.

COURSES IN GENERAL EDUCATION OUTSIDE OF DEPARTMENTS

Distribution, as discussed in the previous section of this report, provides one means to the goal of assuring that our students acquire a sense of the diverse areas of knowledge and experience we think they need for their intellectual development. At the same time, the Faculty has long believed that students should have a readily locatable site for courses whose scope or breadth extend beyond traditional departmental boundaries. For this reason, the Faculty over the last sixty years—first under the system of “General Education” and then the “Core Curriculum”—has cultivated and gathered together a range of courses (along with a support unit for administering them) outside the departments and with a goal that goes beyond distribution.

The Committee believes that we must highlight the importance of broad, synoptic courses that reach beyond the scope of individual departments and disciplines as an integral, but optional, component of a distribution requirement. We are not at this point recommending that any such general education courses be required, although the Faculty may wish to consider some form of requirement from among this group once a number of courses are in place and we have collective experience with these offerings. In this section, we describe the rationale for mounting a distinctive set of courses that would expand further the opportunities that would be available to our students under a distribution requirement, and describe our specific proposal for such courses.

From the start of its deliberations, the Committee gave serious consideration to the possibility of recommending a core program of the non-Harvard type—that is, a sequence of canonical or foundational courses that would be required of all students. Commissioned to reform a general education system which students feel reduces their freedom of choice, however, the Committee did not feel comfortable proposing, as its replacement, one that would provide even less choice. But we remained drawn to the idea of these broad and integrative courses for several reasons. First, is the importance of providing students access to courses that counter the fragmentation of knowledge that is sometimes produced by overspecialization. Synoptic courses with an integrative approach can provide conceptual frameworks that will help to orient students in their intellectual endeavors. Second, there appears to be considerable student interest in such courses: the student members of the Committee spoke eloquently about their appeal and desirability, and many members of the Committee could report similar expressions of interest from undergraduates with whom they have spoken. Finally, there is strong evidence of faculty interest, as well, in designing and teaching such courses. If Harvard students want to take these courses, and Harvard faculty are eager and willing to teach them, then we should provide for them in the system of general education.

The Committee proposes that the Faculty undertake to create a number of year-long courses that would be synoptic and integrative in approach, and topically both wide-ranging and of considerable depth. They should be orientations to large domains of material (texts, ideas, principles, discoveries) that cut across departmental boundaries and academic specialties to provide broad conceptual frameworks for further inquiry and learning. Such courses would be available to students as alternative means of satisfying the general education requirement, and would be listed in a separate section of the catalogue, under the heading “Courses in General Education.” We imagine such courses in Arts and Humanities and the
Study of Societies as consisting primarily of classic or foundational texts but with an eye to contemporary themes or issues important to those fields. A course in Science and Technology might teach foundational skills and knowledge in the context of important and exciting problems in medicine, information systems, climate change, or cosmology. (The new courses, Life Sciences 1a and 1b, are designed along these lines, but it is too soon to know whether they will serve as successful models for the proposed "Courses in General Education." A similar sequence of courses in the physical sciences is currently under discussion.)

The content of the courses will depend very much on the interests and views of the faculty who design and teach them, but they should include what the instructors believe to be the most important materials and knowledge about the general area of study—what books, films, paintings and musical works, what theoretical and critical ideas, what problems and issues are most central to understanding literature, religion, philosophy, and the arts; what thinkers and events, what political and social debates are most central to the study of society; what discoveries and concepts, what techniques and experiments are most central to the study of the natural world. We hope that the courses would be designed with a view to introducing students to disciplines in which they may eventually choose to concentrate, as well as providing non-concentrators with a coherent overview. They might also be attractive to upper-classmen who, having taken a number of specialized courses in the division, want a synoptic course that offers coverage of major texts and issues.

Many of these courses would naturally be cross-disciplinary. All the disciplines have more elastic boundaries than they were conceived to have a generation ago. But these courses—unlike the Core—will have no obligation to relate to disciplines as such. Many may be team-taught with faculty members from different departments; they might also provide opportunities for productive pedagogical collaborations with faculty from among the various schools across the University. Differences in interest and approach on the part of instructors in team-taught courses would be encouraged, but those differences ought not necessarily to be rooted in disciplines. To encourage and facilitate the largest number of faculty to participate and to ensure flexibility for students, closely-coordinated two-term sequences would be welcome, as would appropriate one-term courses.

We further propose that these courses offer intensive pedagogical opportunities for inquiry, debate, and exploration. They should consist of two or three hours of lecture per week, accompanied by a two-hour seminar component in the case of Arts and Humanities and Study of Societies, or a three-hour laboratory session for courses in Science and Technology. We acknowledge that the success of these intensive learning opportunities will depend on appropriate staffing. The seminars and laboratories should be taught only by advanced, well-trained, and experienced Teaching Fellows, or by recent Ph.D.s and post-doctoral fellows when necessary and appropriate. The courses should also receive the same type of extra resources that are currently allocated to courses taught in the Core. We further recommend that these courses and the seminars attached to them be writing-intensive, wherever appropriate.

The Committee wants to make clear that these portal courses are not intended to introduce by stealth an alternative curriculum focused only on the traditional great books and Western Civilization courses characteristic of the twentieth-century general education curriculum. There are great books, and there is Western civilization, and we have long assumed that students who graduate from American liberal arts colleges ought to know about them. But for more than a generation, scholars have been challenging many of the assumptions on which those courses were once based—assumptions about the criteria for inclusion in a list of great books and about the centrality of the West and its values. The Committee did not want to give, even inadvertently, the impression that it was trying to turn the clock back to an era in which a consensus about what all students should know was more easily reached.
Additionally, there is the question of institutional DNA. Apart from its brief and somewhat half-hearted embrace of General Education requirements, Harvard has not been a place of required foundational courses. It is a university dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in specialized areas of expertise, and its curriculum reflects this. Columbia and the University of Chicago have had prescribed foundational courses for more than fifty years; the rest of the curriculum at those colleges has grown up around those requirements. Imitating the Columbia and Chicago models at Harvard would mean creating a program that might never have an organic and acknowledged relation to the rest of the curriculum. Students already sometimes puzzle over the relation between their Core classes and the rest of the curriculum. It seemed a mistake to create a non-departmental requirement that is not clearly integrated into students’ overall programs to study.

The “Courses in General Education” that we propose are intended to reflect precisely the fresh conceptions of knowledge and inquiry that have emerged in the years since the creation of the Core. Chief among those new conceptions is the integrative approach we endorse for these courses. So is the recognition that students learn best when foundational knowledge—classic texts, important debates, methods and discoveries—are put to work in the examination of specific issues and problems. We hope that these new courses, as they emerge from the collaboration of our faculty, will be something new in higher education.

There are, finally, institutional considerations that support the creation of these courses. As noted above, while many departmental courses will be well-suited for the goal of providing breadth in a general education, and many current Core offerings will fit easily back into their home departments, the faculty should have the opportunity to offer certain types of integrative and synoptic courses that do not fit neatly into departmental bounds. Thus, in addition to the intellectual and pedagogical goals of a general education, we hope to provide institutional structures that encourage a broad range of faculty to participate in the central mission of contributing to the general education of our students.

Our students yearn for common intellectual experiences in an age when a common body of knowledge suitable for all cannot easily be defined. They want to fill the dining halls with intellectual discussions about the books they read, the ideas they discovered, the assumptions they challenged, and the problems they solved. Without clearly identified opportunities for common experiences, our students may find it increasingly difficult to build intellectual bridges among themselves. So much of contemporary knowledge, discovery, and scholarship takes place beyond the existing boundaries of academic disciplines. We believe that our students and our faculty should have more opportunities to explore those broad and exciting areas together.

ROUNDING OUT THE GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

There are several additional requirements that the Committee views as central in that they provide much of the groundwork upon which the edifice of general education will rest. Undoubtedly, individual members of the Faculty will find gaps in our list, but by keeping in mind the goals of breadth, flexibility, simplicity of design, and balance, we propose the following set of requirements: a required course in effective writing in the first year and proficiency in a language other than English. The Committee also endorses the expectation—although not a formal requirement—that every Harvard College student participate in a significant international experience.

First, the Committee to Review the Teaching of Writing and Speaking in Harvard College articulated in the spring of 2005 the necessity of effective communication—both written and oral—for
our students, and outlined a broad range of recommendations to promote and expand on the development of those skills in our classes at every level. The Committee on General Education affirms the centrality of communication to all aspects of the academic enterprise and thus reaffirms the requirement that all students take at least one course in the first year that teaches effective writing, and that other courses offer students structured opportunities for honing their skills in oral expression as well as written. Writing effectively is inseparable from thinking clearly; written and oral expression are central to our ability to put forward ideas effectively and persuasively, whether in the classroom or beyond.

Second, the Committee affirms the long-standing tradition that students demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English but proposes to remove the obligation that students fulfill this requirement in the first year, thus providing more flexibility for intellectual exploration during the freshman year. Rather, the Committee recommends that the language requirement be met by the end of the second year. The study of a second language opens intellectual and cultural opportunities to our students, and it cultivates important cognitive skills such as precision and rigor. Competence in at least one second language will assist our students to live in a world in which immigration, travel and border-crossing have made tolerance of and respect for the unfamiliar simply essential. Understanding another culture is almost impossible without a reasonable grasp of the way in which its language parcels up and represents the world. Even our command of our native language is improved by learning a second language: a heightened level of awareness of structure, syntax and semantics results from the comparison and confrontation that are made possible by second-language acquisition. We are as convinced that facility with a second (or third) language will broaden our students’ conceptual and personal landscapes as we are that offering a monolingual Harvard education would fall far short of our students’ needs in the twenty-first century.

