

Mr. Agard

MAY 2 - 1969

Although no proposals for a three-course norm have yet been formally placed before the faculty, there is so much three-course talk in the air that we the undersigned wish to express our misgivings about the idea.

We feel that a reduction from a four-course to a three-course program is a reduction indeed. We understand and respect the educational principles upon which the three-course suggestions are based--a compensation in "depth" more valuable than what might be lost in "breadth"--but are not convinced that such a compensation would in fact result from the change.

The "depth" or "weight" of courses is extremely varied, not only as among courses but, more importantly, as among students. We see little likelihood that a decrease to three courses will lead to weightier courses. We feel that it is more realistic for the faculty to be primarily concerned with the opportunities it makes available to the students than with the more imponderable problem of how much substance each student will get from his courses. Unless the three courses envisioned were practically expanded in terms of number of hours per week and amount of work submitted by students--which would nullify the advantage of making more faculty time available to accommodate an expanded student body--the three-course program would mean, at bottom, that the students would be expected to compensate privately for the loss of the fourth course.

As regards their formal program, the likelihood, with a three-course load, would be increased pressure to conform to divisional norms and a reduced possibility of free choices of courses to suit the student's curiosity or even whim.

Educational quality aside, it seems doubtful to us that, on the practical level, a three-course program would in fact alleviate the over-crowding that may come with an expanded student body. The chances are, in fact, that with a three-course system the crowded courses will remain crowded and the uncrowded ones will become even less crowded. Furthermore, since the over-crowding problem is far more evident in introductory than advanced courses, and since most three-course proposals do not cover the freshman year, it seems unlikely that any of these proposals would contribute significantly to our ability to absorb an increase in the student body.

Since we have serious doubts about the reality of the educational benefits to be derived from a three-course program, and doubts also about the extent to which such a program would solve immediate curricular problems, we feel that the faculty should study these proposals and alternatives to them with the greatest of care.

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