

## A BAD IDEA, TWO GOOD IDEAS, AND A GRAND OPENING [DRAFT]

Only once did the planning faculty, the administrators, and all of the staff members of the young Evergreen lie to the community outside us. In the late winter and spring of 1971, there had been rumblings in the Legislature about postponing for a year our opening to students. We had maintained that we were going to open, no matter what. But as the summer wore on and people were able to come out and look from a distance at the Library Building under construction – our only classroom and office spaces for the first year – even our friends began to doubt that we would be able to open as planned. We of Evergreen had serious doubts too, But we kept saying, “Oh no, the building will be ready, and we shall open on October 4.

In early September, President Charles McCann called an emergency meeting of vice presidents, deans, and directors. There was bad news about the building. But it was typical of Charles McCann’s resoluteness that he began the meeting by asking not if we could open but how we were going to open. He called on Jerry Schillinger, the Facilities Planner [need JERRY’S exact title], to give us the details of the problem.

Because of “snow days” and other occasions on which construction work had stopped or slowed, the contractor could take more time without having to pay a stiff penalty for a delay in having the building ready. He had told Jerry that there were two options: (1) The faculty, staff and students could move into part of the Library Building for an October 4 opening; but then he and his men could take their own sweet time in finishing the rest. Or (2) if we all could stay away for some two weeks more, we could occupy the whole building (even though some work would still be going on with carpeting and fixtures). Jerry warned us about accepting the first option, and Charles McCann agreed that we had to figure out a way of opening the college off campus.

McCann communicated to us an idea which probably came from one or more of our Trustees, or perhaps someone in State government. At North Fort Lewis there were vacant barracks, mess halls, and assembly rooms which could be used for classes. We could open Evergreen there if we chose to do so.

The deans and directors at the meeting most definitely chose not to open at North Fort Lewis. There were some howls of pain and a consensus that this would be a BAD IDEA. Our country was still mired down in the Viet Nam War. The energy of the protests against it, especially among college students, had been growing and growing. Those students who had registered to take their chances at our unconventional college were likely to be political activists, most of them anti-war. To house them near a major army installation, sharing its name, would be to court disaster – confrontations, sit-ins or lie-ins, signs and leafletting at the main gate of the Fort, media sensationalism to add to the prejudices and fears about us, and very little concentration upon the crucial tasks of orientation to the new college and beginning academic work. Then, too, what message would we be sending to these students, their parents, and the rest of the outside world?

President McCann sighed and did not pursue the North Fort Lewis option further. But if we weren’t going to go there, where would we open? Or should we abandon October 4 and tell the students to come later? Dean Donald Humphrey had the answer.

Don Humphrey had already thought out and acted upon one of the most important good ideas in the early history of Evergreen. He had been hired as Dean of

Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Merv Cadwallader as Dean of Social Sciences and Public Administration, and I as Dean of Humanities and Arts. Though the President and Vice Presidents were interested in avoiding the fragmentation of the college into conventional departments, they had still assumed that we would have something like conventional divisions. But at the crucial planning sessions of February 8-9, 1970, we had committed ourselves to a curriculum mainly devoted to interdisciplinary, team-taught programs, balanced by some opportunities to do other kinds of work through individual and group learning contracts. Instead of functioning as divisional deans, the three of us would be collaborating and observing our titles mainly as denoting areas in which we had special but not rigorously compartmentalized responsibilities for developing academic work and providing support.

Don was the first of us, in April of 1970, to take up residence and full-time work at Evergreen. By necessity, and experience, and aptitude, he was assigned the task of developing and overseeing the academic budget. He inherited earlier financial planning which provided separate budget lines for three divisions. In the light of our decisions about interdisciplinary study, and foreseeing how separate budgets and allocations of space could lead to exactly the sort of divisiveness and infighting which we wanted to avoid, Don – with the approval of the other deans and higher administrators – unified the academic budget of Evergreen. And so it has been unified ever since.

In his role as budgetary dean, Don had received requests from the faculty members assigned to programs of the opening year. Although only one faculty member was receiving a salary during the summer of 1971, most of the first-year teaching faculty were on board and coming into their offices just as if they were being paid. The first-year students had already registered for their programs, and the faculty members had been communicating with them about expectations, schedules, early readings, and the like. In true early-Evergreen fashion, most of the programs were planning to meet on campus on Monday, October 4 and for the rest of the first week, then go out on community-building retreats for the second week. At the time, we were still funded for “start-up costs,” and there was money available to support the expenses of the retreats – including transportation and rentals of facilities.

Don was the one person in the room at the meeting in early September who knew all about these plans, and his solution was brilliantly simple. Instead of bringing the students to campus on October 4 and going out the next week for retreats, the programs would start with the off-campus retreats and stay out until the contractor and his people had fulfilled their responsibilities under his second option. The group approved Don’s solution immediately, and he told those program teams who hadn’t been planning to go on retreat to start such planning immediately. The Contemporary Minorities program would have difficulty in organizing a group retreat, so Rudy Martin, Medardo Delgado, and Darrell Phare made arrangements to travel around the state and meet their students at locations where there could be at least two days of seminar per week for the prospective students. The program coordinated by Richard Jones, one of the largest, thought up another alternative. They would stay in Olympia. Local students would arrange eating and sleeping accommodations for the out-of-towners. The program would hold its meetings in the chamber of the Washington State House of Representatives and the social hall of the United Churches, just across the street from the Capitol Campus.

It is a tribute to the dedication of the faculty, staff, and students that everyone could switch plans so rapidly and bring the whole thing off. The arrangements also

amounted to an early test of the curricular planning for the college. If we had committed ourselves to working by separate departmental classes, organized on an hourly schedule, we could not have done this at all. When the first two-member accreditation team arrived for several days of investigation toward the end of October, they got the point and marveled about how an emergency had become an advantage, providing opportunities for collaboration and early bonding completely within the spirit of what Evergreen wanted to be about.

[AT THIS POINT, PLEASE INSERT A LIST OF WHERE THE VARIOUS PROGRAMS WENT]

After an early supper on October 4, I went out by myself to the Olympia Country Club course. Claire Hess, one of the Deans' Office secretaries and an avid golfer, had talked the Club into offering early Greeners a very low membership fee, and a number of us had taken advantage of the opportunity. There was far too much work for me to think of joining a foursome for regular play on the weekends, but I was able to come out once in a while by myself on late weekend afternoons or early evenings during the week. I decided to play the back nine holes and so, just as daylight was fading, I was alone at the eighteenth tee, which overlooks Budd Inlet with a clear view to the east. A full moon was coming up over the Cascades. I thought of Willi Unsoeld and his program on the side of Mt. Baker, of Byron Youtz and his program at the Spirit Lake Y Camp, and of the others meeting for their first full day together all around the state. And I thought to myself, "What a wonderful way to begin college."

Charles B. Teske