Further, the Committee supports the recommendation of the Committee on Education Abroad that all Harvard College students should be expected to pursue a significant international experience—which may consist of study, research, an internship, or service—and that the completion of this expectation be marked on the transcript. These experiences might take place during a term abroad, during the summer, during a possible January term, or perhaps in the context of a Harvard course with an international fieldwork component. By linking such an international experience with language study and other related coursework at Harvard, our students will have a richer understanding of another culture—one that we expect would go beyond the current Foreign Cultures requirement. Judicious advising should help our students not only to prepare for study abroad, but also to expand its positive effects by continuing work in that foreign language and culture when back on campus. The Committee on Education Abroad has elaborated the details of what would constitute a significant international experience in its report of November 2005, and the Committee on General Education endorses these recommendations.

Finally, the Committee considered at length possible requirements in two areas: quantitative analysis (expanded to include forms of analytic reasoning), and moral and ethical reasoning. We debated whether we should include the requirement of a course in both areas or neither, and whether we would include these as sub-categories of the 3-3-3 distribution requirements or as additional requirements. A majority of the Committee decided against adding more restrictions to our students’ set of requirements, despite the obvious importance of these skills and areas of knowledge. We strongly recommend that our students take courses in analytic reasoning and quantitative analysis and in moral reasoning, and that our Faculty offer them, but we have not included them as requirements in this report. There was honest disagreement within the Committee on this point, with a significant minority in favor of including such requirements in some form. We therefore describe below some of the rationale for these courses, knowing that many of our colleagues will have equally strong and varied opinions on this matter.
The Committee felt strongly that our students should be able to apply judiciously a variety of analytical and quantitative tools for critical thinking, not only in the sciences, but in the humanities and in the studies of societies, as well. We believe that an understanding of deductive and inductive reasoning skills are important for both the student and the citizen, regardless of discipline or career path. Quantitative, logical, and probabilistic skills are used in many existing courses, but since the acquisition of quantitative skills alone does not necessarily teach students how logical fallacies occur in science, politics, the arts, or everyday life, we encourage the development of new courses that directly aim to impart these skills in a broad range of areas. The Committee therefore considered a broadened requirement in analytical and quantitative reasoning.

Equally important is the ability to make reasoned moral arguments, and that courses addressing this subject be available as part of the Harvard College curriculum. Courses of this kind would advance two important purposes of undergraduate education: they would develop capacities for moral argument and deliberation that are essential for effective civic agency; and they would contribute to students’ ethical and intellectual development by providing an occasion to reflect self-critically on what they believe and why. Our students have a lifetime of moral reasoning ahead of them: deciding what political candidates to support, assessing public policies that raise hard moral questions, deciding how to resolve dilemmas that arise in family and professional life, and—ultimately—choosing among different life projects and purposes. Here, too, the Committee discussed a possible course requirement in moral reasoning.

In the end, the majority of the Committee reaffirmed its desire to set out a curriculum that expands opportunities—not requirements—for students, even as it asserts a greater responsibility on the part of the Faculty to offer courses in areas of central importance such as these.

**The General Education Requirement—A Summary**

In sum, the Committee on General Education reaffirms the importance of the tradition of liberal and general education as central to the undergraduate education of a Harvard College student. In building on, and learning from, the programs that preceded it, we believe that our students are best served by a flexible structure that provides the opportunity to draw upon the widest range of courses available, while at the same time offering a more focused program of specially-designed general education courses. To that end, we recommend a distribution requirement in which students will be required to take three courses from each of the major divisions of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, that is: Science and Technology, the Study of Societies, and Arts and Humanities. Because each student's concentration will cover at least one of these divisional areas, in effect we are asking students to take six courses in divisions outside the division of their area of concentration. Students may not take three courses in a single department or program in order to fulfill a distribution requirement, except when these courses are part of their concentration.

While all departmental courses, with the exception of tutorials and introductory and intermediate level language classes, could be used towards the fulfillment of the distribution requirement, we expect that each department will be responsible for identifying existing courses and developing new ones that are especially well-suited for the goals and purposes of general education. These courses should be suitable for non-concentrators, but of benefit to concentrators as well. They should be specially designated in the Courses of Instruction in order to aid students in identifying appropriate means for fulfilling their general education requirements.
An integral component of our recommendation is the creation of new “Courses in General Education,” that are expansive in scope and integrative in approach, and which will be listed in a separate section of the catalogue. These courses should be designed specifically to situate important texts, concepts, and discoveries in the context of larger problems and themes in ways that provide students with an intellectual introduction to broad areas of knowledge and inquiry. They will provide an important, but optional means for fulfilling the distribution requirements, and they will provide our students with new opportunities for common intellectual experiences.

The general education of Harvard students also requires additional skills, knowledge, and experience, which have long been part of the College curriculum and that are central to a well-rounded undergraduate education in the twenty-first century. Students will be required to take at least one course in the first year that teaches effective writing, as recommended by the Committee to Review the Teaching of Writing and Speaking in Harvard College. Students will also be required to demonstrate basic proficiency in a foreign language. We recommend that students no longer need to fulfill this requirement in the first year, but rather that the requirement be met by the end of the second year.

Beyond this, and following directly on the most recent work of the Committee on Education Abroad, we expect, but do not require, that every Harvard College student will engage in a significant international experience, which may consist of study, research, an internship, or service. Completion of such an experience will be marked on the student’s transcript. Students will be advised to integrate their international experience with related coursework at Harvard, thus providing a thorough grounding in at least one foreign culture.

To oversee and to support the development of this curriculum, the Committee recommends the formation of a new Standing Committee on General Education, which will work with departments and with the deans to identify and to help develop departmental courses suitable for general education, and to review and approve proposed Courses in General Education. Departmental courses specifically designated for general education should receive additional administrative support along the lines of what is now available to Core courses, as would the Courses in General Education.

* * *

The Committee recognizes that a program of general education that offers such a high degree of student choice carries with it the enduring responsibility of the Faculty to create and maintain those courses—departmental and extra-departmental courses—that are best suited for general education. The responsibility to improve and deepen teaching in science and international studies, for example, will—to repeat the words of the Report on the Harvard College Curricular Review of April 2004—depend less on the number of student requirements than on the number and quality of commitments made by the Faculty to the teaching of these and other dimensions of general education at the highest level and with the greatest rigor. This challenge is nothing less than a test of the Faculty’s commitment to the principles of a liberal education. “Why should all of the creative and liberating ideas for liberal education be left to the small residential liberal arts colleges?” Peter Gomes has asked, adding: “With Harvard’s resources and opportunities we could be both Harvard University and Williams College.” We share this view and offer this document as the basis for constructive discussion, creative elaboration, and engaged debate among our colleagues.
APPENDIX A

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL EDUCATION

Co-Chairs: William C. Kirby (Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences; History) 
Benedict H. Gross (Dean of Harvard College; Mathematics)

Members: Drew Gilpin Faust (Dean of Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study; History)
Matthew Glazer, Student Representative ’05-06 (Government ’06)
Evelynn M. Hammonds (Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity; History of Science; African and African American Studies)
Nicholas Josefowitz, Student Representative ’04-05 (History ’05)
Robert P. Kirshner (Astronomy)
Andrew H. Knoll (Organismic and Evolutionary Biology; Earth and Planetary Sciences)
Matthew Mahan, Student Representative ’04-05 (Social Studies ’05)
Charles S. Maier (History)
Louis Menand (English and American Literature and Language)
Naomi E. Pierce (Organismic and Evolutionary Biology)
Steven Pinker (Psychology)
James R. Rice (Engineering and Applied Sciences; Earth and Planetary Sciences)
Michael J. Sandel (Government)
Donald Stone (Professor Emeritus, Romance Languages and Literatures)
Kay Kaufman Shelemay (Music; African and African American Studies)
Alison Simmons (Philosophy)
Diana Sorensen (Romance Languages and Literatures; Comparative Literature)
Danny Yagan, Student Representative ’05-06 (Economics ’06)

Ex Officio: David B. Fithian (Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences)
Georgene B. Herschbach (Associate Dean of Harvard College)
Stephanie H. Kenen (Assistant Dean of Harvard College)

Staff: Inge-Lise Ameer (Assistant Dean of Harvard College)
APPENDIX B

BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE COMMITTEE

In October 2002 the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences called for a thorough review of the Harvard undergraduate curriculum. To initiate that review, Dean William C. Kirby appointed four working groups and a Steering Committee which met throughout 2003-2004 and issued *A Report on the Harvard College Curricular Review* to the Faculty at the close of that academic year.\(^1\) Prominent among the conclusions of the Working Group on General Education and of the *Report* as a whole was the recommendation that “the Core Program be succeeded by a general education requirement.” The *Report* recognized that the Core Program had proved successful in a variety of ways yet noted a decline in enthusiasm for the Program and a growing lack of understanding of the guidelines that define the constituent areas of the Core. Moreover, given that the number of courses which meet the Core requirement is limited, the possibility exists, it noted, that the requirement “may serve to constrain intellectual development.”\(^2\)

The *Report* enjoined the Dean of the Faculty to prepare a definition of the new general education requirement in consultation with the Faculty. Consequently, in September 2004, Dean Kirby convened a committee of thirteen professors and two undergraduates, with the specific charge “to develop a proposal for the structure of requirements in general education and a mechanism for determining which courses will satisfy these requirements.”\(^3\)

For its earliest sessions, the Committee studied a wide variety of opinions on general education: the “Red Book” Report of 1945 (*General Education in a Free Society*), the account of the creation of the Core Program described in Phyllis Keller’s *Getting at the Core: Curricular Reform at Harvard* (1982), essays prepared by a number of senior faculty, both active and emeritus,\(^4\) recommendations from the Working Group on General Education, as well as position papers in which Committee members set forth their own thoughts on the skills and areas appropriate for the new program. In December 2004, a forum was held to inform faculty members of the progress of the Committee and to permit them to present their views on general education. A similar forum for undergraduates was held in January 2005. A working draft report was discussed and deliberated throughout the spring semester and, based on feedback and input, was rewritten in the summer and autumn of 2005. The current document is the final revision of that draft.

