11 August 1992

President Jane Jervis
Campus

Dear Jane,

The message on our phones this morning[1] was an invitation to come and talk. I may still do that, but I'm a better writer than a talker, and I can play you a better tune on this keyboard hooked to my computer.

Welcome! I'm delighted that you're here. The day we expected the Board to announce appointment of the new president, a big group of faculty folks squeezed into the back of the Board Room, and when your appointment was announced a general cheer went up. We had all discussed the candidates, casually and in a general faculty meeting, and we kept remarking that, of all the candidates, you were the one who most naturally and effectively sat down with us and engaged us in a discussion. You seemed to be one of us from the beginning, but one who could be first among us, who could lead us and help us lead ourselves. And, believe me, there has been a great leadership vacuum here for a long time. By now, you probably know the story of your predecessor (Olander, not Purce) and the trouble he caused. (If Sandy Hanson can't find a file of newspaper clippings about Joe Olander, I have a pretty good Joe File somewhere that I can loan you. I'll suggest that as a historian you would find the historical background interesting and valuable.) Joe led us for his own purposes, using the College rather than serving it. We've had some good people in various positions--Patrick Hill as Provost (though opinion about him is divided) and some good Academic Deans; Les Purce served well in the interim; but we haven't had real leadership at the top since Dan Evans.

Some background.- This College has been an exciting and delightful place, perhaps the most exciting experiment in higher education in this century. It has been, in part, a successor to the Meiklejohn experiment at Wisconsin and the Tussman experiment at San Jose, but it has gone beyond them in its diversity and freedom. Earlier experiments were often the vision of one man and so were restricted by that man's conception of educational orthodoxy. Although Evergreen owes a lot to Tussman, and the Coordinated Studies model that we inherited from him via Merv Cadwallader shapes much of the curriculum, we aren't bound by that model. The most wonderful thing about teaching at Evergreen is the near-absolute *freedom* this place affords. We have many teaching modes: coordinated studies, individual contracts, group contracts, cluster contracts, modules, and even regular old courses. But these modes only suggest the range of things we're able to do. Within each mode of teaching, we have incredible freedom to try new

[1] "This morning" refers to 11 August. I've been developing this letter ever since then, and I waited until after a really good evaluation conference that Les Wong and I had this morning (26 August) that gave me some important insights and a lot of food for thought.

ideas and methods, to explore anything under the sun, to follow happy inspirations on the spur of the moment (or at least the spur of the week), to experiment, sometimes to fail but more often to succeed. There is no Curriculum Committee or Department Chairman looking over our shoulders. We are responsible only to our students, our colleagues of the moment, and our own sense of integrity. This freedom has the potential to frustrate and even anger some students; it has the potential for educational disaster; and yet, over twenty years, it has generally produced great satisfaction and a long list of students with, I venture to say, much better than average college educations.

I didn't get in on the Evergreen experiment until the second year of classes, 1972, but the College was still being molded for some time after that. I have felt enormously privileged to be part of this faculty, part of a bunch of "sondry folk, by aventure y-falle in felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle." I have studied and taught at Minnesota, Johns Hopkins, Oregon, Caltech, and Kentucky, and I have been part of the exciting development of molecular biology at its peak in the early '60s. But I found my real home at Evergreen. In one of Feiffer's old cartoons, one of his men is explaining how much he loves the company he works for, how the company has done so much for him and his family, and he concludes, "I would die for the company." That's a *bit* extreme, but I do love this place; and I think you'll find the faculty in general--at least, the old-timers--feeling that way. (But one problem I think we now face--and I say this hesitantly, because I'm not sure of my information--is a contrary feeling on the part of many new faculty members of some alienation from the established College as they found it, and from the older faculty.)

[minor stuff] And yet there are odd things about this place, oddly bureaucratic practices that we've never been able to get around. Many of us have always been mystified by the practice of charge-backs from our meager academic budgets, of having to pay people (such as those in Facilities) who are already receiving salaries to do jobs for the good of the College. There is an odd placement of trust in staff and a subtle mistrust of faculty; when we want keys to offices or labs, for ourselves or our students, we have to have key cards signed by an authorized staff member, since faculty members obviously aren't trustworthy. And heaven forbid that any faculty member should have a key to Lab Stores! (At the University of Kentucky, I had two keys; one opened the entire Medical Center and the other opened the entire Cell Biology Department. When Fred Tabbutt was on sabbatical at Carleton, the first thing they gave him was a general department key.) Program Secretaries are authorized to look at the general roster of students and (when we had this system) to access student records on the computer; faculty members can't (officially) look at the roster and Program Secretaries were admonished to not let faculty members use the computer system, even though we were only seeking information that would be given to us in print-outs within a few days. (I must admit, however, that Arnaldo Rodriguez told me that some faculty members have been quite irresponsible about student records.) Things like that sometimes drive me a little nuts, although they don't diminish the quality of life enough to make me really unhappy with Evergreen.

