



the
evergreen
state college

Mid-Cycle Accreditation Report to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities



August, 2021



Dear Mid-Cycle Accreditation Report Reviewers:

Thank you for reviewing the Mid-Cycle Accreditation Report for The Evergreen State College. Your visit coincides with Evergreen's 50th academic year. In some ways, the key to understanding the college today lies in its founding. The founding board, administration, and faculty seized the opportunity to create an institution singularly focused on teaching and learning. They were determined to reject any traditional structure that did not contribute to that goal. Letter grades, academic departments, and much else failed to meet that test and were rejected. The college that they created was – and remains – radically committed to interdisciplinary study, collaborative learning, and bridging theory and practice.

Over the decades, Evergreen benefited greatly from the dialogue with our peers through the Northwest Commission's accreditation cycle. Through that dialogue, Evergreen sharpened the founding vision into the [Five Foci](#), the college's enduring statement of its educational philosophy. In later cycles, we articulated the outcomes that Evergreen's baccalaureate graduates should achieve, the [Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate](#).

Working with Commission visitors over the years, we have focused on assessment: how does an interdisciplinary college where students have agency over their course of study assure itself that its students achieve the breadth and depth of learning expected of liberal arts graduates? Evergreen's distinctive program structure presents both challenges and extraordinary opportunities for learning assessment. In this report, you will read about current work to take full advantage of the data available to us to improve student outcomes.

Most recently, our attention has been seized by concerns over enrollment and financial sustainability. As a public college in Washington state, our financial condition in recent years has been buttressed by increased public support. The infusion of federal money associated with the COVID-19 pandemic allowed us to rebuild our financial reserves. Nevertheless, we continue to show an operating deficit. Consequently, plans for new programs and enrollment strategies feature prominently in this mid-cycle report.

We look forward to your visit.

Best wishes,



John Carmichael, Ph.D.

Interim President

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1 • MISSION FULFILLMENT

1.1 • Evergreen's Mission

Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees in April 2011, the mission of The Evergreen State College is as follows:

As an innovative public liberal arts college, Evergreen emphasizes collaborative, interdisciplinary learning across significant differences. Evergreen's academic community engages students in defining and thinking critically about their learning. Evergreen supports and benefits from local and global commitment to social justice, diversity, environmental stewardship, and service in the public interest.

Our unique role and model

As Washington's designated public liberal arts college, Evergreen is dedicated to ensuring that a college education in Washington is rigorous, accessible, and affordable. We take pride in admitting, supporting and graduating students from groups underrepresented in and underserved by higher education. Evergreen prepares students for today's challenges through collaborative work, hands-on experiences in and out of the classroom, and active community engagement. The college offers two undergraduate and three graduate degrees: **Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Environmental Studies, Master in Teaching, and Master of Public Administration.**

Three strategic goals and thirteen objectives guide our fulfillment of this mission:

Goal 1: Achieve unprecedented levels of student academic success and personal development in a manner responsive to students' unique career goals, talents, identities, and diverse perspectives.

- Objective 1: Deepen and expand the impact and reach of the curriculum
- Objective 2: Build on and create new academic areas of emphasis and excellence
- Objective 3: Integrate all aspects of the academic curriculum
- Objective 4: Fully support students personally and holistically
- Objective 5: Realize our commitment to equity, inclusion, and justice
- Objective 6: Develop and engage partnerships to enhance curriculum

Goal 2: Significantly expand support for our local community, region, state, and nation during an unprecedented period of social and economic turbulence.

- Objective 1: Contribute to the region's workforce development
- Objective 2: Prepare graduates for post-degree success
- Objective 3: In accordance with the Centennial Accord and New Millennium Agreement, strengthen partnerships with Native nations and their citizens

Goal 3: Become a much stronger, more resilient, and adaptive college by expanding our capacities to serve a much wider range of students and achieve our vision of contributing fully to the larger society.

- Objective 1: Grow the total number of students who enroll, persist, and graduate
- Objective 2: Build our individual and collective strength and resilience
- Objective 3: Strengthen Evergreen's financial position
- Objective 4: Enhance and elevate Evergreen's reputation

1.2 • Mission Fulfillment Process

Evergreen assesses mission fulfillment through an ongoing process of evaluating quantitative and qualitative information on the college's programs, operations, and experiences of our students.

Background

As Evergreen's previous strategic plan, *Shaping our Future: Building on Our Past*, was coming to an end in 2020, the college launched an extensive series of data-informed campus conversations on Evergreen's future. During the course of the 2019-2020 academic year, these focused on increasing student success, serving the larger community and region in new ways, and fortifying the college's financial position and reputation. The conversations were framed with data from institutional research and environmental scans; they included multiple meetings and gatherings of students, faculty, and staff, covering

ideas and aspirations for academic programs, approaches to supporting students holistically, and improving Evergreen's outreach to southwestern Washington. The conceptual plan that emerged from these conversations was approved by the faculty and Evergreen's Board of Trustees in June 2020, culminating in a new strategic plan, [The Evergreen State College Strategic Plan 2020-2023](#).

With the completion of the plan, staff and faculty have begun the process of identifying key performance indicators for each of the new strategic objectives, along the lines of the college's [dashboard of performance indicators](#), prepared for [The Evergreen State College Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report 2018](#). The process seeks to adopt indicators of institutional performance offering effective guides for implementing strategy, realizing substantive outcomes, and enabling leadership to make course corrections in fulfilling Evergreen's mission as needed.

Widely used indicators of institutional performance including degree completion, retention, persistence and post-graduation success, are presented and analyzed in Section 2. These form the baseline measures for broad institutional effectiveness. We supplement these indicators with routinely collected survey data on [student experience](#), the [transcript review](#) of the narrative evaluations of students by faculty as well as [End-of-Program Reviews](#) of the academic programs they take, [on alumni](#), and most recently on the [overall campus climate](#). As mentioned in our [2020 Ad Hoc Report](#), we are also developing a process for collecting and assessing direct measures of our institution-wide student learning outcomes, the [Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate](#). This process and the timeline for its implementation are described in Section 3.

Evergreen's new goals and objectives refocus institutional strategy on initiatives and actions aimed at improving student success, expanding our outreach to new populations of students, and stabilizing our finances. As we implement initiatives and tactics under the new strategic plan we are also identifying key assessment indicators to measure their success. Two examples are illustrative:

1. The college recently implemented major changes in our academic curriculum to improve student success particularly among first-time first-year undergraduates. Greener Foundations is a credit-bearing program that introduces entering students to the nature of academic work at Evergreen and specific skills and strategies for success. Results from the program pilot indicated participants in Greener Foundations persisted past their first academic term at rates much higher than those who did not. Not surprisingly, they also reported being more satisfied with their experience at Evergreen than those who did not. Our initial programmatic assessment of the first full year of implementation for Greener Foundations is described in section 3.2, for which we focus on persistence, credit earned, and participation as key indicators.
2. Paths are broad interdisciplinary areas offering tracks in the curriculum that students can voluntarily follow for four years with specified academic offerings taught every year or every other year. Faculty began developing these Paths in 2018, with the support of the Mellon Foundation. The student outreach and engagement phase of our Paths project was implemented this year, providing students a clearer and more predictable window into our complex and dynamic curriculum. [Student experience surveys](#) have shown some Evergreen students lacked confidence they would be able to develop skills and expertise in a field of interest or would be able to get the kinds of classes they wanted. The Paths project was designed to address this issue. We are pleased to discover that fully one-half of those students surveyed this spring are affiliating with one of the college's Paths. Starting in fall 2021, we will learn how effective Paths are in retaining students who affiliate with them and how this affects the confidence that students can find what they want in our curriculum, consistent with the objectives of Goal 1 of our strategic plan.

