

## REPORT OF THE DTF ON THE WORKING CLIMATE

### INTRODUCTION

The Working Climate DTF has carefully considered information about working conditions at TESC from all sectors of the campus. All members of the DTF initially wrote statements about their perceptions of working problems. We solicited additional comments about working climate and specific complaints about job conditions from all employees, both through statements in the Cooper Point Journal and direct notices to employees. We then tried to organize, through supervisors, divisional meetings of all employees to discuss their local problems; information from these meetings was forwarded to us. We estimate that half of all employees have participated in these meetings. We collated all this information and tried to identify problems of concern to a significant number of people and solutions to those problems. We have arrived at the following set of recommendations.

We recommend a broad policy change that we believe will generally improve the working climate and alleviate many specific problems. We also attach a list of specific problems that must be attacked individually now, even if the broad policy changes would eventually clear them up.

The value of this report depends upon several specific actions, particularly from the President and the Vice Presidents. In order to help implement this report, this DTF does not intend to disappear immediately. We will meet occasionally until at least the fall of this year, and we will be available for consultation.

### SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

#### President's Office:

- 1) The President should initiate new administrative policies that will result in all employees functioning under a directive rather than a supervisory system (pp. 6-7 and Display 1).
- 2) The President should set aside about 1% of the budget for (a) temporary employees to help at critical times and places and (b) in-service training programs (p. 10, §6).
- 3) The President should issue a statement to clarify Affirmative Action policies and their implications for Evergreen employees, insofar as this can now be done on the basis of federal guidelines (pp. 11-12, §1).
- 4) The President should explore the institution of rotation systems in all units, similar to the deans rotation system among faculty members (p. 7, §3f).
- 5) The President should explore ways to bring people in the community together informally and often (p. 7, §4).

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Vice Presidents' Offices

1) During the process of redefining jobs, all business forms should be reexamined to eliminate any repetition, confusion, and duplication (p 9, §3).

2) Vice Presidents should initiate direct discussions with employees about priorities and how reductions in force should be made (p. 8, p. 11, §1).

3) If reductions in staff are necessary, they should be prioritized to balance the work load in each division (p. 10, §5).

4) Vice Presidents should examine the wage and seniority systems in all of their divisions to be sure that they are clear and equitable (p. 11).

5) New employees should be selected to fit the Evergreen system. They should be examined on their understanding of the COG and Human Rights Documents, Social Contract, and the academic system before being hired. Orientation sessions for both old and new employees should be maintained and expanded (p. 12, §2 and 6; p. 15, §5).

6) Pay scales for student employees should be equalized and rationalized (p. 13, §8).

7) The Vice Presidents should consult with each other about hiring procedures, to ensure that procedures in both the business and academic areas are open and as uniform as possible (p. 12, §4).

8) In filling all vacancies, Evergreen employees should be considered first and weight should be given to their experience here and their knowledge of Evergreen, insofar as it would help them do the prospective job better (p. 12, §3).

9) The Vice Presidents should encourage staff in their areas to consider taking professional leaves (p. 12, §5).

10) All employees should go through an exit interview if they resign (p. 13, §7).

11) Sick and annual leave benefits and ~~professional leave~~ should be reexamined with the goal of equalizing benefits for exempt and classified personnel (p. 15, §2). *also overtime,*

12) The Vice Presidents should caution administrators against ever issuing the kind of rude, authoritarian memos that have been sent out in the past to rigidly restrict employees' behavior (p. 15, §3).

13) An improved system for distributing information should be implemented (p. 9, §2a, and Display 2).

14) A campus messenger system should be instituted (p. 9, §2b).

15) A brief handbook of personnel and area functions should be issued (p. 9, §2c). *bus offc?*

16) The People-to-People Index should be revived and maintained by the Information Center (p. 9, §2d).

