26 February 1987

Patrick,

Re “assessment,” and to amplify what the Academic Advisory Board wrote you yesterday:

Will Humphreys pointed out to us what an enormous change the commitment to assessment by standardized tests would be for the traditional Evergreen; and therefore one should obviously anticipate great resistance on the part of the faculty, even if it is inevitable because of HEC©Board action. But I think we should recognize that assessment, in general, is perfectly compatible with Evergreen's commitment to evaluation (frequent evaluation, with recommended action for improvements), and that it should be an important component of academic advising (which is why our Board felt it should comment on the matter).

About two years ago, I think, you were going to assemble a DTF on graduation requirements; I think it got tabled because there was so much else to do. I remember writing you a note for that DTF, recommending that one requirement should be demonstrated ability to write well and read critically, both at quite high levels. (You replied that that seemed quite reasonable.) Perhaps it is time to convene that DTF, but to broaden the charge to include developing a system of early assessment to catch problems and correct them. I cannot believe that the faculty, on the whole, would oppose some minimum standards of literacy; I would hope that we would support quite high standards of literacy. (What the heck are we all doing, if not trying to develop the abilities to read and write very well?) We are also beginning to talk about the development of mathematical ability, which many of us see as being closely tied to general analytical skills; this fits the same general movement, but it will be harder to develop.

By doing these things now, perhaps we can be ahead of the HEC Board and can do something important for ourselves that we should be doing anyway, but not under the gun of outside pressure. If we wait too long, we will clearly be under that gun. Perhaps©©is this too idealistic?©©if we do it now, and in our way, we may be able to strongly influence the direction taken by the whole State system.

Best wishes,

Burt Guttman