These initiatives address several of our strategic goals and objectives. For example, Goal 1, Objective 1 - Deepen and expand the impact and reach of the curriculum, and Goal 3, Objective 1 - Grow the total number of students who enroll, persist, and graduate. By increasing student persistence, we are increasing college revenue and addressing Goal 3: Objective 3 - Strengthen Evergreen's financial position. Measuring students' participation in and perceptions of initiatives like Greener Foundations and Paths will prove critical to knowing whether the initiatives contribute significantly to achieving Goal 1: Achieve unprecedented levels of student academic success and personal development and Goal 3: Become a much stronger, more resilient, and adaptive college. Other initiatives that address various elements of our strategic plan are described in section 4.

A revised college dashboard of key performance indicators will be developed in fall 2021, with input from faculty, staff, and students. Our aim is to ensure the dashboard's final set of indicators enables the campus community to understand whether we are achieving each objective and whether individual tactics such as Greener Foundations and Paths have their intended impact. As additional new initiatives, such as new certificate programs and a suite of online courses, are launched, assessment plans will be developed, and additional indicators will be added to the dashboard. Further, disaggregating data across different groups of students will shed light on variances in program effects.

1.3 • Initial Assessment of Mission Fulfillment

Below we identify some key areas of strength for Evergreen, and some areas where we have established indicators for our goal of continuous improvement.

Areas of Strength:

- More than 80% of Evergreen students identify with one or more groups historically underserved by higher education. Our commitment to these students helps us fulfill our mission as a public institution, and contributes to Washington State's goal of advancing diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Evergreen continues to be [recognized](#) as a college that offers an innovative, interdisciplinary, coordinated studies model providing opportunities for collaboration and community engagement, breadth and depth of learning, and putting theory to practice.
- A 2018 [Evergreen Economic Impact study](#) conducted by the Thurston County Economic Development Council (EDC) and the Center for Business & Innovation demonstrated the importance of Evergreen in the county and region, both in terms of the contributions of Evergreen, alumni working in local government and business and in terms of the broader economic impact of the college as an important intuition and partner in the region.

Indicators for Improvement:

- Expand participation in our first-year transition programs, including Greener Foundations. Evidence of success will include increased persistence and the proportion of students making satisfactory progress (Goal 1, Objectives 1, 2, and 3).
- In order to support students personally and holistically, and to create a climate of inclusion and belonging, increase the portion of students feeling connected to the campus as measured by our student experience survey (Goal 1, Objectives 4 and 5).
- To prepare graduates for post-graduate success, increase the proportion of students participating in capstone work and internships (Goal 2, Objective 2).
- Improve 4 and 6-year graduation rates with a goal of reaching or exceeding the level of our peers by 2025. (Goal 3, Objective 1).
- Strengthen Evergreen’s financial position by stabilizing and growing enrollment (Goal 3, Objective 3).

2 • STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

2.1 • Introduction to Evergreen curricular structure/programs

The Evergreen State College is a public liberal arts college with a unique curricular structure and pedagogy. Historically, most students have participated in full-time inter-disciplinary coordinated studies programs, team-taught by 2 or 3 faculty, often continuing for 2 or 3 consecutive quarters. Students in these long-term and intensive learning communities have been able to develop breadth and depth in their learning, as they work toward achieving the [Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate](#). In recent years, the college has offered more 4, 8, and 12-credit courses and programs, supplementing the curriculum of 16-credit programs, many of which are provided through the Evening Weekend Studies curriculum. While most students are full-time, attempting 12 or more credits/quarter, approximately 8-10% of students are part-time.

As we enter the 2021-22 academic year, Evergreen has been investigating the creation of flexible pathways to degree to better meet the needs of adult working learners and returning students. These flexible pathways will include part-time, online, and/or alternative schedules, including stackable credentials and certificates.

2.2 • Student Demographics

Our Office for Institutional Research and Assessment maintains a [fact page](#) with demographic information of the undergraduate students we serve, and the trends overtime. Below is a snapshot for fall 2020.

The Washington State Council of Presidents [Public Baccalaureate Sector Fact book](#) (with data for the 18-19 academic year) shows that compared to the undergraduate students at our 4-year peers in the state Evergreen stands out as supporting traditionally underserved students:

- Highest percentage of adult learners (Evergreen 21% of students aged 30 or over. Nearest peer is 12%).
- Highest percentage of transfers (Evergreen 57% vs peers 27% to 47%).
- Highest percentage of Native American students (Evergreen 3.1% vs peers 0.5% to 1%).
- Highest percentage of Black students (Evergreen 5% vs peers 1.7% to 3.8%).
- Highest percentage of Pell grant recipients (Evergreen 47% vs peers 25% to 40%).

WHO WE SERVE (FALL 2020)	
2080	Enrolled students
27	Average age
87%	Washington State Residents
61%	Female
32%	Students of color
40%	Low-income students
50%	Olympia undergraduates identify as LGBTQ+

The Evergreen fact page also includes trend analysis for these measures. The most significant trend is the overall enrollment, which has declined since 2012 (Figure 2.1).

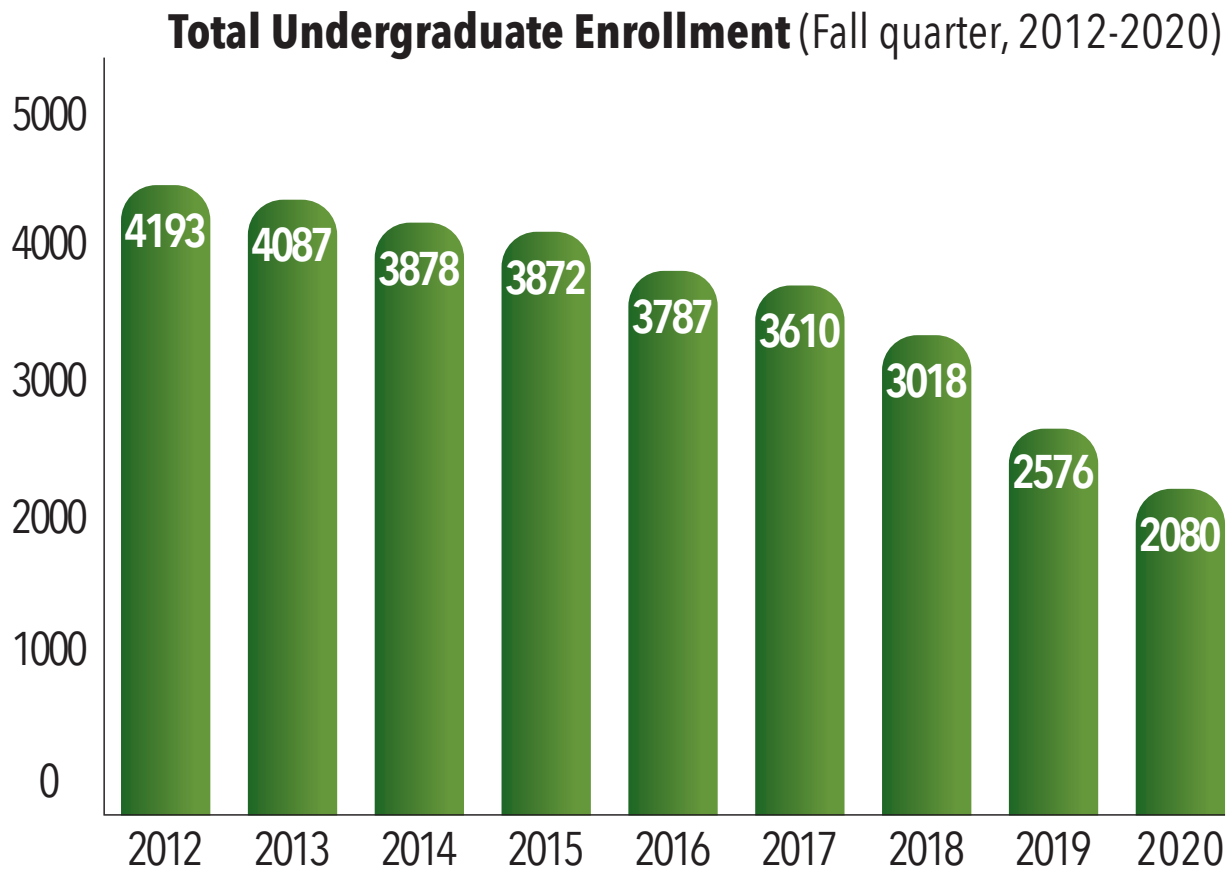


Figure 2.1. Total undergraduate enrollment at Evergreen, 2012-2020 (headcount, measured in Fall quarter).

