

March 5, 1990

TO: Faculty Agenda Committee and President Olander

FROM: Administrative Evaluation DTF

RE: Final Report and Recommendations

On October 16, 1989 you charged the Administration Evaluation DTF to prepare recommendations regarding administrative evaluation at Evergreen. The major aspects of the DTF's task, as reflected in the charge, were:

- to address ourselves not to whether there should be administrative evaluation at TESC but to how it should be done;
- to review the history of administrative evaluation at TESC;
- to think about administrative evaluation within the framework of important and longstanding TESC values;
- to recommend procedures that reinforce these values and are consistent with Board of Trustees policy and State rules;
- to address procedures for top-level administrators (president, vice-presidents, deans and directors);
- to complete our task expeditiously.

DTF Activities

The DTF members reviewed the following documents:

- the charge;
- the report of the 1971 DTF on administrative evaluation;
- an informal history of administrative evaluation practices at TESC prepared by Burt Guttman;
- relevant sections of the Strategic Plan, and the report of its Values and Aspirations subcommittee;
- a Harvard Business Review article, "Appraisal of what performance?" by Harry Levinson (suggested by Ken Winkley).

The DTF also sent a memo to the entire Evergreen community, soliciting input. A few written responses were received. We held six meetings between October 18 and February 21. We invited Joe Olander, Margarita de Sugiyama, Gail Martin, Rita Cooper and Mike Grant to share their thoughts on the subject with us.

We set up a discussion scheme in which we would start with Evergreen community values, work from there to what we called "principles of evaluation," and from there to specific procedures. Our report is organized according to this three-part scheme.

Our charge directed us to consider a process that applies only to presidents, vice-presidents, deans and directors. We have done so, but we do want to call the community's attention to the necessity for establishing an evaluation policy for all exempt employees. We believe this is a high-priority matter. Also, the charge does not specifically address the question of the applicability of the policy to such enterprises as the Institute for Public Policy, the Labor Center, the National Faculty, and the Washington Center. We recommend that these entities be covered by this policy, but the final determination should lie with the provost or other responsible administrator. In general, we believe that the values and principles outlined below are applicable to anyone at Evergreen, including administrators, faculty, staff, and students. We hope that our work will stimulate and inform discussions about evaluation in all these areas.

Evergreen Values

The DTF spent three full meetings discussing values. We wanted to be as sure as we could that we were operating from a shared understanding (i.e., among ourselves and with the rest of the Evergreen community) of what important Evergreen values are, and whether these have changed over time. We were concerned about the issue of whether there is any discontinuity between expressed values and actual practices and behaviors among community members. We decided that in the case of some if not all the values there is such a gap, and that it would be important to come up with principles and procedures that would help to re-energize the values and support behaviors and practices congruent with them.

The list of relevant values that we developed is as follows:

- that Evergreen is a place that fosters individual development;
- that all of us, students, faculty, and administrators, are both teachers and learners;
- that everyone in the community is engaged in a joint venture regardless of what particular role they fulfill;
- that consultation and collaboration, honesty, and fairness should characterize our ordinary and extraordinary interactions with one another;
- that we prize diversity of people, ideas, and practices;
- that all members of the community are accountable to one another and to the external world.

In our discussion of these values, we came to the conclusion that a gap

has arisen between administrators and faculty so that frequently we no longer see that we are all teachers and learners engaged in a joint venture. In addition, we perceive that in some respects the organizational culture at Evergreen, in practice, has moved away from honesty. For example, there is widespread opinion among faculty that one can no longer write honest evaluations of colleagues, and we have heard the view that administrative evaluation will run up against the same problem. These views appear to be based on the theory that honest criticism destroys working relationships. The practice of "working around" people has become common, since people are reluctant to deal directly with each other when problems arise, and established mediation and conflict resolution procedures frequently don't get used.

We have a situation in which we have stratified our community into different constituencies (faculty, staff, administrators, students) and this stratification has implications beyond simple description of roles. It acts as a barrier to consultation, collaboration, honesty and accountability, so that we tend to consult only with those in our own bailiwick. There is a significant problem with people feeling "left out" to various degrees. Diversity is prized on paper but considered risky in practice. Trust depends on an openness of communication that we no longer always achieve.

Members of the DTF feel that the Evergreen values listed above are still relevant, widely held, and strongly supported in theory by virtually all members of the community, but that practices too frequently fall away from these ideals. We recognize that administrative evaluation is only one of a number of issues affecting and affected by this situation, and that no one set of procedures can reconnect values and practices. Nevertheless, we tried to keep the need for reconnection and restoration of community in mind and heart as we approached our discussion of principles and procedures.

Principles of Evaluation

Working from the above set of values and our shared sense of their problematic status in practice, the DTF developed a set of principles by which administrative evaluation at TESC should be guided. We felt it important to think about principles per se, instead of moving directly to procedures. The link between values and specific procedures can be tenuous. Principles help to bridge this gap by serving as a sort of first-order interpretation of values, within the context of a particular application but prior to the specification of procedures. Principles help to actualize values while still leaving room for flexibility about actual procedures, which may need to be adjusted depending on the nature of the actual work being done.

Here are the values-principles linkages we made:

Individual development --> Administrative evaluation should be self-reflexive. It should promote individual growth and development as well as be the basis for administrative decisions about promotion and retention.

Everyone a teacher and a learner --> Administrative evaluation should be

a reciprocal process rather than a one-way street. There should be an exchange of evaluations in every case where evaluation is being done.

Joint venture -->

Collaboration --> Both these values support an administrative evaluation process that is open and visible and characterized by a wide circle of community input. Criteria on the basis of which people are evaluated should be developed in a consultative process with relevant others, including but not limited to the immediate supervisor.

