

THE DEANS' AND DIRECTORS' BREAKFAST

A future historian of Evergreen can read about the external threats to its survival in the press clippings preserved in the Archives, or the morgues of *The Olympian*, the *Tacoma News Tribune*, the *Seattle Times*, and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. From the pressure to postpone the opening so that the planners would come to their senses and design a conventional "real" college, to the moves to close the place and use the buildings for State offices (with the possibility of turning the dormitories into a minimum-security correctional institution), to the proposal, as late as the early 1980's, to force a reorganization into departments and majors and multiple courses and alphanumeric grades -- perhaps turning the college into the Olympia Branch Campus of the University of Washington -- the attacks and proposals can be read in the legislative news, the editorials, and the letters to the editors. But learning about the countervailing tendencies which kept Evergreen alive -- the idealism, the imagination, the stamina -- requires a careful and patient study of what was going on, quarter by quarter, in decisions, policies, programs, campus activities, and thus the practices which led to coherence and solidarity. One such practice, from 1971 through 1973, was the Deans' and Directors' Breakfast.

The initial meeting was organized by Ken Winkley, our Controller, to take place at the Golden Carriage Restaurant, located in the large commercial block bounded by Plum Street on the west, Union Avenue on the north, and Eastside Street on the east. It was conveniently close to Interstate-5 and Route 101, with a lot of parking spaces and a meeting room suitable for our group. As the group then developed its own momentum and routines, we would gather at 8 A.M. on Wednesdays, have our breakfasts, and then turn to business. We took no votes and did not engage in thorough discussions, but as we went around the rectangle of tables everyone had the chance to summarize the projects and problems he was dealing with and to present the questions and requests for help which he had for his colleagues in this truly interdisciplinary gathering. (At this time, it was an all-male group.)

The President and Vice Presidents were not invited to attend. Indeed, the necessity for our meetings had arisen from frequent instances of dysfunctional behavior among the members of the President's Council. There were collisions in management style, unresolved disagreements in educational philosophy, and conflicting interpretations of the administrative structure. Communications and cooperation had suffered. If the Deans and Directors would have attempted to approach each other only through their respective Vice Presidents, the essential work of running the college and carrying out the short-term and long-term plans would not have been completed. We did not keep our conversations secret from our superiors, but we did not normally report them, nor did we waste time on gossip. There was too much to be done.

As we took our turns in presenting our concerns, each of us at times would be saying, "I really

don't know how to deal with this problem and shall be glad to read or to hear during the week any suggestions you might have," or "Unless you talk me out of it, here's what I'm planning to do." And when each of us used "I," he meant it. At the time, and at our administrative level, the watchwords were "accountability" and "locatability." If we needed advice, we were supposed to ask for it. If the task was a large one, each of us could form a "disappearing task force." The task force might propose a course of action before disbanding, but the decision would be up to the dean or director. There could be no hiding behind the anonymity of a standing committee. ("Don't look at me; this was their decision.") So each of us was locatable, and we were expected to account for our decisions, especially when we did not follow the advice we had asked for. What we said at our breakfast meetings counted.

After each of us had said what was on his mind, he remained "It" as a target for any questions or complaints his colleagues might have. Some of these could be rough, but they were presented honestly, and only honest responses would do. We learned to be candid with each other, to dispel rumors, to appreciate the points of view which accompanied our colleagues' functions and duties. The breakfast meeting served as a weekly clearing of the air and fostered respect, understanding, and trust.

Let me give you examples of what I mean by dysfunction and effectiveness:

In the winter of 1971-2, as in the preceding winter, one of my assignments involved producing the academic sections of our college catalog -- writing them or editing them. In those days before web sites or anything of the sort, the catalog would be our main instrument for presenting who we were and for recruiting 800 to 1000 new students for our second year of operation. This year's effort differed from our initial catalog in two ways. (1) The planning faculty had been able in the fall of 1970 to design and to write program descriptions for our first year of operation. But in this busy first year, it would take until the spring of 1972 for the faculty to plan and to describe the programs for our second year. Thus for this general catalog which had to be prepared earlier, we reprinted descriptions of the programs currently running to give prospective students a sense of the kind of college they would be joining. The new programs would be described in a catalog supplement to be issued in the spring. (2) For the essays describing in the first catalog the modes of study, the opportunities, and the obligations of students, I had drawn upon contributions by Merv Cadwallader on coordinated studies and Don Humphrey on the sciences and on self-paced learning, but I was responsible for the full final text. With only a few changes to reflect our experience thus far, I could use that text for the new catalog.

