1964

Recommendation that the Freshman Orientation Convocation Program not be continued (Report of Special Committee to evaluate the Freshman Orientation Program, recommendations of Group I.)

University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate

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Transmittal Form for Bills Approved by the Faculty Senate

From: The Chairman, Faculty Senate
To: The President, Dr. Francis H. Horn
Enclosure

1. The attached bill, entitled Recommendation that the Freshman Orientation Convocation Program not be continued (Report of Special Committee to evaluate the Freshman Orientation Program, recommendations of Group 1.) is hereby forwarded to you for your consideration.

2. The official original and duplicate copies for your use are attached.

3. This bill was approved by vote of the Faculty Senate on April 23, 1964.

4. After your consideration, will you kindly indicate your approval or disapproval, as appropriate, and either return it or forward it to the Board of Trustees, as you may deem appropriate, completing the appropriate endorsement below.

5. Attention is invited to the fact that this bill will become effective on May 14, 1964 (three weeks after its approval by the Senate), in accordance with paragraph 8.2 of the Bylaws of the Faculty Senate as amended, or in accordance with provisions of the bill, unless it is returned disapproved by the President, or unless referendum is petitioned for by the Faculty, or unless the President decides to forward it, with his approval, to the Board of Trustees for their approval. If it is to be forwarded to the Board of Trustees, it will not become effective until approved by the Board.

April 24, 1964
Robert W. Harrison
(Signature) Chairman, Faculty Senate

Endorsement 1.

From: The President, University of Rhode Island
To: The Chairman, Board of Trustees of State Colleges

1. Forwarded.
2. Approved.

Continued on reverse side.
Alternate Endorsement 1.

From: The President, University of Rhode Island
To: The Chairman, Faculty Senate

1. Returned.
2. Approved X. Disapproved _____.
3. (If approved) In my opinion, transmittal to the Board of Trustees would not be desired by the Board and is unnecessary.

May 13, 1964
(Signature) President, University of R.I.

Endorsement 2.

From: The Board of Trustees of State Colleges
To: The Chairman, Faculty Senate
Via. The President, University of Rhode Island.

1. Returned.
2. Approved _____, Disapproved _____.

(date) (Signature)

(Office)

Endorsement 3.

From: The President, University of Rhode Island
To: The Chairman, Faculty Senate

1. Forwarded.

(date) (Signature) President, University of R.I.

Received May 14, 1964
(Signature) Chairman, Faculty Senate

Original forwarded to Secretary of the Senate and Registrar, E. Farrell, for filing in the archives of the University.

(date) (Signature) Chairman, Faculty Senate
Report of the Special Committee to Evaluate the Freshman Orientation Program.

I. Remarks Related to Recommendations, Group I. (A summary of recommendations appears at the end of this report)

For a number of years prior to 1958-59 the University required all Freshmen to complete a one-semester orientation course during their first semester. Several colleges also required a second semester course of orientation to their own disciplines. After years of experience, the all-University orientation course was found by those most closely associated with it to be unsatisfactory. Accordingly, the committee in charge of the course recommended that it be abolished; their recommendation was endorsed by the Executive Council and enacted by the General Faculty in the Spring of 1958. Following are pertinent excerpts from the minutes of the Executive Council.

March 11, 1958:

"University Orientation Course (Secretary). The Secretary reported a request by the Orientation Course Committee for suggestions and advise from the Executive Council regarding the advisability of discontinuing the course. Council opinion was varied, but the matter was referred back to the Committee with the following suggestions: that academic credit be considered, that integration with the various college orientation programs be discussed, that smaller groups be tried, and that other efforts be made to motivate greater student interest in the program."

April 1, 1958:

"Freshman Orientation Course (President). President Woodward called attention to Dean Quinn's March 20 letter forwarding the recommendations of the Freshman Orientation Course Committee to the effect that the course be discontinued. After some discussion, the Committee recommendation was approved by the Council for presentation to the General Faculty for endorsement."
Following is an excerpt from the minutes of the University Faculty meeting on May 8, 1958:

"Recommendation of the University Executive Council that the first semester all-University orientation course for Freshmen be discontinued as of September, 1958, was approved with the understanding that where applicable the various college orientation courses will be moved up to the first semester, and that substitute procedures for orientation, particularly in the academic area--study techniques, etc.--be instituted beginning in September."