Because Evergreen is so important to me, I'm going to be very straightforward in giving you my view of our present condition. I assume that other people will give you contrary views, but I think they'll confirm much of what I'm saying.

Governance and the Crisis at Evergreen.- The principal message I would like you to hear is about governance, trust, and fear at Evergreen. The issues are multiple and tangled, but we have to sort them out. They are the most serious issues we face, and the issues for which we most desperately need your guidance and leadership.

Something has gone terribly wrong with governance at Evergreen, and I'm still trying to understand just what happened. (Under the auspices of the Agenda Committee, Deans, and Provost, a few of us will start meeting in the fall for informal discussions about governance, so I'm trying to understand our situation.) In the days of our youth, everything seemed so simple. Yes, there were some difficulties: some deans were perceived to be out of control in hiring their cronies or firing (being instrumental in firing) some faculty members unfairly. And I was once part of a minor rebellion of scientists who complained that science at Evergreen wasn't being treated equitably. But, on the whole, we seemed to govern ourselves like a small community of colleagues who could get along with one another very well. The College began with a COG (Council on Governance) document that had been developed early in 1971. It established a relatively simple procedure for a small community of scholars to govern themselves, with a Sounding Board to hear and resolve governance issues and a College Forum, convened by the President, to discuss general issues. Grievances were to be handled informally first and then, if necessary, by an All-Campus Hearing Board. An important aspect of governance was that all people making decisions were to be locatable and accountable; they were to consult with those most affected by their decisions, and this system was closely tied to regular administrative evaluation, to be parallel to the evaluation of faculty and students. As our late colleague Byron Youtz explained at the time, administrative evaluation was to be the mechanism whereby the community assured itself that decision-makers would consult before making each decision and would make choices to benefit the community.

Somewhere along the way, the system broke down. It would probably be wrong to associate the troubles with Joe Olander, but I think that he and the Board at the time must bear much of the blame. Joe changed the governance process in ways that I can't document yet, and he alienated the Board and the faculty from each other, making each suspicious of the other. There was a nasty affair in which the College tried to fire Bill Brown, a faculty geographer; Bill sued and won, and in the suit the College was told that it did not have a procedure in place that would permit it to legally fire any faculty member. The Board reacted to this by instituting--or getting faculty DTFs to institute--new policies. For instance, at that time we acquired a policy on faculty retention which divorced faculty development from evaluation and set up a formal, legalistic system of standards that faculty members had to meet in order to receive a new contract. We acquired a policy on Mid-contract Termination with Adequate Cause (now called "McTWAC"), one of a number of moves that created tension between the faculty and the administration, and demonstrated a general administrative mistrust of the faculty. But Joe was managing all kinds of administrative changes sub rosa during his administration. When the great Patrick Hill Firing occurred, the Faculty Agenda Committee had to look into the whole matter of administrative evaluation, since one of the issues was that Patrick had been fired without any evaluation of the kind that the faculty had always depended upon--and which I think we assumed the administration was still engaging in. At that time, I did an extensive history of administrative evaluation, to prepare for the DTF that we established, and I discovered that the Board had been throwing out WACs left and right, without anyone objecting, with Joe and David Tang, the Board Chair, assuring everyone that these were just minor administrative adjustments. But in the process administrative evaluation got thrown out, along with god knows what else.

There is now enormous fear among the faculty, at least among some segments of the

faculty, and I think the fear is largely justified; this is one of the greatest problems we have to overcome. Some faculty members have been dealt with badly. I don't have all the insight I need into the situations in question, and certainly the administrators involved could defend their actions. But there is a strong perception that segments of the administration, unfortunately including both Academic Deans and Provost, are not acting in the interests of the faculty, or are, at least, handling some charges against faculty members very badly. This is particularly disturbing to me because of one of the few good things that emerged from Patrick Hill's firing; in the emergency faculty meeting at which we discussed the matter, Mike Beug stood up and spoke for the Deans, saying that it had become clear to them that they are not simply a third tier of administration, under the President and Provost, but, rather, that they are members of the faculty, doing the faculty's business. On the whole they do this, and do it very well. But the perception remains that some faculty members are being screwed over, and this is a factor in the general mistrust of the administration.

