

Report of the Disappearing Task Force to Study the Self-Study Report

April 24, 1974

Introduction

The Self-Study DTF was charged by the Provost, Edward Kormondy, with the task of critically and constructively evaluating the Evergreen State College Self-Study Report of March 1974. It was prepared in anticipation of the accreditation visit of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools to begin April 29, 1974. The Provost's charge in itself reflects one of the fundamental aspects of the Evergreen State College; a healthy, concerned, on-going interest in honest self-evaluation and the means to bettering the operation of the institution and enhancing its academic mission. The disappearing task force received its charge on the 8th of April, 1974. The task force met regularly beginning the 10th of April. Materials used by the DTF in arriving at its report included: the November 1971 Self-Study prepared by the Evergreen State College in anticipation of the visitation which advanced the College from correspondent to candidate for accreditation status; the DTF closely examined the November 19, 1971 Candidate for Accreditation Report sent to the Commission on Higher Schools resulting from the visit of Dr. Leonard W. Rice, Dr. Paul E. Walschmidt, C.S.C. and Dr. James F. Bemis. Additionally the task force examined the Manual of Standards and Guide for Self-Study prepared by the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools and the March 1974 Self-Study prepared by the College.

The task force is composed of representatives from all elements of the College. These faculty, staff and, importantly, students offer its report in the following spirit:

1. We assume we are speaking directly to the visitation team.
2. We feel that it is imperative the following narrative and analysis be understood in its proper context.
3. What follows, we believe, is illustrative of one of the healthiest aspects of The Evergreen State College, an institutional commitment to candor and honest self-evaluation. A candor that proceeds not from the standpoint of grumbling, carping, criticism but a committed desire to continually refine, distill and perfect an institution dedicated to humane life and academic excellence.

General Observations

It is the opinion of the DTF that the Self-Study of March 1974 accurately follows the guidelines established by the Manual of Standards and Guide for Self-Study insofar as matters of budget, distribution of funds, financing of buildings, program support and college structure are concerned. The Self-Study provides an accurate portrait of the College and its organization relative to traditional guidelines. Further, the Self-Study correctly delineates the structure and organization of the institution. The episodic nature of the Self-Study, written by individuals responsible for precise activities provides an accurate assessment of each college activity as information and knowledge rises to the upper levels of administrative responsibility. Many of the statements are direct and candid. For example, the Faculty Forum passed a resolution April 10, 1974 to commend Academic Dean, Lynn Patterson, for the candor and honesty with which she explained and outlined the origins and development of the Faculty Forum. The Self-Study is then a portrait of the operational aspects of the institution.

While the operational information provided by the Self-Study is, in its broadest terms, correct it is the opinion of the DTF that operational descriptions do not accurately reflect important elements of the daily joys, fears, ambiguities, frustrations, intellectual victories, or the unique relationship between the academic enterprise and the life of the institution. Further, the Self-Study does not go far enough in providing important insights and samples of essential information. For example, there are no samples of official program descriptions which accompany student transcripts. While statistics included in the Self-Study are impressive and important, the DTF feels there is not enough information to show what does in fact occur academically at The Evergreen State College. Finally, the episodic nature of the material does not convey the real, intense, commitment to the goals and betterment of the institution to be found at all levels of the college: administration, faculty, students and staff. While the college catalog and the catalog supplement have often been able to convey the spirit of the institution, the Self-Study of March 1974 does not.

Specific Comments

-Spirit of Commitment-

Perhaps the first important statement to be made by the DTF concerning needed amplification in the March 1974 Self-Study should center upon the spirit of commitment to be found at all levels of the college. Administrators have carried contracts and sponsored internships in addition to their regular work loads. At no point in the Self-Study is there an effort to tie this information with other aspects of the College in a way that would highlight its importance. Secondly, faculty have shown a willingness to share information with programs other than current teaching assignments. Faculty in individual contracts, group contracts, and coordinated studies provide guest lecture services among programs throughout the institution. Third, clerical and secretarial support is excellent. Program secretaries not only provide support functions for as many as twelve separate faculty members but also function as an adjunct faculty member: available for information purposes, clarification of assignments, often general counseling and friendship to students, as documented in many program histories. Fourth, the Business Office, general staff, and maintenance staff perform with a willingness and a friendliness unparalleled at other institutions. The maintenance technicians, for example, who are responsible for maintaining building temperature balance, operation of the power plant, and necessary custodial services generally evince an extraordinary sense of participation and contribution toward the academic goals of the institution.

