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The Evergreen State College: "No Carbon Copy of Other State Institutions"

by

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Archives
The Evergreen State College
Olympia, Washington 98505

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"I had no intention of living in the Northwest! I'm an East Coast, snow and sun person. . . . I didn't unpack for seven years. I said, 'I can't live here!' . . . But, I'm telling you, when I came to work, it was like I couldn't imagine spending the majority of my day at any other place where the values were so strange. It just felt like I needed to be here. The values were clear. They were mine. They were what I believed in."

ᔓ An Evergreen faculty member of 23 years

Background: Setting the Scene

Nestled on 1,000 acres of forest land that extends upward from 3,300 feet of beachfront on Eld Inlet of Puget Sound is The Evergreen State College, an innovative public liberal arts college in Olympia, Washington. The campus is located just 20 minutes from the State Capitol in downtown Olympia, and is a one-hour drive from the Olympic Mountains and Mount Rainier on the Cascade Mountain Range. At the edge of the campus, there is a 13-acre organic farm and a cozy farmhouse where students and faculty gather for potlucks, retreats, and suppers. Hiking trails and paths through the forest lead to Geoduck beach,[1] where students can rent canoes or kayaks and explore Puget Sound.

At the heart of the campus there is a red brick plaza (Red Square) that Evergreeners must pass through to reach most campus buildings. On one side of Red Square, there is the College Activities Building ("the CAB"), a campus hub that houses campus eateries, the bookstore, student organization offices, and the college radio station (KAOS-FM!). During the lunch hour on a chilly winter's day, the CAB comes alive with energy and activity: Groups of students in a unique assortment of self-styled garments gather in circles on carpeted floors and in chairs near the deli area to share ideas about their classes, to talk about life, dreams, and

[1] The campus' mascot is the Geoduck (pronounced "gooey-duck"), a giant clam native to Puget Sound.

politics. Vendors sell earthy-looking hats and jewelry at the entryway to the CAB, and posters and banners advertising campus events hang from the second floor balcony and catch your eye.

Adjacent to the CAB is the Library Building, a multi-purpose structure that houses the main library, the admissions office, advising center, and college administrative offices. Inside the building, there are murals designed by students as class projects, including a three-story high dragon mural in the Library stairwell that was designed by the members of the "Man and His Art" program in the opening year of the college (Clemens, 1987). A short walk across Red Square is the Lecture Halls building ("significantly, the smallest structure in the center of campus") (Tommerup, 1993, p.88), the Lab I and Lab II (arts and sciences) buildings, and an arts annex. The newest addition to the Evergreen campus is the Longhouse Education and Cultural Center, a wooden structure that is modeled after the historical longhouses of the Northwestern Coastal Native American communities. The Longhouse serves as a nucleus for multicultural studies and activities at Evergreen ("Evergreen Self-Guided Tour," n.d.; The Evergreen State College 1997-98 Catalog, 1997; Lyons, 1991).

The Founding

The story of The Evergreen State College begins in November of 1964 when the Council of Presidents of the five state-supported colleges and universities in Washington (the University of Washington, Washington State University, Central Washington State College [now Central Washington University], Eastern Washington State College [now Eastern Washington University], and Western Washington State College [now Western Washington University]) issued a report examining the status and future of higher education in the State of Washington. The report, titled "A Plan for Public Higher Education in Washington," noted that the population of western Washington was rapidly increasing and recommended that the State

Legislature establish a new public college in order to accommodate projected enrollment increases (Clemens, 1987; "Grounds for Greatness," n.d.; "The Making of the College," n.d.).

Acting on the Council's recommendations, the 1965 Legislature assembled a Temporary Advisory Council on Public Higher Education composed of legislators, state college and university presidents, community college representatives, and public leaders. The Temporary Advisory Council was charged with the task of determining whether a new college was needed in western Washington, and if so, where the campus should be located and what kind of institution it should be (Clemens, 1987). The Advisory Council utilized the services of a consulting firm (Nelson Associates, Inc. of New York) to investigate the issue of population growth and the future demand for higher education in western Washington.

"Not blessed with a crystal ball," Mark Clemens (1987) points out in his 20-year profile of The Evergreen State College, the consulting firm concluded that higher education enrollments would rapidly expand in the 1970s and that Washington's existing public and private campuses would not be able to accommodate a projected applicant pool of nearly 17,000 students by 1975 unless new institutions were built. "At the earliest possible time," wrote Nelson Associates in their 1966 report, "a new four-year college should be authorized." The campus, they said, should be prepared to enroll 10,000 students by 1975.[2]

In October 1966, the Temporary Advisory Council submitted its final report to the State Legislature, supporting the consulting firm's recommendation that the state open a new four-year college as soon as possible. The Advisory Council proposed that the college be

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[2] Like many of the optimistic planners of innovative colleges and universities in the expansive 1960s era, Evergreen's founders did not foresee the economic and demographic turnarounds of the decade ahead. In the 1970s, the Pacific Northwest was hit with an economic recession that would reduce the number of college-bound students. The Evergreen State College has never reached the early enrollment projection of 10,000 students (Bergquist, 1995; Clemens, 1987; Youtz, 1984).

located in Thurston County, within a 10 mile radius of Olympia and that the site incorporate at least 600 acres. On March 1, 1967, the 40th Legislature "voted Evergreen into being," authorizing the founding of a four-year campus that would be located in the Olympia area. Evergreen would be the first public four-year college to be founded in the State of Washington since 1896 (Clemens, 1987; "Washington's Newest State College," n.d.; Youtz, 1984).

The Legislature proposed three major objectives for the new "Southwest Washington State College" (as it was then known): (1) to serve the needs of Southwest Washington, (2) to provide services to the Washington State government and its employees, and (3) to develop an innovative structure that would not duplicate existing academic resources in the state. Gordon Sandison, the State Senator who chaired the Temporary Advisory Council on Public Higher Education, was instrumental in encouraging this third mission of educational innovation. At the first meeting of the newly formed board of trustees, Sandison announced: "It was not the intent of the Legislature that this be just another four-year college; it is a unique opportunity to meet the needs of the students of today and the future because the planning will not be bound by any rigid structure of tradition as are the existing colleges, nor by any overall central authority, as is the case in many states" (cited in Youtz, 1984, p. 95).

On August 15, 1968, the board of trustees "definitely made a commitment to nontraditional education" in selecting Dr. Charles McCann, Dean of the Faculty at Central Washington State College, as founding president of The Evergreen State College[3] (Clemens, 1987). Charter faculty member Byron L. Youtz (1984) reports: McCann was an "articulate spokesman for individualizing the college learning experience" (p. 95). At his very first press

[3] The college's name, "The Evergreen State College," was officially adopted on January 24, 1968.

meeting, McCann proclaimed that Evergreen "would be 'no carbon copy' of other state institutions" (Clemens, 1987).

The Washington State Legislature provided the funds so that The Evergreen State College would have a year (1970-71) to plan and to prepare for the opening of the institution. A pioneering group of 18 faculty members, three academic deans, and a provost was hired to design the curricular programs, the governance structures, and the initial policies and procedures for the new college (Youtz, 1984). The planners represented a unique mix of educational philosophies and pedagogical approaches, including advocates of Great Books programs, proponents of self-paced and collaborative learning, supporters of cooperative and wilderness education, and advocates of independent study. Many of the charter academics and administrators were drawn from other educational experiments, such as the State University of New York (SUNY) at Old Westbury, Prescott College in Arizona, New College in Florida, University of California (UC) Santa Cruz, the General Program Experiment at San Jose State, and the Interdisciplinary Science Program at Oregon State.

Perhaps the most influential of these early visionaries was Mervyn Cadwallader, one of Evergreen's three founding deans and the former director of the San Jose State College experimental program (1965-1969). Cadwallader was a disciple of Alexander Meiklejohn, the educational reformer who led the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin (1927-1932) (Meiklejohn, 1932). Cadwallader had modeled his San Jose program around Meiklejohn's interdisciplinary experiment and Joseph Tussman's Meiklejohn-inspired Experimental College at UC Berkeley (1965-1969) (Cadwallader, 1984; Tussman, 1969). As a founding dean at Evergreen, Cadwallader seized the opportunity to transport the ideas of Meiklejohn to Evergreen and its planning faculty team. As Youtz (1984) writes, "Much of the curriculum planning effort of the first year was devoted to detailed design of the strongest

possible and most diverse set of Meiklejohn-like interdisciplinary programs we could conceive. We called them 'Coordinated Studies'"[4] (p. 97).