Les Wong and I talked about this matter extensively this morning, and we agreed that it won't be easy to solve the problem. Since each case is a personnel matter that cannot be discussed openly, there is no forum in which a dean, for instance, can explore the issues of the case before an impartial panel who can then judge whether the faculty member is being treated fairly or not. A partial solution may be a forum in which a dean could explain the issues without getting into personalities, so the community could make a general judgement about principles. Another partial solution may be a governance system that, ironically, incorporates some features of McTWAC. As Michael Beug pointed out, the McTWAC procedure, threatening as it is, entails establishing a faculty inquiry committee to hear the case; I know that in one recent case where McTWAC was invoked against a faculty member, the committee ended the situation by finding in favor of the faculty member.

Much of the fear revolves around the Affirmative Action Officer, who is perceived to be a law unto himself, someone who is able to act as prosecutor, judge, and jury; there is a comparable fear of the Internal Auditor, who is involved in at least one case of alleged conflict of interest. I know of at least two cases of faculty colleagues, both bright and good men, who have been put through hell over accusations of sexual harassment and of failure to accommodate a disabled student. In the case I referred to above in which McTWAC was invoked, the AAO dragged the situation out endlessly and made the faculty member's life miserable, until finally the faculty investigative panel concluded that the case had no merit; in the other case, the Academic Deans investigated the matter and supported the faculty member, assuring the AAO that there was no cause for action, and yet he persisted on the case. (I get this information from talking to the faculty members involved; you, of course, may get a different viewpoint from administrators.) People's lives are being disrupted badly, and there is a feeling that it could happen to any of us. You should have heard the debates over the new Sexual Harassment Policy; you would have heard people talking about how the proposed policy, and the atmosphere surrounding the issue, will inhibit good teaching and keep them from discussing certain issues and from using methods in their teaching that might be misconstrued. A kind of poisonous, fear-generating atmosphere hangs over this whole issue. It is an issue that has divided the faculty strongly, and one that may only become worse with the policy that has now been adopted.
Fear and Mistrust Among the Faculty.- You have a badly divided faculty. I'm still trying to understand just what's going on, but I think we are divided three ways: by age, by gender, and

by race/culture. I referred above to something that makes many new faculty members feel alienated from the old-timers, and suspicious of what we have established. One of the important insights I got from Les Wong is some understanding of just what new folks and old-timers are saying. Some of the differences sound like minor misunderstandings, and my impression is that this division in the faculty might be resolved rather easily just by airing the issue and starting some good conversations. The gender split revolves largely around sexual harassment, with many female faculty members talking about the pain and discomfort that women, especially students, are feeling, and male faculty members often feeling threatened, accused, and defensive.

But the worst split may be the racial/cultural split, which has several dimensions. First, there has been a general determination by the faculty--but one that not everyone has bought into--that we must promote multiculturalism, but no one knows what "multiculturalism" means. And the whole national debate over political correctness, multiculturalism, and racism has had its impact here; Alan Nasser has written quite clearly about this issue, and I attach a couple of his articles from the CPJ (attachments 1 and 2). (I'm sorry, I can't find my copy of Ryo Imamura's letter to which one article is a reply.) I send these to you not because I'm taking Alan's side (although I think his analysis is largely correct), but because I want you to get some insight into an issue that divides the faculty.