Since 2017, Evergreen has experienced two important events that have substantially influenced enrollment.

First, during the spring of 2017, on-campus protests that were prevalent in social media and national press led to campus disruption by external extremist groups. Second, the COVID-19 pandemic which led our campus to shift suddenly and almost completely from the hands-on, experiential, learning with many opportunities for field experiences and community engagement, for which Evergreen is well known, to almost completely remote. Each of these events decreased Evergreen's enrollment for different reasons above a gradual decline that that began in 2012 -- a decline that parallels one in many community colleges and similar liberal arts college enrollments over the same period. Our strategic enrollment plan was drafted to address and reverse this significant downward trend.

2.3 • Student Achievement Measures

Measures of student achievement are available on Evergreen's [Institutional Research website](#). We have identified student achievement measures for graduation, retention, persistence and post-graduation success. Many of the data presented here have been provided to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). When identifying peers we use a "COPLAC+" comparison group, which includes the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC; list of 29 members found at coplac.org/members), + our regional 4-year state institutions Western Washington University, Eastern Washington University, and Central Washington University.

For completion, retention, and persistence we first consider our own Evergreen undergraduate student measures, and compare to peer data from IPEDS, when available. We then provide Evergreen data disaggregated by sex, Washington state residency status, ethnicity, traditional/non-traditional age, veteran status, disability status, first-generation status, Pell status, and socio-economic status for student sub-populations with n greater than 10. Data regarding post-graduation success are derived from internal Evergreen alumni surveys and are likewise disaggregated for student sub-populations with n greater than 10.

2.3.1 • Completion (Graduation with bachelor's degree)

With respect to completion rates, we recognize that Outcome Measures cohorts, with a focus on graduation rates for both first-time first-year and transfer students best allow us to measure the success of our students relative to our COPLAC+ peers. We consider the following cohorts of students for the purpose of comparison: First-time first-year full-time students, transfer (non-first-time) full-time students, and transfer part-time students. Approximately 90% of our students are full-time, comprised of a 50:50 mix of first-time first-years and transfers. Approximately 10% of our students study part-time, nearly all of whom enter as transfers. We recognize that our student populations may change in response to our ongoing initiatives aimed at returning adults students needing part-time, online, and/or alternative schedules. In addition, Outcome Measures cohorts include students who enroll throughout the year, which better reflects our broad student population.

For each of our three cohorts Evergreen compares well with our peers throughout the measurement period for Outcome Measures through 2018. Graduation rates for Evergreen students are generally higher than our peers for first-time first-year students but not dramatically different. Graduation rates were much better for Evergreen transfer students compared to our peer institutions.

We do not rely solely on Outcome Measures, because the most recent cohort years that we can consider are for cohorts starting 2012. This window does not capture important information relating to recent changes in our enrollment patterns. Given that Outcome Measures data are not timely in the context of recent enrollment trends, we also consider the IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey cohort 150%-time graduation rate (GRS150) so that we can analyze more recent student data, up to the 2014 entering cohort. This data set includes only first-time full-time students, which reflects less than 50% of Evergreen's student population (Figure 2.2). Nevertheless, it provides an important window into the success of this group of students.

Full-time, First Time IPEDS Graduation Rate

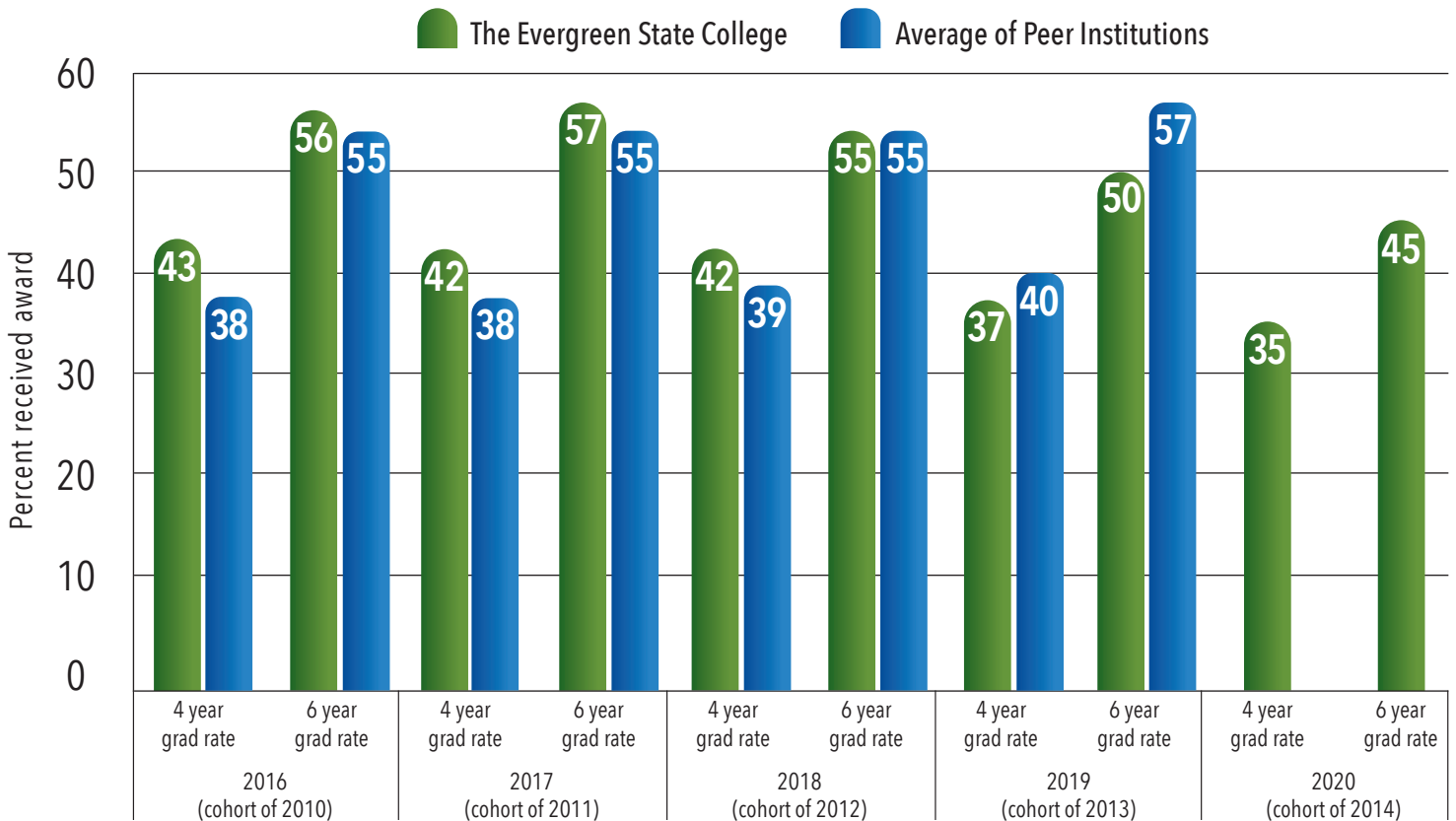


Figure 2.2. IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey (GRS150, first-time full-time students) 2010-2014 cohorts, measured in 2016 through 2020 respectively.

