10 November 1999

TO:

FROM: Burt Guttman

SUBJECT: Student recruiting and success

Today's faculty meeting was the first time I've had time to focus on the Strategic Plan, and I was particularly aroused by items under part II: Student recruitment and success. I believe some of these plans have been written without adequate consideration of some realities of teaching at Evergreen. I beg to offer you some insights based on my 27 past years of teaching here, on top of several years of teaching at other institutions.

Point 1.c refers to characteristics associated with success at Evergreen, and point 2.c proposes to find out more about factors that lead to retention (I read "success" as equivalent to "retention"). But I believe most faculty members who have much experience in teaching at Evergreen would agree that success depends primarily on one overriding factor: ***maturity.*** This term, for me, includes such characteristics as having a strong personal work ethic, the ability and determination to do whatever work is necessary without whining and making excuses, and a generally mature outlook on life coupled with a sense of personal direction, providing motivation to take one's studies seriously. It does not particularly mean *intellectual* maturity; that is presumably what good students acquire as a result of their studies and hard work. Given a list of students enrolling in a program with some information about their backgrounds, I could easily predict those who will have the greatest success. They will be students who are a few years older than a typical high school graduate, who have been working for a few years, who may have a history of almost random sampling of courses at some other colleges, and who are returning to school with clear career goals in mind.

I now see that the College proposes to increase by 15% those students coming as transfers or directly from high school, and I am rather dismayed. I can certainly agree that transfer students are likely to be successful, and many of my best students have come here as transfers; they often fit that profile of students who are at least a few years beyuond high school. However, having two years of work at community colleges, they cannot take full advantage of those interdisciplinary programs we pride ourselves on, the programs that are at the heart of our work. "But, all right," I might say. "They're likely to be successful, so let's go after our share of them." Then I consider the direct high school graduates, and my heart sinks. It is precisely the typical high school graduate who *lacks* that maturity that makes for success. These students so often need a combination of coddling, parenting, tough-loving, and avuncular talk to shape them into successful students. So why are we going after them so strongly? Of course, they are the most obvious source of students--the most traditional source of college students. And so I say to myself, "Okay, I can support an additional effort to get high-school-direct students if we go after the *best* of them." Certainly most colleges depend on getting these students, and they manage to

be successful, in various degrees, at