

# FINAL REPORT OF THE VALUES AND ASPIRATIONS COMMITTEE FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

## I. Introduction

The Evergreen State College, though complex and evolving, has a definite, definable, and persisting center. Our work as a committee over the past few months in reviewing college documents and listening to the live responses of Evergreen people has given us confidence in advancing this report as a statement of central Evergreen values, issues and dilemmas they raise, and aspirations to which they point.

Our initial charge from Provost Patrick Hill named three tasks:

(1) "to identify and articulate the animating values of the institution:" our statement appears in Section II (Central Values) below;

(2) "to describe the manifestations or embodiment of these values in the policies and practices of the college:" Section IV contains a short list of key practices we find it important for the college to protect as it evolves, and the discussion of central values mentions further ways in which college policies and practices grow out of them; while Section III (Value Tangles) shows some ways our values compete with each other; and

(3) "to elicit from the major constituencies of the college their sense of where we are and where we ought to be in the pursuit of these values." Sections V and VI (Proposals and Issues) highlight current debates over how to pursue Evergreen's central values, and set forth ample work for later groups.

This report is for internal use. It aims to help Evergreeners understand each other. The Strategic Plan, based partly on our committee's work, is the right vehicle for addressing audiences outside the college about its values and aspirations. We wish to speak more plainly, more specifically and more fully than it can.

We have gathered text and testimony on Evergreen's values from several different sources:

- . college documents, including DTF reports on specific past policy questions, self-study documents for outside reviews (accreditation, CPE), relevant sections of the Evergreen Administrative Code, etc.
- . comments from participants in a series of "values

in practice" seminars exploring the values embodied in the ways Evergreen actually conducts certain key practices;

- . comparison of catalog description, program descriptions, and evaluations of students from selected programs;
- . oral and written comments in response to our early drafts, from the public consultation sessions and from special meetings of various campus groups.

In all these sources there are important recurring values. No single one defines the institution; all have had a role in shaping the college we find around us today. These value commitments are always intertwined with each other, often are in tension or even collision with one another, and occasionally lead to confusion or contradiction. We have not imposed a simplistic harmony on this scene, nor have we drawn any boundaries that distinguish the "true" Evergreen from things beyond the pale. A college which is committed to individual development, which hopes to support cultural diversity, and which is engaged in innovation needs a clear center, not fixed boundaries. It is this center we have tried to define.

A final note: thanks to those who responded to our early drafts in writing: Richard Alexander, Scott Buckley, Richard Cellarius, Mark Clemens and ReView Respondents, Core Review Team, Trace De Haven, Marilyn Erickson, Judith Espinola, Faculty Agenda Committee, Facilities Staff, Richard Gaines, Andrea Gardner, Margaret Gribkov, Burt Guttman, Michael Hall, Ingrid Hansen, Phil Harding, Woody Hirzel, Steve Hunter, Kristin Jagelski, Cath Johnson, Stella Jordan, Christine Kerlin, Sig Kutter, Jessy Lorion, Jacinta McKoy, Earle McNeil, David Milne, Mary Nelson, Susan Perry, Philip Rees, Ann Remsberg, Sue Roden, Wen Shaw, Bob Shirley, Bob Sluss, Adele Smith, Barbara Smith, Staff Nominees to President's Governing Group, Student Affairs Staff, Third World Group, Kirk Thompson, Cheryl Vest, Joyce Weston, Jodi Woodall, Arno Zoske. (Apologies for any names omitted.) And thanks also to all those who spoke about values and aspirations in the campus consultations and workshops.

## II. Central Values

In our previous drafts, we worked hard to give voice to the values we heard recurring in what people now and in the past wrote and said about Evergreen. In this, our final report, it is time to call for commitment. We believe the following values define the center of Evergreen's identity. We find these values rooted in the college's development,

though all are not equally strong or vital in what now goes on here. Evergreeners should value much of what they have created here; they should aspire to much more, especially in certain areas where our rhetoric has far outrun our reality.

We organize our discussion around three clusters of values -- three faces of Evergreen -- which inform the work of all Evergreen's people. While some offices or persons have more to do with one of these clusters than the others, nowhere on the campus is insulated from any of them.