Coordinated Studies drew on the structural and pedagogical features of Meiklejohn's general education reforms at Wisconsin. They were conceived of as year-long, team-taught, multidisciplinary academic programs involving 4 to 5 faculty members and 80 to 100 students. Each program would offer a common reading list and schedule, program retreats, small seminars, and cooperative projects. Students would receive narrative evaluations rather than letter grades (Clemens, 1987; Youtz, 1984). The faculty team would hold weekly Faculty Seminars to exchange curricular ideas and to discuss the reading list and the interdisciplinary instruction. Each Coordinated Studies program would be bound together by a "covenant" -- a written agreement that would set forth the duties and expectations of program participants and define the basis upon which credit was to be awarded to students.

Along with the Coordinated Studies programs, the planning faculty and administrators of Evergreen instituted several other key components of the first-year college curriculum (all of which remain intact at the campus today): Individual Learning Contracts (independent study contracts that would be negotiated between a student and a faculty member); Group Contracts (20 to 40 students and a faculty member [or two] "would agree to study a particular field or subject in depth, full time, for one or more quarters") (Youtz, 1984, p. 99); and internships and cooperative education programs. Early on, the founders decided that there would be no majors, no departments, no faculty ranks, and no educational requirements at Evergreen.

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[4] According to one founding faculty member, the planning faculty had held a contest amongst themselves to see who could come up with the best name for the new interdisciplinary, team-taught programs that they had designed for the college: "The prize for the contest to name this particular interdisciplinary beast was a quart of Chivas Regal scotch! [Faculty member] Richard [Jones] won it with the term 'Coordinated Studies.'"

While the planners worked day and night to complete the educational designs for the college, and the buildings began to emerge, Clemens (1987) reports, "the town watched and waited." On October 4, 1971, The Evergreen State College would open its doors, welcoming an entering class of 1,178 students and 55 members of the faculty. (The planning faculty had selected 37 faculty members out of more than 7,000 applicants to join the innovative campus in the first year.) (Jones, 1981) It was a spirited time in the life of the college. The first courses were held in temporary classrooms, faculty homes, churches, legislative chambers, state parks, and even on an island until the campus buildings were completed in late October. After months of intensive preparation and planning, The Evergreen State College had come to life.

Evergreen Today

Today The Evergreen State College enrolls 3,625 students (3,410 undergraduates and 215 graduate students). Of the 3,625 students, 2,067 (57%) are female and 1,558 (43%) are male. Five percent of Evergreen students are Asian or Pacific Islander; four percent are black or African American; four percent are Mexican, Latino, or Hispanic; another four percent are Native American or American Indian; and 83 percent are Caucasian or members of other ethnic groups. Sixty-seven percent of the entering classes at Evergreen hail from Washington State, and 27 percent of all Evergreen students live on campus. Thirty-eight percent of Evergreen students are age 25 or older (The Evergreen State College 1997-98 Catalog, 1997).[5]

[5] In addition to the main campus in Olympia, Evergreen has a campus in Tacoma, Washington that opened in 1972 and that offers interdisciplinary, collaborative upper division Coordinated Studies programs designed primarily for working adults. The Tacoma campus also provides lower division coursework (leading to the A.A. degree) in conjunction with Tacoma Community College. The lower division program is a Bridge Program -- participants have priority placement in the upper division program of the Evergreen-Tacoma campus. The Tacoma campus currently enrolls 189 students (23% of whom are male and 77% of whom are female). Eighty percent of the faculty and 58 percent of the students are persons of color (B.L. Smith, personal communication, February 21, 1997; Bridge Program, 1997; The Evergreen State College 1997-98 Catalog, 1997).

There are 423 administrators and staff members at The Evergreen State College. The faculty is comprised of approximately 205 full-time and 75 part-time academics (B.L. Smith, personal communication, March 12, 1997). Forty-one percent of the faculty are female, 59 percent are male, and 25 percent are persons of color. Eighty-one percent of the faculty hold the Ph.D. or other terminal degree. The instructional student-to-faculty ratio at the college is 22 to 1 (The Evergreen State College 1997-98 Catalog, 1997).

The college continues to honor the distinctive early ethos of the founders of the institution. There are still no majors, no general education requirements, no disciplinary departments, no faculty ranks, and no grades at this uncommon college. Undergraduates receive narrative evaluations of their academic work, and are required to complete 180 quarter credit hours in order to receive a baccalaureate (B.A. or B.S.) degree. In nearly all cases, students enroll in one full-time Coordinated Study program or contract of study per quarter. Faculty, likewise, devote themselves to full-time teaching in a single program or contracted study area each term.

In addition to a diverse range of Coordinated Studies programs, the college offers Core programs (originally called Basic Programs) that introduce first- or second-year students to Coordinated Studies as a foundation of knowledge and skills for more advanced work at Evergreen. Evergreen today offers three types of Contracted Studies: Individual Learning Contracts, Group Contracts, and Internship Learning Contracts (an independent plan for conducting an internship that is negotiated between a student [usually a junior or senior], faculty sponsor, and field supervisor at an internship site -- e.g., a business, social service agency, or non-profit organization) (The Evergreen State College 1996-97 Catalog, 1996; Student Advising Handbook, 1995).

There are five general "foci" of the Evergreen curriculum (identified in internal strategic planning documents in the mid-1980s) that reflect the core values of the institution. These are: (1) interdisciplinary study; (2) personal engagement in learning; (3) linking theoretical perspectives with practice; (4) collaborative/cooperative work; and (5) teaching across significant differences (a commitment to gender, ethnic, and cultural diversity in the curriculum and in admissions and faculty and staff hiring procedures) (Constancy and Change, 1989).

All curricular offerings at Evergreen today are organized within five interdisciplinary curricular areas or "Planning Groups" (formerly called Specialty Areas): Expressive Arts; Environmental Studies; Scientific Inquiry; Social Science; and Culture, Text and Language. All Evergreen faculty members are affiliated with one of the Planning Groups.[6]

The campus today offers graduate studies leading to the degrees of Master of Environmental Studies, Master of Public Administration, and Master in Teaching. The college also provides part-time studies and evening and weekend programs that are team-taught and interdisciplinary, and geared towards the schedules of working adults (The Evergreen State College 1997-98 Catalog, 1997).

Today, The Evergreen State College is known far and wide for its interdisciplinary, collaborative Coordinated Studies programs. There are a number of distinctive public service centers at the college that are funded by the State Legislature to carry out the campus'

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[6] At the time of the campus visit, the curriculum was organized into twelve interdisciplinary "Specialty Areas:" Environmental Studies; Expressive Arts; Knowledge and the Human Condition; Language and Culture; Management Studies; Native American Studies; Political Economy and Social Change; Science and Human Values; Science, Technology, and Health; Master of Environmental Studies; Master of Public Administration; and Master in Teaching. All faculty members were affiliated with one or more Specialty Areas. In February 1996, the Specialty Areas were replaced by the five smaller interdisciplinary Planning Groups in order to provide a more balanced or representative distribution of faculty members across curricular groupings (Long Range Curriculum Disappearing Task Force, 1996).

educational service mission. The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education at Evergreen was founded in 1985, and is committed to higher education reform and to sharing resources with other institutions to support the development of interdisciplinary learning community programs. The Center facilitates faculty exchanges, coordinates workshops and conferences, and provides technical support to assist other campuses in providing high-quality, interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning. There are currently 46 colleges and universities participating in Washington Center programs, including all of Washington State's public four-year institutions and community colleges, 10 independent colleges, and one tribal college (The Evergreen State College 1997-98 Catalog, 1997).

Organization of this Chapter

This chapter explores the history and endurance of educational innovation at The Evergreen State College. The case study begins with a demographic profile of the interview participants in this study, the current and past generations of the college community who shared their voices and memories of the campus in this investigation. The next section draws upon the archival documents and the data gathered in the interviews to describe the early distinctive educational ideals of Evergreen. The chapter then traces the evolution of these beginning ideals, focusing on where and how the college has kept alive its innovative philosophies and where and how the institution has changed or transformed itself. The next section examines key issues or challenges, pressures or tensions to innovation at Evergreen. The case study concludes with a summary and a reflection on the Evergreen story and its implications for reform and experimentation in American higher education.