-Faculty-

The portrait of the faculty at The Evergreen State College presented in the Self-Study represents many elements requested by the Manual of Standards and Guide for Self-Study of the Northwest Association. Unfortunately, this does not accurately reflect the true nature of the faculty at the College. The DTF considers the promise of biographical sketches of each faculty member to be made available to the accreditation team to be inadequate and should have been included in the body of the Self-Study. The faculty of the College is rich in talents, abilities, and ideas; and deserves something more than a statistical breakdown and a mention of last names.

Further, the Self-Study does not accurately highlight the problem and the nature of the pressures under which Evergreen faculty function. Evergreen faculty who have been asked to teach in areas outside their expertise accept the risks this entails willingly, however, they often find discomfort in teaching literature when trained in the sciences or teaching science when trained in literature. Faculty seminars provide necessary and important support in alleviating those discomforts. The faculty must continue to work at learning how to teach better and feeling more competent and comfortable in these areas not directly connected with their specific training or past experience. Page 94, point 2, "Finding creative solutions to the problem of faculty 'burn out'" the DTF feels does not adequately speak to the problem or define its parameters. Additionally, faculty function as informal counselors, or parental figures and other adjunct members of an extended family situation. The faculty member who cares about his students' development recognizes the close association between living conditions and academic growth. The Self-Study does not provide information about the many faculty members who find themselves carrying home worrisome problems concerning a student whose academic growth is currently hampered by a severe personal problem. No work load analysis or statistical chart can present this very real and important function of the Evergreen faculty member. Faculty have willingly sought support and insight from counseling services as a means of providing better counsel to students. In addition faculty have taken of their time to participate in various workshops offered through counseling services, and are involved in many activities in the world outside the College campus. The willingness to accept near total commitment on the part of the Evergreen State College faculty is not reflected in the Self-Study.

-Student Academic Life-

In the DTF's view perhaps the single most important omission in the Self-Study is the absence of a student written statement about student academic life at Evergreen. So important was this omission that the student members of the DTF to study the Self-Study have prepared their own joint statement concerning student academic life at The Evergreen State College. Their statement follows:

It is very difficult to make a general statement on academic life at Evergreen. It is the nature of Evergreen to encourage diversity, and to allow individual pursuit in the various areas of learning. Our difficulty is attempting to make some remarks about student life at Evergreen has certainly demonstrated to us how very real and successful this is.

In the discussion that generated this report, two statements persistently arose: "It depends on the individual", and "Evergreen isn't for everyone".

The structure of the curriculum at Evergreen, whether it be a coordinated studies, a group or an individual contract, tends to immerse the student in a specific area of study (the narrowness of this area, of course, varies). This automatically puts pressure on students to question their commitment to what they want to learn. Consequently there is a seriousness and a genuine interest demonstrated by most Evergreen students. At the same time though, because this college does not use traditional grades and exams, and because it relies heavily on the initiative and motivation of the individual, it is vulnerable to students who "breeze through to their degree". The high quality and the integrity of the faculty is perhaps the most important safeguard against this. Needless to say, we feel that the strengths of this kind of a system and the inevitable struggles that it entails are extremely worthwhile and beneficial and certainly justify the possible risks.

The relationship that a student has with his or her faculty carries a great deal of importance (as the DTF report shows). The success or failure of a program for a student is intimately related to the personality of the faculty person(s) he or she is working with. Although this holds true in most educational situations it is magnified at Evergreen by the degree of interaction within seminars and tutorials, and by the crucialness of evaluations. Again this is a mixed blessing, especially considering the small size of Evergreen. When student-faculty conflict stimulates growth in either or both parties its value is obvious, but unfortunately it does at times discourage a student from a certain area of study which is not duplicated elsewhere in the College.