Everyone at Evergreen is engaged, one way or another, with the teaching and learning enterprise. We reject the notion that only faculty teach and only students learn. We believe that all college functions have important effects on teaching and learning. The conditions for learning, and the quality of learning achieved, depend on the competence of the faculty and the responsible engagement of students, of course, but also very much on the ways the college handles financial aid, student recruiting, choosing and handling library books, the cashier's office, key policy, the paths through the woods, funding student organizations, and dozens of other functions.

Everyone at Evergreen participates, one way or another, in a community of persons. We use the following modest definition of "community" [Webster's Third New International (1976)]: "A group sharing interests or pursuits; a group linked by a common policy; a body of persons united by historical consciousness or by common social, economic, or political interests." Some dispute the health or moral basis of our community, but a community it is, by virtue of our being engaged in the teaching/learning enterprise, and in many other ways touching students, faculty, and staff. One of its hallmarks is the frequency and importance of person-to-person dealings with other Evergreeners of all constituencies. Another range of central Evergreen values pertains to this face of the college.

Everyone at Evergreen, in one way or another, is a cog in an organizational machine. For good and for ill, everyone here must deal with political, legal, and logistical pressures that flow from Evergreen's existence as an agency of the state of Washington, as a business entity, as an employer, as proprietor of a major physical facility, as a coordinator of the time and effort of several thousand students and several hundred faculty and staff.

In what follows, we characterize the more intricate interplay of values in each of the three clusters. First, though, we highlight some values which affect what we do -- or ought to -- so pervasively that they deserve pride of place.



**High Quality Arts and Sciences Education which combines theory and practice.** Undergraduate teaching and learning in the humanities and arts, the natural and social sciences in ways that help students develop inquiring minds, learn to learn, to value a variety of intellectual and cultural traditions, to think and solve problems independently -- and cooperatively wherever appropriate -- and to approach ethical decisions humanely, has formed and should continue to be the academic center of the college. Graduate study properly has a professional orientation, but should be conducted in the same spirit as the undergraduate program.

Since neither classroom study nor work in the field or laboratory is complete in itself, we value learning that blends theoretical with practical activity. We consciously seek ways to bring actual experience and ideas and principles into contact with each other, for the purpose of elucidating both.

**Being a Legitimate Alternative to Other Institutions of Higher Education in This Region and in the United States.** While acknowledging that many other institutions offer quality education and that difference, or innovation, for its own sake is not what we seek, we also want Evergreen to offer a first-rate education in the arts and sciences that is distinct from that learning offered elsewhere. Difference might exist in who attends this college, in the content of its curriculum, the method(s) of instruction or otherwise, but it should conduce to our students' being able to recognize and cherish what separates their education from others available to them.

**Service to the South Puget Sound Basin, Southwest Washington, and the Entire Region.** By means of a variety of study modes, in multiple subject areas, and in different formats, we have been meeting and should continue to meet as many of the needs of our service areas as we reasonably can. Outreach programs, economic development efforts, joint projects with other state agencies, and policy research and study are some of the ways this institution does, and should serve its students and the environment in which it is situated.

**Easy Access to the College and Its Resources.** Historically, we have tried to make admission to the college as open as is legal for us to do. We have also tried to make our facilities and human resources available to as many people as is feasible. We should continue these efforts in the light of what we have learned through experience.

**Diversity.** We should renew our efforts to incorporate as much variety as possible in race and ethnicity, socioeconomic class, lifestyle, cultural values and so on into the faculty, staff and students of TESC. We should make diverse

peoples and cultures, modes of teaching/learning, ways of seeing and being, mind-sets and points of view part of the fabric of this institution.

**A Rich Campus Life That Contributes in Various Ways to the Development of Balanced and Complex Individuals.** In the past, we have tried to nourish sound minds and healthy bodies, to support physical and mental activity, to recognize the complementarity between work and play, to respond to academic and social needs and to acknowledge the multiplicity of gifts and talents among us. We should renew our commitments to this value for our students, staff and faculty.

**A Consonant Community.** Evergreen is a learning community whose life is and should be defined most by the college's academic mission. Therefore, all other aspects of life here should not only support the forms and content of our teaching and learning, but reflect them as completely as they can.

These values and positions represent the center of the spectrum of opinion about what this college is and does. As a result, we believe that they should continue to form the central core of what we seek to achieve in the future.

