

Presentation to Evergreen's Board of Trustees
Regarding Affirmative Action
October 21, 1983

Sister Chair Jackson and Members of the Board of Trustees:

As a member of the Evergreen community, I would like to commend the Board on the decision to hold this public hearing at a time that allows the members of this community the opportunity to respond to a document of grave importance to this campus--the revised version of the Affirmative Action policy. As a preface, this presentation is conceptual in nature. It is not a presentation supported by enormous amounts of statistics, but rather perceptions based on my participant observation and experience here at Evergreen. It is not a presentation attempting to evaluate the past performance of Affirmative Action efforts, but rather a presentation intent on posing questions relating to the potential success of future Affirmative Action efforts as outlined in the revised document. And lastly, this presentation is divorced from dealing with personalities presently encumbered with the responsibility for implementing Affirmative Action, but will attempt to address at a later point in this presentation, what is perceived to be an "ideal" set of personalities necessary to execute a viable and effective Affirmative Action program.

I am confident that the intent of this public hearing is not to debate the merits of having an Affirmative Action program here at Evergreen. Rather, the intent is to share with you, the Board, some input on how the policy can be constructed to strengthen Affirmative Action efforts at Evergreen. I am sure each of us in this room is

aware of the history of social injustices and inequalities in America that laid the foundation and was the breeding ground for the need to develop Affirmative Action, along with other policies designed with the "intent and spirit" to correct the wrongs of the forebearers in the development of this country. I am equally certain that we understand this task needs additional attention. It is a mammoth task but achievable, causes discomfort but is necessary, and is frustrating to implement but is liberating to observe the outcomes. It is a task that is necessary to achieve if we are to be true to the decree that "every individual in this country has the right to freedom, liberty, justice, and the pursuit of happiness."

Given this preface, I turn your attention to the core of my presentation. I postulate that any efforts to develop and implement a viable and effective Affirmative Action program can be classified in two broad categories: objective and subjective. The objective category by definition is concerned with those ventures that have to do with the mechanics and structure of Affirmative Action. These ventures tend to be tangible. An example of the objective is, indeed, the draft itself. On the other hand, the subjective has to do with the more "personal and interpersonal" dynamics of Affirmative Action. It tends to be less tangible. An example of the subjective is the level of commitment of various personnel within Evergreen to implementing the Affirmative Action document. Implicit in these definitions and categorizations is the interdependency of the objective and subjective for Affirmative Action to be effective.

If we look at the objective category as stated above, it can be defined as the mechanical end of the spectrum; namely, the policy itself. In viewing the policy, assuming we want it to be an explanation of the intent of our efforts and be successful in implementing the program, the following questions must be answered affirmatively:

- A. Has the policy clearly outlined the intent of the Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity program of the college? Is it inclusive of all aspects of the college (employment, grievance, student, etc.)?
- B. Does the policy clearly identify the accountable authorities and delineate the role and responsibilities they must assume to ensure the success of Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity efforts? Does the policy include component outlining how, who, what, and when these efforts will be evaluated?
- C. Have the goals and objectives of the policy been clearly defined both in operational and measurable terms? Are they accompanied by timelines? Does the policy identify the individual accountable for monitoring efforts to achieve these goals and objectives? How, who, and when will they be evaluated?

These questions appear to be fundamental to the success of Affirmative Action. It assumes that the clarity in defining the task, the accountable individuals, and an evaluation system is pivotal to achieving the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action.

Now, I turn your attention to the subjective as stated above; the subjective has more to do with the "personal and interpersonal" dynamics of Affirmative Action. This category tends to be less tangible than the objective because it is concerned with how people either feel about or their level of commitment to Affirmative Action. The subjective category also contains a set of questions that must be answered affirmatively. They are:

- A. Has the leadership of the college taken the responsibility of setting a positive "tone" for Affirmative Action?
- B. Has the governing body of the college asserted itself through the planning and evaluation process to prioritize Affirmative Action? For example, is part of the evaluation of the President of the college concerned with Affirmative Action achievements?
- C. Is the leadership of the college taking the responsibility of prioritizing in the budget process, Affirmative Action efforts?
- D. How does the leadership of this college evaluate their subordinates in terms of Affirmative Action and achieving specific unit objectives?
- E. Is Affirmative Action organizationally in a position of responsibility and authority?

Implicit in these questions is the appearance, the image of commitment. I would suggest that in any organization, when it comes to issues such as Affirmative Action, the higher degree of commitment articulated by leadership--the higher degree of commitment/achievement in the organization. We witness this with the present administration with

Reagan denouncing the efforts of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action. Given the lack of commitment, there appears to be a positive correlation to the rise in Klan activities, racial slurs, lynching and castration, and other violations of human rights occurring in America.

I understand leadership cannot make anyone do anything. However, I am certain if a leader is confident and has faith in the integrity of people and in their own ability to inspire, influence, and motivate people to excel and achieve at a given task, anything can be accomplished; but it takes commitment. So, if we view the efforts and energies put into Affirmative Action from the objective and subjective, we can see the two work hand in hand; they are interdependent. For without strong leadership, the policy will not be implemented. On the other hand, if you do not clearly define policy, leadership is without a plan of action to implement. Both categories must be strong, clearly defined, and subject to evaluation.

In closing, in the unique interdisciplinary philosophy of Evergreen, I would like to share some literary quotations that are adequate to this situation. Just as Evergreen was a dream at one point, people persisted and actualized that dream. Affirmative Action is a dream and with teamwork, it can be achieved. Langston Hughes said it best:

Hold fast to dreams
for if dreams die
life is a broken winged
bird that cannot fly.

Equally appropriate to the situation is the theme of Push/Excel
Jesse Jackson:

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To life challenges we say, that if I
can conceive it, and believe it,
I can achieve it.

To the challenges of Affirmative Action at Evergreen:

If we can conceive it
and believe it,
we can achieve it.

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