

THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

November 26, 1996

To: The Evergreen Community

From: The Academic Advising DTF

Mikko Ambrose, Justino Balderrama, Bob Cillo, Donna Davis, Shannon Ellis,
Wendy Freeman, Steve Hunter, Jackie McClure, Andrea Meld, Frank Motley, Tom
Rainey, Tina Scott, Matt Smith, Jim Stroh, Masao Sugiyama, Sean Williams

Subject: Final Report from Academic Advising DTF

Here is the final report of the Academic Advising DTF*. We worked on this project for over a year, and presented preliminary findings to the Evergreen community at multiple points. We believe that what follows reflects the best of our efforts informed by discussion among various constituencies across the college.

We worked to create an integrated advising structure for both full- and part-time students, including orientation for new students, support at transition points, multiple entry points (as students enter the college at every quarter with different amounts of credit), and peer advising, thus creating a seamless and integrated "feel" from the student perspective.

The primary conclusion we have reached is: Good advising is an important aspect of good teaching and of effective learning. Advising and teaching are not discrete and separable tasks. Rather, advising, especially at Evergreen, is a collaborative venture with staff and faculty working together with students to provide students with the best possible education. The proposals presented herein flow from this primary assumption and are built on many of the college's existing strengths.

For clarity and easy accessibility we have arranged our recommendations under the headings of the parties primarily responsible for carrying them out.

* This final document is extracted from the May 15, 1996, preliminary report made to the community. That report included full explication and justification for the recommendations here. Copies of this report are available from the Provost's office and the Academic Planning Office.

FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

★ Information and Accountability

- ✓ Improve information delivery by providing complete, specific, and clear program descriptions and catalog copy in a timely way.
- ✓ Faculty members should assert more clearly their advising role, and articulate this function to students. They should also schedule, display, and keep office hours that are accessible to students.
- ✓ The Provost and Academic Deans should support faculty in learning the curriculum and its structure, and in learning about the expertise of their colleagues so that they have useful information with which to do good advising. Examples of ways to do these things might include paid summer workshops, "brown bag" lunch sessions, day-long events divided among curriculum information presentation, faculty introductions and social time.
- ✓ Charge a DTF to resolve BS degree issues, including the place of part-time and evening studies in this program, and greater clarity about its requirements. We propose that Evergreen either do away with the BS degree, or create appropriate curriculum and advising support for it.
- ✓ Planning Groups should clarify in their covenants how they will support advising, including advising for part-time students.

★ Academic Fair

We should continue the four Academic Fairs per year, allowing students to efficiently locate faculty and get questions answered about curricular offerings. The college should investigate further possibilities like smaller planning group fairs, talking catalog presentations, and other uses of the fair.

★ Academic "Plan" for Breadth and Depth

This part of our recommendations is a central element of the integrated and seamless system we hope to build. It draws upon multiple resources, connects faculty, staff, and students in a focused enterprise, and should result in the kind of serious but flexible academic planning students need to make optimal use of Evergreen.

We propose a four-credit course, taught by the full-time faculty advisor along with some of the part-time faculty advisors and/or some of the advising staff. We could offer this course in multiple sections in a given quarter, or enough other times over the academic year to meet the need.

The course should aim at more than simply creating an Academic Plan, but should also encompass some history and theory of education, some recollections of Evergreen's particular genesis and development, consideration of the five foci of the unique Evergreen education, as well as models of life-long learning. The following outline contains some of the kinds of things the course might include:

- ✍ introduce and reflect on the idea of self-designed education
- ✍ show models of "thinking about doing"
- ✍ start reflection on "what to learn", and "how to learn it"
- ✍ get started on serious portfolio building
- ✍ produce a preliminary written plan to go into the portfolio and to use when writing the summative self evaluation
- ✍ stimulate thinking about "life after Evergreen" (graduate school, career planning, etc.)

This course would be available to students at any level, including the first year. We would strongly encourage students to complete it by the end of their sophomore year. Transfer students should complete it as soon as possible.

The second way for students to do focused critical reflection on their educational future is for the faculty in sophomore and entry level programs to spend some advising time helping students devise academic plans to guide their remaining study toward their degree. This planning work could also help students prepare themselves to write the required summative self evaluation before they graduate from Evergreen.

The third option is for the Advising Offices to provide students with information and advice through workshops, handouts, or conferences that assist students in thinking independently about this element in their learning.

★ Final Evaluations and Conferences

Imaginative uses of evaluations and conferences could take advantage of prime opportunities for faculty to help students design their programs of study without adding another layer of work for faculty. A number of faculty members already do these things, but we encourage all faculty to do them, and we want students to understand how to make use of such advising opportunities.

- ✓ Student self evaluations should be mandatory.
- ✓ We encourage faculty to explore non-numerical, non-competitive, non-comparative system for writing evaluations of students, ones that include both short/quick options and brief narrative options. Various models already exist among us, and can be made available easily.

✓ We strongly urge using existing evaluation conferences to build in reflection on academic planning connected to work accomplished. As part of these required evaluation conferences, faculty and students should reflect on:

- Expectations of the current quarter,
- Evaluation of current work,
- Exploration of what might come next, including short and long range plans as appropriate.

✓ We urge faculty to take special note of students who are nearing the end of their undergraduate study (as indicated on listings provided by the Registration Office), in order to help them plan how to achieve appropriate breadth and depth in their work before they graduate. Faculty should remind these students and assist, when appropriate, in planning for the student's summative self evaluation. In some cases, faculty will also help students consider post-baccalaureate planning issues such as graduate school or career planning.