Now for a brief discussion of the three value clusters. **Boldface** type indicates the name (more like a nickname) of a value.

#### Evergreen as a Teaching/Learning Enterprise

The most prominent feature of Evergreen's arts and science education is a curricular commitment to **interdisciplinary teaching and learning**, not only in team-taught coordinated studies, but also in thematically coherent group and individual contracts. Significant themes and problems promote **engagement in study** by both students and faculty. It is more important that students reap the benefits of studies growing from among different fields than that they merely acquire specialized knowledge or cover a body of knowledge; disciplinary background and **sound consistent academic advice** are crucial aids to success.

Interdisciplinary work is the academic key to linking **theory and practice**, especially when it leads to internships, research and public service projects; and the like. As our students are diverse in educational background and goals, in age and place of origin, though not as diverse as we wish in class or race, communication and joint **work across significant differences** are vital to the same goal. We should encourage the integration of different cultures' ways of learning into the life of the college.

Evergreen encourages students to **take responsibility for learning** and is committed to support them with teaching that is both authoritative and responsive, with sound advising, and with provision of **individualized as well as group modes of study**. In evaluation, students and those who teach them look for **increasing competence** in analysis and expression and **continuing growth** in understanding, ethical sense and strength, and personal direction.

### **Evergreen as a Community of Persons**

This is the most visibly troubled face of the college. A sense of exclusion strikes numerous staff and students, especially in relation to influencing policy or resolving grievances satisfactorily. Evergreen's hopes for cultural diversity have repeatedly stalled on the related issue of fostering a wide enough sense of shared interests or historical consciousness to include persons of color authentically and naturally.

We propose the following values knowing that they touch raw spots, and that feelings are much divided about the ways the college embodies them (or fails to). We recognized that the list of "practices to protect" in Section IV contains few of the main staff functions: it may be significant that this planning exercise has inspired little overt commitment to Evergreen's specific administrative practices. In this area, more than any, we want the college to aspire well beyond its status quo.

The members of the Evergreen community are individual persons, not abstract roles, functions, statistical or sociological groups. This committee reaffirms Evergreen's **Social Contract**, especially in its commitment to **open, responsible, mutually respectful relations** between persons. This entails **acceptance of divergent life-styles** and, beyond mere tolerance, **active respect for cultural difference**.

In teaching and learning, in administration, and in student affairs, Evergreen stands for **an environment of cooperation**, where collaborative ventures and mutual support are specially valued, and in which competitive activities and individual initiatives find appropriate forms. The health of this community depends on finding occasions for personal creativity (scholarly, artistic, or other) within the web of mutual dependence.

The ideals of a consonant community and of linking theory with practice imply **access to governance processes** for all. A duty of responsible participation goes hand in hand with a right to receive clear information, to be heard in good faith consultation, and to have legitimate views acknowledged in the college's processes.

Conflict is a normal feature of communities, and a healthy one, if it is conducted with basic respect between the parties, with **temperate behavior, willingness to discuss grievances**, and imagination in devising solutions.

### **Evergreen as a Work Organization**

As co-workers, Evergreeners should expect the college's formal policies and procedures to be consonant with its values on teaching/learning and community and should insist on **fair and sensitive implementation** of them. It remains valid that people charged with responsibility for decisions should try to decide issues as close to "where the action is" as possible, that they should conduct **adequate consultation**, that they should make their thinking plain, and that they should be **locatable and accountable**, so that good decisions can be praised, and bad ones acknowledged and corrected. This committee recognizes the tension between these features of share decision-making.

Hand in hand with the natural expectation that work be performed with **professional competence** according to the standards of each function goes a need for the college to develop **avenues of growth and advancement** for its workers.

The legal requirements of **affirmative action** in hiring and promotion, **comparable worth** in pay, **environmental protection** in operations, and the like are the formal expressions of the spirit of respect between persons and service to the public at large which Evergreen people should find imaginative ways to carry beyond minimum standards.

