Frosh Report Urges Curriculum Revision

By GRIFFIN SMITH

A freshman committee, formed in response to the “Rice Myth” Forums early this semester, has submitted its final report on “Disillusionment in the Freshman Year” to the 1962-63 Student Senate.

Describing the freshman as individual who comes to Rice with the expectation of “embarking on an active quest for deeper insight, comprehension, and understanding,” the report asserted that he is unnecessarily disillusioned by the Rice atmosphere.

THE CAUSES of this disillusionment the committee summarized into five principal categories: specialized, factual courses; not enough opportunity for independent study; unavailability of faculty members; severe grading and excessive workload; and traditional student apathy.

Most freshmen, the report said, “fear that Rice is catering to too many groups and serving none of them well.” An indication of the problem is that freshman level courses tend to be quite specialized: they are oriented toward preparation for a major and not toward general background for all students.

OBJECTIONS TO both science and academic curriculum requirements were advanced. Science labs particularly, the report said, are a “regression” for many students who have done independent work in high school or attended NSF summer programs.

Terming the academic freshman’s choice of natural science courses “woefully inadequate” and specialized to the point of being “impractical,” the committee observed that most academics take geology and biology to avoid the mathematical demands imposed by other science courses.

THE PRESENT science requirement defeats its purpose because the academic major fails to learn “the scientific method” and “science as a social function.” Instead, he is acquainted only with “the tedium of science.” The report proposed a new course for academic majors, along the lines of a Harvard “general Education” course, which would include study of “straight science,” philosophy of science, and the function of science as a social activity.

(Continued on Page 5)
Beginning with the premise that the purpose of history and social science courses is to "deal with the problem of citizenship" and produce individuals who can take "intelligent and effective social action," the committee strongly urged an integrated, two-year course combining history, economics, and the behavioral sciences.

THE PROGRAM would deal with three topics: "the organization of social living," a history of the Atlantic community, and analysis of the institutions and problems of contemporary society. It would replace freshman history and continue into the sophomore year.

Concluding that, in the humanities at least, "the major complaint about the freshman year is its passiveness," the report called for more essays and papers in all courses.

The committee, composed entirely of freshmen, was chaired by Bill Broyles.