A Brief History of Grinnell’s Tutorial
Tutorial Orientation Lunch
March 11, 2011

1964  President Howard Bowen mentions tutorial style of learning.


1968  Curriculum reform at Grinnell adds new graduation requirements, including 36 credits in humanities, social studies, science, foreign language, and fine arts.

Fall 1969  Student activism and protest of Vietnam War.

February 1970  Beryl Clotfelter: “A Proposal that all Graduation Requirements be Abolished.”

Spring 1970  Freshman Year Committee (Barry Zigas and three other students) propose non-graded tutorial as a college requirement.

October 1970  Alan Jones proposes tutorial to faculty; proposal amended to Clotfelter document.

November 1970  New requirements for graduation (including the tutorial) approved by the faculty.

Original tutorial had three main goals:

i)  To achieve closer faculty/student relations in an informal non-classroom setting without grades;

ii) To improve the advising system by having the tutorial professor act as the student’s adviser until the student declared a major field, and the faculty member would receive teaching credit for tutorial responsibilities;

iii) To provide a context for first-year student writing, usually short writing exercises and essays.

Spring 1971  Pilot of four tutorials conducted.

Fall 1971  35 tutorials offered at Grinnell.

April 1971  Freshman Year Committee recommends that each tutorial be assigned a reference librarian and two upper-division students as class assistants.

2003  Clotfelter reflects: “The tutorial endures.”

Fall 2011  40th anniversary of tutorial

Alumni Outlook Survey: tutorial consistently listed as one of the “most rewarding academic experiences at Grinnell.”