Interview Participant Profile

In order to explore the history and current status of innovation at The Evergreen State College, 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted with founding and/or current faculty members, administrators, and students in late January and early February of 1996. Each interview lasted about 50 minutes. The participants included 15 faculty members (including six members of the planning year faculty), 10 administrators (including the current president, the founding president, and the provost), four alumnae/i (three of whom graduated in the first eight years of the institution), and one student. (Some individuals occupied more than one role at the institution.) The interviewees included 13 men and nine women from several different "generations" of the Evergreen community: Eight of the participants joined Evergreen in either its pre-opening years or planning year (1968-1970, 1970-1971), another eight started in the first three years of the institution (1971-1973), two arrived in the college's eighth or ninth year (1978, 1979), and four joined the college in its nineteenth year or later (1989-1995). Excluding the current student, the "tenure" for the interviewees at Evergreen ranged from 4 to 28 years, with an average length of stay of 21.3 years at the institution.[7]

Evergreen's Distinctive Early Ideals

"The Midnight Oil Burning Society," Clemens (1987) reports, "is how the campus Newsletter referred to the three deans and 18 faculty members who worked days, nights and weekends pulling dreams out of thin air and transforming them into real programs that would

[7] One interviewee had held more than one position at the college at different points in her career. In this case, the total number of years employed at Evergreen was determined by taking the sum of the number of years employed in each position at the college. Calculations for the year of arrival were based on the earliest position held at Evergreen.

be offered to real students." Arguments, thoughts, ideas, conferences, reports -- a kind of chaos -- McCann said at the time, were "hammered into a positive, creative force by imaginative, determined people." What resulted in this year-long, intensive "act of creation" was a vision for the new institution that embraced a "list of negatives" (no departments, no ranks, no requirements, no grades) accompanied by a "vaguer list of positives" (collaboration, interdisciplinary study, individualized education) (McCann, 1977). The planners and early faculty members fleshed out an original curricular scheme for Evergreen that included the following key distinctive ideals: (1) interdisciplinary teaching and learning; (2) individualized or student-centered education; (3) undergraduate teaching and faculty freedom; (4) egalitarianism (an absence of faculty ranks and grades; students and faculty as co-learners; participatory governance); and (5) experiential learning (internship and practical engagement in issues, social problems, and professional fields). Each of these early unique attributes of The Evergreen State College is described in the paragraphs below.

Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning

First, interdisciplinary education was the heart and soul of the early Evergreen curriculum. Collaborative, team-taught Coordinated Studies programs were intended to be the cornerstone of the teaching and learning experience, offering multidisciplinary exploration of diverse fields of study and inquiry. The idea, according to an early informational brochure, was that in "small, cooperative learning communities, usually involving 100 students and five faculty from different fields," students would "study common topics or problems from a variety of academic perspectives" (Once Over Lightly, 1971, p. 2). The opening year catalog instructed prospective students: "Instead of studying, for example, Sociology, Economics, or Psychology as disparate, self-justifying fields, you will study central problems or themes by

learning to make use of appropriate techniques from these several disciplines" (The Evergreen State College Bulletin 1971-72, 1971, p. 19).

The first-year curriculum offered a lively blend of Coordinated Studies programs. A sampling of the titles from the 1971-72 academic year includes "Causality, Chance and Freedom," a program that integrated philosophy, history of science, mathematics, computer science, neuropsychology, psychology, and biology; "Contemporary American Minorities," which offered perspectives from black studies, Indian education and organization, and American literature; "Human Development," which linked psychology, education, history, comparative literature, biology, philosophy, and anthropology; and "Space, Time, Form," which combined physics with visual arts, "physical science aesthetics," political science, and history (Once Over Lightly, 1971).

The Evergreen planners decided that there should be no academic departments, no specialized groupings of faculty preserving the "sacred" walls between the disciplines. Faculty members would teach outside of their fields of expertise and work side by side with students in multidisciplinary learning communities. President McCann (1977) recalls:

> We [the founders of Evergreen] were committed to exploring interdisciplinary study as far as it could be taken with undergraduates . . ., to study phenomena from as many angles simultaneously as the expertness of the faculty would supply. We expected a side effect, in that as an expert becomes occasionally a learner in interdisciplinary study, a student benefits from the powerful example of a faculty member in the art of learning. When interdisciplinary -- our term is coordinated -- studies work at their best, faculty members begin to uncover new ways of knowing, new angles of pursuing and widening their own areas of study. (p. 151)

A long-time faculty member in art reveals the thrills and challenges of engaging in cross-disciplinary teaching at early Evergreen:

> The . . . thing [about coming to Evergreen] was that I was going to teach with people outside of my discipline. I would get an opportunity to teach with people in philosophy, in science, things like that. . . . Scared me to death! . . . The first program I was in was called "Words, Sounds, and Images." [The faculty team] all took turns presenting each week and designing things . . . that everybody did. So, when [faculty member] Robert Gottlieb said we would all learn to sing a [German piece] by Beethoven and learn to read music, I couldn't just say, "While my students are doing it, I'm gonna go out for a cup of coffee." And I had such a block about singing. I had to get out my terrors just as the [students] all did and it was hard -- I had to read all of these books and be able to talk about it with these students. . . . But, as tiring as it was, as difficult as it was, it was a world that I couldn't believe was happening. . . . The students couldn't believe it. Nobody could believe it.

Individualism: Student-Centered Education

Second, the pioneering planners of Evergreen embraced the idea of individualized learning and placing the student at the center of the educational process. While Coordinated Studies emphasized the interdisciplinary connections of academic fields in a collaborative learning community, Contracted Studies allowed for independent study of a particular subject or interest area. A founding academic dean explains: "So on the one hand, you would have this [Coordinated Studies] group which could get as large as four or five faculty members and over 100 students who would be doing nothing else but be a little college by themselves for a whole year. Then, on the other hand, quarter by quarter, individual research projects."

"Many of us [early faculty and administrators]," writes McCann (1977), "believed that learning occurs best when the learner takes responsibility for the program of study" (p. 151). In preliminary campus announcements, the planners stressed that the student would "contribute actively to his own learning and that of other students through discussions and presentations. He will not merely receive facts and ideas from his teachers; he will be constantly encouraged by them to learn for himself and to make his work count by improving his skills as a communicator" (The Evergreen State College, 1970). In the words of the first Evergreen catalog, "Instead of listening passively to lectures most of the time, you will be responsible for

engaging actively in regular discussion" (The Evergreen State College Bulletin 1971-72, 1971, p. 21).

Through Contracted Studies and highly engaging, student-centered Coordinated Studies programs, students would be free to design their own academic plans and to direct their own academic lives. In the words of a planning faculty member, "We wanted students to understand that they played an active role in their education, that they were responsible for the kinds of decisions and choices that they made, and to learn how to be responsible for them." Youtz (1984) explains: "'Learning how to learn', that is, helping students to become independent of their teachers, was one of our principal educational goals" (p. 98).

There would be no educational requirements and no majors at Evergreen so that each individual student could design and follow his or her own learning pathway. The planners also did away with grades to ensure that students would be evaluated on the basis of personal achievements and individual growth and development. Professors would write narrative evaluations of each student, commenting on the individual's unique attributes and skills. An alumnus who attended Evergreen in the 1970s comments: "I went to Washington State University my freshmen year and I was disillusioned by the fact that I found myself working for a grade rather than working for knowledge. [Evergreen] allowed me to come alive intellectually. I had ownership over my education. . . . I came away with an incredible sense of empowerment."

Undergraduate Teaching and Faculty Freedom

Third, teaching was to be the heart of faculty life at the college. In the words of one of the planning faculty members,

> We [charter faculty] were interested in making a place that would keep undergraduate teaching and learning in the center of activity, rather than faculty publication, athletics, student politics, [etc.] and to have everything flow from that and back to that. [Teaching] was the end-all and be-all that we thought ought to animate the place. And so that's what we tried to do. That was the main thing. That was first and last was what we thought we were about.

There were no academic departments and no curriculum committees dictating what or how a faculty member could teach. Academics had the freedom to engage in creative teaching styles and to invent new courses. A faculty member who was hired in the 1970s reports:

> One year, [all] I did [was individual student] contracts. I said to students that I didn't want to ever come to campus, that I will do a contract with you, but I have decided that this quarter, I don't want to be on campus. I don't want to think of myself as somebody who goes to an office. I'll meet you anywhere you want. I'll meet you in restaurants. . . . I'll come to your house. I will "be teacher, will travel." So, I had this whole mess of students and I used to go to all of these different places.

In order to ensure that teaching was kept fresh and alive at Evergreen, the early faculty members decided not establish a tenure system. A veteran academic in the sciences explains:

> [The faculty] decided that there wouldn't be tenure [at Evergreen] because we wanted to avoid the old "yellow pages syndrome" that we all knew from our own college days. You know, the old yellow page of lecture notes! The old guys that work like hell the first seven years of their [academic] life and then have an early retirement and do the same thing [in their classes] over and over forever! That happens in tenured institutions. . . . We thought that tenure was an unnecessary thing.

