

Dumbing down W&M

By Karla K. Bruno

ARLINGTON

The Curriculum Review Committee at the College of William & Mary met with the Board of Visitors in a special session this week to share its view on the future of academics.

But first they shared it with the rest of the faculty. That view, contained in a published document, is available at www.societyforthecollege.org.

Warning: it's not pretty.

In 2013, when this new plan would presumably be implemented,

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W&M will look more like a playground than a center of higher learning. Gone are most general education requirements.

The foreign language requirement has been watered down. The math and science requirement, once three full courses in both fields, will be but one course that supposedly covers both.

Gone are *all* history requirements. The writing requirements remain weak, but at least they are there.

Throw in a new Curriculum Center ("Think of the present Writing Center on steroids") at a price not yet determined, where unnamed staffers, rather than faculty, will advise students on what classes to take.

What were they thinking?

Not about what students will actually learn over four

years. Not about what standards should be applied. Not about costs involved.

What were they thinking?

That "anything goes" is more important than student's academic progress. That accountability for teaching is oh, so passé. That having to advise those pesky undergraduate students is not worth their time.

That history of any kind is such a snore it shouldn't be required of anyone. This is in Williamsburg, where American history freely lives and breathes and where we live and breathe in freedom because of American history.

The Society for the College, an active group of alumni, students and friends of the college, engaged the faculty and administration in public and private discussion about the direction of any changes that might be forthcoming. The society has tried, since last April, to stop this slide by bringing the topic beyond the campus and out into the public square. After last October the college shut out the society from all discussion.

This week, when invited to present their views on curriculum review to an audience of alumni, students and taxpayers in the Wren Building, the faculty and administration declined to participate.



The Society was not requesting a debate or even an open discussion, merely someone from the Curriculum Review Committee present their findings after a presentation by the Society on its recommendations for curriculum change.

Refusing to share vital information with alumni is nothing short of stupefying.

The only reason the document is posted on the Society website is a lone, brave faculty member gave it to them.

Accountability and transparency have not been the college administration's strong suit, but I had hoped that Taylor Reveley was bigger than that, more rational, more attuned to fairness and to the idea that alumni participation is valuable and useful.

Leadership, if it ever existed in recent memory at the College, is gone, just like the general education requirements.

A W&M classmate who currently works at Harvard asked me this week, "What's going on with our alma mater? Based on that wussy curriculum description, I wouldn't choose the school now."

Nor I. Not for all the slides on the playground.

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