On April 30, 1962, a Committee to Study the Place, Nature, and Improvement of Convocation Programs, appointed by the President, reported to the President as follows:

"The purpose of the Convocation Committee was to study the place, nature, and improvement of convocation programs.

The need for this study was indicated by 1) a lack of information regarding a definition of 'Convocation' at the University, 2) a lack of a clear statement of policy regarding the purpose and scope of convocation programs, 3) a lack of standards to determine the quality of convocation programs, 4) a lack of faculty and student interest in present convocation programs, and 5) very poor attendance at convocation programs.

"After investigation of the problem, the committee agreed that convocation programs, as they are now constituted, are no longer desirable or practicable.

"However, the committee also agreed that the University should have 'a convocation program' because it is educationally and psychologically stimulating to bring the entire faculty-student group together to experience programs of outstanding universal significance. In addition, convocation programs that include world leaders, scientists, historians, educators, musicians, etc., with international reputations would be a salient supplement to extant University programs, such as, Visiting Scholars Series, Music Series, and Art Series.

"Therefore, the Committee submits the following recommendations regarding convocation programs:

1) That the concept of convocation, as exemplified by the 'convocation program schedule' from 1956 to the present, be abandoned.
2) That 'convocation' be considered a major university event.
3) That an 'all-University opening convocation' be held on or about the opening date of classes for the Fall Semester."
1) That there be no more than two convocations per semester, in addition to the 'all-University opening convocation'.

5) That the time and place for each convocation be set by the President of the University.

6) That all faculty and students be required to attend the 'all-University opening convocation'.

7) That faculty and students be 'expected' to attend convocation.

8) That all University functions, activities, and services, such as classes, offices, dining halls, library, Student Union, etc., be suspended during all convocation periods.

9) That the President of the University in consultation with the Administrative Council and selected student representatives determine the programs for convocations.

10) That invitations to address convocation be extended by the President of the University.

11) That the intent of convocation be printed in the University Catalogue, the University Manual, and the Student Handbook. The intent of the following statements should be included: Convocation is a major university event. Faculty and students are expected to attend.

12) That the desirability and practicability of the preceding recommendations should be reviewed periodically by the Administrative Council."

During the winter and spring of 1963, the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate received a letter from a faculty member requesting re-institution of convocation programs. This was referred to the calendar committee, who returned it to the Executive Committee with the opinion that it was not within the Calendar Committee's jurisdiction.

The Executive Committee placed the question of jurisdiction before the Senate. The question was referred back to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee held a lengthy discussion on February 28, 1963 and postponed further discussion to the next meeting. The matter was not discussed again and was not resolved, so far as the record shows.

On June 11, 1963, the Administrative Council approved a freshman orientation program, as indicated in its minutes:

"Dean Quinn presented a Freshman orientation program of nine weekly one class hour sessions. Some concern was expressed over overlapping with orientation programs of the several undergraduate colleges and matters such as introducing the Library which were not included. Dean Quinn was requested to involve the academic deans in planning details of the program, and to arrange an evaluation procedure to aid in future planning.

"Motion approved: to schedule a Freshman Orientation Program for the Fall of 1963 concluding prior to Thanksgiving vacation, arranged under the Vice President for Student Affairs. Students having unreconcilable conflicts because of class schedules will be excused from attending the orientation by the Dean of Students."
On October, 1963, the Faculty Senate voted to confirm the recommendation of its Executive Committee to "...approve a Freshman orientation program for the Fall of 1963, under the conditions recommended by the Administrative Council on June 11, on a trial basis, to be evaluated during this year, and further recommendations for next year to be considered by the Senate in the light of the evaluation."

The present problem is to evaluate the experience with the Freshman orientation program carried out in the Fall of 1963, and to formulate recommendations regarding its continuation, cessation or alteration, or to suggest alternate means by which to accomplish the purposes for which it was intended.

In order to evaluate the program, the members of the evaluation committee attended the meetings of the program to observe. At the last convocation meeting a questionnaire was completed by the Freshmen students attending. A copy of the tabulated responses is attached to the original of this report (omitted in copies distributed).

Study of the questionnaire supports the following statements:

Only three of the eight programs were rated by more than 15% of the students as of major value to them (Organization of Study Patterns, 34%; Student Commitments, by visitor Capt. Anderson, 35%; and The World Around Us, by international students, 73%).

Only three of the programs were rated by more than 43% as of moderate or greater value to them (the same three, by, respectively, 63%, 65%, and 86%).