Honesty --> People should be able to write evaluations of each other without fear of reprisal and without fear that their working relationships will thereby be destroyed.

Fairness --> Evaluation should be based on clear standards directly related to the job description and to individual developmental goals to be agreed upon by the employee and supervisor. In other words, standards should be related to responsibilities of the job and to actual behavior in carrying them out. There should be particular emphasis on behavior that reflects important TESC values such as consultation, collaboration and honesty.

Diversity --> Administrative evaluation at TESC should leave room for flexibility of procedures and criteria to fit specific situations.

Accountability --> Administrative evaluations should be done on the basis of tangible evidence of fulfillment of responsibilities and of behavior in carrying them out. The primary evidence should be provided by those who have been in direct contact with the employee or are directly affected by the work. The most important basis should be the eyewitness account, including, of course, the person's own self-evaluation.

Administrative Evaluation Procedures

Having developed a set of principles to guide administrative evaluation, the DTF went on to draw up procedures to operationalize them. We emphasize that these procedures are not the only conceivable set consistent with our principles, and that flexibility of approach is important in order to suit procedures to various administrative bailiwicks. We also recognize that there are procedural details still to be worked out, but we felt these to be appropriately left to be specified by those more directly concerned. With those caveats in mind, the strategy we envision is as follows:

1. Exempt administrators should collectively develop a covenant with one another that sets forth general administrative behavioral expectations that apply regardless of specific assignment. It would establish norms such as, "If you have a beef with someone, you try to work it out directly with that person rather than work around them and/or badmouth them to someone else;" or, "We will be honest with each other; we will make our critical feedback to one another constructive and substantive;" or, "We will consult with affected parties, including faculty and students, before finalizing plans." Such a covenant could and should be the centerpiece of the process through which administrators become oriented to TESC. Individual

administrative units can also establish expectations specific to their particular responsibilities, by means of a mission statement or covenant.

2. Once a year, each administrator will meet with his or her supervisor to update the job description and set forth developmental goals and standards for the coming year, as well as to exchange and discuss evaluations. The job description outlines the output or results--the "whats"--that are expected; the developmental goals and standards set forth behavioral expectations--the "hows"--as well as specific individual growth-oriented activities. The agreements reached in this conference will constitute the administrator's Individual Action Plan for the upcoming year and will form the basis for evaluation at the end of that year.

3. It is vital that people "below" the president, vice-presidents, deans and directors understand the basis on which these administrators are assessed and have an opportunity to participate in the establishment of criteria. Input from others should be sought by the person or body responsible for assessing the performance of a person covered by this policy. For example, the board of trustees should consult with the community before the establishment of criteria for the assessment of the president's performance; the president should consult with the community before the establishment of criteria for the performance of vice-presidents, and so forth. While criteria and the process for their establishment should be public, the responsible person or body's judgment as to how well a person actually measures up on any criterion should of course be confidential.

4. Each administrator will write an annual self-evaluation and will annually exchange evaluations with her or his supervisor and with several relevant others, the list for the coming year to be agreed on with the supervisor during the annual conference.

5. In order to provide opportunities for tangible evidence of administrative performance, especially in the form of "eyewitness accounts" such as faculty receive from students and colleagues, administrators will send and receive "significant incident messages." You can send a "SIM" to anyone with whom you have been directly interacting, such as in a meeting or working jointly on a project. The purpose of the "INC" is to provide, from your own point of view, immediate substantive feedback on someone's performance, either positive or critical. You might say, "I noticed in yesterday's meeting that your idea was the turning point of the whole meeting, helping everyone to clarify the task and move forward." Or, "When we met yesterday, it seemed to me that you moved too quickly to try to impose closure on the group." Someone who receives a SIM should have an opportunity to reply in writing to the person who sent it. The point of the SIM is not to throw darts at one another, but to enable administrative evaluation based on tangible specifics instead of amorphous generalities. Its success depends on an administrative covenant in place that prizes honesty and constructive collaboration. Both the person who sends the SIM and the person who receives it should include it in their own portfolios, together with any follow-up.

6. Administrators will maintain a portfolio, which includes job descriptions, individual action plans, self evaluations and those exchanged with relevant others, SIMs sent and received, and other evidence they may want

to include. The portfolio should form the basis on which judgments about retention and merit pay should be made. We believe that people should be informed specifically when their performance doesn't meet expectations (which have been made explicit) so that they have a chance to improve. Our recommendation is that portfolios should be open to anyone, but we realize that this is a touchy issue. Certainly, self-evaluations should be available to the community.

Conclusion

Probably any administrative evaluation process would require considerable preparation of the administrative as well as the wider community; we are sure that the one described above necessitates it. We recommend that a skilled facilitator be retained to develop and implement a highly interactive training process to prepare people for such a system. In addition, we believe that whatever system is put in place should be approached in the spirit of an experiment, to be reviewed and adjusted after a two-year try-out. We realize that instituting administrative evaluation in the current Evergreen climate is going to encounter difficulties, because the level of mutual trust necessary to make it work effectively can only be developed by trying to make it work effectively. We believe that the process can be self-developing, i.e., it can help to foster the very culture needed to make it work, but it will only do so if an administrative covenant stressing norms of honesty and collaboration is developed first and if everyone approaches it in a spirit of active experimentation, flexibility and open-mindedness.

We hope that our report will form the basis on which to begin the process. That is, we hope that the document will serve as a catalyst for beginning, among administrators and with others in the community, the conversation that will move us all in the direction of a renewal of the values that animated Evergreen in the first place, and without which we are just another college.