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2. For a more complete account of the attitude of the working groups toward the Core, see *Report*, 12-16.
3. The names of the members of the General Education Committee are given in Appendix A.
4. These essays can be read at www.fas.harvard.edu/curriculum-review.
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ABROAD

The Committee on Education Abroad is a Standing Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. It provides advice and oversight to the Office of International Programs (OIP); monitors and approves study abroad programs, and recommends policy to the Dean of the Faculty. Over the past two years, the Committee has worked with the OIP to expand international opportunities for Harvard undergraduates. The Committee has focused on assisting the OIP’s efforts to streamline procedures and improve advising, engage faculty in the development of new programs, and develop a strategic plan. The purpose of this report is to inform the Faculty of the progress achieved to date and to recommend goals that the Committee believes are both desirable and feasible to achieve in the next three to five years.

PRINCIPLES

The Committee endorses the recommendation of the report on the Harvard College Curricular Review that all Harvard College students should henceforth be expected to pursue a significant international experience during their time in the College, and that completion of such an expectation be noted on the transcript (see Appendix A). The Committee believes that students should be able to fulfill this expectation through study abroad for credit as well as through research, internships, or service and will propose appropriate standards to the Dean of the Faculty in due course. The Committee is convinced that the College can and should increase both the quality of students’ international experiences and the number of students going abroad. The key to achieving both of these goals is the active support and participation of Harvard’s exceptionally international and internationally engaged faculty.

The Committee believes that the programs and activities developed for Harvard students and for which Harvard students receive recognition should reflect Harvard’s institutional commitment to understanding of and respect for the cultures and values of other societies and for different educational objectives and pedagogies; focus on academic quality and opportunities to build knowledge and skills while immersing students as far as possible in the host society to help them develop sensitivity to the cultural environment and tolerance of the unfamiliar; and ensure that financial constraints do not prevent access to every kind of opportunity to all our students.

REALISTIC OBJECTIVES

In the summer of 2004 and academic year 2004-05, a total of 840 Harvard College students engaged in for-credit study abroad or in Harvard-supported research, internships, work, and service in other countries. Of this number 351 studied abroad for credit, 211 during the academic year (most for a single semester) and 140 during the summer. A total of 489 took part in sponsored non-credit summer activities abroad. Our goal is thus to approximately double these numbers. Our expectation is that students will find it increasingly attractive to study abroad for credit during the academic year, but that a larger number will opt for summer courses and non-credit activities. Enhancing the quality of students’ international experiences should be equally feasible, but will depend to a significant degree on tapping the knowledge, networks, and competencies of the faculty.
ORGANIZATION

The OIP is the College entity charged with responsibility for realizing the expectation that all Harvard undergraduates have a significant international experience. The Committee believes that this expectation should be implemented through the development of well-structured incentives, appropriate financial aid, expert advising, and easy access rather than through the imposition of formal requirements.

To that end, the OIP is working to make existing Harvard resources more accessible by providing better information to students and by fostering coordination among relevant departments, offices and centers across the Faculty. The OIP focuses particularly on engaging the faculty and staff of regional studies centers and committees in the development and management of new programs and activities. The Committee expects that new forms of engaging Harvard’s extensive international contacts, including international alumni, affiliated researchers, and faculty with international projects will prove especially helpful in the future.

The Committee observes that a reform of the College calendar would be helpful in facilitating certain kinds of education abroad. The fall calendar now makes it difficult for students to enroll in study abroad programs that begin in January, while the spring semester causes similar difficulties for students enrolling in early starting summer programs. Course-based field trips and other international activities would be much easier to organize during January if the fall term ended before the holidays.

INCENTIVES AND FINANCIAL AID

The OIP and the College Office of Financial Aid are working together to marshal existing and new resources effectively. Specific program-related incentives as well as both general and targeted adjustments to financial aid packages would be required to achieve the College’s education abroad goals. In this connection, the Committee endorses the recommendation in the report of the Curricular Review that the FAS expand financial aid for undergraduates to include summer grants and loans in order to make it possible for all students to pursue at least one international experience. Students on financial aid are already able to adapt their financial aid packages to cover the cost of a semester or year of term-time study abroad. The Committee recommends that future Harvard financial aid packages include financial aid in the form of reduced summer earnings expectations as well as direct aid for students who do not study abroad during the regular academic year but choose instead to spend a summer abroad in an approved program of summer study, research, internship, or service. The Committee recommends that financial aid only be given to students engaged in summer programs of sufficient seriousness as to qualify for mention on the transcript.

The Committee also recommends increased merit-based support for summer activities through the area and international centers as well as other Harvard programs. This support will become even more important in the future, not only to recognize and support the international activities of students not on financial aid, but also to supplement financial aid and provide support for additional summers abroad for students on financial aid. Fortunately, substantial contributions are already being made by some of Harvard’s centers, institutes, and committees in support of undergraduate summer abroad activities. The Committee believes, however, additional efforts should be made to insure that the range of summer opportunities and levels of aid in relation to cost are roughly comparable across all world regions.

The Committee also recognizes and applauds the importance of the language citation to our students, and recommends that, in order to facilitate study abroad as a way of fulfilling part of the four-course requirement for a citation that procedures be developed for pre-approving specific programs or courses abroad for citation credit. The Committee further recommends that the College provide
encouragement to students' engaged in rigorous interdisciplinary study of other societie and cultures through official recognition of area studies certificates, beginning with the Certificate in Latin American Studies that has been awarded to undergraduates by the FAS Standing Committee on Latin American and Iberian Studies since 1967. Official recognition would make it possible to mention this Certificate in official FAS publications, such as Courses of Instruction, and on student transcripts.

**FACULTY ENGAGEMENT**

The quality of the international experiences available to Harvard students could be enormously enhanced by more active engagement of faculty in advising, designing, and in some cases leading and participating in education abroad.

The Committee, along with Harvard College students, places a high value on programs abroad led by Harvard faculty. Forty Harvard students enrolled in the seven programs offered through the Harvard Summer School in 2004. Ten such programs will be offered in 2005 in a range of fields in Bolivia, Brazil, China, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK. The Committee commends the Summer School for its swift and effective efforts to expand the number of such courses, which offer unique opportunities for students to work closely and intensively with Harvard faculty. The Committee recommends expanded support for Summer School courses abroad taught by Harvard faculty.

The number of course-based field trips, some supported by departments and centers, has also increased in recent years. Should the calendar reform free up time in January, whether a formal January-term is instituted or not, the Committee recommends that faculty be encouraged to develop January study abroad activities, especially where such programs can be linked as follow up to fall term courses or as introductions to spring term courses. Such experiences, though of short duration, can provide invaluable learning experiences when carefully planned and integrated to work done in Cambridge.

The OIP and the Committee are exploring additional ways to link concentrations, courses in Cambridge, study abroad, and non-credit activities that could substantially raise the quality of students' educational experiences in Cambridge and abroad. The Committee believes that faculty should be especially encouraged to develop modes of including undergraduates in research and other academic undertakings abroad. We recommend that the FAS support the development of new programs and activities through the creation of a special Innovation Fund to which faculty could apply. Funds would be allocated competitively by the Committee on Education Abroad. This would allow OIP and the Committee to fund small-scale education abroad activities organized and led or otherwise proposed by faculty, both those that offer a unique one-off opportunity for College students and others that could serve as pilot projects for larger programs in the future.

**COLLABORATION WITH DEPARTMENTS AND CONCENTRATIONS**

The Committee believes that some of the best study abroad experiences will be those that are integrated into students' work in Cambridge. This will require that faculty in the departments and concentrations participate actively in the identification and development of opportunities for their concentrators. The Curricular Review report recommended that the concentrations, in consultation with the Office of International Programs, identify study abroad programs in which Harvard College students may enroll for degree and concentration credit, and that all concentrations plan requirements and course sequences to accommodate one term of study abroad. This Committee warmly endorses this recommendation. Indeed, the effort to implement this recommendation is already underway in many departments and concentrations with the help of the Director of OIP and her staff. A number of departments and
concentrations have adjusted requirements to accommodate study abroad, some by waiving tutorial requirements or accepting substitutions, many by creating equivalencies for required courses abroad, or by a flexible approach to the sequencing of courses. To continue this progress, the Committee recommends that all concentrations have designated advisers for study abroad, either a member of the faculty, or a member of the advising staff. Information and assistance for these advisers should, of course, be provided by OIP, and OIP should continue to serve as students’ primary source of advising on study abroad.

The Committee believes that special attention should be paid to enhancing international opportunities for science concentrators to engage in laboratory and field work abroad. Such experiences can make invaluable contributions to enriching a student’s program by integrating a student into the scientific community of another society and by providing high-level engagement in basic or applied research activity not available elsewhere in addition to the other benefits of studying abroad. The Committee recommends that support be provided for the development, in consultation with the faculty, of such opportunities for concentrators in all fields, but with special attention given to developing programs for science concentrators in laboratories, field stations, and other sites in as many regions of the world as may prove feasible.

SERVICE

Many Harvard students wish to combine study or research abroad with internships that engage them in community service and civic engagement. Their interests range across a broad spectrum from adult education and human rights to public policy and journalism. A growing number seek to spend their time contributing to projects in developing countries. The Committee believes that Harvard alumni and their contacts throughout the world could play an invaluable role in connecting students to worthwhile endeavors and recommends that the OIP continue its efforts to work with other divisions at Harvard to develop a range of such opportunities, using existing networks and knowledge of the extended Harvard community whenever possible. Students can be guided towards these opportunities early in their time at Harvard, when such experiences are formative and can thus lay the foundation for future international activity.