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Academic Deans

- won't*
- 1) The deans and faculty should try to find an appropriate role for the Ombuds-Advocate Office in student-faculty relationships (p. 16, §7).
  - N/a already handled* 2) The four dean-faculty groups should be converted into forums in which faculty members can discuss issues of concern to them (p. 16, §8).
  - ?* 3) The academic deans should reexamine their various desks and try to find ways to lighten their work loads by assigning some responsibilities to other people (p. 17, §9).
  - must* 4) Annual office-moving should be planned to minimize the number of moves (p. 17, §10).
  - can* 5) The deans should survey staff members, to determine which modules they would find most useful (p. 15, §4).

General principles for all employees

- must*
- 1) Principle of Equal Consideration: All Evergreen employees should be treated as equals in answering their requests for services and information (p. 14, §1).
  - can* 2) All employees at Evergreen have the following rights ~~and obligations~~:
    - a) To participate in DTFs, review boards, employee meetings, etc.
    - b) To take time equivalent to one Evergreen unit per quarter for their own education.
    - work release?* c) To attend lectures, concerts, symposia, etc. on campus.
  - must* 3) Teske's Principle: The community should operate through direct communication between individuals who are in conflict or have grievances with one another. No person should try to solve a problem by first going through higher administrative channels and no administrator should listen to any complaint unless he knows that the people in conflict have tried to work the situation out between themselves (p. 16, §7).
  - must (but not format - copying everyone in paperwasting)* 4) All Evergreen employees should get into the habit of explicitly thanking one another and commending each other for doing a job well (p. 17, §11).
  - must* 5) Principle of Consultation: Whenever a decision has to be made that sets a precedent or establishes guidelines or policy, it should only be made after consultation with those who might be affected. The tentative decision should be circulated as widely as possible and should be made final, with appropriate changes, after those interested have had time to react to it (p. 18).



*GENERAL POLICIES: An atmosphere initiated at the top*

Every organization has continuous problems with its working climate, but we find it incongruous with Evergreen concepts that Evergreen has significant dissatisfaction among employees. We see a small group of people in a relatively new organization devoted to a noble experiment in education that should generate great enthusiasm. We see people working informally with each other in comfortable, even beautiful surroundings. (Looking at the forests and the mountains, we sometimes wonder how we ever manage to get any work done around here.) We see these employees greeting each other warmly, smiling at students and at one another, all apparently quite happy. We ask ourselves how these people can be unhappy in their work.

A list of complaints tells the story. We have been told that:

- people here are overworked;
- people abuse each other--for example, by making unreasonable demands on time or by ignoring common courtesy toward each other;
- people are unsure of their positions, not knowing what they are supposed to be doing or if they are likely to be fired for doing something;
- important decisions are being made without the knowledge of others who are concerned or affected;

and the list goes on.

How do these problems arise? Well, as people rub against each other in their work, some are bound to rub others the wrong way and we could not hope to eliminate all these problems. But we suggest that one large class of problems can be traced to a communication breakdown--a failure of people higher in the Evergreen organization scheme to communicate their ideas clearly to those who are lower in the scheme.

Evergreen is a college with a mission that is defined quite clearly in the minds of many people in the community. There will always be arguments about exactly what we should be doing (this program or that, this educational philosophy or the other), but there is no real argument about our attempting to do some novel, useful things in higher education. Largely on this basis, Evergreen is said to be a community--a group of people with defined roles who work together toward some common goal. (COG 3(f) encompasses all members of the community in this philosophy.) And yet we hear complaints that:

- People work hard and do a good job, but then are let go or forced to resign.
- People are requested to conform to an Evergreen philosophy without knowing what that is.
- Employees are expected to support and stand up for Evergreen but have the feeling that if the tables were turned, Evergreen would not stand up for them.
- Many employees feel they are second-class citizens who are bossed around and aren't appreciated, while the first-class citizens make their own rules and get a lot of credit.
- Those same second-class citizens would like to participate in the educational activity here but aren't allowed to.

-- Some people know what is going on here while others are in the dark.

When we hear how little many employees understand what we are trying to do at Evergreen, it becomes obvious that the people who do understand have failed to communicate with everyone else.