We see that from 2016 to 2020, graduation rates of first-time full-time students decreased from 43% to 35% for 4-year graduation rates, and from 56% to 45% for 6-year graduation rates. In early cohort years our graduation rates compare favorably with our peers, but they decline to levels below our peers in more recent years. This is a trend we would like to reverse.

As we implement changes to support our current and future students, we focus the rest of this analysis on our 2017 to 2020 student populations, disaggregating our first-time first-year and transfer student populations. The total population of the transfer (non-first-time) part-time student cohort is not large enough to disaggregate the data in a consistent manner.

Key findings for first-time first-year (full-time) students: [The data referenced is in [Evergreen's graduation rate graphical summary](#)]

- Graduation rates decreased across all students from 2017 to 2020; the 4-year graduation rates for undergraduates decreased by 5%, and the 6-year rate by 13%.
- Male students graduate at rates approximately 10% lower than female students, growing to a 14% gap for the most recent cohort. The decline in 4-year graduation rates from 2017 to 2020 is most pronounced for male students, the 4-year graduation rates for female students are more stable.
- Students of color 4-year graduation rates are 1% to 9% less than their white, non-Hispanic or unknown counterparts, though 6-year graduation rates of both groups were similar.
- Students below the poverty level graduate at a similar rate to low-income and not-low-income students, with more consistent graduation rates over the last 4 years than other groups.
- Pell-grant-recipients had consistently higher 4-year graduation rates than students who did not receive Pell grants; the effect of Pell grants on 6-year graduation rates is more inconsistent.
- First-generation students consistently graduate at lower rates than their non-first-generation counterparts. The gap in 4-year rates grew from 4% to 12% between 2017 and 2020, and the gap in 6-year rates declined slightly from 7% to 5%.
- Traditional age students typically had higher 4-year graduation rates than non-traditional age students; this is less consistent for 6-year graduation rates.

We further disaggregate students of color, but note that the differences observed may not be generalizable because student populations are small. The most remarkable observations are:

- » The decline in 4 and 6-year graduation rates from 2017-2020 is most pronounced for Asians and multiracial, non-Hispanic students. The former group has the highest graduation rate of any group.
- » The 4 and 6-year graduation rates for African-American non-Hispanic students did not change much during these years, but the rates are the lowest of all race-ethnicity groups, at 21% and 41% respectively. However, the gap between the 4-year graduation for African-American non-Hispanic students and the average graduation rate declined from 21% and to 14% from 2017-2020. The 6-year gap for the same group declined from 15% to 3%.

Key findings for full-time transfer students:

- 4-year graduation rates decreased by about 10% and 6-year graduation rates decreased slightly, by 3%, from 2017 to 2020.
- The graduation rates for male and female transfer students are very similar, in contrast to the large disparity between the graduation rates of male and female first-time first-year students.
- Since 2019, students of color have marginally lower 4-year graduation rates compared to white, non-Hispanic or unknown students; 6-year graduation rates remain comparable.

We further disaggregate students of color, but note that the differences observed may not be generalizable because student populations are small (ranging from 20 to 80)

- » African American non-Hispanic and Native American non-Hispanic students have among the highest graduation rates for all groups.
 - » Graduation rates for Native American non-Hispanic students have increased overall since 2017, with substantial increases in the 6-year graduation rates. The 6-year graduation rates for African American non-Hispanic students are high and stable.
 - » We see a larger than average 15% decrease in 4-year graduation rates for Hispanic students. The 6-year graduation rates for this group also saw the largest decline, of about 9%.
- Students below the poverty level have similar 4-year and 6-year graduation rates to low-income and not-low-income students, though in 2020 students below poverty had the lowest 4 and 6-year graduation rates of all groups since 2017.
 - Pell-grant-recipients consistently had higher 4-year and 6-year graduation rates than students who did not receive Pell grants.

Discussion of Graduation Rate Key Findings

The general decline of graduation rates from 2017 through 2020 is a concern. This decline may be attributable to the events of 2017 and subsequent reputational and enrollment challenges. Our Strategic Plan outlines objectives and tactics to address this trend. Our goal is to increase graduation rates to the levels we achieved compared to our peers prior to 2017. If we are successful, this improvement should be visible in the IPEDS measures by the time of our 7-year self-study in 2025.

The low graduation rates for first-time first year male students are also of concern, especially as the gap with female students has increased between 2017 and 2020. Notably, we do not see this gap for transfer students. It is not clear what is causing this gap, but certainly it pertains to younger students with less college experience and appears to have been exacerbated in the period following 2017. As we implement and assess our Greener Foundations program, designed to serve new first-time first-year students, we will need to be attentive to this gap and determine strategies to reduce it.

The low graduation rates for first-time first-year African American students remain a concern, although these graduation rates have not fallen with the overall institutional decline in graduation rates between 2017 and 2020. The gap between the graduation rates for students from these groups has closed substantially. While we might regard the narrowing of this equity gap as a success, it is not a satisfactory outcome overall because it comes not from an increase in graduation rates for African American students, but from a decline in graduation rates for other students. It is unclear whether closing this gap is a manifestation of efforts to address equity we have implemented, or if the events since 2017 have differentially impacted other students in more substantial ways. As we engage in efforts to increase overall graduation rates our aim will be to maintain the success in reducing the equity gap for graduation rates for first-time first-year African American students and reduce it further. Initiatives designed to close the gap further will not be regarded as successful unless they are accompanied by increases in graduation rates overall.

The high graduation rates for African American and Native American, non-Hispanic transfer students are notable, especially the increase in Native American graduation rates since 2017. These high outcomes are likely attributable to two cohort-based programs that serve many students in these groups. The Native Pathways Program, which we describe in section 3, enrolls mostly Native American Students, and the Evergreen Tacoma Program enrolls mostly students of color, over 30% of

whom are African American students. Both programs historically only admitted upper-division transfer students, but both began admitting first-time first-year students for the first time in fall 2020. We hope to see the success of these programs in serving transfer students of color extending to improved graduation rates for first-time first-year students from these groups and that this will contribute to further closing equity gaps in graduation rates for these populations.

2.3.2 • Persistence and Retention

Measuring and disaggregating our persistence and retention data is critical to our work in responding to our enrollment decline. We define persistence as fall-to-winter continued enrollment at Evergreen, and we use this as a measurable benchmark toward fall-to-fall retention. This definition of persistence provides data to support Evergreen in better retaining students into their second year and toward graduation, and reflects the fact that the vast majority of Evergreen’s students start in fall quarter. We measure persistence and retention, for first-time full-time (first-year) and transfer (non-first-year) full-time students separately to aid in our planning with respect to student support and curriculum. We present data from Evergreen’s [Institutional Research website](#), specifically, within the [2020 Retention Summary](#) document. In instances when we seek to include peer data, we present IPEDS data through 2019, which focus on the retention of the first-time first-year full-time cohort.

