

UNC perspectives needed for well-roundedness

If you are preparing to enter Carolina, you are probably looking over the Academic Advising Manual you received in the mail. If you are already enrolled at Carolina, you are probably thinking about which classes you are taking in the fall. But no matter where you are in your studies, two words are very important to your scholastic plans: perspectives requirements.

At first glance there seem to be a lot of requirements. During General College, a student has to take courses in five perspectives — natural sciences, social sciences, Western historical/non-Western comparative, aesthetic, and philosophical. Then, if the student goes on to the College of Arts and Sciences, he or she must take one more course in each perspective.

Many of you may feel frustrated that you can't just get on with your major because of all these requirements. You may wonder what ancient philosophy has to do with organic chemistry or Russian government with marketing. You may

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simply be trying to make heads or tails of what you have to take. But before you complain about the requirements, think about the reasoning behind them.

The perspectives requirements were instated for three main reasons. The first is to strengthen the student's writing. Some students have gone through Carolina without ever having written a paper after freshman year. They have learned to think in terms of zeroes and ones, but not in terms of passable English. Writing a paper does take effort, but it forces you to think through your subject, and original thinking is the most effective (and the most rewarding) method of learning.

The second reason behind the

perspectives requirements is to promote better communication between students and professors. Too many students have hidden in lecture classes of 100, and too few have taken advantage of the wealth of knowledge, thought and creativity which their own UNC professors have to offer.

The third reason is to strengthen each of the skills the General College offers. An English major may never have taken an upper-level biology course, and many chemistry majors have missed out on the perspective philosophy gives to life.

There are lots of reasons not to specialize too quickly. When you get out of college, you will use not just math or speaking skills, but all of the skills you learn here. If you want to go into business, you will need to not only how advertise, but also how to understand trends in the economy. If you want to be an administrator, you will need to know not only how to keep records on a computer, but

also how to help employees work to their potential. If you want to be a doctor, you will need to know not only how to work organic chemistry equations, but also how to talk with patients. Your college education should not put you on one track, but should define the different tracks of a whole.

Moreover, on the job, it is the people with the broad liberal arts education who rise to the top. Executives have to make all kinds of decisions dealing with all kinds of issues daily. The person who has learned how to see many different sides of a problem is more equipped to deal with this than the person who has learned about only one way. Often, people with technical training only get to mid-management levels, and stay there.

But the most important reason for taking advantage of the perspectives requirements is to make your college experience as meaningful as possible. If you are a biology major, take

Greek history and learn more about the cultural roots of western civilization. If you are a business major, take psychology and learn more about why people buy what they buy. If you are an art history major, take chemistry and learn more about the make-up of the atom.

While you are planning your curriculum, take a look at capstone courses. These courses give you a chance to be in a small class with a top-notch professor teaching a field he is knowledgeable about. Most capstones are interdisciplinary, and all offer an exciting and original approach to whatever subject most interests you.

Carolina means activities, friends and parties, but it also means academics. You're paying for it. Get something you can remember out of it.

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Moderation makes students average and extremely boring

Incoming freshmen are treated to a plethora of redundant and contradictory advice: "get involved"/"don't get involved," "have a good time (these are the best years of your life)"/"study (the best years are ahead)" and my favorite — "do everything in moderation." Thus we have the creation and perpetuation of the "Moderites" — people that blend into a spectrum of the most narrow of parameters.

Sex, drugs and rock & roll exist in many incantations at UNC as do politics and religion. Many students dabble in all five areas (sometimes simultaneously) as they tend to go together. But the Moderites view these various activities as separate and isolated from each other. Moderites conduct their lives on campus and the hereafter in a compartmentalized fashion.

What makes a Moderite a Moderite?

Status quo is the operative mode. It is the protective medium through which these people move. Neutrality is the guiding light and "I don't brake for questioners" the bumper sticker for those who ride in the Moderite buggy.

The way Moderites make friends is a perfect exemplification of compartmentalized behavior. Moderites have a lot of friends, tons preferably, hundreds at least. A Moderite bestows friendship upon unsuspecting individuals, often other Moderites. Moderites "bump" into their friends. God forbid they have any contact or conversation beyond the bump lest they be forced into a conversation that becomes an actual discussion. I've never figured out why Moderites act this way.