In one important sphere of activity, the failure for ideas to filter down through the hierarchy becomes especially acute. The atmosphere of a college can and should be strongly influenced by its president. Charles McCann's way of dealing with the people closest to him seems to be based on the laudable assumption that employees here are responsible adults who can make reasonable decisions and largely govern themselves if they understand what their roles are. Given that assumption, President McCann seems to employ a laissez faire policy that allows people great latitude in their behavior. For example, deans and faculty, working as teams, do pretty much as they please within general limits, largely determining their own schedules, work loads, and specific daily activities. Other segments of the campus work in much the same way; academic staff secretaries, organizing themselves as PAWS, have worked out comfortable mechanisms for self-governance and for dealing with their common problems.

But the same philosophy and policy has not filtered down from the President through all branches of the hierarchy. One of the most consistent complaints we heard dealt with the regimentation of some employees under a rigid administrative structure which makes them perceive themselves as second-class citizens when they contrast their work conditions with those of other employees. If Evergreen is going to be a community, working conditions and benefits ought to be more equalized. Typing, filing papers, and cleaning floors may not be considered as fulfilling, fun, or exciting as teaching, counselling, or operating computers and audio-visual equipment, but they are important elements in the community. Yet the people who have to do the more routine jobs perceive themselves to be encumbered by an administrative system that dehumanizes them further. In short, some people may not be told why their jobs are important to Evergreen, which demoralizes them and results in fear and mistrust.

Among the earliest statements made by Evergreen planners, there were promises that the College would experiment with novel administrative structures as well as novel academic programs. Today we find statements like the following, from the Student Services Five-Year Plan:

The college must always be concerned about the stability and vitality of each function within our organization. The campus climate is almost totally dependent upon personal attitudes and working relationships. Retention of competent employees requires challenging and rewarding experiences plus a supportive and responsive environment. For a college to be concerned about the educational development and personal growth of a student without providing similar opportunities for employees is a glaring contradiction.

We suggest that much of the poor working climate can be eliminated through creation of a novel administrative structure that reflects such concerns. We suggest a series of concrete actions, initiated from the top.

*must*

1) A series of workshops should be held for all employees so that everyone understands what Evergreen is trying to do and how we are trying to do it--so that everyone has a clear picture of his or her role in the community and can take pride in that role. Similar workshops and orientation should be given to all new employees.

2) The President and Vice Presidents should be sure that administrators at all levels understand how important it is that the atmosphere of trust and responsibility that exists at the top of the administration be extended to all employees.

3) To implement this working climate, all units in the Evergreen administration should be reoriented to create a structure that we will characterize as directive rather than supervisory. Some units, such as the faculty and program secretaries, are already operating under this structure, but the President and Vice Presidents should see to it that it is extended to all units.

*Not everyone ready for this*

a) We will continue to use the word "supervisor," but with a new definition. The role of a supervisor is not to control employees but rather to be primarily a director, where we define the two roles as follows:

Direction: guidance; working with others for a common goal; sharing decision-making in consultation with staff or concerned individuals; providing advice, information, and suggestions upon request; discussing problems with the entire group for mutual good; establishing teamwork and procedures for carrying out necessary work in cooperation with fellow employees.

Supervision: to supervise; to tell someone under you what to do; to make the decisions and see that others carry them out; to keep watch on another's work; to criticize and correct such work; to keep those working under you busy at something for the sake of being busy; to have others working for you and under you. (People working under supervision frequently feel as if they are being harrassed or hovered over.)

b) Under the directive structure, employees at each level should organize themselves, with the aid of their supervisors, into teams that would function as faculty teams or the program secretaries' group now do. This structure may not be uniformly useful, but it should be tried wherever possible.

c) The members of each team, with their supervisor, should have discussions according to a general format (Display 1) to determine exactly what their jobs are, with a list of priorities. Thereafter the members of a team will be primarily responsible to each other and answerable to each other for failures to do their jobs properly. Within the limits they have established, employees will be responsible for getting their jobs done in the best way and at the best time; they will be allowed to make their own decisions about times for taking breaks or lunches, attending classes, etc. (Certain general limitations on time may have to be set to conform with State laws, but we expect these to be interpreted as broadly as possible.) As with existing teams, the important

*but certain offices are expected to have coverage 8-12 1-5 may tend to encourage working less than an 8-hr day*