August 28, 1998

To: Rhodes Faculty
Fm: John M. Planchon, Dean of Academic Affairs
Re: Recommendations Concerning the Curriculum

During the 1997-98 academic year, Rhodes undertook two important planning projects, an intensive strategic self-study and a strategic planning initiative aimed at defining Rhodes’ vision for the third millennium. The self-study, an integral part of our accreditation process with The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), also serves to inform the strategic planning initiative which will culminate with the Board of Trustee’s meeting in October. These efforts have involved people from all parts of the Rhodes community, trustees, faculty, students, staff and administrators. In 1997-98, the curriculum committee raised questions and made recommendations in the area of long-term curricular planning and general degree requirements. These questions served as a basis for the study by the SACS committee on curriculum. My purpose in writing this memorandum is to present to you my recommendations concerning the curriculum, which are grounded in the discussions of and the reports from the curriculum committee, the strategic self-study committees and the curriculum work group, and to request your engagement in selecting a course of action for us to pursue regarding these curricular issues. Faculty have been very involved in the process leading to this report, and although the report takes the form of specific recommendations, I welcome your discussion and suggestions for changes. The curriculum is the responsibility of the faculty, and thus, this should become the work of all faculty.

Background

In Rhodes’ proposal to SACS for a strategic self-study as part of the accreditation process, the College focused on three very distinct, but closely related areas under the general rubric of “Liberal Learning and the Residence Life Experience at Rhodes:” (1) Academic Experience, (2) Enrollment, and (3) Housing and Student Services. Within the academic experience, four significant areas were identified as meriting study—the academic climate and its relationship to residential life, the international thrust of the curriculum, the foundational framework of the curriculum, and technology’s value and potential within Rhodes’ curriculum. Subcommittees to examine each of these four areas were formed with each submitting a report for its area. In these reports, several critical curricular issues were identified and a recommendation submitted to the Dean that an ad hoc committee be formed to study them. (A similar recommendation was first discussed in the curriculum committee. (See faculty minutes of 15 April 1998.) Following these recommendations from the subcommittees, I sent to all faculty on April 29 an invitation to join a faculty work group in studying the issues enumerated below.
1. An investigation into the divisional model we now use as the foundation for our general education goals as well as researching alternative models

2. A clarification of discipline specific goals of the distribution requirements

3. An analysis of the major, minor, and elective hours, their purposes and their relationships to general education goals

4. An analysis of the senior seminar across departments and programs

5. An examination of ways in which to achieve more of an interdisciplinary synthesis

6. An examination of internships, service learning, practica, their purposes and their relationships to general education goals

7. An examination of the desirability of an honors program or other program which provides special opportunities and recognition to students who excel academically

Twelve faculty volunteered to be part of the work group: Professors Tom Barr, Joe Favazza, Patricia Gray, Steve Haynes, Bob Llewellyn, Mark McMahon, Kenny Morrell, Bob Mortimer, John Olsen, Robert Strandburg, Steve Wirls, and Lynn Zastoupil. Additionally, Associate Dean Terri Lindquester was a member of the work group, and the group was chaired by Dean John Planchon. During the course of examining the seven issues above, the work group selected twelve peer colleges for comparison.

Very tentative schedule

September 2, 1998 Distribute report to Department Chairs (Ask chairs to ready and study the document and meet again to discuss on September 11)

September 10, 1998 Meet with Department Chairs (Discuss the

October 1 - 14 Meet with Department Chairs, Divisional Meetings?

1 The Curriculum Work Group, at the request of the Dean, added distance learning to the issues considered under this item.

2 The institutions examined for this review form a subset of the fifty peer institutions used as references by Rhodes. The subset examined consists of Amherst, Carleton, Centre, Davidson, Grinnell, MacAlester, Oberlin, Sewanee (University of the South), Swarthmore, Williams, Reed, and Pomona.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 1</td>
<td>Dept. Divisions return proposed revisions to</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 15</td>
<td>Revised Report to Faculty and Curriculum Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 10</td>
<td>Complete changes in time for vote by faculty and inclusion in new catalogue</td>
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