Evergreen faculty would receive three-year contract appointments and would be evaluated on the basis of a cumulative portfolio of their teaching activities, including evaluations that were written by students, faculty colleagues, and academic deans. The portfolio would also include self-evaluations and evaluations submitted by the faculty member to students, colleagues, and deans. In the words of one charter academic, it was decided that "the faculty [would be] required to write self-evaluations [and that] students would evaluate faculty so that faculty could understand what they needed to do to be better teachers, to continue to grow."

At the same time, the founders believed that the curriculum should be constantly changing or "self-destructing" from year to year in order to ensure a continuing sense of vitality and excitement about teaching. In the words of the 1972-73 Evergreen catalog, "In order to keep abreast of the changing world and to capitalize quickly on our own experience, we do not simply carry forward to the next year's catalog the listings in the previous year's. . . . This arrangement insures a degree of freshness and the benefits of a thoughtful review of the opportunities for learning that Evergreen represents" (pp. 11-12). An alumnus and current member of the faculty reports: "When the campus first started, [the faculty] had this rule . . . that you're not allowed to repeat anything you'd done previously. The reason [for this] was there was a big fear amongst faculty initially that we'd slide back into a traditional mode of teaching . . ., that [teaching] could get stale here, and there was an idea that we don't want things to get stale here."

Egalitarianism

Fourth, the campus was devoted to participatory, egalitarian community ideals. As Jack H. Schuster (1989) reports in his site visit report for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the planners of Evergreen set out to build something "akin to a 'classless society.' This was a conscious effort. First names were universally used by faculty, staff, and students" (p. 7).

The dividing lines between students and faculty and between faculty cohorts were knocked down at early Evergreen. There was no faculty rank, no seniority system creating artificial distinctions among teachers. Charter faculty member Byron L. Youtz explains:

> At the outset of our curricular planning in 1970, it became clear that academic rank would be a serious impediment to the team teaching methods of Coordinated Studies. Members of a team could best work as co-equals so that the subject area expertise could pass from one member of the team to another as required by the study plan rather than by some seniority system. (Youtz, 1984, p. 109)

This meant that young, new faculty members were equally as likely to facilitate a Coordinated Study program as were the more experienced academics at Evergreen. "In teaching a Coordinated Study Program," Youtz says, "all faculty [would] learn from one another independent of seniority" (p. 109).

An historian who was hired in the very first years of the campus puts it this way:

> We [early faculty] were going to be asking people to come here and give up certain professional directions and take a risk professionally. We didn't want there to be artificial levels, so we did away with rank. . . . And [it was hoped that] there would be honest communication back and forth between faculty and students, and that we would get rid of the artificial categories and the titles. You'd be on a first-name basis [with students].

Coordinated Studies programs would be collaborative ventures with students and faculty working in partnership in the learning process. As Kenneth G. Gehret observed in a 1972 article about Evergreen, "the distinction between students and teachers is played down [at Evergreen]; professors are thought of as co-learners with their classes" (p. 17).

Evergreen's cooperative, anti-competitive ethos was also fostered through the absence of traditional letter grades. An early faculty member explains that the founders wanted "to get rid of the grading system . . . to create an equity amongst students, to get rid of the competition in the classroom." Student evaluation would, again, center on the individual accomplishments and growth of the learner (as captured in the narrative evaluations).

Campus governance structures, too, reflected the early egalitarian mission of Evergreen. Rather than having a few officials at the top making all of the decisions for the college, Evergreen sought to involve all campus constituencies in governance, with "a broad

base of participation and from points of view that are shared and that represent college-wide concerns" (The Evergreen State College Bulletin 1972-73, 1972, p. 13). There would be open and honest communication (what one planning faculty member referred to as "good faith") in decision making. Students would have a great deal of input in campus governance.

In order to prevent power-wielding structures from "penetrating" the campus, the college also created temporary ad-hoc committees (called "Disappearing Task Forces" or DTFs) that involved students, faculty, and staff in consensus decision making (The Evergreen State College Bulletin 1972-73, 1972). According to Youtz (1984), "The planners had an abhorrence for the lethargy and inertia which they had experienced elsewhere with standing committees, to say nothing of the power (and hence the politics) which such committees vested in a few members of the academic community" (p. 98). The DTFs would address a single problem or task, and when the work of the group was completed, the task force would disband, disappear.

In addition, the academic deans at Evergreen would serve rotating, temporary appointments, and would be drawn from the faculty. "That [was] real healthy!," a founding academic exclaims. "Administrators," in general, he says, "were going to be locatable and accountable for their decisions." This included the president of the institution:

> Charlie McCann was totally committed to democratic procedures. By the time I got to Evergreen [in 1970], I was not madly in love with academic administrators, but one of the things that blew me away about Charlie was that he always went to democratic procedures. So, when we were getting down to something like, say, salary [or] when we had to develop governance policy for the college, we had everybody from the hardest core bureaucrat on the one hand to the secretaries on the other on that team. And we, the team, made the policy. Charlie would make input if he felt like it, but he did not intrude. . . . And that's a hell of a statement about him! There have been very few academic administrators who didn't just verbalize that democracy. [Charlie] never once violated it. . . . Charlie would come to seminars. His door was always open. I could walk into his office any time if he wasn't with somebody, and I could talk to him. From my point of view, for a college president, that was just astonishing!

Experiential Learning

Finally, experiential, out-of-classroom learning was integral to the distinctive educational philosophy of Evergreen. Internships relating to both career learning (professional or job skills) and service learning (social or community service) were available to students through the Individual Contract system -- an Office of Cooperative Education was established in the college's first year to assist with field placements and supervision (The Evergreen State College Bulletin 1972-73, 1972; Youtz, 1984). The campus was committed to providing relevant, out-of-classroom learning experiences to students. An early brochure stated:

> Traditionally, students have left the "real world," entered college to advance their education and, four years later, returned to that "real world." Since the world changes so rapidly . . ., re-entry after four years can be a harrowing, even irrelevant experience for students. Consequently, Evergreen's programs place great emphasis on student participation in off-campus community activities -- as tutors in local schools, as companions to psychiatric patients, as aids in hospitals, as participants in community events, as information gatherers for various groups, as interns in business and governmental agencies and other experiences. (Once Over Lightly, 1971, pp. 6-7)

Internships, apprenticeships, and field placements were integrated into the campus' curricular offerings. According to the 1972-73 Evergreen State College Bulletin, the idea was to "couple experience of the real world with reflection. Although sophisticatedly informed and rational habits of thought may be acquired and strengthened through campus-based efforts, those reflective capabilities are not likely to prove most useful unless they are engaged with direct experience of the institutions and the people through whom the larger society conducts its business and empirically reveals itself" (pp. 13-14).

In the eloquent words of one charter academic, "Our belief was that the future would belong to people who were able to fuse their life and learning. . . . What we achieved was trying to create a learning environment which would challenge students to see that there's no

effective separation between the way you live your life and the things that you learn and the things that you're asked to apply out of that learning."

Endurance and Transformation of Evergreen's Distinctive Early Ideals

Twenty-five years later, and the dreams of the founders are alive and flourishing at Evergreen. The guiding missions or ideals of the campus planners, the unorthodox strategies and styles of education remain remarkably well preserved. In fact, the very same principles that the founders envisioned for the college some 25 years ago, are ever-present in the catalogs, brochures, planning documents, and reports that are published by and about the campus today (e.g., Constancy and Change, 1989; The Evergreen State College, 1995; The Evergreen State College 1997-98 Catalog, 1997; Lyons, 1991; Tommerup, 1993). The five curricular foci of the institution are a testament to the staying power of the original distinctive educational ideals and the institution's increasing commitment to diversity and to serving the needs of the educational community both within and beyond the Southwest Washington region. In the words of a high-ranking administrator,

> Evergreen has remained remarkably true to [its early visions] over time and it remains an extraordinarily internally consistent institution in that sense -- [in] the way [the campus] grades and the way students organize themselves, the way academic programs are organized, the way the curriculum is constructed remains consistent with that founding theory of knowledge. I've never been at an institution that's so clear about what it's about.

This section of the case study draws upon the voices of the interviewees, the archival materials, and campus histories to examine the endurance and evolution of Evergreen's early distinctive educational themes (interdisciplinary teaching and learning, individualism, undergraduate teaching and faculty freedom, egalitarianism, and experiential learning). It then

explores the longevity or "survival" of the institution, and offers a summary of the key reasons for the preservation of the innovative founding ideals of Evergreen.

Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning

First, interdisciplinarity remains a centerpiece of the Evergreen curriculum. Cross-disciplinary educational programs are at the heart of the academic experience today, and interdisciplinary learning has been singled out as one of the five educational foci of the institution. According to the 1996-97 campus catalog, one of the fundamental ideas that sets Evergreen apart from other colleges and universities is the view that "connected learning -- pulling together different ideas and concepts -- is better than teaching separated bits of information" (The Evergreen State College Catalog 1996-97, 1996, p. 5). The college is firmly committed to the belief that "it is impossible to isolate bits of learning and present them as if they had no connection to other learning and to other parts of the world" (p. 6).

This commitment is perhaps best symbolized in the interdisciplinary, collaborative Coordinated Studies Programs, which remain a fixture of the Evergreen curriculum. Today there are 46 Coordinated Studies programs at the college, comprising 61 percent of the regular, full-time curricular offerings;[8] group contracts and core programs account for the other 39 percent of curricular programs at the college. What kinds of interdisciplinary programs are being offered at The Evergreen State College today? A review of the titles of the Coordinated Studies efforts in 1995-96 reveals a rich array of cross-disciplinary programs: "Political Economy and Social Change: Race, Class and Gender" (an exploration of race, gender, and class relations through the lenses of history, feminist studies, theories of racism, and international political economy); "Hispanic Forms in Life and Art" (an integration of the history

[8] When the college opened in 1971, albeit with far fewer students, the number of Coordinated Studies programs that were offered was thirteen (The Evergreen State College Bulletin 1971-72, 1971).

and literature of medieval Spain and colonial Spanish America, and contemporary Latin American literature and culture); "Shakespeare and Chaucer: Experience and Education" (a study of the poetry of Shakespeare and Chaucer, along with philosophies of education, aesthetics, and literary criticism); and "Mythic Reality: Imaging the Goddess" (which explores the connections between theater, literature, Third World feminism, and goddess myths) (The Evergreen State College 1995-96 Catalog, 1995). Two and a half decades since the opening of the institution, and interdisciplinarity thrives at Evergreen.

What keeps the spirit and tradition of interdisciplinary teaching and learning alive at Evergreen? First and foremost, there is the absence of academic disciplines (and majors) and conventional academic departments at Evergreen. In the words of one veteran academic, "I think it's the lack of departments, the lack of, in a sense, internal organization -- one body of faculty -- that has helped the cohesion of the faculty. . . . One of the strengths of Evergreen is that we never had any [confrontations like,] 'You are in this department and not in any other and you're loyalty is to this and so on.' There really is a desire to have folks teach across the curriculum."

Although Specialty Areas (now called Planning Groups) were introduced in the 1980s in order to "set up more predictable, better sequenced year-to-year program patterns," the faculty in the groups were not given budgets or hiring authority -- this was to guard against the areas taking on the traditional roles of departments (Constancy and Change, 1989, p. 23). "Even when we went to divisions [Specialty Areas]," a faculty member explains, "we kept all of the budget central. We kept all the faculty hirings central. I served as the budget dean for more than five years and there was no 'department' out there that was defending its turf or the amount of money they got [and] whether or not they retained faculty positions."

Second, a remarkable number of the founders have remained on the faculty at Evergreen. In 1995-1996, 30 of the 58 original faculty members and academic deans (more than 50 percent of the first-year faculty) continued to teach at Evergreen. Forty-one percent of all regular, full-time faculty in 1995-96 had been employed at Evergreen for at least 25 years. The founding president of the college, Charles J. McCann, also continues to serve as an emeritus member of the faculty (The Evergreen State College 1996-97 Catalog, 1996).

As one dynamic charter academic explains, "The fact that so many faculty have stayed for so long -- that there's been very little faculty turnover in this institution . . . -- can't help but cause some of the attitudes and values and behaviors [interdisciplinarity, etc.] to persist." A fellow faculty pioneer relates: "We [founders] all have been very committed to developing and maintaining and nurturing the things that we came up with in the first couple of years. I think that speaks quite directly to the ability to maintain ourselves" (i.e., the interdisciplinary, student-centered traditions of the institution).

Third, faculty recruitment has been critical to the continuation of interdisciplinary approaches at Evergreen. A faculty member of 24 years reports: "One of the things that new faculty are looked at for is not only their disciplinary expertise. They are often hired into a particular vacancy, but they are also looked at for their ability to teach more broadly across the curriculum." Another long-time academic responds: "We try to be very careful in the way we hire people. . . . We try to be sure that we get people who are very broadly trained, and who have interdisciplinary interests and they're not going to just wanna be a physicist or a chemist or a political scientist, that they're going to want to do the kind of work that we do." And from this top-level academic administrator: "We set up a hiring system [in the beginning] that was very clearly nondepartmental and tilted towards interdisciplinary people. That maintained that [interdisciplinary] thrust."

The students, too, support and strengthen the interdisciplinary mission of the institution. A faculty member in urban planning points out: "The strongest spokespeople [for the institution] have been the students. There is a natural selection by and large. . . . Virtually every student who comes and stays here, comes because they want to do this type of education. So, they're engaged in it."[9]

Individualism: Student-Centered Education

Second, there is a longlasting commitment to student-centered learning at Evergreen. Students take charge of their education through active participation in Coordinated Studies seminars and Individualized Learning Contracts. The campus remains free of educational requirements and letter grades. Curricular programs are centered around the individual interests and concerns of the learner, and narrative evaluations focus on the personal accomplishments and growth of each student. An excerpt from the Evergreen State College 1989 campus self-study accreditation report perhaps best captures the enduring ideal of personal engagement in learning (one of the five curricular foci of the institution today):

> Students at Evergreen are required to make their own choices about their educational objectives and their courses of study. This empowerment and self-consciousness about ends is enhanced by full time (16-credit) study in one program, the lack of major requirements for graduation, and the realities of an evaluation system which requires students and faculty to judge and be judged on the basis of their unique experience and accomplishments. The intensity demanded by the structure of many Evergreen programs creates a situation where students feel responsibly engaged not simply in a dyadic relation with the teacher, but in a community of learners within the program. (Constancy and Change, 1989, pp. 15-16)

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[9] According to James W. Lyons (1991) and David Dodson (1991), the high proportion of adult learners at Evergreen helps to sustain the college's distinctive founding missions. "It must be acknowledged," writes Dodson, "that a certain portion of the institution's success has been attributable to the natural intellectual curiosity and educational persistence of its more mature student body" (p. 205). A top-level administrator on campus today agrees: "I would say it has mattered a lot that a large proportion of our students are adult learners. They've set a tone for the classrooms, they tend to be more self-directed and they appreciate many of the aspects of the colleg[e] such as the emphasis on applied work."

Why has the early distinctive emphasis on individualism been maintained at Evergreen? Long-time faculty and staff indicate, again, that the presence of a core group of founding faculty members and the absence of disciplinary departments, majors, and major requirements has provided Evergreeners with the encouragement and the opportunity to continue to design and direct their own learning. In the words of an Evergreen student, "The system of interdisciplinary studies, not having any requirements to graduate, and having the space to learn in the manner that you want to allows for people to come out of here with an extreme sense of themselves and an extreme sense of being able to accomplish things, self-motivation."

Undergraduate Teaching and Faculty Freedom

Third, teaching remains at the heart of the Evergreen curriculum. "Teaching is what Evergreen is all about," the 1996-97 campus catalog proclaims, "so the college's entire curriculum, from Core programs to advanced and independent study, is designed to enhance the student's ability to learn. . . . Faculty are drawn to Evergreen because they love teaching -- they are interested in the process of teaching and learning, and they want to work with students in an environment that rewards that interest" (p. 6).

There is a continuing sense of creativity and excitement about teaching at Evergreen. An emeritus faculty member in the sciences reports:

> The faculty have maintained an incredible amount of academic freedom at Evergreen. You don't even have to teach your field! So oftentimes, people get out of their field and try other things. The academic freedom is just outrageous! In my later years, I got very interested in natural history and thought that natural history should be taken more seriously as opposed to science. . . . I don't know of any other school where I could have taught natural history in anything other than maybe a leisure ed. program or something. . . . But here, . . . I've spent whole quarters with students doing nothing but bugs! And they learn a lot about bugs! And birds and stuff like that. And I think that's probably pretty rare. You can do that here. It's true for all the faculty. They can really branch out.

Another veteran academic puts it this way: "Faculty . . . come here and find that they can explore some of their own interests and develop some of their own talents, and because there is no template model for Coordinated Studies programs, they have a lot of flexibility to try out [new ideas] and be creative in certain kinds of ways."