The statement made earlier, "Evergreen is not for everyone", does not in the least imply that there is a certain "type" that attends Evergreen. What we do have in common is Evergreen, and there is a sense of pride, concern and community because of the school's uniqueness and newness. The bond between students and between all of the various members of Evergreen is a special one simply because we share the "differentness" of this College. Evergreen appeals to students who want to learn in another way, and it appeals to students who want the leeway to plunge headstrong into their interests. On a sunny day the atmosphere is one of excited, energetic students who want to really and sincerely share what they are learning with one another. On a rainy day it is a little more subdued, but you might hear someone say, "Evergreen's the place to be, if you can stand it".

-Enrollment Figures-

The Self-Study enrollment figures, such as those found on page 206 relating to modular studies, do not accurately reflect what in fact has gone on in modular studies. The figures presented reflect only official enrollment statistics available to the registrar. In the Studies in U.S. History Module offered Fall 1973, for example, while the enrollment figure pinpoints an official enrollment of eight, actual participation ranged from a low of twenty-eight at a particular lecture to a high of thirty-six. The Ceramics Process Module, reflecting an enrollment of zero, provided services for over fifteen students enrolled in other programs at The Evergreen State College. Similar amplifications of all modular studies units can be made. Finally, there is no way of knowing, unless each seminar leader was polled, how many students from other programs regularly attend specific seminar offerings as amplification of their enrolled academic work.

-Library Resources-

In its investigation the DTF determined that the Library Purchase Figures found on Page 45 of the Self-Study may be amplified or replaced by the following information:

Value of Library Collection

Capital Budget	Books	754,000
	Periodicals	
	(Including microfilm)	248,000
	AV Materials	147,000

1969-71 budget	Books	27,000
	Periodicals	14,000
	AV Materials	11,000
1971-72 budget	Books	14,000
	Periodicals	24,000
	AV Materials	6,000
H.E.W. Title II-A 1971-72	Periodicals	5,000
1972-73 budget	Books	54,000
	Periodicals	45,000
	AV Materials	36,000
President's Reserve	Books	102,000
Abel Credit	Books	9,000
To December 1973 of 1973-74	Books	56,000
	Periodicals	30,000
	AV Materials	17,000
Grand Total	Books	\$1,016,000
	Periodicals	\$366,000
	AV Materials	\$217,000
	Total	\$1,599,000

-Counseling Services-

As with many elements of the College the counseling services section has found itself understaffed and has trained students to help with counseling problems. They have also created an advisory group of some 15 members of the faculty who have been identified as "good counselors" available to help their colleagues should the need arise. Counseling services has constantly, since its formation, shown a willingness to cross lines in the college to be supportive and helpful of the academic mission. Finally, one area, lacking in the Self-Study, which might help show the true nature of the services provided by counseling at Evergreen, is the total number of contacts and services rendered by counseling during the past three years. Inclusion of such figures will help the accreditation team to understand better the truly remarkable job performed by counseling services at Evergreen.

-Academic Counseling-

The Self-Study does not address itself in any systematic fashion to the area of academic counseling. What are the best programs for the student's own growth and development? What is the best line of study for a particular student to follow at

Evergreen? Too often as the College encourages individual student responsibility and growth, students may lose sight of the fact that faculty expertise can often help them determine their academic direction. Such academic counseling as it occurs on the campus is often sporadic, individualized, isolated and completely ad hoc. The DTF feels this is one area which should be examined very closely in the future to develop adequate methods to remedy this deficiency.

-Communications-

While there are references to the problem of communications among various areas of the campus, the nature of coordinated studies groups as discreet, separated academic operations, group contracts, internships and individual contracts remains a source generating inadequate communications about campus-wide activities and the decision-making process. The COG I Document postulated a College Forum, to be chaired by the president, which would provide a gathering in which dreams could be dreamed, feelings could be shared and problems aired. The College Forum has, to date, been ineffective. It is the opinion of the DTF that the emergence of the Faculty Forum might have been prevented if the College Forum had functioned in the manner as it was designed. The College Forum has been largely neglected and deserves examination and vivification.