There was, therefore, a clear-cut division between those programs well-received and those not well received. Of those well received, only one was of a strictly orientation nature; the other two could be classified as a combination of entertainment, exhibition of a distinguished person, and horizon-broadening.

(Study patterns might well be included in the new student week. Horizon-broadening and entertainment might well be provided in the formal courses available and in presentations to larger audiences, e.g. all-University Convocations).

Only one-third of the Freshmen responding considered the time spent, overall, to have been worthwhile. Forty-six percent recommended continuation for next year's Freshmen. But two-thirds recommended a weekly convocation program devoted to other or additional subjects. Roughly one-third expressed interest in programs concerned with general University regulations, morals & values, social regulations and current affairs.
It seems plain that any objection is not to attendance at convocations, but to the orientation programs presented. It seems to be indicated that the Freshmen are receptive to horizon-broadening, especially if it has some aspect of the unusual or entertainment.

Those responding to a request for additional comments gave only complaints, indicating lack of interest, lack of motivation of lack of satisfaction.

All of these data except one, point toward the conclusion that the results of the program in general were not worth the time spent on it. The indication by 46% that the program should be continued next year is not in conformity with the other answers, and is difficult to explain or to assess.

Generally speaking, the observations of the observers on this committee corroborate the data from the questionnaire.

In consequence, it is believed the recommendations of group I are justified by the experience of 1963 (and they are substantially the same as the recommendations of the Orientation Course Committee in 1958.)

1. That the orientation program in this form be discontinued.
2. That a program on study patterns and techniques be included in the program of the new student week.
3. That consideration be given to orientation to the Library in the new student week.

II. Remarks Related to Recommendations, Group II.

The Committee would, however, like to make some further observations:

It is felt that a well-planned convocation series can make an important contribution to student growth, in terms of placing the college experience in clearer perspective, broadening the students' understanding of their responsibilities, and facilitating an examination of the complexities of life, as related to the students' educational role and to their post-college place in society.

These educational experiences are not readily attainable in the classroom. The embellishments provided by a convocation series should help students to attach greater significance to their academic work and to promote greater incentive to get the most out of college.

As indicated in the earlier-mentioned survey evaluation, students are receptive to convocations. They respond to capable and notable speakers and famous personages. They appreciate horizon-broadening programs, especially if they are well presented.
The University presently lacks any University-wide forums, except one or two convocations per year. More would be well received, it is felt.

There are many capable people on campus who could present excellent programs on topics of timely interest, that should be made available to broader audiences than are reached in their formal courses.

Many excellent speakers and notable personages have been brought to the campus in recent years, in connection with the programs of Visiting Scholars and Honors Colloquium. These people often speak to small audiences and are brought to the campus at considerable expense.

Based on the above considerations, the Committee proposes the following recommendations:

1. That more frequent convocations be held.
2. That these programs be coordinated with the Visiting Scholars Program and, if practicable, with visits of Honors Colloquium speakers.
3. Attendance should be voluntary, except that each freshman be required to attend at least half of the convocations during each semester.
4. The Thursday, 1:00-2:00 P.M. period be kept free of classes to accommodate convocations, curriculum-connected meetings, college orientation efforts and faculty meetings.

The present committee has given some thought to means of implementing a convocation plan that might prove successful. In the opinion of the committee, the following features might prove of benefit:

1. Implementation should be a joint administration-faculty effort, with executive capacity vested in an administrative officer or other permanent or semi-permanent office.
2. A single person should have prime responsibility, both as executive and chairman of any advisory group that might be involved in planning and/or execution.
3. The chairman should have the benefit of advice and assistance from certain others that might well include:
   a) Faculty members representing a diversity of disciplines and fields of interest.
   b) A representative of the Honors Colloquium Committee or the coordinator of the Honors Program.
   c) A representative of the Visiting Scholars' Committee.
   d) Student representation (perhaps member-at-large of the Student Senate and President of the Freshman class.)
   e) Representative of Personnel Services Division.
   f) Representative of performing arts group or groups (e.g. music, drama.)
   g) The Dean of Students.
4. There should be a broad flexibility in selection of programs, but we suggest some types that might prove successful, e.g., visits of noteworthy persons, speakers on current events, modern trends and recent developments in various intellectual disciplines, items of current campus interest and importance, exhibition of campus performing artists and visiting artists (drama, music, dance, debate), repetitive annual events (Honors Day awards, Honors Lectureship.) Items of interest and emphasis in particular years (e.g. Civil War Centennial, Darwin’s centennial), outstanding faculty speakers who ordinarily reach only a small audience in their classes. Not the least, a more frequent opportunity for the President to speak to a large student group might prove beneficial.