And still, the curriculum is always being reinvented at Evergreen (Kuh et al., 1991). Although some academic programs may now be repeated from year to year, the programs are constantly changing as new teaching teams take over and new groups of students participate. A faculty member of 25 years reports:

> Early on, we used to never teach the same thing twice because everybody was experimenting. If you offered it twice, [we used to think] you might be starting to get into a rut. Now, it does happen [that programs are offered more than once,] but oftentimes you're with a different team, or even when you're with the same team, you have new ideas, and [the class is] never quite the same.

The founding spirit of creativity in teaching is also reinforced by the absence of seniority and departmental structures at Evergreen. "The . . . thing that keeps the [teaching] mission alive," a veteran faculty member relates, "is that we have no rank! There's nobody that's the boss that says 'You can't do that! You better talk to so and so because they have to approve this.' It's not true. There are no departments" and no curriculum committees. "We can create our own quarters!," she continues, "our own calendar! We can say we're only going to work on Saturdays; we just have to do the equivalent of a certain number of hours. We can do anything we want! We have our own budget" in each teaching program.

Perhaps most important, teaching has remained the primary criterion for academic review and reappointment at Evergreen (Faculty Handbook, 1997). Faculty today are still required to maintain a portfolio including course syllabi, evaluations from students, evaluations from faculty colleagues in teaching teams, and self-evaluations spanning a teacher's career. A charter professor and former academic dean explains:

> When you go up for promotion at most other campuses, they . . . know about your publications, but nobody really knows how good a teacher you are. . . . We [at Evergreen] know because when I am teaching in these [Coordinated Studies] programs, I am working with four other faculty members, and they know whether I'm reading the book of the week for our faculty seminar. When I give lectures [to the class,] they know whether I'm prepared. [My portfolio includes] course evaluations, my evaluations of students, students evaluations of me, colleague's evaluations of me.

In the words of one academic administrator, the college has "set up a culture" that supports innovation in teaching:

> Evergreen does not have the dualisms about rewarding one thing [e.g., research] and saying you value something else [teaching]. . . . We [always] said teaching mattered and that became the central value in reappointment. As we hired [new faculty], we assessed for teaching interests. [The candidates] even had to teach a class during the interview and they had to write an essay of their educational philosophy as part of the application. All of that is a message to folks that's pretty clear [about the value that is placed on teaching].

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Since the time of the campus visit, Evergreen has changed its academic reappointment policy: The campus now offers both term and continuing contracts to faculty members. (Prior to the adoption of the new policy in the summer of 1996, Evergreen faculty were hired for one-year, three-year, or eight-year contracts. Evaluations took place at the end of a faculty member's first year and second year at the college under the three-year contract; and during the individual's second, fifth, and seventh year of employment under the eight-year contract.) (Faculty Handbook, 1988)

Today regular part-time and full-time faculty members are eligible for continuing contracts up until the time of their voluntary departure, retirement, or dismissal from the college. Academics are initially appointed to a term contract, and after nine (but no more than eighteen) quarters of full-time teaching in interdisciplinary programs with six or more faculty

(at least four of whom are regular faculty members on continuing appointments), they are eligible for a continuing faculty appointment at the college (Faculty Handbook, 1997).

According to Evergreen Provost and Academic Vice President Barbara Leigh Smith (personal communication, February 21, 1997), under the new policy, all Evergreen faculty members (on both term and continuing contracts) are reviewed annually by their peers and students. Academics who are employed under a continuing contract are also evaluated every five years during a three-hour conference with all of the colleagues with whom they have taught. The five-year evaluation is based upon a review of the faculty member's cumulative portfolio of teaching experiences and evaluations from faculty and students, along with a five-year self-evaluation that includes a retrospective on the individual's work and a three- to five-year growth plan.

Why was the new reappointment policy adopted at Evergreen? According to a memorandum written by Academic Dean John Cushing to the Faculty Reappointment Policy Study Group (J. Cushing, memorandum, January 7, 1994), over the years, faculty and deans at the college had raised a number of concerns about the term appointment system. Cushing reports that academics who were employed under a one-year or three-year contract found the process to be threatening and feared non-reappointment, especially in times of budget cuts. In addition, the old policy stated that the three-year contracts provided the same amount of job security as the eight-year contracts, yet it was widely believed among faculty that only the eight-year contracts guaranteed a sense of long-term job security.

While some have compared the new reappointment policy to a tenure system ("Is Tenure Evergreen?," 1996), others indicate that the system differs from a traditional tenure process in a number of ways (B.L. Smith, personal communication, February 21, 1997). Since there are frequent reviews of faculty members who are employed under a continuing contract,

and since evaluation is heavily based upon an academic's achievements and skills in interdisciplinary teaching, the system protects the centrality and vitality of teaching at the institution. It still guards against the "old yellow pages of lecture notes" syndrome and provides a continuing sense of vitality and freshness in teaching.

Egalitarianism

Fourth, Evergreen has kept alive its early egalitarian ethos. The campus remains free of hierarchical role divisions and status distinctions, such as faculty titles and ranks. Students, teachers, administrators, and college president all call each other by their first names, and formal boundaries between students and professors are minimized -- faculty and students continue to view themselves as "co-learners," working in collaborative Coordinated Studies communities.

In the words of a faculty member in the arts, "Learning how to learn is a part of everyone's work who's a teacher [at Evergreen]. You learn how to learn together, with your students. It's not like you have all the answers." A current student agrees: "Interaction between students and faculty . . . is very important, that human contact. [Faculty are] not so separate from us and we're learning from them and they're learning from us. There's not a hierarchy of 'Oh, I'm the teacher and you listen to what I have to say.'" According to the 1989 institutional self-study report, "Collaborative and cooperative work has been a central feature of the Evergreen experience since the college opened" (Constancy and Change, p. 78).

Campus governance structures also remain flexible and participatory. Although there are a few permanent standing committees in place at Evergreen today, the primary vehicle for college-wide decision making continues to be the Disappearing Task Force or dissolving ad hoc committee, which is based on consensus. The campus also retains its distinctive system of

rotating deanships (Constancy and Change, 1989). "The deans are members of the faculty," one academic explains, "they're not outside administrators."

At the same time, students continue to have a great deal of input in campus decision making. In the words of a faculty member of 24 years,

> Our students here have . . . tremendous voice, . . . tremendous influence in terms of what gets offered [in the curriculum], and can influence significantly the design of a program even once it's underway. . . . In hiring of faculty, students serve on the [hiring] committees, the incoming faculty speak before classes, and we actively recruit the student input and that's taken very seriously. We'll have a visiting faculty member here and the students, by really being interested in her or his classes, will then have a significant effect on whether that person is hired or not.[10]

Finally, Evergreen remains committed to a non-competitive student evaluation system. One founding faculty member observes: "There's been a real strong defense of the written evaluation" as opposed to a standard grading system. In the words of the 1989 institutional self-study report, "Students find that this [nongraded] approach renders unnecessary the view of other students as competitors scrambling against each other for the few good grades" (Constancy and Change, p. 79).

What keeps the egalitarian ethos alive at Evergreen? The structuring of the curriculum around full-time teams of faculty and students who are devoted to cooperative learning has, in essence, glued this feature of the Evergreen mission into place. The entire curriculum, the academic life of the faculty member and the learning community of the student is centered in the collaborative Evergreen program of study. In the words of a long-time academic, "The particular program, group contract, or class that [students are] registered in is the only thing

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[10] Interestingly, Evergreen students have never formed a permanent student government body. According to interviewees, students' lives at Evergreen revolve around their academic programs, where they form close-knit, involving communities with fellow students and faculty. While there have been a number of proposals to establish a student government (most recently, in the fall of 1996), this remains a hotly contested issue at the college.

[students and faculty are] doing. I think that's been one of the reasons for [Evergreen's] success."

The values of cooperation and collaboration have also been passed down from one generation of Evergreener to the next through the longlasting commitments of the veteran faculty who firmly believe that this type of education, and these antihierarchical, involving approaches to college governance, to use the words of one charter academic, are effective and "they're fun!" Egalitarianism has become a fixture of the campus culture.

Experiential Learning

Finally, there is enduring commitment to experiential learning at Evergreen. "Linking theory with practice" is one of the five foci of the curriculum today, and many academic programs continue to integrate internship experiences into the learning activities. Juniors and seniors may engage in individualized internship projects through the college's "Internship Learning Contracts." According to the 1996-97 college catalog, more than half of Evergreen's students complete one or more internships by the time that they graduate. (This compares to a national figure of less than two percent of all college students.)