ADVISING

For students to understand and benefit from international opportunities, the Committee believes that improved coordination of information sources will prove indispensable. Harvard is so decentralized that students often find it difficult to access the expertise and information already available at Harvard. Recognizing the importance of timely and accessible information, the OIP has launched an effort to create a new web page linked to a searchable database of information that students will be able to access continuously. The new web site will provide updated information about funding sources, curricular initiatives, co-curricular programs and sources of advice and assistance which will help both students and their advisers find the best resources in planning and preparing for international experience. The Committee expects that OIP will receive the staff and budgetary support that will be needed to maintain this new web site and thus recommends that such support be provided.

Since the Houses are a critical source of information and advice on all aspects of undergraduate life, the Committee recommends that every House designate a staff member to serve as resource person for study abroad and international opportunities. The study abroad resource person in each House would help to provide guidance on how to access information and refer students to the Office of International Programs, the regional studies centers, and the Office of Career Services for further help.
In order for students to benefit as much as possible from such opportunities, they must be well-prepared prior to departure. The Weatherhead Center, the David Rockefeller Center, the Center for European Studies, and the Office of International Programs among other entities run orientation programs for students going abroad. We recommend pre-departure orientation for all undergraduate students going abroad be provided by the departments, concentrations, centers, and committees that fund and support international experiences for undergraduates. By the same token, the Committee encourages initiatives within the concentrations as well as the Houses to engage returning students in analysis and reflection on their experience abroad, so that the impact of their experience is maximized.

CONCLUSION

The expectation that every Harvard College student will have a significant international experience will likely have a powerful effect on the culture of student life as well as curricular development at Harvard. We believe the changes to come will prepare students more effectively for responsible leadership in a global society.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

To implement the recommendations of the Harvard College Curricular Review on international experience, the Committee recommends:

that the Committee on Education Abroad be charged with recommending to the Dean of the Faculty appropriate standards for determining the eligibility of students’ proposed international activities for financial aid and official recognition;

that Harvard College future financial aid packages include support for a summer abroad for students who do not choose term-time study abroad;

Increased merit-based support from area and international centers and others for summer study, research, internships, and service work;

Credit toward the Language Citation be given for courses taken abroad and official recognition be accorded the Latin American Studies Certificate and such similar certificates as may be proposed to recognize interdisciplinary studies of other regions;

Concentrations identify study abroad programs in which their students may enroll for degree and concentration credit, and that all concentrations plan requirements and course sequences to accommodate one term of study abroad;

Continued expansion of Summer School courses abroad;

Creation of a Fund for Innovation in Study Abroad to encourage faculty projects and proposals;

Appointment of Study Abroad Advisers in all departments and non-departmental concentrations; and the designation of a study abroad staff resource person in each House;

Special attention to the development of international opportunities for science concentrators; and
Pre-departure orientation for all undergraduates by all centers, departments, and other entities that fund such travel.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ABROAD 2004-2005

APPENDIX A

DEFINING SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

October 18, 2005

The report of the Committee on Education Abroad submitted in May 2005 (above) endorsed the goal, first set forth in the Report on the Harvard College Curricular Review, that every Harvard College student engage in at least one educationally significant international experience before graduating and recommended that appropriate incentives, rather than new rules and requirements, be employed to reach that goal.

This goal is consistent with the values embodied in the Liberal Arts education Harvard seeks to provide its students. International experience enables students to encounter, assimilate and learn from what they may initially see as unfamiliar and even alien. Moreover, the knowledge and sensibilities that result from such experiences help students to become more informed and responsible citizens. Finally, the language and cultural skills that students are able to acquire by studying and working abroad are becoming crucial for professional careers in every field of work.

International educational experience should supplement and enrich rather than replace or dilute the education that Harvard College provides its students in Cambridge. This principle implies term-time for-credit enrollment in foreign universities should be encouraged only in cases where the educational quality of the programs meets Harvard standards. It also implies that many Harvard students will continue to engage in learning abroad during the summer rather that during the regular academic year.

The Committee on Education Abroad recommended last spring that the College consider adding two new incentives to encourage students to engage in significant international experiences. First, the Committee recommended explicit recognition on students’ transcripts. For example, in place of a brief reference, we suggested that courses taken abroad should be listed with the grades awarded (but not included in the students Grade Point Average calculation) and that the host institution and country should also be named. This change is already being implemented.

In addition, the Committee recommended that brief mention on students’ transcripts also be given to significant international experiences involving honors thesis research, internships, service work, other paid employment, and non-credit courses taken abroad.

The second incentive, to be offered as the College secures new funds to do so, would involve funding for students who choose to take courses or engage in other significant international experience in the summer. The College has already begun to provide modest grants to students who take courses abroad for credit in the summer. The College has also provided merit awards to College students engaged in internships abroad through the Weissman program, while a number of area centers also offer such grants to College students.

Providing transcript recognition or funding to students who take academic-year or summer courses for credit raises no new issues. Providing transcript recognition or financial aid for other kinds of international experiences, however, would constitute a departure from past policy. To implement such a policy, the College will need to adopt clear standards that can be easily administered.
The Committee’s recommendations are intended to encourage students to link work abroad to their studies in Cambridge. Extending transcripting to international experiences other than formal course would recognize that significant learning takes place outside the classroom in unfamiliar settings.

In discussing the implementation of these standards, the Committee considered how such standards should be applied to international students. It concluded that such students should not normally receive recognition or financial aid for research or other work performed in their own countries. However, the Committee believes that such students should be able to appeal for an exception to this rule in cases where their work involves a culture, language, or social setting distinct from their own (as in work distinct other ethnic groups or social strata).

The Committee believes that the language training should continue to play a key role in the growth of study abroad and international education more broadly defined. The current rule, adopted four years ago, requires that students engaged in for-credit term-time study abroad must either take courses in a language of their host country or enroll in at least one course of instruction in a local language. The Committee is now exploring ways to help students improve their language skills for summer activities through courses in Cambridge prior to departure, through intensive on site preparatory or brush-up courses, or by combining internship or work opportunity with language instruction.

The Committee recommends that College transcripts henceforth make brief mention of students’ educational experiences abroad, including:

1. Summer work performed abroad in connection with a 91r or 98 or Independent Study and lasting at least one month;

   Note: Students already use the 91r or 98 (for concentration credit) and Independent Study (for College credit) options to engage in summer research activities for which they receive course credit in the fall semester. In some cases, students have been able to combine these summer research projects with relevant internships. The College, the Office of International Programs, and the concentrations may encourage the use of the 91r and Independent Study options to help students construct summer programs that extend and deepen their education.

2. Honors thesis research involving at least one month of full time field work abroad;

3. Participation in regular Harvard courses offering associated field experience abroad involving intensive interaction with other cultures, societies, or environments;

4. Participation in Harvard-approved internship programs abroad of at least one month’s duration;

   Note: Such programs normally involve intensive orientation to the society, culture, and language of the host country.

5. Full time work abroad of at least two months duration performed in a setting in which the dominant language is not English.
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON A JANUARY TERM

If the University Calendar were altered in such a way that students and faculty would have three to three and one-half weeks of free time at their disposal in the month of January, how might they wish to use it? If, between a fall semester that ends before the beginning of the last week of December and a spring semester that begins slightly before the end of January, students and faculty were to invent a curriculum, what would they do? How would they go about it? The committee approached the questions by keeping in mind the conclusion of François Rabelais’s *Gargantua*, a monument of humanism patterned on the model of Thomas More’s *Utopia*. Rabelais designed the Abbey of Thélème, a castle without walls, over whose entry was chiseled a handsome device: “Fais ce que vouldras” [do what you wish]. In the spirit of Rabelais’s vision the *J*-term committee convened to see if, in the month of January in future years, Harvard University might become a new Thélème.

To see what could be done, and how—without fretting over finance, accreditation, or remuneration—the committee concentrated on what it felt would be a feasible and intellectually productive January Term. From this perspective the group reached the consensus that the month would indeed be a time and place for curricular invention and innovation. It felt that the *J*-term could indeed make available a broad number of programs of appeal to students and faculty alike. It would be a time in which teaching would not be done as it is practiced in the fall and spring semester. Rather, with the *J*-term, ideas could be entertained, pursued and realized: the three or three and one-half week term would be one in which an invitation would be tendered to the Harvard population to engage inquiry and study following, in the words of a contemporary philosopher, myriad “lines of flight,” unforeseen “intensities,” exciting modes of “deterritorialization.”1

The committee is of the opinion, first and foremost, that the January term ought not to be imposed as a burden but treated as place for experiment in which on-going and future innovation and research and pedagogy could be realized. The *J*-term ought therefore to be treated, in the words of one of the members of the committee that echo those of the philosophers cited above, a conceptual “toolbox.” From the onset it ought to be made available on a facultative and experimental basis. Some members of the committee felt that upon arrival at Harvard students would do well to think strategically about how they would make use of the *J*-term over the course of their undergraduate careers. Students might want to begin immediately, in the freshman year, in taking a *j*-term course or they might, too, wish to designate a *j*-term in their senior year for the final (and often deliciously excruciating) writing and editing of their theses or alternative capstone experiences.

The committee asked itself how, why, in what way, and with what implementation the *J*-term could be launched. First, it was sensed that undergraduate students spend much of their undergraduate careers filling requirements and that as a result they have little room for elective work in areas paradoxically marginal and central to their concentrations. A January-*term* would allow them both to move to the peripheries of their fields of specialization and to fill lacunae or even explore *terrae incognitae* in their formative and professional geographies. The January term

would be construed to be a place, in the strongest sense of its etymology, of *election*, or free and informed choice, for students to follow creative and productive intellectual travels. The committee noted that, because many Harvard undergraduates spend much of their careers in oversized classrooms and (with the exception of the Freshman Seminar Program), far from intensive and protracted contact with individual members of the faculty, J-term would offer a context for collaborative teaching and research. The J-term would develop seminars in which students might collaborate with faculty members (on individual bases or in co-taught classes) in small groups. It would offer to both undergraduates and graduate students a chance not merely to be taught but also, in an active way, to teach. Classes would be conceived on a small scale and in formats encouraging freedom of exchange. Time and again reports from students have emphasized how much their lives are “hyperorganized” and “hyperstructured.” Students might want to think of the J-term in units not only of three and one-half weeks but also of combinations of smaller and cumulative units of time. The J-term would be elective enough to make the undergraduate experience more supple than it now seems to be and, too, pliable enough to invite faculty, in the Erasmian spirit of paradox to “make haste slowly,” that is, to let ease inspire a will to explore and inquire.