Retention Rate, Full-time, First-Time and Transfer (Evergreen Only)

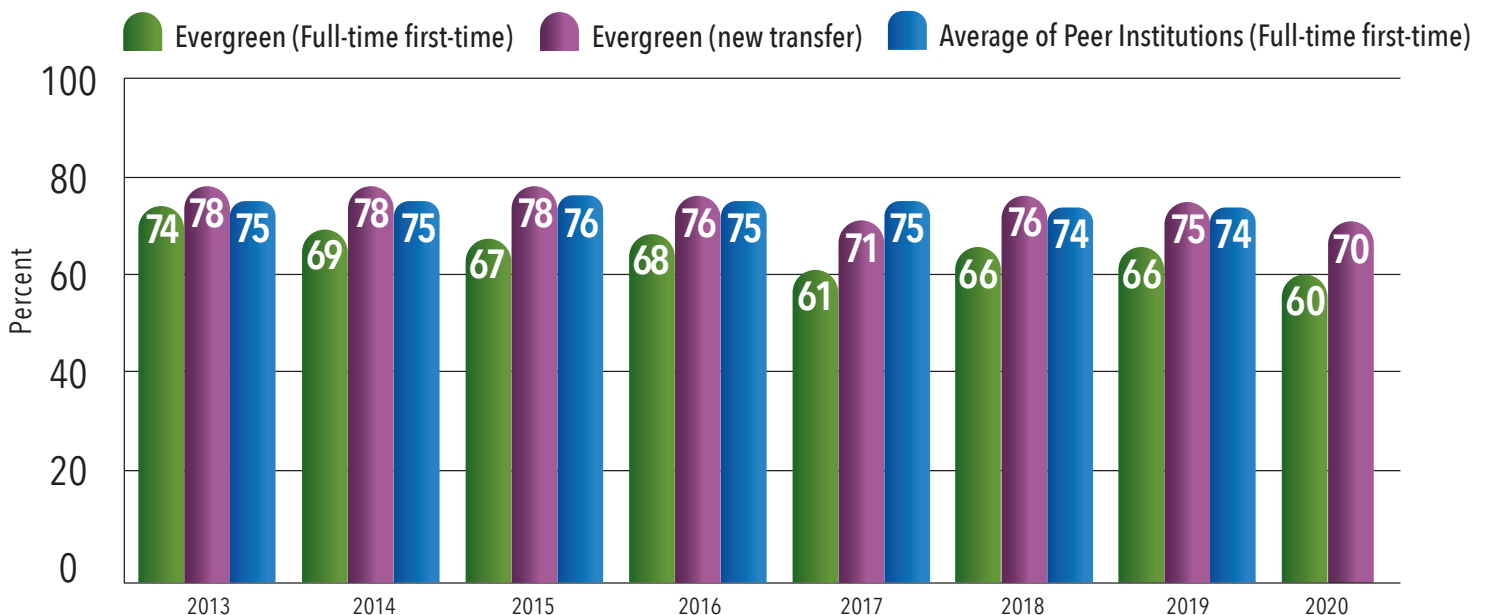


Figure 2.3. Evergreen’s Retention of first-time full-time students (first-year) compared to peers (IPEDS, up to 2019). Retention of new Evergreen transfer students (full-time and part-time aggregated) provided as well.

Focusing on retention of first-time full-time students, we see an overall decline relative to our peers over the last 8 years, with a sharp drop in the retention of first-time full-time students for fall 2017 (Figure 2.3). This drop followed protests and campus disruption by external extremist groups in spring 2017. Evergreen responded with additional efforts and resources to support retention of all students, coinciding with increased retention rates of both first-year and transfer populations into 2018 and 2019. In 2020, retention rates of both first-year and transfer populations decreased to 2017 levels, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to remote (online) learning.

Ultimately, we are most concerned with supporting our current and future students, and thus we focus on and disaggregate 2017 to 2020 persistence and retention data for our student populations. We disaggregate our first-time first-year and transfer student populations and focus our efforts to develop support and intervention initiatives.

Key findings for first-time first-year students: [The data referenced is in [Evergreen's persistence and retention graphical summary](#)]

- Persistence rates have decreased slightly from 2017 to 2020, from 86% to 82%; Recent retention rates have been lower than our historical average of about 70% since 2017, when retention rates decreased to a low of 60%. The retention rate increased in 2018 and 2019 to 65%, possibly reflecting dividends of enhanced college-wide retention efforts, but decreased back to of 60% again in 2020, coinciding with the COVID-related shift to remote (online) learning.
- Persistence and retention rates for males and females are similar, in contrast to the graduation rates, for which a large gap between males and females is a concern.
- On average, students of color had lower rates of persistence and retention than their white, non-Hispanic or unknown counterparts.
 - » Notably a gap in persistence rates between these groups grew from 2017 to 2020, growing from a 1% gap in 2017 (86% for students of color and 87% for white, non-Hispanic or unknown students) to a 15% gap in 2020 (73% for students of color and 88% for white, non-Hispanic or unknown students).
 - » Similarly, gaps in retention rates between these groups grew from 2017 to 2020, growing from a 5% gap in 2017 (57% for students of color and 62% for white, non-Hispanic or unknown students) to a 17% gap in 2020 (49% for students of color and 66% for white, non-Hispanic or unknown students).
 - » Persistence of white, non-Hispanic students during this period was stable.
- We further disaggregate students of color, but note that the differences observed may not be generalizable because student populations are small (ranging from 20 to 80)
 - » Between 2017 and 2020 persistence and retention both dropped substantially for African American, non-Hispanic students, decreasing by 27% and 42% respectively.
 - » Similarly, there was a 16% decrease in persistence rates of Hispanic students. There is less of a trend in the retention rates for this group, although retention rates in 2020 are at their lowest level, 13% below the average retention rate for first-time first-years.
- Students below the poverty level had similar rates of persistence and retention to low-income and not-low-income students.
- Pell-grant-recipients had consistently higher persistence and retention rates than students who did not receive Pell grants.
- First-generation students persist and retain at just a slightly lower rate than their non-first-generation counterparts, although the gap widened significantly in 2020, growing from a modest 1% gap in 2017 to a 12% gap in 2020.
- Traditional age students tended to persist better than non-traditional age students, though this evens out when considering fall-to-fall retention.

Key findings for transfer students:

- Persistence rates have decreased slightly since 2017 from 89% to 86%. Retention rates were quite stable, increasing slightly in 2018 and 2019, perhaps reflecting dividends of enhanced college-wide retention efforts, but decreased again in 2020, coinciding with the COVID-related shift to remote learning.
- On average, students of color had similar rates of persistence and retention to their white, non-Hispanic or unknown counterparts.
- We further disaggregate of students of color, but note that the differences observed may not be generalizable because student populations are small (ranging from 20 to 80)
 - » There is some evidence for increasing persistence in 2018 and 2019, relative to 2017 for most students of color. However, in 2020 there were notable decreases in persistence of Hispanic students (11%).
 - » There is some evidence for increasing retention in 2018 and 2019, relative to 2017 for most students of color. However, in 2020 there were notable decreases in retention for African American students (24%), and Asian students (26%).
- Students below the poverty level had similar rates of persistence and retention to low-income and not-low-income students.
- Pell-grant-recipients had consistently higher persistence and retention rates than students who did not receive Pell grants.
- First-generation students are consistently retained at lower rates than their non-first-generation counterparts.
- Non-traditional age transfer students tended to persist and retain better than traditional age transfer students. This is opposite the trend for first-time first-year students.
- Veteran students tended to persist and be retained at marginally better than non-veteran students, though in 2020, there was a notable increase in persistence and a large decrease in retention.

Analysis of Key Findings for Persistence and Retention

The general decline of retention rates compared to our peers since 2013 is a concern. The drop may be partially attributable to the events of 2017 and subsequent reputational and enrollment challenges and COVID-19 pandemic, but a downward trend began earlier than either of these events. Our strategic plan outlines objectives and tactics to address the longer-term retention trend, including creating clear and coherent Paths for students to find their way through our curriculum, our Greener Foundations first year experience program, and our Holistic advising initiative to address the needs of the whole student. Our goal is to increase retention rates above 70%, close to where they were in 2013. If we are successful, this improvement should be visible in the IPEDS measures by the time of our 7-year self-study in 2025.