One of the lessons to be learned from Evergreen, a faculty member in the arts explains, "is there's got to be a real affirmation of theory and practice" in education. At this campus, she says,

> you don't just sit around and talk about things. People have to <u>do</u> things; they have to get out. They have to make projects. . . . That's one thing that's wonderful about Evergreen. Our programs always have these big "doing" components. I can't tell you how many times I come [to campus] and in the traffic circle, there are buses and vans and trucks full of students going to do the thing they've been talking about. They're going to Indian reservations; they're going to visit the State Capitol; they're going to the forest to look at trees. They're always going somewhere, doing things.

The dreamers and visionaries of early Evergreen designed a campus that would integrate life and learning, and according to charter faculty members, the college has lived up

to this dream. Evergreen was recently singled out in a book by George Kuh and colleagues (Kuh et al., 1991) as one of the nation's 14 "involving colleges," campuses that foster student learning and development outside of the classroom, that integrate in-class with out-of-class life and learning experiences. During their visit to Evergreen, the researchers were struck by "seamlessness" of in class and out of class activity.

The enduring ideal of experiential learning has been sustained over the life of the college, once again, through the commitment of the veteran faculty (and like-minded recruits) and the students who self-select to attend Evergreen. According to interviewees, it is the continuing presence of the founders and the ever-present ethos of the "Evergreen way" that keeps alive the spirit and commitment to practical real-world learning experiences.

Evergreen's Survival as an Innovative College

Twenty-five years later, and The Evergreen State College thrives as an alternative institution of higher education. This is a remarkable achievement for a public college. Over the course of its lifetime, Evergreen has faced several crises, including at least seven bills to close the college. Severe budgetary cutbacks in the State of Washington in the 1970s and a changing sociopolitical climate also threatened Evergreen's continuation as an alternative college (Clemens, 1987; Kuh et al., 1991; Schuster, 1989; Youtz, 1984). Given the shifts in the economy since the 1960s, the changes in contemporary attitudes towards education (what some characterize as a conservative shift in public attitudes about reform in education), and the short lives of many of Evergreen's kindred counterparts in the '60s and '70s, what has kept this innovative institution healthy and alive? Taking a different turn on the topic, interviewees were asked to comment on Evergreen's longevity -- i.e., to share, if they could, some of the reasons why this distinctive college -- unlike so many of the alternative campuses in the '60s and '70s -- has survived.

Late Start-Up Date -- Lessons Learned from Other Innovative Institutions

First and foremost, authors and interviewees single out Evergreen's later start-up date. The college opened in 1971, at the very end of the alternative higher education movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The campus planners, thus, had the advantage of learning from the earlier educational experiments of the period. When it came time to recruit faculty, they brought in individuals who had experience at other innovative institutions. "It is notable," write Richard M. Jones and Barbara Leigh Smith (1984), how many Evergreen faculty came to Olympia via Old Westbury, Santa Cruz and similar institutions" (p. 44). Youtz (1984) explains: "The war stories of these veterans considerably tempered our wilder dreams" (p. 96). Charles Teske, Evergreen faculty member and founding academic dean of humanities and arts, asserts in a footnote to Youtz' piece:

> I cannot emphasize too strongly how important it was to have in our planning year the wisdom of those who came to us from "earlier educational experiments" which either had failed or were wavering. . . . Our veterans saved us from those pit-falls [of other institutions]. Indeed, it may not be all that wrong to maintain that we are still around because we were one of the last innovative colleges to open. (Youtz, p. 96)

A founding faculty member at the campus today puts it this way: "A number of people who came here, came here with prior experience at places that had tried to do some of these [innovative] things. They came with a fairly vivid sense about what the structural mistakes that they'd made at those places were." And a long-time administrator at the college agrees that "people are a big ingredient" in Evergreen's longevity. In the beginning, she says,

> the college . . . hired people with a little more savvy than some of the other experimental schools of the time. We hired people away from other experimental schools. We hired people who'd been at Santa Cruz or had been at Old Westbury or had been at Oberlin, and we hired them in fairly large numbers the first two years, so they came I think with a little more reality about what it would take to run an institution. And that helped. It gives [the institution] an experience base.

An Autonomous Board of Trustees

Second, Evergreen has benefited from having its own board of trustees. Unlike many of the other state-supported innovative institutions of the era (e.g., UC Santa Cruz, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay), Evergreen has been granted relative autonomy and its own built-in system of support. Although there is now a Higher Education Coordinating Board in the State of Washington, there is no central governing board of trustees whose interests represent the norms of a large conventional public university system. This has been a key factor in the college's longevity.

Founding faculty member Richard M. Jones (1984) singled out Evergreen's autonomous board of trustees in a discussion of the factors that "bedeviled the growth of kindred ventures into alternative higher education" of the 1960s. He said that unlike most distinctive colleges and universities of the period,

> Our Board of Trustees is an autonomous governing body. . . . Moreover, the particular trustees who saw us through our first year were among the most conservative, republican, successful business persons in the state. . . . They did not always understand what the planning faculty had planned, and did not always approve of what they did understand. But they did consistently support the plan in response to all forms of off-campus opposition. . . . [W]hen push came to shove on the several votes to close the college in its early years, the only politically significant eyeballs available for showdown confrontation were those of five white, conservative, republican successful business persons -- and their political clout. No more effective protective parenting could have been planned for such an improbable infant as we were. (p. 120)

Leadership

Third, institutional leadership also appears to be a key to Evergreen's longevity. The early trustees brought in a former State Governor (Dan Evans) to serve as the college's second president "in one of the roughest periods" of the college's history (the late 1970s and early 1980s). An alumnus and current administrator relates:

> Evans . . . was a three-term governor and was very well regarded in the State Legislature. . . . That helped a hell of a lot. At that time, we were under heavy fire from the legislature for underenrollment. The late '70s was a time when many of the alternative institutions that had been started up in the late '60s or early '70s were going under. So, we felt the same pressure, but we were fortunate in that with Evans here, the Legislature grudgingly, but nevertheless, backed off. . . . It was savvy of the trustees at that time to be able to cut this deal with Evans to come in and take over the presidency and I think we're damn lucky that he did. It helped a lot.

Evans publicized the college's achievements to the world, Clemens (1987) reports:

> Evans mobilized the whole college in presenting its story. Early in his administration, he formed the Design for Enrollment DTF to reorganize and clarify its position in the competitive educational marketplace of the 1980s. He also employed his political credibility and skill as an orator in an ongoing campaign to inform the public and media that Evergreen was both a unique resource for present-day students and a modern heir to long-held educational values.

Summing Up the Key Reasons for the Endurance of Evergreen's Distinctive Early Ideals

By Legislative mandate, The Evergreen State College was designed to be different. For 25 years the college has carried out that early vision. Looking back over the life and lessons of this remarkable campus, what, in summary, are the key factors that have enabled the college to sustain its pioneering principles? What has kept the innovative educational philosophies alive at Evergreen? First and foremost, there is the continuing presence and dedication of the founding faculty who sustain the distinctive early ideals in their commitment to interdisciplinary teaching, student-centered education, and experiential learning at Evergreen. The innovative principles and philosophies are passed down to new faculty cohorts who are recruited for their interest in collaborative, interdisciplinary teaching. Then there are the students who self-select to attend Evergreen, generation after generation, in search of an education that is centered around cooperative learning, individualism, and diverse fields of inquiry. At the same time, the campus remains free of rigid and hierarchical organizational structures, which allows for a continuing a sense of vitality in teaching, an openness and

freedom to experiment. Above all, it may be Evergreen's later founding date and its lively original planning teams who were drawn from a family of innovative and experimenting institutions, that has enabled Evergreen to endure as a distinctive public institution.

Issues and Challenges to Innovation

Like any creative entity or community, The Evergreen State College has come up against pressures or tensions in its continued existence. This section explores some of the key issues and challenges to innovation at Evergreen. These are: innovation in a state-supported institution, faculty overwork and burnout, academic immobility, and the forthcoming retirements of founding faculty.

Innovation in a State-Supported Institution

First, Evergreen faces pressures and tensions as an innovative public institution. As indicated earlier, the college has had to do battle with the State Legislature for years to preserve its alternative mission. "Every year since 1970," Youtz (1984) writes, "there had been at least one bill introduced into the Legislative hopper to close Evergreen, to turn it into state offices, or a police academy, or at least a southern branch of the University of Washington" (pp. 103-104). Long-time faculty and administrators speak of a "siege mentality" at the campus in the 1970s and early 1980s.