When I had completed the draft of the new text, I submitted it to Academic Vice President and Provost David Barry, my superior, for whatever emendations he might have to make and his approval. Dave would then pass the emended draft to Executive Vice President Joseph Shoben

for his emendations and approval. In a somewhat unusual administrative arrangement, Joe Shoben, hired after Dave Barry, in addition to the areas assigned to him under the October 10, 1969 reorganization to accommodate three vice presidents, had been given the authority for "Internal Analysis and Planning Coordination." Joe interpreted this designation as the right to review and suggest alterations in the policies and procedures of the other two vice presidents. Thus Joe would have the final say on the wording of the academic sections of the new catalog. I assumed, in delivering the material to the third-floor area of the President and Vice Presidents, that with the relatively small amount of new material to be scanned the tasks of reading and emending my draft would take at most three hours for each vice president.

After some three weeks the draft, with no substantive emendations, came back down to me from the third floor so that it could be incorporated in the full catalog text to go to the printer. We had lost precious time in the campaign to recruit new students, but the causes for the delay were never explained to me. I know only that Dave Barry took seriously the title of Academic Vice President and did not like being in a position where he could be second-guessed in an area which had been delegated to him in the original administrative organization. I also know that during the time when my draft languished on the third floor, Joe Shoben had been absent from the campus for several days to fulfil continuing commitments as a consultant and popular lecturer on educational innovation. Whatever the causes, there had been a serious lapse in the processes of communication and cooperation.

[Those concerned with the history of Evergreen might be interested to read about the symbolic placement of the Academic Deans' Office in the early years. The offices of the President and Vice Presidents were on the third floor of the spacious Library Building, along the corridor and in the corner behind the clock tower. As Merv, Don, and I met with Jerry Schillinger, Director of Facilities, to assign the faculty members' offices for the opening year, we arranged to have the offices of the Deans and their secretaries located on the first floor, at the far end of the building from the clock tower. Any further away from the presidential area, and we would either be housed with Media Services or be working outside on the loading dock. Why?

We thought of ourselves as teachers who were temporarily serving in administrative posts. During the Planning Year of 1970-71, we had devised a scheme by which, sequentially, we would be leaving the Deans' Office to take up our faculty positions. By having our offices at a distance from the presidential area, we were demonstrating our close ties with faculty colleagues, students, and their instructional programs. And when our next building, Lab I, came on line in September, 1973, we moved the Deans' Office to the first floor of its faculty-office wing. Only after I, as the last of the three of us to leave the Deanery for the faculty, had moved out did the contemporary Deans relocate their offices to the second floor of the Library Building, below the President and Vice Presidents. By that time, however, the precedent for

rotation had become established. Almost all of the Academic Deans in the next forty years came out of the faculty, served their administrative terms, and returned to the faculty.]

Effectiveness on the lower administrative level of the Deans and Directors:

At a Deans' and Directors' breakfast meeting in late November or early December, 1971, when I had made my comments but was still "It," available for questioning or complaint, Don Parry, Director of Plant Operations, had a complaint to make. My people were causing problems for his people. Don's custodians had the job of keeping our brand-new Library Building clean and neat. But in our first months of hectic operation, in those days before email, cell phones, or social media, the only way that our faculty members and students could keep in contact between meetings was by posting materials on office doors, seminar-room doors, and the walls surrounding those doors. There were pieces of program business, such as revisions in syllabuses and schedules, new assignments, and additional articles to be read. There were items of correspondence among students about transportation, upcoming events in Olympia and Tacoma and Seattle, requests for housing, availability for part-time work, and the like. Especially prolific in the number of materials on display were two programs in my Dean Group: Man and Art; Space, Time, and Form. The faculty members and students of these programs also posted drawings, diagrams, and even some reproductions of fine art and architecture.

The custodians did not know what to do about this clutter. Some of the postings were secured by masking tape, thumbtacks, and heavier Scotch tape which could do damage to the freshly dried paint of the corridor walls. There had already been several incidents when students and faculty members had found that their materials had been removed by custodial staff. There had even been a few direct confrontations and quarrels when faculty members and students had witnessed the custodians in the act of removing materials, or when the custodians had observed "my people" in the process of posting more. A feud was on the way.

At the breakfast meeting, Don and I simply arranged to talk in the afternoon. We were dealing with a collision of two understandable, rational, even necessary patterns of behavior. He and I resolved the problem quickly and amicably. Through his boss, Jerry Schillinger, Don ordered a sufficient number of wood-framed, cork-surfaced bulletin boards, which his people – advised by program faculty – mounted in the spaces where the heaviest traffic had been. In return, I established the policy that all postings on the bulletin boards should bear "pull-by" dates. Ideally those who had done the posting would take the responsibility for removing the material when its relevance had passed. Otherwise, the custodians were authorized to remove the out-of-date postings without fear of quarrels developing.

In Stevens' dissertation, Merv Cadwallader states that he wished the working relationships in the President's Council could have been as effective as the collaboration among the first three

of us academic deans. At least for the earliest years of the college, I suggest extending that claim to the first cadre of Deans and Directors and citing their breakfast meetings as a main source of that spirit.