Several principal themes came forward. With the small seminar in mind everyone countenanced that the Houses would provide an informal and congenial spaces for research. By shifting pedagogy from a formal space to areas where what one ethnographer calls the “practice of everyday life” is cultivated a sense of productive ease would be obtained. Not only would the space of the Houses be made useful in a fallow moment of the year, but many of their attributes could also be included in the curriculum. Senior Common Room members could be invited to take part in projects; students could use archives and technologies of the space for creative ends. They could conceive the production of plays, stage musical performances, or develop workshops on cinema and video. Following the outstanding success of a mini-seminar taught at a House in the spring and summer of 2004 (and successfully taught in April of 2005), specialists in a given field, either inside or outside of the University, would work with students, using the program to help them launch themselves in a professional direction. On a different scale, the House could be a place where a mechanical or practical art—say, three-week study and work in a culinary tradition—could be made available.

Study abroad, the committee concluded in unanimity, would be a keystone to the architecture of the J-term. It would invigorate and inspire. It would open students onto new perspectives. It would indeed prepare students for more protracted research in their target countries and their languages. Noting the many editorials in *The Harvard Crimson* that argued for overseas study, it was sensed that work in areas anywhere and everywhere on the globe. Without constituting a unit or semester of study abroad as such, travel and exposure to a country outside of North America or anglophone milieux would foster research, promote further development or exchange begun in the undergraduate experience (for reason that the undergraduate population is of increasing cultural diversity). Students could ostensibly craft projects that require them to consult archives or make use of human resources in target countries. They would possibly do intensive language study in many locations abroad, under the jurisdiction of Harvard, that sponsor summer study. Three weeks of immersion in a language and a culture other

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3 “The Art of Screenwriting,” taught by David Black (novelist, screenwriter, poet) at Kirkland House for a group of 15 students that included visits by Richard Dreyfuss and Alec Baldwin.

4 The idea for a seminar on cuisine came from Mollie Katzen, author of many cookbooks and adviser to the Harvard University Dining Service.
than one’s own, no matter how brief it might seem, could not fail to open new perspectives and bring the undergraduate to encounter and to read, in the words of the peripatetic author of the *Discourse on Method*, the “book of the world.”

Following a very successful model inaugurated by a faculty member of the Department of the History of Art and Architecture, students might wish to study a site, a collection, or a monument in a context that (at least in the northern hemisphere) would be free of tourists and welcoming to individuals doing work that could lead to dissertations.\(^5\) One colleague has suggested that Harvard students would do well to extend roots in Africa by organizing a short term course in Cotonou (Benin Republic).\(^6\) Another, the Director of the Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, expresses excitement at the idea of having students take part in a J-term “to conduct research and study abroad in Greece and South Eastern Europe.”\(^7\) Or, as one member of the committee stated with inspiration and insight, students in literature could make pilgrimages to areas or landscapes that have been of decisive influence on some of the great writers in the English and American traditions: the Lake Country for Wordsworth, “Wessex” for Thomas Hardy, western Massachusetts for Emily Dickenson or Melville.\(^8\) In a fashion in keeping with January terms at other institutions, students could strengthen a linguistic and cultural base of the kind gained in high school or the first year of college by studying in a place, such as Mexico City, Santiago de Chile, Tokyo, Beijng, Berlin or Paris, where exposure to language would find a complement in the attributes of the city itself.

Failing travel overseas, intensive study of other cultures or languages could be made available on campus. Members of the committee agreed unanimously that three and one-half weeks of immersion into language would yield positive results. Not only could students aiming at overseas travel grasp the fundamentals of the target language, but they could also, if work in less frequently taught idioms were made possible, engage study of languages not in our college catalogues, one instance being Telugu, a language shared among 80 million speakers in India. Student-speakers could enroll themselves to teach Telugu or other languages native to them.\(^9\) The same principles would hold for more common languages that, say, a student would need to command for research devoted to a dissertation. Graduate and undergraduate students might wish to use their energies to teach Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, Italian, or another language with students and faculty eager to rebuild a base or refamiliarize themselves with its internal structures. Or, in another way, disciplines that are sorely lacking in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences—such as geography, a flagship at other top-tier institutions—could be taught in the hope that they might one day find a place in the curriculum.

The discussions concerning smaller classes and study of language and culture, both overseas and at home, indicate that the J-term could be conceived broadly as an area where internships could be developed. Students have remarked that they would wish to work in

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\(^5\) Hugo Van der Welden, Professor and specialist in Northern European art, has taken groups of students to Ghent for study of Van Eyck and to Burgundy to see, often in remote churches, work of fifteenth-century sculptors in the tradition of Beunneveu.

\(^6\) “The course,” notes Abiola Irele (Professor of Afro-American Studies), “could be devoted to the country’s history, beginning with the precolonial period which saw the rise of the powerful Fon kingdom of Dahomey.” In his communication Irele adds that on-site study could begin effectively in a short matter of time.

\(^7\) Gregory Nagy, correspondence of 2/16/05 with the chair of the committee.

\(^8\) Ideas of this order (of Lisa New’s conception) extended to Balzac’s or Rabelais’s Touraine, the Paris of film makers of the New Wave, Freud’s Vienna, or even Foucault’s Uppsala.

\(^9\) The committee thanks Vijay Yanamadala for his suggestions about Telugu, a course that he offered to teach.
professional milieu in order to hone skills needed for their careers. Pre-medical students would be encouraged to work with mentors in local hospitals or laboratories. Concentrators in economics aiming at careers in the commercial sector would avail themselves of what companies could offer in their own spaces. Professors at Harvard who require help in their laboratories or studios would arrange tutorials (with pre-assigned horizons of expectation for the nature of the work to be engaged) for interested students. The committee assumes that internships could be negotiated along various axes and on a broad scale that could include both the liberal arts and practical motivations. A hispanophone student, for example, who is seeking to develop a career in oenology could reasonably investigate resources in Argentina by consulting oenologists and merchants on the eastern slopes of the Andes.

The committee intuited that a change of calendar might bring new stress to teaching in the fall and spring semesters. Were courses to begin after Labor Day (after students have moved into their Houses in the later weeks of August) and end toward the end of December it was surmised that January would be a good time—as it has been in the current schedule—to catch up on work not completed or bring closure to classes and seminars. Students and faculty might elect to use the J-term for study of supplemental material in classes taught in the fall or, too, in preparation for classes in the second semester, use the J-term to set the foundations for a class in the spring term. The pattern is one that indeed is congruent with overseas study insofar as, in courses that bear on foreign cultures, an experience abroad would afford students either proof of what had been done in the fall semester or preparation for and anticipation of issues to be taken up in the spring.

Because the J-term would begin as a facultative program, and because it would invite both faculty and students to develop programs that fit electively in their fields of interest and concentration, an office, like that of Special Concentrations, would serve as a clearing house and a center for the negotiations. The credits assigned to students for the work they do would be, it is hoped, on a pass-fail basis. They would be negotiated between the instructors or investigators and the students; their worth in terms of credits would be assigned through the office itself. Likewise, faculty members would not be required to lead seminars or courses in the J-term. Those electing to lead courses could conceivably, after having taught a sum of two over the period of four years, be awarded with a reduction of one course in the fifth year. Various solutions could be arranged for the good ends of both student and faculty. Even though the question of remuneration was not a charge central to the committee it was felt that negotiable solutions would be overly difficult to obtain.

Insofar as in its initial phase the J-term would be facultative and experimental in design and would invite students to take an average of two short courses over the span of four years. While there was a range of ideas debated by the committee, with one member suggesting that students participate in J-term activities during each of their college years, this framework of participation in two out of four years was supported by the majority. It was felt that the freshman year might be given to acclimatization, while, for many, the month of January in the senior year would be dedicated to the undergraduate thesis or an alternative senior capstone experience (with work on these projects ideally counting for J-term credit). The J-term would find its ideal participants among sophomores and juniors; yet, at the same time, no student would be discouraged from using the J-term at any point in his or her four years at Harvard. Each of the units in the College would be invited to submit ideas for roughly four courses. In an ideal situation these courses might be both bona fide classes and models for creative variation.

Some of the faculty members who were consulted expressed concern about the consequence of an undue increase in teaching at a time when a break is needed to sustain energy
over the duration of the academic year. The committee has felt that students and faculty would use the term in the best of creative and experimental ways, not in the spirit of a burden or a loss of time but an invitation to innovation. The J-Term would be conceived in the spirit of the Thelemite’s Abbey, as a structure with and without walls, as a place where the historian of the future will say of its participants, “toute leur vie estoit employée non par loix, statuz ou reigles, mais selon leur vouloir et franc arbiter” [their whole life was led not by laws, statutes or rules, but according to their good and free will].

Insofar as committee reports require bullet-proof conclusions, those that committee brought forward include:

a. a guiding principle of creative experiment and election;
b. courses based on the model of the Freshman seminar;
c. internships in the pre-professional sphere;
d. an office and staff devoted to the J-term;
e. classes led by both students and faculty;
f. optimum use of the undergraduate Houses and their common rooms;
g. intensive study overseas;
h. public service opportunities;
i. activities of varying degrees of intensity and accreditation;
j. experiences supplemental to or in anticipation of existing courses;
k. negotiable accreditation and remuneration; and
l. a plan for students to take two (variously designed) J-term units over four years.

