

April 25, 1980

To: Byron Youtz

From: Richard Alexander

REPORT OF FACULTY STUDY GROUP ON DESIGNATED DEGREES

This Faculty Study Group was organized after a January Faculty Meeting, and asked to

...review the problems identified by the CPE study concerning the understandability of the curriculum; the need for specialized degrees and the problems which students and future employers have in defining the nature of the work done at Evergreen. Consideration should be given to the views of current students at Evergreen as well as those that are leaving Evergreen for reasons related to these problems. The study group ~~should~~ shall provide a range of possible solutions in addition to the already proposed designated degree.

Our group interpreted this charge to mean that we were determine just what the nature of the ~~mm~~ "problems" were (if indeed there were any problems) and to determine how serious they were. We were to collect possible solutions, and to discuss the probable consequences of these solutions. But we were not a DTF, and therefore were not supposed to decide what would be the proper solution.

I. We went through the CPE study collecting each reference to the "problems" mentioned in our charge. These problems appear to be:

- 1) Problems incoming students and high school guidance counsellors have in understanding the present curriculum;
- 2) Problems students have in understanding the curriculum while enrolled;
- 3) Problems that graduating students have in expalining what their work has been at Evergree;
- 4) Problems future employers and graduate schools have in interpreting the Evergreen transcript.

We could not find any statements in the CPE study which expressed clearly a need for a "Designated Degree."

II. This study group had neither the time nor the funds to engage in a survey of the present student body, much less the time or funding required to determine who the students who "are leaving Evergreen for reasons related to these problems" were and sample their views. We therefore consulted with those agencies on campus (Admissions, Academic Advising, Career Placement and Planning, the Counselling Center, and the office of institutional research) which are in direct contact with large numbers of students, in situations which would make gathering information on our questions natural.

We discovered that there has been no institutional research in recent years on any of our questions, and that no pertinent data exists in our computer banks. Moreover, the Exit Interviews, which had seemed like a fruitful source, turn out not to ask the right questions (for our purposes), not to have been collected conscientiously in recent years, and ~~MMMM~~<sup>not</sup> to have been collated or analyzed over the last two years. The various college agencies we consulted have not kept data on these questions. We were thus forced to rely on the subjective impressions of these people. However, since these subjective impressions seem to confirm each other to a quite remarkable degree, we feel that the picture thus drawn is very likely to be accurate. If the faculty wants something more than such an impressionistic survey, it will have to call for a major survey.

1) There are slight problems with incoming students and high school counsellors. The catalog materials are not quite reasonably comprehensible, and the major problems arise because it is clear that we do not offer certain things which the potential student wants, or because we have clearly promised something--in the catalogs or in publicity flyers--which it then turns out we are not prepared to offer. (An example of the latter would be a flyer which promises that ~~mm~~ a student can study physics here, whereas subsequently no physics program or courses is offered.)

One difficulty we uncovered has to do with a register of college level courses and programs offered in the State of Washington, this register published by the CPE and distributed to all high school guidance counsellors. In this register Evergreen is most inadequately represented under subject headings. But it appears, on investigation, that this problem can be solved rather handily by further cooperation with the CPE.

2) Many brand-new Evergreen students express confusion about the

Evergreen curriculum, but this confusion has largely dissipated after one quarter of work here. Then the problems become that their program has not turned out to be what they had expected, or that they have problems working in the programs, or that they come to see that the school does not offer some things which they feel they need. Our informants tell us that very few students indicate--while students at Evergreen--a need for a "designated degree" or a "major." Many would be helped if curriculum could be promised for two years ahead, rather than just one year ahead.

3) Graduating (or leaving) students do express great anxiety about how they should present their Evergreen career to future employers or Graduate schools. In their discussions with Career Placement and Planning, this anxiety often takes the form of a talk about "majors." But this anxiety is usually overcome after the student has completed the "Summary of Academic Work" form provided by CPP. This form (see attachment) can be included in the Transcript, and organizes the course equivalencies earned at Evergreen under broad "subject headings." It thus becomes a handy guide to reading the student transcript, and indicates quite clearly in what areas this student's work was concentrated.

