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THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

April 4, 1975

W.L.P.

TO: Academic Deans and Provost
FROM: Rudy Martin SRM
RE: Proposal for Restructuring a Portion of the Academic Deans' Office

Anymore, there seem to be very few among us who doubt the necessity for making some alterations in the duties, responsibilities, and functioning of the Academic Deans at Evergreen. Without casting aspersions on past deans or incumbents, it's fair to call the jobs as they now exist inhumane and inhuman. The myriad tasks the Evergreen deans perform--ranging from planning, to enforcing policy, to advising, to evaluating, to communicating with various publics, to putting out all sorts of fires--consume whomever occupies the positions. Everyone who has been or is now a dean here has been at one point or another at least a little mad (in nearly every sense of the word), on occasion physically ill, and nearly always exhausted. Most people at Evergreen work hard, but the deans have jobs that are simply impossible to do very well.

In addition to being literally chewed up, the academic deans have so many different things to do they too frequently end up being diverted from some of the most important ones they should be doing. For example, whatever planning, thinking, dreaming, the deans do now is done after work hours or on week-ends and holidays. Their interactions with more than a minimum number of faculty, students, and staff tend to be sporadic, if not accidental. Their efforts at initiating new people into the workings of this institution and the uniqueness of its conception fall by the way, buried under mountains of paperwork and every-day emergencies. Their attempts to gather the required information base for valid and constructive faculty, program, and institutional evaluation are inconsistent because of the press of other work.

At a time when all of higher education is being increasingly subordinated to other concerns in American society; e.g., a depressed economy, political corruption, continuing violence and fear, etc., Evergreen cannot afford to settle gently into the mediocrity we found to be so destructive in other institutions. However good the people who become deans are, we need to modify the structure of the office to assure the kind of academic leadership at the dean's level that will help this college realize itself. We've examined different ways of going about this, but we've always backed off before resolving the issue. I think the time is right to try again.

Here's what I propose that we do:

Create two (2) Administrative Internships, perhaps to be increased in number if/when we increase the number of academic deans. We should make them full-time positions to be filled by Evergreen graduates or staff with broad

experience in the academic component of the college's working. We should see them primarily as interim positions for graduates planning and/or saving for further education or for people interested in the limited kinds of administrative training that might be derived from working in such an institution as this. We should select people who already know this school to diminish the time required to acquaint them with how Evergreen operates. Since we'd need to have at least a modicum of continuity and at the same time to avoid creating yet another administrative monster (remember the little grey-haired ladies with wire-rimmed glasses who controlled the departments and laboratories we left?), we should limit the length of time a person could hold the position. I'd say a maximum of two (2) years. There are lots of things the deans do now that could be assigned to such interns outright and supervised by the deans. My experience with Diane Brennan and Sally Hunter validates this notion. Among the possibilities I can think of right away would be such things as the academic calendar, assembling and helping edit the catalog, the supplement, the faculty handbook and quarterly brochures, academic advising, research, some DTF's, certain aspects of our public relations function, faculty year-end activities, graduation, professional travel, public events, workload analysis, community workday coordination, and perhaps there are some others.

In addition, for specified periods and tasks, they could be assigned to deans with particularly heavy desk loads like curriculum planning and faculty recruiting. (This whole process would be helped along if we assigned the clerical desk to the campus personnel office, where it belongs.) And we should peg the pay for the positions at a point that would make them attractive to the kinds of young people we'd want, but not so high that they'd be tempted to make careers of them. I'd recommend \$700-\$750 a month which would come out to \$8400-\$9000 a year, or the equivalent of one upper-level faculty member. The money should come from reserves. If that is impossible, we could spend one substantial FTE position this way.

Without question, there are some drawbacks to this proposal. For one thing, dollars for anything "new" are hard to find nowadays. But from where I sit, this is not a "frill" or an extravagance; it is a necessity. Another problem is that this proposal, like some of the others we've toyed around with, proliferates the number of administrative types in the academic area of the college, which could create even greater distance between the deans and the rest of the community. Again, however, the number and range of administrative functions the deans are either unable to perform or bring off haphazardly makes the question of administrative proliferation a moot one--to implement this proposal would simply be a move to make the number of people and person hours available more closely approximate the jobs we expect to have done than our present structure does. And anyone worried about decreased accessibility to the deans under this plan undoubtedly has not tried to get onto one of the dean's calendars or joined the lines outside their doors. Finally, to be sure, some people might want to hang onto the internships and they might agitate to do so. But if we made the terms of the appointments specific and clear at the time we hired people, we could avoid this problem.

I believe the advantages of this approach far outweigh its disadvantages. First, it would most likely lead to more and better service from the academic deans. They could do the things they already do better, and they could do things they can't do now. Second, it would make the deans' office more

attractive to more faculty members than is the case now. Faculty members who won't even consider becoming deans now might reconsider their decisions if the job were focused more into the academic core of the college and made less killing on every level. This would re-enforce the concept of a rotating academic administration. Third, if we funded the positions out of reserves at the beginning and then built them into our regular budget request, we wouldn't have to use other FTE faculty positions, a process which would further erode our already-slipping grip on a reasonable student-faculty ratio.

I think this proposal makes a lot of sense, and I've tested it out on several faculty members and they agree. I'd like us to discuss it at our regular meeting on Monday, April 7, 1975, take it to our dean/faculty groups soon, and put it into action by the end of this current quarter.

Responses?