

THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE
Olympia, Washington 98501

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LEARNING FOR CREDIT,
AND JUST FOR THE HELL OF IT

Part I

In order to map out those kinds of contributions to the Evergreen learning experience the Library is best able to provide, we must first take a look at the whole experience from a student's viewpoint.

A student enrolled at Evergreen will be exposed to three major kinds of learning experiences simultaneously; and to the extent that the three are interrelated, we can expect him or her to go beyond exposure - to involvement.

I. Learning for Credit

- A. Coordinated Studies
- B. Contracted Studies

II. College Sponsored, Non-credit

- A. Events
- B. Self-sufficiency skills
- C. Survival skills

III. Life Experience, Non-credit

- A. Crisis handling
- B. Answers
- C. People

Please do not despair though the outline may seem odd. Remember, it is student oriented - not learning theory, or Educator, or College oriented.

I. Learning for Credit

All credit-producing learning at Evergreen has at least a few things in common:

1. A person must be enrolled to be involved.
2. Normally there is at least a one-month duration.
3. There is some formal or informal agreement on what is to be learned, how the effort at learning is to be evaluated, and how much credit is to be given for the learning achieved.

A. Coordinated Studies

Coordinated Studies Programs tend to involve relatively large numbers of students with common interests in large areas of inquiry. These programs are relatively long term, have some degree of internal flexibility, and tend toward informal, proforma contracts. Because of the large investment of institutional resources, such programs have lengthy lead-times, take much planning and preparation, and are primarily institutional in origin.

Because Coordinated Studies Programs are oriented more to problems, themes, and issues than to the usual disciplines, they usually entail an interdisciplinary approach and operate on a community-of-learners model.

duration and are described in highly specific contracts which are usually student-initiated. Normally, contracted studies require little commitment of institutional resources other than the time of the sponsor. Thus, they demand little lead-time. If students involved in contracted studies can find others with whom to conduct their explorations, so much the better; but their special quest for learning is essentially a unique and therefore a lonely one.

Library - The traditional Public Service function of the Library is designed to support people pursuing their own learning goals. The Library can advise students and staff on exploiting the information available at Evergreen, direct them to other informational resources, and obtain materials for them from other libraries and agencies.

and it should assume primary responsibility in disseminating information about educational events. For example, the Director of Counseling may need to initiate special discussion groups and seminars on such major student problems as drug-use and birth control. Working with him, the Library can act as a facilitator of this kind of college-community effort.

B. Self-Sufficiency Skills

A large part of anyone's learning takes place as a result of his realization that he needs more skill in a particular area. Often such needs are neither of sufficient magnitude nor sufficiently intellectual in nature to deserve reward with academic credit. For example, exercises designed to improve a student's reading, writing, and computational skills are normally non-credit. They are made available to the student so that he can improve his performance in areas in which he feels deficient. In similar fashion, a variety of "mini-courses" in personal financial management, interpersonal skills, use of A-V and other kinds of special equipment, etc.-all largely self-administered and aimed at meeting the general non-academic needs of students-may be considered under this heading. It includes all those kinds of self-improvement that will among other advantages help a student get more from his learning-for-credit.

Recognizing this interest as personal and not at all vocational, Evergreen should be able to respond to those students who, in reaction to the specialization of their fathers, are trying to collect a broader assortment of self-sufficiency skills,

Library

As in Item B, there are three major elements the Library can provide. First, it can collect indications of interest. Second, it can identify persons both on campus and in the larger community who are able to teach such skills. (Unlike Item B, the predominant model here will be a series of workshops, and the majority of teachers will be volunteers.) Third, it can provide space and publicity. In addition, the Library collection will include considerable material for self-determined and personal study in these areas.

Library

The Library, in its traditional role, must include in its collection materials relevant to major areas of social and personal concern. Maintaining current information on handling personal budgets, drug-usage, draft laws, career opportunities, interpersonal relations, human growth, and other issues of vital importance to personal decision-making among college students, can greatly assist the Evergreen counseling function and help undergraduates become more skillful in self-management.

B. Answers

By the time a student graduates from Evergreen, he should possess considerable ingenuity in knowing where, or to whom, to go to satisfy his informational needs. This aim is completely consistent with the life-long learner that we are here to produce. Early in the process, however, it won't do for us to assume that a student can just ask questions or look up answers. For people who are aware but untrained as searchers, there are many occasions to need information so removed from their experience that they don't know who to ask or where to look up answers. By definition, there is no way to teach such individualized information even though most learning-for-credit experience will materially improve a student's searching skills.

Library

Perhaps the least utilized of the valuable services most libraries can provide is acting as a universal respondent to questions.

In this role, it isn't too important whether or not the Library

until some chance conversational encounter reveals a commonality of interest.

Library

Traditionally charged with the responsibility of categorizing resources by subject in a way the public can utilize, the Library should be the obvious place to maintain an interest index. Placing one's interest in such a file would, of course, be voluntary, and open to members of the college community and the public as well.

We hope this outline has shown the variety of learning needs which will exist among Evergreen students. We have sought to describe them only in the most general terms. Similarly, the descriptions of the Library's capability to meet those needs has been described only in the most cursory fashion. This part of this paper is intended merely to provide a rough idea of the scope of the problem and the relationships among its components. Part II will sketch a series of specific projects to flesh out the Library's distinctive contribution to learning at Evergreen.

KEN PAULL
Coordinator of Library Systems

P.S. I am grateful to Ken Paull for pulling all these ideas and courses of action together in a Library group position paper. We hope this paper serves as a catalyst to help make Evergreen the kind of college which will not require a free university next door to meet essential student needs for human growth.

James F. Holly
Dean of Library Services