### **III. Value Tangles**

While the value orientations mentioned above are relatively clear to us, there are other things we say/believe are important that are much harder to define consistently, much more difficult to practice in relation to each other. These are "value tangles," conflicting, tension-creating, contradictory situations that occur when certain values run head-on into each other, or get so intimately wound up together that it's hard to know where one ends and another begins. Some of these tangles are relatively innocuous, causing only a wry grin here or there or an occasional minor inconvenience. Others, however, frustrate expectations, hinder individual development and log-jam institutional business. **Shared Decision-Making**, for example, seems a nice value. But sometimes the speed required in settling certain issues doesn't allow much, or very broad, consultation. At other times, the process of consulting postpones decisions unduly. Not only is this process sometimes inefficient, but it sometimes results in issues never getting settled or



## V. Proposals

The committee has decided to make several recommendations to the Planning Council on a variety of issues which it thinks can be satisfactorily addressed in the form of proposals. In this section the committee makes two types of recommendations: first, we recommend reviews of current college practices, and, second, we recommend formal campus-wide discussions about issues which involve value tangles. We present our recommendations in a way which shows the relationships among relevant central values.

We recommend a FORMAL REVIEW OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS at Evergreen. The results of the Small College Goals Inventory suggest that a majority of the people surveyed think the role of intercollegiate athletics should decrease in the future; that many values generally associated with athletics seem to conflict with some of the central values of this institution; and that there is a desire to determine in what ways this institution should develop physical and mental health as well as intellectual aptitude.

Some value-laden questions are: (1) Does intercollegiate athletics foster the kind of cooperation Evergreen values within a competitive context?, (2) Do we consider physical training a valid mode of learning?, (3) How much support is this institution willing to provide to allow students to develop their minds and bodies?, (4) To what extent can we honestly say we support, recognize and respect an individual's right to choose his or her lifestyle?, and, (5) To what degree can we afford a full spectrum of athletic opportunities?

The committee recommends a review of possible ways in which the Evergreen STAFF COULD ORGANIZE INTO COOPERATIVE UNITS that make their own decisions, establish their own procedures and evaluate their work in consultation with their supervisors and the people they serve.

The staff is presently organized in a hierarchical structure which is antithetical to many of Evergreen's values. Evergreen values personal development, self-evaluation and decision-making at a level closest to those people most affected. Would a reorganization of staff relations provide a cooperative atmosphere which fosters open, mutual respectful relations and a feeling of self-direction on the job, and also be an effective and efficient way of getting work done?

This committee suggests that Evergreen ESTABLISH A CENTER TO LINK THE COLLEGE WITH SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES. A "community center" would reaffirm our commitment to such values as linking theory with practice, of active learning and of supporting projects or "theme" work. This center



would be one way the college could develop a more active dialogue with its external environment. It would also encourage the mutual use of the college and the community as resources.

The center should integrate the functions of teaching, research and service: teaching that develops civic understanding, responsibility and sensitivity by linking students and faculty or staff with community groups working on current issues and problems; research that involves faculty/staff/student/community teams in generating information about and for communities in the region; and service that responds to regional needs and that engages students with individuals or groups in a community context.

We recommend the most careful preparation and planning for **controlled growth**. Evergreen should be innovative and creative in its approach to growth. As we grow, so should the diversity of the community. How will Evergreen open itself to serving the needs of a diverse community? Careful growth should maintain reasonable levels of service so Evergreen would need to increase staff in step with rising numbers. Currently, housing is inadequate to fulfill students' needs. When considering new housing, Evergreen should keep in mind its commitment to fostering community.

Further questions: How will the physical environment of the campus be affected as we build new facilities? How will our current facilities handle growth? How will advising be affected?

We recommend a **switch from a quarter system to a semester system**, with either an inter-session or a reading period between terms. The semester would allow more thorough investigation of subjects. An inter-session or reading period could support faculty research and creative work and allow students to prepare for the second semester.

Although the change would lower the frequency of choice, it would lighten the workload for Academic Advising, the office of registration and records, and program secretaries, reducing stress and/or cost. It would substantially reduce the evaluation workload for faculty and students.

We recommend developing a **curriculum in Pacific Rim studies**, as part of college growth. This would show a commitment to the needs of the state, with effects on public support, and would provide new avenues for multi-cultural involvement. This new specialty would need to be integrated with the rest of the curriculum, much work in defining and designing remains before it can be launched.