"From the beginning," a founding administrator relates, Evergreen "was fighting off attacks from people who really had no idea what we were doing here -- or they had the wrong idea -- you know, we were nothing but a bunch of hippies. I suppose [we] asked for it, but [we] wanted people from the very beginning to know what we intended to do and how we were going to do it, and from that moment, the arrows and the mud started [to fly]." An early alumnus and current administrator puts it this way:

> There have always been people in the Legislature that have serious misgivings about the alternative nature of this [college]. I think that shared sense of being embattled all the time really brings people together and that people forged a common sense of what the place was about and an appreciation of each other because of that feeling that the outside was after us, that we were misunderstood and oftentimes abused.

"The standard rap against the place," he says, "is that this is now a holdover from the '60s where students get credit for basketweaving, where anything goes, that it's a center of leftist activity." In the last 10 years, however, he indicates that the college has gained increasing acceptance and recognition, both in the legislative arena and in the state in general. Several high-profile magazines and national reports have publicized the successes of Evergreen's graduates who often go on to assume leadership positions in industry and community organizations, and are very successful in graduate schools (Clemens, 1987).

Still, the college remains in a precarious position as a state-supported institution. Budget issues have been an ever-present concern. A member of the planning faculty remarks:

> Budget cuts have really hurt. . . . Since [the planning year,] we've averaged a budget cut every two years. . . . The first year that we had students [1971-72], I coordinated a program . . . which had five faculty and 100 students, and my program budget for the academic year was $4,500. . . . This year, my program [has] three faculty, 66 students, and my <u>entire</u> program budget for the year is $760. We've learned to get along on next to nothing and still provide a high quality product.

Faculty Overwork

Second there is the issue of faculty overwork. "This is a very labor intensive place," an academic administrator explains, "and that's always a tension here. Faculty typically teach 16 hours a week here. The normal is more like nine [hours] in most other schools. That's a consequence of teaching full time."

Evergreen prides itself on its intensely personal approach to teaching and learning. Faculty often devote hours upon hours to crafting thoughtful narrative evaluations for each student and faculty colleague, and spend a great deal of time in preparation and reflection in

writing their own self-evaluations, which become part of their cumulative teaching portfolio. A founding academic who has recently retired from the college explains: "In some ways, it was a nightmare" writing those narrative evaluations. He says: "I'd write a small novel at the end of every quarter. Faculty members dreaded it! . . . I would put in 30, 40 hours writing evaluations at the end of each quarter. . . . You would want to get it right -- to say what the student did and what was unique about the student's work."

A member of the planning faculty, likewise, observes that "burnout is a very, very real issue" at Evergreen. He says that "faculty need more time to get away," and that some of his colleagues take unpaid leave: "Those faculty that can afford it, like my teaching partner this year, will drop to one-quarter time in the spring [quarter]. . . . And the few of them that have been successful at writing books can get enough revenue from that to take unpaid leave and support themselves. . . . But, there's so much enthusiasm in most faculty for what we're doing that it offsets [the burnout]." There is always the excitement of teaching at Evergreen.

A veteran academic agrees: "Faculty members, especially at evaluation time, will grouse about having to write page-long narratives rather than doing alphanumeric grades, but whenever they think of the alternative and realize that that grading system, rather than a personally based narrative, would do away with the collaboration that we stress in our programs, everybody forgets about that." In the end, the vitality and excitement of teaching in the Evergreen community frequently outweigh the emotional and physical energy that is involved in this kind of education.

Faculty Immobility

Third, there is the issue of faculty advancement and mobility. Faculty members at Evergreen devote most of their time to teaching in the college's full-time, interdisciplinary programs. Often, there is little time to conduct research or to stay current in one's disciplinary

field. A chemist remarks: "The work week is about 60 hours a week for a faculty member and there's little or no time for research. When I have done research is when I'm teaching an upper division program and I get a student project going. . . . So, I have done some publications here, but not nearly what I would do elsewhere because we put our time with the students in class."

Faculty "don't come here just because they're just looking for a job," an academic in urban planning says. She explains: "You . . . come here because you believe in the place, and there's a risk that you will get out of your field -- the research, the publishing, and so forth. There are some risks [for faculty] depending on your field if you come here early in your career." A top-level administrator on campus sums up the dilemma in this way:

> Faculty . . . here . . . are always teaching in interdisciplinary programs where they are continually being pulled off of their disciplinary base. Because the intensity of the full-time instruction here is so great, very few of our faculty are able to maintain a research and publication life which keeps them current in their home disciplines. So, if you come here as a biochemist or an economist, by the time you've been here for a few years, you're a very weird kind of biochemist or economist, and it will be very hard for you to be employed in a conventional institution because you've lost your place in your discipline. . . . For faculty . . ., once you're here, you're here for life, and there is nowhere else. Partly there is nowhere else . . . because you have become a weird kind of economist. But, it's also that there's no place else for you because you can no longer conceive of teaching in that [disciplinary] way anymore.

Founding Faculty Retirements

Evergreen is at a turning point in its history. Like many of the innovative colleges and universities of the 1960s and early 1970s, Evergreen faces the forthcoming retirements of its founding faculty. "That's a challenge for us," an administrator remarks. "In another 10 years," she says, "there won't be any founders left. So, what will we be? How will we define ourselves? That's exciting. It's scary. It's threatening."

While the campus has been fairly successful in recruiting faculty who share the distinctive values of the founders of the institution, some academics fear that when the majority of the founding faculty members retire, the campus's distinctive heritage could be lost. A

member of the planning faculty expresses his concern: "The question of generational continuity is extremely important and difficult and I don't know for sure what the answer to it is. I'm not sure anybody does. What that means is that in another 25 years, what used to be Evergreen may simply be in songs and old stories."

Conclusion: Summary and Implications

Vision. Flexibility. Spirit. And remarkable durability. Since the time of its pioneering creation in the late 1960s, The Evergreen State College has, in the words of its founding president, "been no carbon copy" of other state institutions. For two and a half decades, the college has continued to offer interdisciplinary, student-centered alternatives in education; cooperative, creative teaching opportunities; an open and participatory (and disappearing!) governance environment; and real-world, out-of-classroom learning experiences. Despite budgetary crises and threats of closure, Evergreen has carried on as an innovator in public higher education. Looking back over the life and lessons of this distinctive college, what are some of the implications or teachings of the Evergreen case study and history?

- The first lesson to be learned from The Evergreen State College study is that freedom from conventional academic structures sustains and nourishes educational innovation. At Evergreen, it is the very absence of departments, curriculum committees, faculty rank, competitive grading scales, and curricular requirements, that has enabled this campus to engage in collaborative and creative processes of teaching and learning for 25 years.
- Second, an ever-changing or evolving curriculum or governance design may promote longlasting experimentation and vitality in teaching, learning, and decision making. The "self-destructing" curriculum at Evergreen, the Disappearing Task Forces, and the rotating deanships all contribute to a sense of dynamism and creativity.

- Third, this analysis underscores the importance of the continuing participation and dedication of founding faculty members in distinctive institutions of higher education. At Evergreen, the dreams of the pioneers are kept alive and passed down to future faculty and student generations by the dynamic charter academics who remain at the college.
- Fourth, faculty recruitment is critical to an innovative institution's longevity. As Evergreen faces the forthcoming retirements of its charter academics, the institution looks to the future generations of faculty to carry on the distinctive traditions.
- Fifth, students often self-select to attend an innovative campus. At Evergreen, the distinctive spirit of the college is kept alive, in part, by the energy and interest of the Evergreen students.
- Sixth, faculty reappointment systems that reward teaching are a necessity if academics are to continue to engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary education. Portfolio assessment may provide one alternative (or supplement) to traditional forms of faculty evaluation.
- Seventh, new innovative educational ventures should look to the experiences of other distinctive campuses across the country as they develop their curricular plans and institutional policies. The recruitment of faculty with a background in alternative higher education may also be critical for a distinctive college's success or longevity.
- Eighth, innovative institutions in the public sector may be subject to intense scrutiny, budgetary cutbacks, and threats of closure. Campuses with their own independent board of trustees and those that recruit presidential leaders from the public political arena may have a better chance of survival.
- Ninth, faculty members who are engaging in interdisciplinary programs at innovative institutions may find that their opportunities for professional mobility in academe are

limited. Faculty burnout may also be a consequence of the intensive, collaborative full-time teaching-centered approaches at distinctive colleges.

In the end, however, it is the joy and excitement of cooperative exchange and nourishing dialogue between faculty and students that captures the hearts and souls of the people at Evergreen. Human concern and passion for education is the essence of the place, the quality that continues to make Evergreen Evergreen.

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