The emergence of persistence and retention gaps for first-time first-year African American and Hispanic students since 2017, and most starkly, in 2020 is a concern. For transfer students we are pleased to see increases in persistence and retention for most groups of students of color, suggesting our retention efforts

since 2017 are having an impact. The 2020 drop in retention for African American transfer students, and first-time first-year *first-generation* students are at least partially attributable to the differential impact of COVID-19 on these populations. This [national trend](#) is seen at many 2-year public institutions, whose student populations are similar to our own demographically. We believe our strategic plan initiatives and tactics set us up well to close these gaps as we return to in-person and hybrid-online learning after the pandemic.

It is gratifying to see that our Pell-grant-receiving students and low-income students are retained so well relative to other groups. Their persistence may reflect the diversity of services the college has developed to support housing-limited, and food-limited students among other important needs. These students are important to our mission as a public college. We are optimistic that our continued efforts to support these students will translate to continued success for these students.

2.3.3 • Postgraduation success

Evergreen is very interested in the post-graduation success of our graduates. We track this information via a biannual survey of graduates. We define post-graduation success as being employed or enrollment in graduate or professional school one year following graduation.

Key findings for post-graduation student success: [The data referenced is in [Evergreen's post-graduation success graphical summary](#)]

- Post-graduation student success rates were steady at 87-88% in 2016 to and 2018, but in 2020, dropped to 78% coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on employment.
- On average, students of color had similar rates of post-graduation student success to their white, non-Hispanic or unknown counterparts.
- We further disaggregate students of color, but note that the differences observed may not be generalizable because student populations are small (ranging from 10-35 students).
 - » In 2020, the clearest evidence of decreases in post-graduation success were for multi-racial non-Hispanic students and, to a lesser extent, white, non-Hispanic students. It is not clear why these students might be differentially impacted.
- Students below the poverty level had variable though similar rates of post-graduation success compared to low-income and not-low-income students -- reflecting the success of Evergreen's efforts in supporting our students' diverse needs.
- Traditional age students tended to have better post-graduation success rates than non-traditional age students.

Veteran students tended to have higher rates of post-graduation success than non-veteran students, particularly in 2020.

Analysis of Post-graduate student success

In general, we are satisfied with the level of post-graduate student success, as measured by our surveys. We expect the slight decline in 2020 is attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic and will return to historic norms in due course. Our Strategic Plan aims to improve access to career-connected learning, through professional studies opportunities, internships and partnerships. Success of these initiatives should be reflected in improved post-graduate student success in the future.

3 • PROGRAMMATIC ASSESSMENT

3.1 • Ongoing efforts to improve programmatic assessment

3.1.1 • Operationalizing Assessment of the Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate

Evergreen has made progress in developing a continuous quality improvement framework for student learning. This year we embarked on our plan for operationalizing the assessment of our college-wide student learning outcomes, the [Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate](#). The faculty were introduced to this work during a faculty meeting in winter quarter 2021. Providing common learning outcomes that are assessable and aligned with the Six expectations will result in student-desired transparency as they navigate Evergreen's unique curriculum and help the college assess and keep its promise to students that they will have sufficient opportunity to engage in learning experiences that will help them to meet the Six Expectations.

In support of this work, [Evergreen's Learning and Teaching Commons](#) offered a two-part workshop series in spring quarter 2021 that supported faculty in converting aspirations for students into learning outcomes that are student centered, measurable, and inclusive. We also introduced the use of a peer-consulting protocol to refine existing learning outcomes to encourage higher-order and portable learning, aligned with the Six Expectations. In addition, the Learning and Teaching Commons is offering two different multi-day incentivized workshops in summer quarter 2021 focused on incorporating learning outcomes into program planning, to provide learning outcome training to even more faculty. Lastly, the Learning and Teaching Commons is offering a targeted workshop for Path Conveners, who are responsible for leading the development of Paths curriculum, and Curricular Area Team Leaders, who provide oversight of our main curricular areas.

The intent of these workshops is to enhance support for faculty colleagues in developing learning outcomes and to provide a framework for Paths to align curricular planning and development with the Six Expectations. We anticipate 25-50% of faculty will have had the opportunity to participate in workshops by the end of summer 2021. We will continue to offer support for faculty via workshops and peer-to-peer mentoring as they learn to write well-formed, measurable learning outcomes during the 2021-2022 academic year.

During summer 2022, we plan to produce a curriculum map, with the support of Path Conveners, Curricular Area Team Leaders, and faculty, that will clearly illustrate student opportunities to engage with each of the Six Expectations, at introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels during the 2021-22 academic year. This map will provide faculty and administration a much clearer understanding of which of the Six Expectations, at which levels, students are given the chance to engage with as they navigate through the curriculum—and influence (future) program planning (by faculty and administration) and student advising as we guide students to meet the Six Expectations during their time at Evergreen. This is an important piece to understand, as we interpret data of students' learning through their time at Evergreen. Since Evergreen faculty are continuously developing new team-taught coordinated studies programs, this effort will be required annually in response to Evergreen's dynamic curriculum.

We anticipate that by fall 2022, faculty will have capacity to include learning outcomes that are assessable and aligned with the Six Expectations in their syllabi. This transparency for students will support their ability to consciously navigate Evergreen's dynamic curriculum. In order to simplify this work for faculty, the college will be improving its infrastructure supporting curriculum development and proposals, to allow for faculty to include learning outcomes and credit equivalencies that faculty identify when proposing new offerings. These pieces of information will populate a syllabus for students, streamlining the work for faculty and simultaneously producing more consistent syllabi for students.

3.1.2 • Establishing a Protocol for Direct Assessment of Student Learning

Evergreen is committed to direct measurement of student learning outcomes. To launch this process during summer 2021, we will convene a group of faculty and administrators, including deans and learning and teaching faculty, to develop a new “Six Expectations Scoring Rubric” that will be used to score samples of student work. The rubric will be modeled after the Expectations Coding Key that was developed in 2009 and has been refined through quadrennial [Transcript Reviews](#). The group that develops the new “Six Expectations Scoring Rubric” will be comprised of a small group of diverse faculty across different disciplines at the college. The goals of this work will be to produce a rubric that will be used in subsequent years to score samples of student work, and to develop an institutional process that makes meaning from students’ authentic achievements and that yields useful data for multiple audiences.

This work sets the scene for faculty in summer 2022 to participate in a calibration and scoring training with this rubric immediately prior to scoring samples of student work. The potential for human variability and error will be reduced through implementation of a robust norming and scoring protocol and engagement in an annual review process. This process will allow the college to examine student learning across the college, not just in graduates, and will therefore offer the opportunity to faculty and administrators to intervene to improve student learning and/or the student experience in our effort to support students in meeting the Six Expectations. This will be a significant new effort and is seen as the logical successor to the [Transcript Review](#) and the [End-of-Program Review Survey](#). Notably, this new tool will provide timely and disaggregated information to aid the college in supporting students in meeting the Six Expectations before they graduate. The data provided by this effort will be used by the Office of Institutional Research and Paths, to close the loop. These direct assessments will allow the college to improve learning opportunities for students before they graduate.

3.1.3 • Closing the loop: Using direct assessment of student learning

During summer 2022, deans, Learning and Teaching Commons faculty, and Institutional Research will meet with Path Conveners and Curricular Area Team Leaders to clarify how information will be shared with Paths to influence their future program planning and embedded student advising. We anticipate that the plan will be consistent with the following:

- annually the Office of Institutional Research will prepare data summaries that provide student achievement data (retention and graduation rates, etc.) and student learning data (Curriculum map and six expectations data) that is disaggregated by demographics and curricular areas.
- these data summaries will be available to planning faculty and Academic Deans.
- Paths/faculty groups will convene to review the data, identify the key metrics they will address, and prepare a plan for improving student outcomes by identifying 3-5 actions.
- annually, Path conveners will include in Path reports, a report on the progress of their interventions in the following summer where they would create an update to that plan.