5. Regarding finances, it might be possible to operate such a program without additional expense by making use of visitors coming to campus in connection with other programs already subsidized by University funds.

Following is a summary of the recommendations of the committee:

Group I.

1. That the required Freshman Orientation Convocation Program, as held during the Fall of 1963 not be continued.

2. That a program on study patterns and techniques be included in the New Student Week.

3. That consideration be given to orientation to the Library in the New Student Week.

Group II.

1. That more frequent convocations open to the campus community be held.

2. That these programs be coordinated with the Visiting Scholars Program and, if practicable, with visits of Honors Colloquium speakers.

3. That attendance should be voluntary, except that each Freshman be required to attend at least half of the convocations during each semester.

4. That the Thursday, 1:00-2:00 P. M. class period be kept free of scheduled classes to accommodate convocations, curriculum-connected meetings, college orientation efforts and faculty meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

Boris C. Bell
George E. Osborne
Robert W. Harrison, Chairman
STUDENT ORIENTATION PROGRAM EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix A. November 21, 1963

1. Will you please indicate, in the space to the left margin, the extent to which each Freshman Orientation Convocation program this fall contributed to your orientation to college life? Use the following scale of values:

   3 - of major value to me
   2 - of moderate value to me
   1 - of minor value to me
   0 - of no value to me

   ___ 1. (Oct. 3) Dean McGuire, "Society's Challenge."


   ___ 3. (Oct. 17) Judge Trumpetto, Chief Congdon, Mr. Smith, "The University and Its Public." Mr. Hallenbeck, Moderator.

   ___ 4. (Oct. 24) Students: Misses Oxley, Abrams, Mr. Beebe, "Organization of Study Patterns." Dr. Harrison, Moderator.

   ___ 5. (Oct. 31) Professors Potter, Price, Rife, "Effective Communication."

   ___ 6. (Nov. 7) President Horn, "Role of Student, Faculty & Administration."

   ___ 7. (Nov. 14) Captain Anderson, "Student Commitments."

   ___ 8. (Nov. 21) Mr. Suddard & Panel of International Students, "The World Around Us."

II. Overall, do you believe that your time spent in these programs was worthwhile? ______ (Yes or No.)

III. Would you recommend continuation for next year's freshman class? ______ (Yes or No.)

IV. Would you favor a weekly convocation program devoted to subjects other than or in addition to those found in the current orientation program? (Yes or No) Suggested subjects:
   (Check)
   ___ General University Regulations
   ___ Morals and values
   ___ Social regulations
   ___ Current state, national and international affairs
   Others: ____________________________________________

V. Comments?
### Appendix B.

December 16, 1963

#### *STUDENT EVALUATION OF FRESHMAN ORIENTATION SERIES*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Rating</th>
<th>Scoring Percentages</th>
<th>#Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
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<td>1.12</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
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<td>1.26</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
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<td>1.79</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
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<td>1.24</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average Rating and Scoring %**

*Calculations are based on 800 student responses to the questionnaire.

#Student evaluation based on following scale:

3 - Program of major value to students
2 - Program of moderate value to students
1 - Program of minor value to students
0 - Program of no value to students
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Questions asked in Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33.67%</td>
<td>66.33%</td>
<td>1. Overall, do you believe that your time spent in these programs was worthwhile?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.75%</td>
<td>54.25%</td>
<td>III. Would you recommend continuation for next year's freshman class?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.19%</td>
<td>33.81%</td>
<td>IV. Would you favor a weekly convocation program devoted to subjects other than or in addition to those found in the current orientation program?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
<th>Other Topics Suggested by Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1. General University Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
<td>2. Morals and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>3. Social regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
<td>4. Current state, national, and international affairs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments Found on the Questionnaires**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number Registered</th>
<th>Nature of Comments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Waste of time, boring, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Opposed to compulsory convocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Series repetitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Series too long; programs should be spaced out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Prefer to study during this time slot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Subjects uninteresting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Programs too unrealistic, not practical enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Poor speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Complaints of student rudeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Program better suited to New Student Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>More student involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Student panels better than speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Opposed to panels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>