4) Future employers have only rather small problems dealing with the "understandability" of the curriculum, and these are usually resolved when they are provided with the completed "Summary of Academic Work." Future employers are very seldom concerned to dig further than that summary.

Graduate schools have three major problems:

i) What was the "major"? Usually answered by the Summary of Academic work.

ii) Which of the course equivalencies were "Basic"? which "Intermediate"? which "Advanced"? This could be readily resolved if the majority of course equivalencies given to students contained clear indications of the level of the work done.

iii) How well did the student do in comparison to other students? This problem is not so easily resolved, but might be more clearly addressed in the evaluations.



IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT NONE OF THE PROBLEMS ABOVE APPEAR TO REQUIRE A "DESIGNATED DEGREE" FOR ~~MINIMUM~~ SOLUTION. Those problems that seem to turn on a "major" would seem to be quite adequately resolved if every graduating student (or students leaving before graduation as well?) were required to complete a Summary of Academic Work form, and this form were made an official part of every transcript.

The study group was advised that Career Placement and Planning does not have, and never will have, the staff to help every student complete such a form. Moreover, since the form would now be "official" it would seem to need some "official" person to provide counsel and to authenticate the form.

The study group suspects that only faculty can play this role, and ~~therefore~~ therefore that the completion of such forms would have to become part of the advising process. We will address this more fully later in the report.

III. It is important now to address the question "what do we mean by the term 'Designated Degree'?"

Our sister state universities do offer a number of "Designated Degrees"--that is, degrees in which the area of study is specified on the title of the degree itself. For instance, the following is a list of the Degrees offered by Western Washington State University:

BA  
BA in Education  
Bachelor of Fine Arts  
Bachelor of Music  
BS

The listing for the University of Washington is longer (22 items) but shows the same pattern. There are standard BA and BS degrees offered by the college of Arts and Sciences--for which no further designation is given in the name of the degree--and then there are further "Bachelors" degrees offered by other independent "schools" or "colleges" for which a designation is provided in the name of the degree to make it clear that, for instance, this ~~degree~~ Bachelor's degree was awarded for work in the College of Fine Arts, or Education, not in the College of Arts and Sciences. Since Evergreen does not have, and does not wish to have, such separate divisions, colleges, schools, or curricula--it would be misleading in the extreme if we were to offer "designated Degrees beyond the BA and the BS.

What most of us seem to mean by "designated degree" is the official specification of a major--as in "BA (Political Science)." But it should be noted that the major is indicated in parentheses, and is not really a part of the name of the degree.

It would appear that most of the problems we face which turn on students claiming to have "majored" in something, or in outside people wanting to know what a given student's "major" was, can be resolved by making the Summary of Academic Work an official part of the transcript, and by having each student work up this summary with the help of a faculty advisor.

The Study Group feels that if this official Summary uses the word "Major," ~~and~~ it could easily lead to the legitimate misperception that Evergreen does in fact have MAJORS--that is predesigned curricular pathways, with basic requirements and departmental guarantees, which students must declare and which they follow in pursuing their degrees. Should the college ever decide that it really wished to institute such majors, we can see no reason ~~not~~ to acknowledge that by describing them as "majors" on the transcript and on the diploma. But to use such language now, or much worse to add what everyone would interpret as a "major" designation to the diploma, would be extremely dangerous.

IV. Several proposals were submitted to us to deal with one aspect or another of these problems. As we deliberated it became clear that these proposals usually went beyond the particular problems we have been discussing so far, or those we were asked to investigate. Even so, they are very clearly related to the general issues involved. Some of these proposals dealt with the mechanics of allowing for senior "demonstration projects"; one was a plea that we not close off the possibility of providing actual "majors." It also became clear to us that both these proposals and many of the elements involved in helping students design their concentrations, and in completing the necessary final Summaries, seemed definitely to require an expanded and considerably altered system of advising. This ~~MEMO~~ section will attempt to summarize and rationalize these various suggestions. It does not present the suggestions in the same form in which they were submitted, but attempts to combine them into one scheme which would provide all the benefits suggested.