This approach will connect the student learning data to faculty, curriculum development, and advising to support student success. We anticipate that this data-grounded approach will be particularly important as we track and improve the retention of first years, and fundamentally improve the student advising and the student experience to improve retention and graduation rates.

While this institution-wide program assessment protocol is under development, we provide program specific assessments for two of our programs supporting student learning in the next two sections.

3.2 • Programmatic assessment of Greener Foundations

3.2.1 • Description of Greener Foundations

Greener Foundations, a 2-credit 2-quarter (4 credits total) foundational course for first-time first-year students and transfer students with fewer than 40 credits was started in fall quarter 2019. The development of this program was initiated in spring 2017 with co-leadership from the Academic Administration and Academic Affairs, acknowledging the holistic curricular and co-curricular supports needed for first-year students. As Evergreen's curriculum had been primarily defined by 16-credit coordinated studies programs, this was a challenge to design and implement. In order to give first-year students access to Greener Foundations, 16-credit programs with first-year enrollments were asked to "offer" 14-credit blocks to allow for 2-credit Greener Foundations curriculum to be included under the umbrella of the 16-credit program.

The 2-credit Greener Foundations curriculum (in both fall and winter) was designed to be taught by instructors who were not the faculty in their 14-credit regular programs. This approach provided students with an instructor with whom they could have honest conversations/feedback without impacting their 14-credit regular academic work. This separation of instructors for Greener Foundations also allowed for the Greener Foundations instructors the time to collaborate in delivering a consistent curriculum to ensure similarity between first-year experiences. With respect to the rest of the curriculum, this allowed faculty, who were re-designing and teaching the 14-credit components, to focus on changes within the academic programs, particularly for programs comprised of first-year students and students from other levels. Notably, while Greener Foundations became an "add-on" piece in the bulk of Evergreen's curriculum, it was embedded directly into the Native Pathways Program (NPP; we elaborate on this in section 3.3).

This curricular work was supported institutionally by a Greener Foundations Faculty fellow with half-time teaching release to work on designing the curriculum (with some external support) and training the co-curricular staff members who were recruited to teach the 2-credit Greener Foundations curriculum. Co-curricular support was provided through the Student & Academic Life and Inclusive Excellence & Student Success Divisions, who made changes in new student advising, Pre-Orientation Programs, and New Student Orientation, to align these programs with the same learning outcomes for first-year students while also scaffolding intentional learning experiences throughout the students' first year.

The fall 2019-winter 2020 pilot implementation indicated that there was a steep learning curve institutionally. Efforts were made to reduce workload in teaching Greener Foundations and to clarify expectations for both students and staff. These plans were interrupted by COVID-19 and the shift of Evergreen's academics nearly completely to remote operations with nearly all coursework online. The 2020 Greener Foundations was modified to fall-quarter-only (2-credits total) and was conducted synchronously online. The plan for fall 2021-winter 2022 is to return to a 2-credit 2-quarter (4 credits total) Greener Foundations program.

3.2.2 • Assessing the success of Greener Foundations

The Greener Foundations program has three goals:

1. To help students succeed academically as they transition to Evergreen,
2. To help students connect with the Evergreen community, and
3. To help students prepare for leading a responsible life in the diverse, interconnected and changing world of the 21st century.

The Greener Foundations academic program was designed to offer the same set of lesson plans, assignments, and assessments between different groups of first years, aligned with these overall learning outcomes. Student focus groups, a student survey, and a staff instructor focus group supported our assessment of the broader Greener Foundations program, and provided feedback regarding the effectiveness, inclusivity, and breadth of the curriculum. In response, the curriculum has been re-designed to include more-assessable learning outcomes. Ineffective modules are being removed and staff training improved.

An evaluation of the Greener Foundations program has highlighted the need for clearer articulation of the learning outcomes. The curriculum is being re-designed with assessment of student learning at the core.

Assessing the effect of Greener Foundations on student success (credit earning) and fall-to-spring retention

In spring 2021, we conducted an evaluation of the fall 2020 Greener Foundations in order to assess the second goal of the program, to help students thrive in college. Two outcomes of academic success that we measured were 1) the academic credit earned by students in the fall quarter and 2) student retention from fall to spring. The effectiveness of the Greener Foundations programming on students' ability to earn credit in the fall quarter was a target for determining student success because the fall quarter is a critical academic period for incoming students according to previous analyses of first-time first-year students at the college. Likewise, if the Greener Foundations program helps students to succeed academically in their first quarter, then we expect to retain those participating in the program from fall-to-spring at Evergreen. Moreover, this approach allowed us to correlate retention rates of Greener Foundation students who earned full academic credit in the fall compared to those who did not.

Student participation was determined by engagement in the Greener Foundations work and attendance. Of the 271 Greener Foundations-eligible students, 58% participated in the program. While we are aiming for a higher participation rate in the future, the number of participants is higher than in the previous year when we piloted the program. Importantly, we found that many traditionally underserved students did not participate at the same level as others. Specifically, while 62% of all first-time first-year students participated, just 55% of all low-income students, 48% of all students who are below poverty level, and 53% of all students of color participated

in the program. The pandemic and online curriculum certainly had a differential impact on student participation, but this finding will be a target for intervention in subsequent years.

When we examined who earned full credit during fall 2020, we found that those who participated in Greener Foundations fared better than those who did not: 80% of students who engaged in Greener Foundations earned full credit; in contrast, only 42% of students who did not attend Greener Foundations earned full credit. Only 65% of all first-time first-year students earned full credit in fall 2020. These findings have been transformational in our understanding of student behavior regarding the program and student success. We are currently working on strategies to determine how to engage all students in Greener Foundations and in their programs in the future.

Of those who participated in Greener Foundations, 94% of students were retained from fall 2020 to spring 2021; in contrast, only 47% of students who did not participate in Greener Foundations continued to be enrolled at Evergreen through spring 2021. Again, we feel it is critical to determine how to engage students in the program in order to ensure their academic success. Our efforts will be focused on this aspect of the program as we continue to improve the program.

Our assessment highlights the importance of connecting Greener Foundations to as many students as possible to better support them during their time at Evergreen. Likewise, there is a need to better support students in earning full credit (each quarter), especially first-year students, to improve their time-to-graduation and to enhance their likelihood to be retained at Evergreen.

Looking forward, student learning assessment in Greener Foundations is being modified based on this years' experience. In addition to curriculum re-design to better align with more-assessable learning outcomes, staff training has likewise been adapted to improve curricular and co-curricular support for students in their first year at Evergreen. In fall 2021, we will establish baselines for student learning in Greener Foundations, as students in their first-year start work toward meeting the [Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate](#). The integration of student learning outcomes assessment into Greener Foundations is a critical component of the college's institution-wide assessment structure.

3.3 • Programmatic assessment of the Native Pathways Program (NPP)

3.3.1 • Description of NPP

The [Native Pathways Program \(NPP\)](#) is an inclusive, interdisciplinary series of coordinated studies programs and courses designed for lower-division, upper-division, and all-level (freshman to senior year) students. NPP was established in 2017 as a re-envisioning of the Reservation Based Community Determined Program (RBCD) which was established in 1992 for upper-division students. NPP offers learning opportunities across the state with place-based sites at the Evergreen Olympia and Tacoma campuses, the Quinault Reservation, and the Peninsula Community College's Longhouse. In addition, NPP offers hybrid and remote learning opportunities through our Salish Sea virtual site. NPP's mission is to promote lifelong Indigenous scholarship by placing value on cultural and traditional ways of knowing, working with Indigenous research methodologies, and expanding indigeneity through academia.