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Appendix 1

January Term Committee Members

Chair: Tom Conley
Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures

Members: John Dowling
Gordon and Llura Gund Professor of Neurosciences

Jane Edwards
Director, Office of International Programs

Robert Luc
Dean of Harvard Summer School; Executive Director of Undergraduate Studies;
Senior Lecturer on Molecular and Cellular Biology

Reva Minkoff
Harvard College Class of 2008
Student Representative

Elisa New
Professor of English and American Literature and Language

William Todd III
Harry Tuchman Levin Professor of Literature and Professor of Comparative
Literature

William Wright-Swadel
Director of the Office of Career Services

Staff: Inge-Lise Ameer
Assistant Dean of Harvard College
APPENDIX 2

EXISTING JANUARY PROGRAMS CONSULTED BY THE COMMITTEE

The January Term Committee consulted information on January Term Programs at the following schools:

Colby College
Harvard Law School
Michigan State University
Middlebury College
MIT
Mt. Holyoke University
Oberlin College
St. Mary’s College of California
Stanford University
University of California, Berkeley
University of Maryland, College Park
University of Virginia
University of Wisconsin
Williams College
REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PEDAGOGICAL IMPROVEMENT

As we move toward making decisions about curricular revision it is imperative that we pay more attention to the quality of teaching. The success of any plan will depend on how it is implemented. Below, we emphasize four broad objectives that have guided our deliberations this year. Under each, we have made practical suggestions that we believe will be helpful to faculty and administrators as they continue to refine their plans for curricular change. See Appendix for Committee Membership.

The College needs to improve evaluation of teaching and learning

We cannot fix problems unless we know what they are. Although the College has been gathering data for many years, much of it is unprocessed, inaccessible, or perhaps inadequate for the fine-tuned analysis we believe serious curricular revision requires. At the moment, the College relies on two instruments—CUE evaluations and exit interviews. Ironically, the exit interviews pan the same curriculum that the CUE evaluations seem to praise. We believe there needs to be better, more focused analysis of existing data. We also believe the College needs to find ways to use peer evaluation, alumni surveys and interviews, and other devices for clarifying the strengths and the weaknesses of a Harvard education.

A good place to begin is with CUE evaluations. Right now, the CUE evaluation are probably used most often as an aid to undergraduate course selection and as a way of evaluating (and rewarding) teaching fellows. We think the evaluations should be improved so that they become a device for improving both teaching and learning. To do so they need to recognize the needs of three different constituencies—faculty, teaching fellows, and undergraduate students. The questions on the CUE form need revision. We are delighted that this process is now underway. We encourage the group working on the new revisions to consult assessment experts as well as students and faculty in arriving at a final form. Although focus groups are helpful, they should recognize that professionals may be able to reconcile the often competing demands of the three groups.

We urge the undergraduate deans to persist in redesigning forms that will:

a. refine the standard questions for clarity and relevance;

b. offer a menu of optional questions from which instructors may choose;

c. provide easier ways of breaking down the data so faculty can know what is and is not working with particular groups;

d. provide opportunities for faculty as well as teaching fellows to discuss results with specialists at the Bok Center; and

e. provide easier, more flexible ways of administering anonymous mid-term evaluations that will allow instructors and students to make mid-course corrections.
We believe that, regardless of the form the evaluations take, faculty need help making sense of the responses they get. For example, given the great diversity of Harvard students, it is not uncommon that even a class of fifty will have two or more distinct subgroups—one of which feels the pace is too fast, another too slow. An average masks these bi- or multi-polar distributions. Those who discover the strangely skewed responses often throw up their hands thinking it impossible to serve both groups effectively.

We would also like to see the College develop additional methods of evaluation, encouraging wider use of mid-term evaluations, and perhaps doing more with peer evaluation, especially for new instructors and graduate assistants. It also seems wise to inform students of the availability of on-line anonymous feedback forms available through the Bok Center. Wider and better use of observations by skilled mentors—either through video tape or in person—would also help section leaders improve their teaching without being subject to specific rewards or punishments.

We are training a future professoriate. Therefore, we cannot let the training of graduate students take a backseat, and it is important not only to help our graduate students to develop strong skills but to develop teaching portfolios that will assist them in their careers. Surely teaching files should be an essential part of promotion and tenure files, something that is too often a perfunctory or last-minute consideration in our current process. As one of our committee members put it, “we need more senior professors who not only have a ‘beautiful mind’ for research, but also a ‘beautiful heart’ for teaching.”

We want to emphasize the importance of interpretation and analysis. We not only need better instruments for evaluating teaching but more help in assessing the data that we gather. Quantitative information is only one part of the process. With on-line evaluations, students will be able to include more comments. But if these are to be effective both students and instructors need to know how to use them.

Now that the College has implemented last year’s recommendation to conduct CUE evaluations electronically, there is an opportunity for significant improvement. It should begin now.

FAS needs to make existing support resources more visible and accessible to students, teaching fellows, and faculty

Harvard has impressive support for teaching and learning but the various components are scattered in different departments and offices. One center works with student writing, another with the training of teaching fellows. One department provides audio-visual equipment, another instruction in its use. Various libraries, deans, the provost, and the president all offer grants for course development. The Bureau of Study Counsel offers one form of help; house tutors another. Although all this energy coming from so many places encourages variety and innovation, it also makes for a lot of confusion, especially for undergraduates who are shuffled from office to office and for faculty who haven’t yet figured out the difference between the Bok Center and the Writing Center or untangled the many “digital initiatives” at work. The problems are compounded by a University web site that is almost unsearchable. We urge the administration to consider these improvements:

a. address the broader problem of competition and overlap among existing programs and identify ways that the constituencies they serve might become more aware of what they have to offer;

b. establish an intranet for easy searching;
c. expand the program begun last fall to orient junior faculty;

d. give one person in each department or program responsibility for coordinating teaching resources and training teaching fellows. The recently created Lead Teaching Fellows program has been very helpful in some departments and might be a model for how to proceed; and

e. build service to faculty and students into every expansion in computer services. Even more than software and power, people need well-trained individuals who can help them make use of the available resources.

_FAS needs to do more to develop communities of learning_

Harvard College is a liberal arts college within a research university. That is our strength. Instead of thinking of undergraduate education as a barrier to research or imagining specialization as the enemy of general education, we ought to build on our strengths.

There are many ways of bringing the missions of the college and the university together. One of the advantages of a large university is that it has immense resources in its libraries, museums, and research centers. It also has specialists devoted to studying how people learn. We do not think the College has done nearly enough to bring all these people together around our common interests in improving undergraduate education. We would like to see a curriculum that recognized the value of research in undergraduate education, that encouraged inquiry-based learning, that gave students more responsibility, and that encouraged more direct give-and-take among faculty, students, and other specialists. We would also like to see the College highlight and take advantage of ongoing research on how people learn. To that end, we propose these initiatives:

a. the establishment of a component of freshmen orientation that engages students from their first days at Harvard in the problem of how people learn;

b. the early development of several specific course proposals in general education that include librarians, museum curators, and specialists from the appropriate instructional centers (Bok Center, Writing Center, Instructional Computing Group, et al.) as part of the design team; and

c. the development of an advising tool that will allow students and advisers to group courses around a theme or topic. (We have jokingly called this the Amazon.com model). We suspect that developing synergy in individual student programs might be more effective in the long run than launching a large number of co-taught courses. This system might or might not include some sort of integrative seminar.

Finally, we hope that the combined efforts of faculty, staff, and students in curriculum revision will cause us all to think harder about how we learn as well as about what we believe is worth learning. As one of our committee members put it, we sometimes talk about teaching “as something faculty do to students, like inoculation.” Instead, it is a collaborative process that depends as much for its success on what students do as on what instructors ask them to do.
FAS can do more to encourage innovation

Harvard College has many excellent courses and outstanding teachers. Curriculum revision should build on those strengths. At the same time, developing new courses offers an opportunity for creativity.

Some who have come from other institutions are surprised at how little variation there is in Harvard courses. Even though Harvard has the #1 ranked School of Education in the country, most faculty in FAS know very little about cutting edge research on how people learn. Large lectures or small seminars appear to be the dominant models. Even within courses, the two exams/one paper model often predominates. Teaching and learning are locked into 50-minute segments, and most courses are crammed into a very few hours of the day. Large lectures can be effective (as many core courses demonstrate), but in our view they are most effective when lectures are closely integrated with sections and when the faculty head and teaching assistant work closely together to design and implement the course. Unfortunately, lecture courses by their very nature encourage passive learning (half-asleep students half-heartedly writing notes that they hope will make sense when they get around to studying during reading period.) There are also serious problems of space. Students tell us how frustrating it is to be crammed into too small a space (as in Sever 113) or sit in the dark in a too big lecture hall such as many in the Science Center.

To build on existing strengths and encourage innovation, we suggest that the College:

a. find ways to open up the schedule to make it easier for classes to be offered in different formats, such as hour and a half sessions that allow lectures to flow into discussion;

b. link classroom planning to curriculum revision to provide better-equipped and more learning-friendly classrooms;

c. encourage open sharing of course materials not only to make better use of resources but to deepen understanding of curricular options and approaches; and

d. launch a series of seminars or workshops for faculty and teaching fellows on specific practical problems in teaching (such as designing and grading exams) where people can learn about new and better ways of doing things. This should not only be a forum where instructors can share ideas but where they can learn from research on best practices.

