

June 17, 1970

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DRAFT

To: President Charles McCann
From: Joseph Shoben
Subject: Justification for College Recreational Center

The need for adequate facilities to insure the physical development of its students is a strong one at The Evergreen State College. With its students predominantly undergraduates, the College serves an age group in which vigorous physical activity is both desirable and essential for healthy growth and for that sense of physical well-being on which intellectual clearheadedness and emotional balance are in some significant degree dependent.

The recreational facility as planned at The Evergreen State College is conceived as an indoor center for the development of sports skills, the year-around participation by students in those activities conducive to health, the establishment of constructive leisure-time pursuits that can be engaged in or built upon throughout one's lifetime, and the linking of sheerly recreational enterprises to more intellectual goals such as an enlarged understanding of the workings of the human body, of the relationship of leisure and recreation to work and the quality of life in contemporary society, and of the psychological place of participatory sports in the formation of personality and the enjoyment of living. The building is thought of, therefore, as (a) a means of meeting the developmental needs for physical activity of Evergreen's students, (b) an integral part of the College's educational apparatus, and (c) a resource for cultivating the kind of institutional climate in which learning can thrive with the greatest enthusiasm and pleasure.

The weather of the Northwest region, as is well known, inhibits outdoor activities of many kinds during a good part of the year. Adequate gymnasium and swimming accommodations are partially a response to this state of affairs. More importantly, such a facility represents a resource for constructively engaging the energies of students (and faculty members), thus lessening tendencies for these impulses to become mobilized in less positive ways or to seek outlets in the already overcrowded resources of the Olympia area, where recreational facilities, especially for young people, are presently considerably overtaxed. Reciprocally, however, the availability of such a building on the TESC campus will permit the College to play host on occasion to youth from the town. This arrangement will prove advantageous to the larger community, will enable students to play meaningful and useful roles as the supervisors and instructors of children from Olympia, and will both lessen the likelihood of town-gown tensions and increase the probability that Evergreen can become a contributory and vital part of the community life of the area in which it is located.

Finally, two related considerations are easy to underestimate in their importance. In many ways, higher education in the past decade has suffered from a lack of informal opportunities for students and the official personnel of colleges to interact with each other and to become familiar with each other in an atmosphere of relaxation. Few situations are more likely to redress this lack of communication across generations as an easily accessible, attractive, and well equipped facility for recreation and unadorned, shared fun. If the program that only such a structure makes possible is successful, it could contribute importantly to a more friendly spirit on campus. Second, the element of seriousness of higher education, like the element of seriousness in our larger society, has taken on, in the past several years, the character of solemnity and even grimness. The reintroduction of play as an enterprise that encourages friendliness, cooperation, and a sense of pleasurable growth may be a matter that has been too severely neglected as a need on our campuses if not in our national life.

In any case, the circumstances under which Evergreen assumes its place among Washington's institutions of higher learning, together with the objectives and the mission of the College, call strongly for the resources that will permit wide and vigorous physical activity among its students, the comfortable fusing of recreational participation with educational aims, the provision of meaningful roles for students to play in helping to meet the recreational requirements of the community of which TESC is an inevitable part, and the development of a program of constructive and healthful play that may make Evergreen's campus a more friendly and constructively disposed place of learning.

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