★ Portfolio

Faculty and students should continue work on a developmental portfolio that includes both written and other kinds of work. It is useful as a tool built into programs for the immediate work within the program, as well as a more general planning and presentation instrument. We recognize the enormity of collecting everything a student produces, but we firmly believe that collecting and organizing everything in some way allows students and others to select the materials appropriate to various situations. Students may choose to present, or faculty may request, portions of the portfolio as part of the application to an academic program, planning for future work, development of the summative self evaluation, and so on.

★ Talking Catalogs

We recommend that faculty make brief presentations about program offerings, especially sophomore-appropriate ones, to provide information to students planning their winter and spring program choices. These presentations should precede the fall and winter Academic Fairs, and will reduce the need to explain programs individually. APEL currently arranges a kind of "Talking Catalog" for new first-year students in May and should extend this concept to include faculty presentations useful to continuing students. APEL should advertise these efforts broadly.

★ Required Summative Self Evaluation

All students will be required to write a comprehensive and summative self evaluation articulating and culminating their liberal arts career, before they graduate. It probably will be combined with or serve as that final quarter's self-evaluation.

Names of students needing to write the summative self evaluation will appear on a list of potential graduates prepared by Registration and Records and sent to faculty. Working with their current faculty member, along with staff members in APEL, students

should reflect upon their academic plan, and the five foci of an Evergreen education, as well as specific skills developed. This whole effort should result in an effective and accurate document that distills the students' experience at Evergreen. This statement should be the most thoughtful and carefully composed evaluation a student develops here, a piece that is simultaneously full enough to contain breadth and depth, and brief enough to be easily read and comprehended.

This required statement and the Record of Academic Achievement (listing credit equivalencies) comprise the centerpiece of the student's Evergreen transcript.

Registration and Records will not certify students as eligible for degrees without receipt of this summative self evaluation so designated on an evaluation form. For this to work, Registration and Records must receive funds necessary to pay for help to perform this added function.

★ Capstone Project Option

Although not strictly an advising structure, nor a graduation requirement as such, a capstone project is a useful way of culminating and articulating an Evergreen education. Current Expressive Arts Senior Thesis productions and perhaps some Prior Learning from Experience documents, and some individual student projects are examples of this important work. Such a project could also be a way for a student to ground his or her work in way that emphasizes mastery of a Planning Group's subject area(s). We recommend it highly and request that faculty make themselves available through their planning groups to sponsor capstone projects as individual contracts and/or in programs built on the SOS model. Planning Groups might limit program enrollments to make particular faculty expertise available to students planning capstone projects.

INFORMATION SERVICES RESPONSIBILITIES

★ Provide an on-line catalog that can be updated rapidly.

★ Index the catalog in more useful ways and places.

★ Improve student access to curriculum change information. For example, investigate the feasibility of on-line catalog updates, and/or create a 24 hour information kiosk in the CAB and/or library lobby, develop more creative and clear signage, etc.

ADVISING OFFICES RESPONSIBILITIES

★ Planning Group Connectors

Connect one advising staff member to each Planning Group, including part-time, to increase information flow 1) from faculty planning curriculum to the advising office, and 2) to faculty from student concerns that come up in Advising.

★ Core Connectors

Advising staff should continue to be integrated into each first-year program to connect learning experiences both in and out of the classroom, as well as to provide information about registration, offer drop-in advising and information about resources, and work with the faculty team as useful.

★ General Orientation for all new students

We recommend that the General Orientation coordinated by the Dean of Student and Academic Support Services continue in its present form with necessary modifications to be made when and where appropriate.

★ Advising Sessions for all new students

We recommend continuation of the currently operating, required, nuts-and-bolts, two-hour, small-group sessions covering how the curriculum is structured, how to get advising, the philosophical underpinnings of the curriculum design, the notion of in-program academic advising, the proposed planning course, how registration works, and other general questions.

★ Peer Advisors

We recommend that APEL recruit and train a cadre of Peer Advisors who would be available for "quick questions" with information from the Catalog, Student Advising Handbook or other written materials. Perhaps in time, these peer advisors could staff the information kiosk, if that develops. One suggested activity would be that during fall quarter, Peer Advisors would check in with first-year students to see how they're doing, ensure that they know what resources are available, make connections, etc.

★ Postcard Reminders

At the time students have completed 90 and 135 credits, they will receive a postcard from Registration and Records or the Academic Planning Office asking if they have academic planning needs and reminding them of available resources and generic application and examination timelines.

★ Academic Fair

We should continue the four Academic Fairs per year, allowing students to efficiently locate faculty and get questions answered about curricular offerings. The Advising Offices and the Registration Office should investigate further possibilities like smaller planning group fairs, talking catalog presentations, and other uses of the fair.

CONCLUSIONS

All of these recommendations comprise a holistic advising system that merges study and planning into a sensible and useful structure. For this system to succeed, it is important that all potentially responsible parties agree to engage in it.

Upon acceptance of this report by faculty and all other affected offices, we think these recommendations should go into effect now and be fully implemented by Fall of 1997, along with the curriculum revised according to the recommendations of the Long Range Curriculum DTF, which also initiated the work of this DTF.

We also recommend that this academic advising process be reviewed and revised where appropriate during the 97-98 academic year.