Secondly, people of color on the faculty feel various kinds of alienation from everyone else, which I don't pretend to understand. (In some way, Joe Olander played on this division and built himself up as the friend to, and hero of, people of color; but I don't have any personal insights into this.) There is a feeling that the College is not serious about affirmative action in hiring, about finding and hiring people of color, even though I think we've been doing very well in this respect in the last few years. Some faculty members, representing other cultures, have said that standard Evergreen modes of teaching are alien to them and that, for instance, they are uncomfortable with a seminar format. There is a general mistrust of the white faculty, and this is what disturbs me the most. Some people of color on the faculty really believe that this is a racist institution (this comes out in Nasser's articles), something that I find incredible. A few years ago, in a Faculty Agenda Committee meeting, we were discussing some issue (I forget what) that had an element of racial division in it, and I tried to make the point that we, the members of the faculty, are not a bunch of ignorant, prejudiced red-necks but, rather, that we are people of good will trying to achieve some good educational ends; and as I said this, one of my colleagues, a Native American woman, looked at me with a look that clearly said that she didn't believe a word I was saying. This is one of the first things that we have to heal; if people of color on the faculty do not fundamentally believe that we are all people of good will with the same general purposes, then I'm afraid we have no common ground to stand on. If they don't believe this, we have some hard talking to do, to get to the point where we all have a clear agreement about our goals and motivations.

This mindless accusation, this continuous calling of "racism," is a disease that infects the College, including the students. (In spite of good intentions, on the whole we are no better at teaching our students to think logically than any other college.) At this year's graduation ceremony, the undergraduate student speaker was one of the young women of color who had been involved in the dispute over their trying to exclude people from their office (which someone else, or a series of CPJ articles, can explain to you). In the most mindless way, she

went on and on, accusing the College of racism-sexism-and-homophobia, a litany she repeated as if it were one word, while students--and, worse yet, many faculty members!--were applauding her. Insofar as I can understand this attitude, it is, "As long as everything is not perfect, it is terrible." If the College doesn't have as many non-white faculty members as someone thinks we ought to have, obviously the explanation is that we are racist. If a student group decides we ought to have a faculty member to teach X, and we don't immediately hire one, the explanation is that we are racist or sexist or homophobic, depending on what X is.

The issues of multiculturalism and sexual harassment are particularly divisive. They inhibit discussion. They make us withdraw, grumbling, into ourselves, afraid to say what is really on our minds, making us subtly identify Those Others as people who are out to get us if we don't go along with their agendas. We need some calm, open discussion of the issues, discussion without screaming. I attach a dittoed sheet I sent out a couple of years ago (attachment 3), primarily because it contains a quotation from Leon Botstein about the problem.

Solutions? - I've referred to a few partial solutions, but you can see that the issues are multiplex and complicated. We will need a lot of extended, open conversations, conversations that must begin by establishing some common understandings. Les believes--and I think he's right--that we haven't really had proper discussions about just what it means to be an alterative college in the '90s. Discussions of this kind would help faculty members of all ages (and staff members, too) come to some common understandings of our mission. In addition, we need some serious discussions of the Social Contract--which has, incidentally, changed considerably as COG documents have been changed. There isn't enough understanding of the Social Contract and enough commitment to it. When students register for one of my programs, we give them copies of the program covenant, tell them that by registering in the program they have agreed to abide by it, discuss it with them, and say, "Sign here." But no faculty or staff member ever has to read and discuss the Social Contract and then sign somewhere to signify agreement with it. As the College grows, we are losing our common commitment to ways of dealing with one another. (During the past year, I myself forgot an aspect of the Social Contract in dealing with a colleague, and I had to apologize for something I wrote to him. But at least I could recognize my mistake.)

We need a wholesale revision of our governance procedures, and we need a wholesale revision of the faculty retention policy. We must combine faculty evaluation and faculty development again, returning to the policy that we are not just here to judge one another when it comes time for a new contract but that we are here to work together collegially and to help one another to be better teachers and scholars. Related to this matter, we must eliminate the sense of antagonism that the faculty got from the Board of Trustees during Joe's time and replace it with the generally good feeling that I, for one, get from the current Board. (I think we now have a group of good-hearted people who truly have the College's interests at heart and want to understand it better--and be understood.)

One thing I believe we need is less bureaucracy and more informality, a return to a community of people doing what is needed just because they perceive the need. During our early years, a lot of stuff just got done, informally, in the absence of formal policies and

administrative mandates. But bureaucratization has crept in steadily, and it continues to overwhelm us. I attach a letter from Bill Arney (attachment 4), one of our most perceptive faculty members, about the transformation of a simple, good idea into an administrative mess. We have to fight this. Ivan Illich writes about the difference between convivial and manipulative institutions, where manipulative institutions do things that people ought to be doing for themselves and make people increasingly dependent. We must work to keep Evergreen as convivial as possible.

But these are only bits and pieces of solutions. We all have a lot of work to do over the next few years.

Best wishes,

Burton S. Guttman
Member of the Faculty (Biology)