-Evaluation-

Another vital element in the Evergreen enterprise not clearly enunciated or explained in the Self-Study is the problem of evaluation and how the College articulates with other more traditional institutions, future employers, professional and graduate schools. Just as there are no official program descriptions and sample program histories available in the Self-Study, neither are there sample student self-evaluations, sample faculty evaluations of student achievement, or sample faculty self-evaluations. While the accreditation team will undoubtedly examine a variety of these materials, the DTF feels the importance of the student evaluation process (as opposed to grading) should be more explicitly illustrated, more direct and a highlight in the Self-Study report. So too should faculty self-evaluation and the growth process that this procedure brings to faculty members be highlighted. Faculty might have been solicited to write statements assessing their own experience with the major evaluation procedure undergone during academic 1972-73. The evaluation process is exciting, demanding, thought provoking, engaging and enlarging when properly accomplished. Students who are often merciless in their self-criticism discover they may have accomplished more (or less) than they realize. The daily routine at Evergreen may prevent a faculty member from seeing clearly the vitality of his role until he undergoes an evaluation procedure. Growth through self-analysis and self-evaluation is a vital, healthy part of the Evergreen State College and deserves a succinct, highlighted position in the Self-Study.

-Equivalencies-

Related to, but in fact a separate part of the evaluation process, is the problem of translatable equivalencies as an addendum to evaluations. The faculty itself is divided on the question. Some faculty believe that if Evergreen's programs work and

are in fact unique, they are untranslatable in traditional terms. Other faculty find it more comfortable to assess student work in ways that do translate into recognizable quarter hour units. There have been problems. There have been disagreements between faculty and students. Both sides offer compelling arguments. The DTF feels it cannot involve itself precisely in such debate but would recommend to a future study group that in all instances student perceptions and needs for translatable equivalencies ought to take precedence in preparing the official evaluation, the matter should be openly and honestly negotiated between student and faculty.

-Student Successes-

Since the preparation of the March 1974 Self-Study we have knowledge of more student successes than are outlined in the section on Financial Aid and Placement. Three of eight National Science Foundation awards in the State of Washington have gone to Evergreen undergraduates who conceived, wrote and applied for grants on their own. One student who found her portfolio questionable at Central Washington State College and Washington State University was awarded a \$2,000 graduate fellowship in education at Harvard University. President McCann has released figures indicating the typical Evergreen graduate earns \$30 to \$100 more per month than graduates of sister state institutions.

-Miscellany-

There are several minor areas in which a more complete statement would provide useful information to the accreditation team. The final paragraph on page 8 discussing the impact of budgetary slashes by the legislature and slowed growth needs amplification. The realignment as a result of fiscal necessity had a large impact on the administrative structure of the institution. As an institution committed to honest self-evaluation the DTF feels Evergreen would be remiss not to more fully explain the impact of that problem. The narrative to be found on page 113 suddenly disappears as it speaks to communications. Certainly the omitted material should be inserted in the Self-Study for the accreditation team. The transition from Computer Services to non-credit workshops (pp. 170-171) is completely unclear and confusing. The DTF finds that the reference on page 128 to "consensual statements" on the arts at Evergreen and the natural sciences at Evergreen is inadequate. These statements which faculty candidates are asked to comment upon should be included either as appendices to the Self-Study or separate hand outs to the accreditation team.

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As the DTF to study the Self-Study report completed its work it became apparent to DTF members that we had carried on a difficult task with good humor, candor, honesty and energy. As with many DTFs on the campus, this DTF composed as it was of faculty, students, and staff operated within what is rapidly becoming an Evergreen tradition. We are all concerned about the health, the well being of the institution. We can and do talk with each other well when we have the opportunity to do so. We intuitively understand the pressures, the time constraints, and the deadlines imposed upon each of

us as a result of our respective activities at the College. We as a DTF have endeavored to present a constructive assessment and analysis of the Self-Study report and to provide a clear model of the efficacy of honest self-evaluation as it functions at Evergreen. We are proud of our successes and honestly aware of our weaknesses. If the operation and result of the work of this DTF is any indicator, the Evergreen State College is a vital, healthy, dynamic, growing conglomerate of human beings who well may in fact one day achieve the creation of a community. A community that lives excellence. A community that demands and expects much of itself. A community whose talk about its dreams is not rhetoric but is in fact a daily functioning vital reality.

The DTF feels that if we have done our job, this document is proof that Evergreen lives what it says and practices what it preaches.

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