We believe that regardless of the final shape curricular reform takes, the conversations that have taken place over the past three years have highlighted teaching in a way that has seldom happened at Harvard in recent years. We hope that this raised consciousness will not only affect the design of courses but the way in which we recruit and retain faculty. Too often, teaching is an afterthought. Although deans may value teaching ability, they can only recommend candidates selected by departments. As faculty we should make sure that we ourselves value undergraduate teaching and that we communicate that to potential candidates at both the junior and senior level.
APPENDIX A

COMMITTEE ON PEDAGOGICAL IMPROVEMENT

Chair: Laurel Ulrich
James Duncan Philips Professor of Early American History

Members: Paul Bergen
Committee Member 2004-2005
Senior Manager of Instructional Computing Group

Sarah Carter
GSAS Student Representative 2005-2006

Aaron Chadbourne ’06
Student Representative 2005-2006

Deborah Foster
Assistant Dean of Harvard College
Senior Lecturer on Folklore and Mythology

Tara Gadgil ’07
Student Representative 2005-2006
Undergraduate Council Student Affairs Committee Chair
Government

Kathryn Izzo
GSAS Student Representative 2005-2006
Celtic Languages and Literatures

Thomas Kelly
Morton B. Knafel Professor of Music
Music Building 203S

Richard Light
Walter H. Gale Professor of Education

Robert Luc
Executive Director of Undergraduate Studies
Senior Lecturer on Molecular and Cellular Biology

Xiao-Li Meng
Professor of Statistics

Patricia O’Brien
Committee Member 2004-2005
Deputy Dean of Harvard College
Ann Rowland  
Committee Member 2004-2005  
Assistant Professor of English and American Literature and Language

Jacob Hale Russell '05  
Student Representative 2004-2005

Sara Lynn Schwebel  
HGSE Student Representative 2004-2005  
Teaching Fellow in Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning

Henry Seton '06  
Student Representative 2005-2006

Josanna Weeks '06  
Student Representative 2004-2005

James Wilkinson  
Director of the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning

Joshua William Yaphe  
GSAS Student Representative 2004-2005  
Vice President of the Graduate Student Council  
Teaching Fellow in Music

Staff:  
Inge-Lise Ameer  
Committee Member 2005-2006  
Assistant Dean of Harvard College

Brooks Lambert-Sluder  
Committee Member 2005-2006  
Curricular Review Project Associate
Following up on recommendations regarding science and technology education for our undergraduates in *A Report on The Harvard College Curricular Review* (April 2004), Dean Kirby appointed a Science and Technology Committee from across the scientific disciplines to reconsider our introductory science courses and the science courses we provide for non-concentrators. From September 2004-May 2005, the committee, chaired by Dean Gross, met weekly to plan the redesign of such courses.

We know from the Harvard College Admission’s office that our undergraduates come to the College enthusiastic about the study of natural and physical sciences—close to 50 percent of entering students indicate an interest in the sciences, but less than 25 percent of seniors graduate with a science concentration. Many leave scientific study after taking an introductory course freshman year. This may indicate that our introductory courses are not successful at retaining interested students by immersing them in the excitement of science. Virtually none of the students in the introductory chemistry, physics, or math sequences for non-concentrators are persuaded to eventually concentrate in those fields. Even if they are successful in completing the work, they retain little of it in the years that follow. We need to spark our students’ interest by introducing them to modern areas of scientific inquiry.

To this end, we need to develop courses that demonstrate the connections between distinct fields and disciplines, and to generate real enthusiasm for the study of modern science. Undergraduates will be exposed to a broader range of science early on, which will allow them to make more informed choices about where their academic interests may lie. They will be able to draw meaningful connections between fields. Interdisciplinary teaching will stimulate broader creative thinking and a deeper synthesis of knowledge. These courses will be the first step in fostering a new generation that is less intellectually constrained by the traditional boundaries of each scientific discipline. This kind of interdisciplinary foundation will produce tomorrow’s scientists who will continue to make exciting breakthroughs at the interface of different fields. Moreover, this will enable tomorrow’s citizens to engage scientific issues from multiple perspectives and make better-informed decisions. In this way, students can understand why they need to take courses in subject areas that at first may seem indirectly related to their concentration.\(^1\)

The committee has divided its task into two parts. During this past semester we have worked to devise year-long introductory courses in the life sciences, physical sciences, and mathematics. These courses are designed primarily for potential concentrators in the life sciences. A common feature is that they integrate fundamental topics taught in distinct departments. For the life sciences, these topics include chemistry, molecular biology, cell biology, genetics, evolution, diversity, and psychology. For the physical sciences, these topics include physics, astronomy, physical chemistry, environmental science,

and computer science. In mathematics, the topics include differential equations, probability and statistics. All of these courses will seek to discuss ideas of engineering and technology. See the new life sciences website at http://lifescience.fas.harvard.edu/ for course syllabi and updates.

These courses have several unifying principles. First, they are problem oriented, and not restricted to a single subject. Second, the context of the science is stressed prior to the study of the fundamentals. This may result in some topics being taught out of sequence, but we feel it has pedagogical advantages. However, we will work to insure that these courses satisfy all of the pre-medical requirements for our students. We aim to present a sequence of useful tools, by emphasizing where and how these tools are applied. Finally, these courses have a broader sweep, so that our students can see how the various branches of the subject fit together.

A revision of the introductory courses will require a re-evaluation of the life sciences courses at the intermediate and advanced levels. Part of this process must also include careful consideration of the curriculum within concentrations, which will likely change as a result. These and other important issues will be addressed in due time, but the process must begin with the introductory courses in the freshman year which have been the primary focus of the committee’s efforts to date. As Dean Kirby wrote in the December 2003 Interim Report on the Progress of the Curricular Review, “We must prepare not only science concentrators but also those students with more humanistic and social science interests to appreciate the sciences and the role that they play in modern society and public policy. At a time when the University is investing mightily in the expansion of the science faculties, our undergraduates need to be among the most direct beneficiaries.”

In the spring semester, we began the process of developing general education courses for all of our students. We expect to set the scientific bar higher for these courses than it is in the current Core curriculum and plan to recruit these courses from all divisions of our science faculty. The committee generated four proposals, to give the faculty an idea of what these new courses might look like, and to model their pedagogical styles. Of course, the final shape of these courses in general education will depend on the deliberations of the faculty in that area of the review.

The first was a course that Dimitar Sasselov and Andy Knoll have developed for the Core, entitled Planets and Life. One goal was to bridge the gap for students in the physical and life sciences. The course will be team taught, with the instructors commenting on each other’s lectures in class, and with teaching fellows selected from both disciplines. The second was a course that Jerry Gabrielse has taught in the Science A-core, Reality Physics. A computer server problem set program where each student receives a different problem is available to all students in the class. Students may try as many times as they want to get the right answer. They receive immediate feedback on their work. Committee members felt this could be a future general education course, as it addressed questions in physics directly relevant to the lives of our students. The third was a course that Eric Mazur developed, entitled Powerful Habits of Mind. The goal of this course is to teach reasoning skills—how to manipulate knowledge and to understand the assumptions being made when analyzing data. It is awkward to fit this course in the Core, as it is more about qualitative reasoning than quantitative reasoning. Finally, David Haig presented a course on genetics, with some quantitative elements. The committee felt that the syllabus had many of the attractive elements of Gabrielse’s course; it might be reasonably titled Reality Biology.

Committee members were encouraged by these courses. They all had serious scientific content, yet addressed topics of current interest to all of our undergraduates. Of course, some non-concentrators might take the Life Sciences 1a and 1b or the Physical Sciences A, B, C, and D sequence, but these general education courses would provide another route. Some general suggestions for courses in general education included:
Designating these courses with a place of honor within the curriculum and a place of distinction for those who teach them. They deserve a special place in the catalog, so that advisers and students can find them.

That general education courses in the sciences be useful to all students across concentrations, not just non-science concentrators.

That teaching fellows for these types of courses be supported by the current Core Teachers Post-Doctoral program and that this program be expanded and restructured to specifically apply to new courses in general education.

Appendices for this report are available online at: www.fas.harvard.edu/curriculum-review.
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE TEACHING OF WRITING AND SPEAKING IN HARVARD COLLEGE

PREAMBLE AND PRINCIPLES

Writing and speaking well are both necessary and sophisticated skills. Inseparable from cogent reasoning, clear analysis, and vivid expression, they inform each discipline and belong to every area of intellectual endeavor. Writing and speaking well are not so much bodies of knowledge as life-long practices to be continually improved.

The teaching of writing and speaking requires a more prominent place in the College curriculum. This instruction must be newly integrated into departments and degree programs administratively, physically, and functionally. Current practices of teaching writing evince strengths but the overall result is inadequate. The teaching of public speaking and oral argument is scant, for many students non-existent, and must be revived vigorously.

Faculty—ladder faculty—should be more engaged in teaching writing and speaking. If they spend more time in this effort, the results are enormously gratifying; consistently, student response and performance verify this. Incentives should be created to increase faculty involvement. Without such involvement in courses in academic writing, in general education, and especially in departmental instruction involving writing and speaking, no scheme or plan will produce satisfactory results.

With few exceptions, schools that teach writing solely by distributing it across the curriculum have not succeeded. However, Harvard does not distribute the teaching of writing and speaking nearly enough and currently places too much expectation and burden on the single required, one-term Expository Writing course. All agree that writing cannot be taught adequately in one course. It is a crucial beginning but only a beginning.

Teaching writing and speaking requires considerable time. Devising assignments, reading them with care, commenting on them concisely and constructively, holding individual conferences, reading aloud passages to students, requesting rewritten papers, and going through the process again all demand hours of attention.

Every instructor who assigns writing or oral presentation implicitly assumes responsibility for teaching writing and speaking. To repeat, quality of thought, depth of analysis, and command of subject matter cannot be separated from their written and oral expressions, which are not purely vehicular. They constitute the very thought, analysis, and knowledge that animate any field not purely quantitative.

Some departments teach writing well in the sophomore year and continue through the senior year. Many departments do not, especially when they do not involve ladder faculty early in the process. There is often a notable lag in sophomore and junior years. In general, departments need to pay more attention to a graduated plan of teaching writing, to involve faculty in this process, and to train their Teaching Fellows rigorously in it. There are a few departments that could serve as models.
We trust that the College will commit the resources required for the changes envisioned here. The teaching of writing and speaking is as important as—and indeed establishes a foundation for—all other curricular efforts and reforms.

As in any enterprise of the College, faculty commitment is paramount.