They remind me of a story about a newspaper photographer who comes into the newsroom screaming, "I just shot 20 rolls of the most incredible fire." To which his editor replies, "Didn't you have the time to concentrate on taking just one?"

John deVille

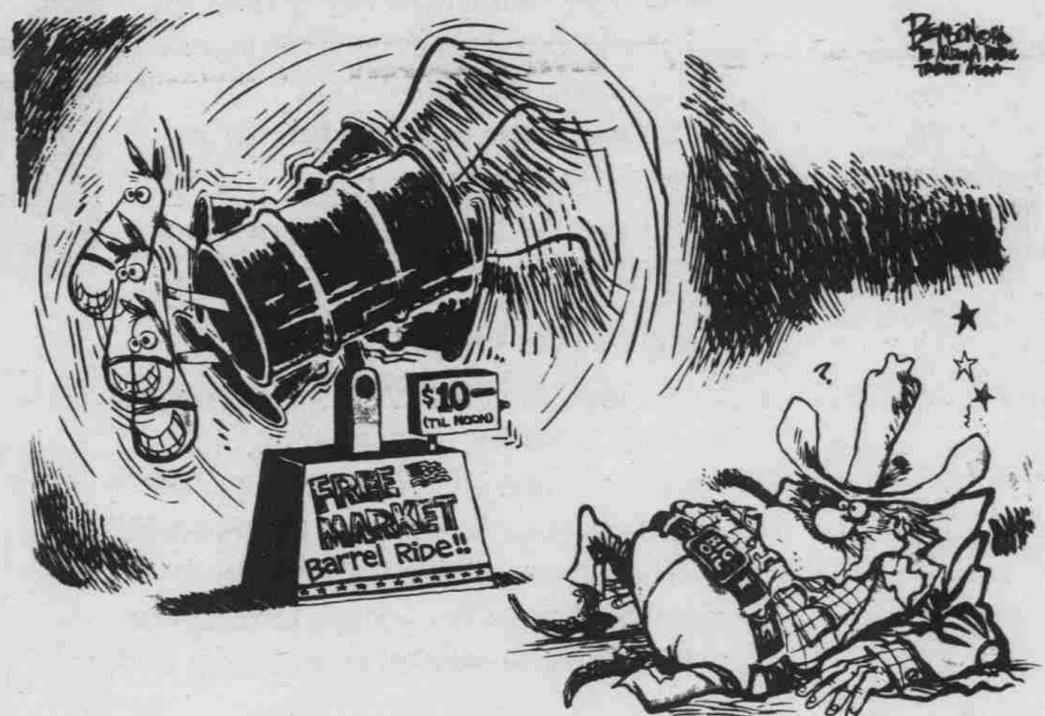
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The compartmentalization consciousness is reified by the recipe-like process through which undergraduates take classes. Take one part science, two parts English, one part philosophy courses and the Moderite, steeped in introductions and short on depth is well on his way to mediocrity. The Moderite might as well have gone to what Father Guido Sarducci called the "Five-Minute College". An institution whose alumni are able to speak on many different subjects — for five minutes, tops. In their quest for the creation of the Renaissance man the university and the student have created the Moderite.

The attempts of instilling knowledge in many different areas are indeed noble and spending time in various extra-curricular activities most worthwhile.

But if the true all-around graduate is to be produced then one must take the course of going to extremes in a given area. By exploring the limits of a given discipline one encounters a realization that cannot be taught. Simply that the boundaries of the different schools touch and interpenetrate each other — a discovery that leads one to holistic thought, the mind of the Renaissance man.

Moderation is the safe way to play it. If you want out of here in four years with good grades, with the requisite amount of time spent in the various compartments and expose yourself to a minimum of vulnerability, then moderation is the means to such a resume. But moderation is boring and it creates boring, uninteresting people who are vastly underprepared for the extremes of the real world.



Living Proof that Guns Don't Kill People

