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The Making of the College: 1964-1967

The history of The Evergreen State College starts with the 1964 report issued by the Council of Presidents. This Council consisted of the presidents of the four-year state colleges in Washington- the University of Washington, Washington State University, Central Washington State College, Eastern Washington State College, and Western Washington State College. The report, entitled "A Plan for Public Higher Education in Washington", noted that there were three public four-year institutions of higher learning in eastern Washington, while western Washington had only two such schools. Also, southwestern Washington had no public four-year college at all. The report also noted that the population of western Washington was larger and growing more rapidly than that of eastern Washington. To compensate for this imbalance, the Council's report recommended that the 1965 legislature create a new state college in western Washington.

The 1965 Legislature created a Temporary Advisory Council on Public Higher Education. This was made effective by Chapter 161, S.B. 489, Laws of 1965. The Council was made up of members of the legislature, state college and university presidents, representatives from the community colleges, and public members. During 1965 and 1966, the Council conducted studies to determine the need for a new state college, and what the best location would be. The Council utilized the resources of a consulting firm, Nelson Associates, Inc. of New York.

In May 1966, Nelson Associates, Inc. submitted a report to the Council entitled "Planning for Higher Education Needs in the State of Washington." The report compared 1965 college enrollments with projected enrollments for 1970 and 1975, and concluded that enrollments would increase to the point that there would be an excess of student demand over available college resources. The consultants recommended that a new four-year college should be established as soon as possible.

Five months later, the Temporary Advisory Council submitted a report to Gov. Daniel J. Evans, entitled "A Report on Higher Education in Washington." In the report, the Council followed the consulting firm's recommendation to open a new four-year college as soon as possible. The Council also recommended that the institution be located in Thurston County, within a radius of approximately ten miles of Olympia. This area was chosen for several reasons, a major one being that this area had the greatest number of potential college students not already served by a state college or university.

The Council's report was presented to the 1967 Legislature; the recommendations were supported by Gov. Evans. A new four-year state college was created by the Fortieth Washington State Legislature, on March 21, 1967, by Chapter 47, Laws of 1967. This was to become effective July 1, 1967. The law not only established The Evergreen State College, but also stipulated that it be located within a ten-mile radius of Olympia, on a campus of at least 600 acres.