ONE PROGRAM

We recommend strongly that the College entirely regroup and coordinate the efforts of Expository Writing, the Harvard Writing Project (including Gordon Gray grants), individual departments, the Bok Center (Graduate Writing Fellows), the Writing Center (peer tutoring), and writing instruction offered by the Bureau of Study Counsel. Faculty in the Freshman Seminar program may also wish to participate in this coordination.

The result of such coordination would be a genuine center for all the functions these various entities now perform. This might be called the Keller-Adams Program in Writing and Speaking (KAP). Helen Keller, a 1904 graduate of Radcliffe, exemplifies the effort and empathy needed to achieve a high degree of skill in writing and speaking, and she attained this against almost insurmountable odds. In 1955 Harvard University awarded her an honorary degree. John Quincy Adams, a 1788 graduate of Harvard, taught rhetoric and moral philosophy at the College and authored a standard textbook of rhetoric and oratory used throughout the nineteenth century. His diplomatic, political, and legal skills owe much to his veneration of the arts of writing and speaking well.

Such a unified program as KAP in one location would not preclude but should facilitate the individual staffing, administration, and direction of specific course offerings (see below). Housed under one roof, preferably in a building centrally located where teaching in other subjects occurs, this program would provide a central resource for all FAS students and instructors.

This program in writing and speaking should emphatically not be viewed as a single required course in the first year (see below). However vital that course—as are all other courses in writing and speaking—it should be but the initial step of an overall program.

Expository Writing has enjoyed active leadership. However, it has been isolated from the rest of the faculty pedagogically, administratively, and physically. Its oversight and teaching mission should be restructured to involve more directly ladder faculty and departments.

A reanimated and reconstituted Standing Committee on Writing and Speaking should include faculty members across all FAS disciplines and divisions. Members should serve more than one year. A faculty member of this Standing Committee and perhaps also the director of KAP should hold a seat on the Educational Policy Committee (EPC).

Any program in writing and speaking should command the attention of the highest levels of FAS and College administration. The director of this program should report to the Deans of FAS and the College. The director should serve on the College Senior Staff. The director should be a voting member of the FAS.
COURSE OFFERINGS

A required one-term course in academic writing should be taken the first year. We propose to call this not Expository Writing but the Freshman Writing Tutorial. We suggest that, while its assignments remain traditionally graded and while the College maintain and report to the student a record of the letter grade earned for the course, the transcript itself indicate Sat/Unsat and the student GPA be calculated without the letter grade.

There should be a maximum of 12 students in any first-year writing class.

All students identified as likely to benefit from a more basic course in academic writing (currently Expository Writing 10) should be required to take such a course. However, they should then not be required immediately afterwards to take a second course in academic writing (currently Expository Writing 20), but rather an additional course in writing by the end of the first term of sophomore year. This additional course may be in academic writing or it may be in rhetoric, a writing-intensive freshman seminar, or a writing-intensive course in general education (see below).

First-year writing classes in the Freshman Writing Tutorial should reflect a diversity of academic training, intellectual disciplines, and subject matters. They should not be largely confined to humanistic or literary subjects but should include an ample number of classes in effective writing for the natural, applied, and social sciences. Any class needs to provide excellent examples and models of prose in the subjects on which students themselves are writing.

The placement process in the Freshman Writing Tutorial should be reevaluated. It is important to start writing as early in the term as possible and for students to meet their instructors in the Freshman Writing Tutorial as soon as possible, preferably during Freshman Orientation Week but in any case before they are asked to select a class. CUE evaluations for individual classes and instructors should be available.

Those who teach classes in the Freshman Writing Tutorial should be appointed as Lecturers or ladder faculty, not Preceptors. Excellent, proven teachers in this course might be then retained longer than is currently the case. The salary for these Lecturers should be at least commensurate with those found at peer institutions.

Oral communication should be taught as public speaking and also as debate and oral argument. A specific course or courses in public speaking should be mounted. General education and departmental courses should participate in the effort to teach argument or debate in sections and smaller discussion groups.

A course or courses in rhetoric should be offered. Rhetorical principles and the recognized vocabulary of classical rhetoric that remains useful for modern students should be incorporated into the Freshman Writing Tutorial and disseminated to departments and degree programs.

The College should hire faculty to teach these courses in rhetoric and public speaking. Such individuals might be professors, professors of the practice, and/or senior lecturers who are permanent faculty members. They should be directly affiliated with the program in writing and speaking but might also enjoy departmental affiliation.

Creative Writing courses currently cannot serve all the students who might benefit from them. The number of courses in creative writing should be expanded to serve all qualified students. Subjects
such as environmental writing should be included in the creative writing program. However, creative writing courses should not substitute for an introduction to academic writing and argument.

DEPARTMENTS, DEGREE PROGRAMS, AND GENERAL EDUCATION

Courses in general education and Freshman Seminars that are writing intensive should be designated in all course listings. The Standing Committee on Writing and Speaking will identify writing-intensive courses for the catalog, where these courses should be clearly indicated.

In each concentration an individual faculty member should be designated responsible for the overall teaching of writing and speaking. This faculty member will be the liaison to KAP. This person, working in conjunction with the Head Tutor or DUS, will be a senior member of the faculty in the department or degree program. Departments and a program such as KAP would benefit by tighter coupling, which must be achieved.

The training of TFs to teach writing is inadequate. Some departments, the Bok Center, and the Harvard Writing Project make good, often outstanding efforts, but these are in general uncoordinated and voluntary. They tend to lapse over time. There are great inconsistencies. Certain departments and courses exemplify best practices. These could be models to emulate.

Those who assign and therefore also teach writing in departments and degree programs (including TFs) should have an intensive orientation to the teaching of writing. Such training would fall under the responsibilities of the individual in the department responsible for writing and speaking (see above). This training will require more than a two-hour or half-day orientation. It should be an intensive program organized in conjunction with departments and the program in writing and speaking (KAP).

In addition to courses in public speaking, the program will work with departments and degree programs to improve the teaching and level of student oral presentations.

Specific graduate student funding and fellowships might profitably be tied to writing instruction in the departments, degree programs, general education, and specific courses in writing and speaking.

Departments should explore the joint appointment of teaching personnel hired with the program in writing and speaking.

House Masters should encourage House writing tutors (an excellent idea), other House tutors, and students to use the program in writing and speaking as a resource.

Staff members of the Harvard College Library provide invaluable research and writing assistance to students and faculty. In each concentration, the faculty liaison to KAP, in conjunction with the Head Tutor or DUS, should ensure that connections between students and appropriate library staff are established and maintained.

Pending the final report of the Committee on General Education, any courses offered in rhetoric or public speaking might be considered to fulfill part of the requirement in General Education. For 2500 years such instruction has been considered foundational for general and liberal education. There might be “Harvard College Courses” (or whatever alternate name is selected) in rhetoric and public speaking.
A CERTIFICATE

The College should confer a certificate in writing and speaking on graduates who complete, over and above the one-term course required in the first year, three additional courses selected from the following: a writing-intensive freshman seminar, a course in creative writing, a course in rhetoric, a writing-intensive general education course, a course in public speaking. At least one of these three courses must be in either public speaking or rhetoric. Conferral of such a certificate should be recorded on the transcript.
APPENDIX I

SELECTED BACKGROUND READINGS


The Committee reviewed materials on teaching and writing from the Departments of Biology, Government, History, History of Science, Psychology, Study of Religion, and selected Core courses.


The Committee examined completed questionnaires on the teaching of writing and speaking from selected Harvard College Degree Programs and Departments:
African and African American Studies
Anthropology
Biological Sciences
Economics
English and American Literature and Language
Government
History
History and Literature
History of Science
Philosophy
Psychology
Romance Languages and Literatures

The Committee examined materials on writing instruction, requirements, and recommendations from other colleges and universities:

Bowdoin College
Cornell University
Duke University
Princeton University
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of South Dakota
Yale University
APPENDIX 2

PARTICIPANTS IN THE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE TEACHING OF WRITING AND SPEAKING

GUESTS

Elizabeth Doherty, Formerly Associate Dean of Harvard College and Formerly Director of Freshman Seminar Program

Willis Emmons III, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the Harvard Business School

Patrick K. Ford, Margaret Brooks Robinson Professor of Celtic Languages and Literatures and Formerly Acting Director of the Writing Program at UCLA

Peter J. Gomes, Plummer Professor of Christian Morals and Pusey Minister in the Memorial Church

Virginie Greene, Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures and John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Humanities

Gordon Harvey, Associate Director of Expository Writing and Senior Preceptor

Thomas Jehn, Preceptor in Expository Writing and Assistant Director of the Harvard Writing Project

Stephen M. Kosslyn, John Lindsley Professor of Psychology and Formerly Head Tutor of Psychology Department

Eric C. LeMay, Preceptor in Expository Writing

Roger Smitter, Executive Director of the National Communication Association

Nancy Sommers, Sosland Director of Expository Writing

James Wilkinson, Director of the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning and Lecturer on History and Literature

Martha Watson, President of the National Communication Association and Dean at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas

Jeffrey Wolcott, Associate Dean and Chief Planning Officer of Harvard College
MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE TEACHING
OF WRITING AND SPEAKING IN HARVARD COLLEGE

James Engell, Chair, Gurney Professor of English Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature and Chair of the Department of English and American Literature and Language

Jayme Herschkopf, Harvard College Class of 2006, Joint Concentration in the Comparative Study of Religion and English and American Literature and Language

John Huth, Professor of Physics and Chair of the Department of Physics

Marilyn McGrath Lewis, Director of Admissions for Harvard College

David R. McCann, Korea Foundation Professor of Korean Literature and Director of the Korea Institute (Professor McCann has also taught Expository Writing at the College)

Emily Vasiliauskas, Harvard College Class of 2007, Literature Concentration

Harriet Morgan, Staff, Special Assistant to the Associate Dean

Inge-Lise Ameer, Staff, Assistant Dean of Harvard College

Committee meetings were two hours long and the Committee met sixteen times during the 2004-2005 academic year.