We also support a **curriculum in communications**,

stressing the link between theory and practice. Emphasis should be divided between technical skill, fundamental theory, and social context. Our ability to regroup faculty for new ventures, and our experience in interdisciplinary study suit us for this initiative toward meeting long-expressed desires of some of our students.

#### VI. Issues and Problems

As we discussed in the first draft of our report, the committee felt that there were certain topics on which we could not possibly reach agreement within the time allotted. We relegated these topics to a category called "Issues and Problems." Our own continuing discussions, as well as comments given to us by the community, suggest that the topics listed here are indeed difficult, and will need a careful examination by future committees. We believe that these problems and issues arise from values in conflict with one another, or from discrepancies between what we say and what we do, or from just plain thorny questions whose connections with particular values are difficult to trace clearly. We suggest that as the college studies these difficult issues, we articulate the specific values which may be in conflict.

(1) The type of student we are recruiting may not be right for the Evergreen environment. What type of student do we wish to recruit and attract to Evergreen? Is there a typical student? Ought we be actively trying to maintain a certain "mix" of students? How do we ensure that we present an accurate picture of Evergreen to prospective students?

(2) Specialty areas may need to be reorganized or reconceived. How can we better distribute faculty expertise through the curriculum, and allow greater faculty rotation? How can we decrease specialty area infighting. Or solve some of the perennial problems certain areas face? Is it possible to create and maintain a coherent, robust curriculum, while, at the same time, ensuring that faculty and students have an integral role in constructing specific course and program offerings? Should we be concerned about having clearly identified curricular pathways? How do we ensure that we have sufficient faculty resources to maintain our curriculum as conceived? Is it important that the curriculum be coherent or only that the student's educational experience be coherent? Is there a connection between the structure of the curriculum and the quality of a student's academic experience?

(3) Facilities for "hands-on" learning are diminishing. How committed are we to experiential learning? How can some of our facilities be restored for this aspect of our teaching? How may we deploy our resources so as to adequately support this aspect of our curriculum.

(4) Increase the number of academic administrative and support staff. Facts seem to suggest that the academic side of the college is seriously understaffed in administrative and support areas. This partly explains why it is so hard to get people to agree to be deans, and why faculty members cling so desperately to the clerical help they have, and why so many staff are experiencing burnout. As a result of this understaffing, things we value get done late, sometimes poorly, and on occasion, not at all. Shouldn't each dean have at least a whole secretary? Don't our program secretaries need more help (despite the word processors that are "supposed" to be coming)? On the other side of the house, don't the folks in student services and facilities desperately need more staff?

(5) Although there is a feeling of cooperation and collaboration within programs, there appears to be a good deal of distrust and suspicion throughout the faculty, a lack of mutual respect that is probably grounded in our often radically divergent ways of teaching and learning. How can we foster an attitude of mutual respect between disciplines, particularly when it comes time to make one of our many budget cuts? To what degree is this attitude of competition an unhealthy aspect of dialogue between and among educators?

(6) Academic advising for students is not adequate. How do we provide better academic advising without adding to an already heavy faculty load, and without incurring great costs in a period of diminishing resources?

(7) The across-the-board 20:1 student/faculty ratio may be inhibiting advanced study. Can we re-think our student/faculty ratio distribution so that more faculty resources are available for advanced studies or other curricular offerings? Is it time to introduce large (50-80) lecture sections in certain areas in order that class size of less than 20 be accommodated at the advanced level? Might not large interdisciplinary lecture courses make good sense? Are there creative alternatives to the standard lecture, lab, seminar, and workshop structures as we currently use them?

(8) Individual contracts should perhaps be restricted to advanced level study only. Isn't the current practice of calling a three or four-course cluster an individual contract often intellectually dishonest? Shouldn't we be reserving individual contracts for those students for whom specialization and advanced independent work make sense?

(9) Faculty replacement and development need to be examined in light of the fact that most of our faculty are "senior." Does this fact raise concerns about the diversity and vitality of the faculty? What happens when a significant number of faculty retire at the same time? Should we have a

policy favoring the hiring of "junior" faculty only?

This list of issues and problems is not meant to be exhaustive, but it does represent those issues about which we have received significant (and occasionally lengthy) comment from the campus community. Our committee feels that each of the issues listed here needs immediate attention from a group convened to look at that particular issue.