11 October 1994

TO: Jeanne Hahn, for the Curriculum DTF

FROM: Burt Guttman

SUBJECT: Real Evergreen values

I found the initial exercise you had the faculty engage in extremely valuable, and I certainly hope that either your DTF or the Academic Deans will arrange for more discussions we had in the morning. This was the first chance we have had, in a long time, to really think about our values and what our teaching here is all about. I was especially interested to see how many disagreements we had about supposedly shared values.

From that discussion, and my own musings, I suggest that the following are some of the real values that Evergreen faculty members share.

1. We trust students. We treat students like adults who are interested in the subjects we address, who don't have to be threatened with poor grades (or even poor evaluations), who don't have to be led like sheep, and who will do good work and learn a lot if they are given the right opportunities.

2. We are not afraid to challenge students with difficult material. Because of our basic trust in them, we feel free to give students difficult assignments, have them read really challenging books and undertake significant projects. Our long experience now tells us that if these challenges are supported appropriately, students will, on the whole, come through and succeed.

3. We believe that our principal role as teachers is to put students into situations where they can work hard and learn, rather than giving them all the information in some kind of highly organized, digested form. This value follows from the others and from our general knowledge of how people learn: That learning must be personal and active, and requires deep involvement. In holding this value, we eschew what Don Finkel calls the Atlas Complex.

4. We value the written word. In spite of all our involvement in modern technologies, in spite of work in all kinds of artistic media, we still believe that ideas must be addressed through reading of significant books and writing significant papers. We believe that students ought to develop, to a high level, their abilities to read deeply and critically, to write clearly, logically, and expressively.