

THE INTERIM TERM



CHAPTER SIX

The Curriculum Study Committee proposes the initiation of a new academic calendar, sometimes referred to as the 4-1-4 plan. Under this plan a student would normally take four courses during the fall semester, which starts early in September and finishes just before Christmas vacation, and four courses during the spring semester, which begins early in February and finishes at the end of May. During the four-week period in January (the interim) the student would take just one course, requiring his full time effort. This program has recently been introduced in a few liberal arts colleges and has been judged successful by many of the personnel in those schools.

The objective of the interim is to provide time and opportunity in the curriculum and calendar for the student and staff to study topics which ordinarily would not be pursued in the regular semester, or to attempt a new approach to a certain topic. An interim period would encourage and facilitate the teaching of a wide variety of new types of courses, among them the following: interdisciplinary courses; courses in recent literature discussing the relation between the Christian faith and some discipline; courses in which some topic which can be developed only cursorily in a regular course in a department is explored in depth; courses in topics which do not fit comfortably into any discipline at all,

e.g., a course in the philosophical and religious implications of recent Supreme Court decisions on school matters; courses in which a certain theme is pursued, e.g., a course in Paradise Conceived as City and Garden in Western Literature; courses in which recent journal literature in some discipline is read and discussed; research courses and independent study courses; courses in which skills are intensively developed, e.g., elementary language courses in which wholly new approaches are taken to traditional topics.

The Committee recognizes that certain of these courses could be taught during the regular semester. It believes, however, that the interim offers the structure most favorable for encouraging and facilitating the teaching of courses outside the regular pattern, since the staff would have much greater freedom in selecting topics to be covered in interim courses than they do in selecting topics to be covered in semester courses. Our college curriculum is, by and large, very inflexible. In our concern that there shall not be a needless proliferation of courses, and that there shall be a definite pattern of courses which the student can assume will be regularly offered and the completion of which will give him a unified education, we have made the introduction of new courses a serious and much deliberated matter. This is certainly as it should be. When, as is the case at many universities, the schedule of courses offered is almost wholly determined by the whim of individual professors, there can be no assurance that the student's needs are being satisfied. But the deliberateness and relative fixity of our curriculum have a corresponding defect—they discourage experimentation and the exploration of topics which, though valuable, should yet not become part of the permanent curriculum. The 4-1-4 plan, it seems to us, provides a desirable balance. Further, in addition to the opportunity for taking unusual courses, the student should find that taking just one course during the interim will prove a fresh educational experience.

All courses to be taught during the interim would be subject to approval each year by a committee of the interim program, under the authority of the Dean of the College. Interim courses should be taught at three levels, one level open to freshmen and sophomores, another open to sophomores and juniors, and a third open to juniors and seniors. Each student would be required to complete four interim courses. In order to avoid forcing interim courses into the normal pattern, only grades of Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, and Honors would normally be given. Departments would be asked to decide, subject to the approval of the Committee on the Interim Program, whether or not a given course could count toward fulfilling concentration or core requirements. A student could not take more than two interim courses in any single department. Generally, each department would be required to offer courses at each of the three levels.