All NPP curriculum is developed and implemented through an Indigenous lens. NPP curricular content utilizes both western and Indigenous thought and pedagogy and modalities of study include community service learning, individual learning contracts, internships, face-to-face, hybrid, and online learning. The NPP lower-division program is comprised of a series of linked courses and embeds the Greener Foundations curriculum into fall and winter quarters (2 credits per quarter). The NPP upper division cohort learning community model includes the place-based NPP sites at Olympia, Tacoma, Quinault, the Peninsula, and our online/hybrid Salish Sea that study core curriculum across all sites. The place-based communities join together for two full weekends each quarter to participate in credit-bearing NPP Gatherings at the Evergreen Longhouse (open to "NPP Bridge Students" from Grays Harbor Community College and Peninsula Community College). NPP also offers, in partnership with the Multilingual Institute, a 2-credit Heritage Language Certificate in Lushootseed. NPP students are fully prepared at graduation to exercise their critical thinking, research, and writing skills; solve complex problems; communicate effectively; and incorporate their indigenous ways of being and knowing in their futures—as leaders, scholars, community builders.

The NPP program has been very successful in recruiting and retaining students since its 2017 re-inception. Enrollment has more than doubled, from 32 students (fall 2017) to 77 students (fall 2020). Likewise, retention increased from 67% (fall-to-fall 2017-18) to a high of 100% (fall-to-fall 2018-19) and most recently 88% (fall-to-fall 2019-20) and the program has been particularly effective in retaining students of color (87% retention of students of color, fall 2020). These retention rates are well above the college average. The overall increase in enrollment and retention reflects very significant efforts on the part of the faculty and staff to build a strong community and sense of belonging through a cohort-based model.

3.3.2 Assessing the success of the Native Pathways Program

The Native Pathways Program (NPP) has two sets of guiding principles that define success for the program as a whole (1) NPP students meeting the Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate (discussed earlier in section 3.1.1) and (2) Fulfilling NPP's Mission & Vision of promoting lifelong Indigenous scholarship. NPP courses, programs, and activities were designed to be aligned with these goals via regular faculty-staff planning. The curriculum's value to the students and the broader community is ensured and supported by detailed quarterly and end-of-academic-year student surveys, student-led talking circles, feedback from NPP Student Governance officers, and tribal community events and panels.

Students demonstrate their progress in meeting the Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate via coursework in programs, and most notably through their Senior capstone projects and final portfolios; both of these provide important evidence (in a variety of forms) to assess if (1) students are meeting the Six Expectations and (2) NPP is meeting their Mission/Vision. That said, the assessment of NPP student learning toward the Six Expectations requires integration and coordination with the college-wide initiative. As described in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, the college is supporting closer alignment between learning outcomes (at the curriculum-scale) and direct assessment of student learning through summer 2021 and into the 2021-2022 academic year. This work is in coordination with NPP faculty, and we anticipate designing an aligned and appropriate assessment structure in time to use during the 2022-2023 academic year.

4 • MOVING FORWARD

4.1 • Evergreen's Academic Initiatives

The college has supported a series of initiatives since fall 2017 that have aimed to build curricular options that would increase our enrollments, enhance retention, and stabilize our finances. This section will focus on the most recent of these, the college's New Academic Directions (NAD) initiative. Our response to Recommendation 3 in the Addendum, regarding our strategic enrollment plan, will provide additional context on earlier initiatives and how they have impacted the college's enrollment management.

The college's operating assumption is that enrollment growth, and therefore financial stability, will be the result of strengthening its academic programs and culture. This is goal three of Terrence MacTaggart's (2010) Academic Turnarounds model. New Academic Directions, which is a formalization of the initiative described as "Big Bets" in our 2020 Ad Hoc report, is the centerpiece of Evergreen's strategy for raising its enrollments and thus is central to its strategic enrollment plan. The goal of the initiative is summarized in an August 2020 update to the Evergreen Community: "Evergreen's New Academic Directions (NAD) initiative aims to identify and begin implementation of major new academic programs and/or curricular strategies that will substantially increase the College's enrollment and create a path to financial stability."

Over the course of the 2019-20 academic year, the New Academic Directions Coordinating Group collected and analyzed institutional data, contracted with [Hanover Research](#) to complete several studies and surveys, and held a series of "Blue Sky" meetings and focus groups to generate a set of curricular options for consideration. They also examined case studies on trends and emerging best practices in higher education in the U.S. and worldwide. All these data have informed the proposals and implementation plans described in this report.

The lifecycle of this initiative consists of four stages that move from development to launch and ultimately sustainable stewardship:

- Phase I: Develop and Approve Conceptual Plan (fall 2019 – spring 2020)
- Phase II: Refine and Assess Conceptual Plan (summer 2020)
- Phase III: Develop Implementation Plan (fall 2020-spring 2022)
- Phase IV: Implement and Steward the Plan (fall 2021-spring 2024)

In the early stages of the New Academic Directions process, the group developed criteria for assessing potential elements of the initiative:

- *The redesign is on a large scale, that would attract hundreds of students that are not currently choosing Evergreen*
- *Able to be supported through new revenue streams (donors, grants, legislative appropriations)*
- *Has evidence of strong market relevance*
- *Builds on assets we already possess*
- *Aligns with existing mission*
- *Significantly enhances our reputation*
- *Allows us to tell a compelling story*
- *Can be implemented within the next three years*
- *Considers the need to develop new structures or modes of delivery*

It was evident early in the process that both demographic and competitive factors would push the college beyond its historical focus on high school direct applicants and transfer students from the community and technical college system. The changes being proposed through this initiative are shaped by the assumption that Evergreen will seek to serve an increasing number of adult students, many with some college and no degree (SCND), as well as students seeking hybrid and online learning options. The college will continue to attract and serve high school direct students, transfer students and students attracted to our unique interdisciplinary approach to post-secondary education. But the increasing focus on adult and SCND students will have a substantive impact on our marketing, recruiting, and admissions processes and many of our administrative and information systems. The college's strategic enrollment plan will reflect this framing as will be discussed below.

The three-year process leading up to NAD began with the intent to identify all-new academic programs Evergreen could add to attract new students. Most literature on enrollment recovery in higher education cite examples of success based on addition of new, market-driven academic programs. Another common feature of success stories are new programs built with existing resources and

strengths in the curriculum, faculty, or physical plant.

While Evergreen has not ruled out the addition of all-new programs, it has proven a challenge to identify curricular areas that could scale up quickly to attract substantial numbers of new students. Many campuses nationwide have had success with the addition or expansion of programs in business, computer science, engineering, and nursing. Engineering and nursing were ruled out due to high start-up costs, incompatibility with Evergreen's current curriculum and faculty expertise, and locally this market is already well occupied by nearby Saint Martin's University. Business, computer science and psychology are a more natural fit for Evergreen. These disciplines exist in Evergreen's current undergraduate curriculum. Moreover, Evergreen may have something unique to offer in the marketplace by teaching these subjects through the lenses of social justice and interdisciplinary study – two core concepts in Evergreen's mission and ethos.

During the 2019-20 academic year, the New Academic Directions group considered a wide range of proposals that would impact nearly all facets of the college's operations, status, and profile. These included changes in Evergreen's status as a public institution (from a college to a university), structural changes (creating separate schools within the university), curriculum enhancements (adding new Paths, centers, certificates and Capstones), enhancing student support structures (moving to a holistic advising model), and modifying the college's transcript. In addition, Evergreen will likely accelerate its timetable for implementing closer partnerships with other higher ed institutions.

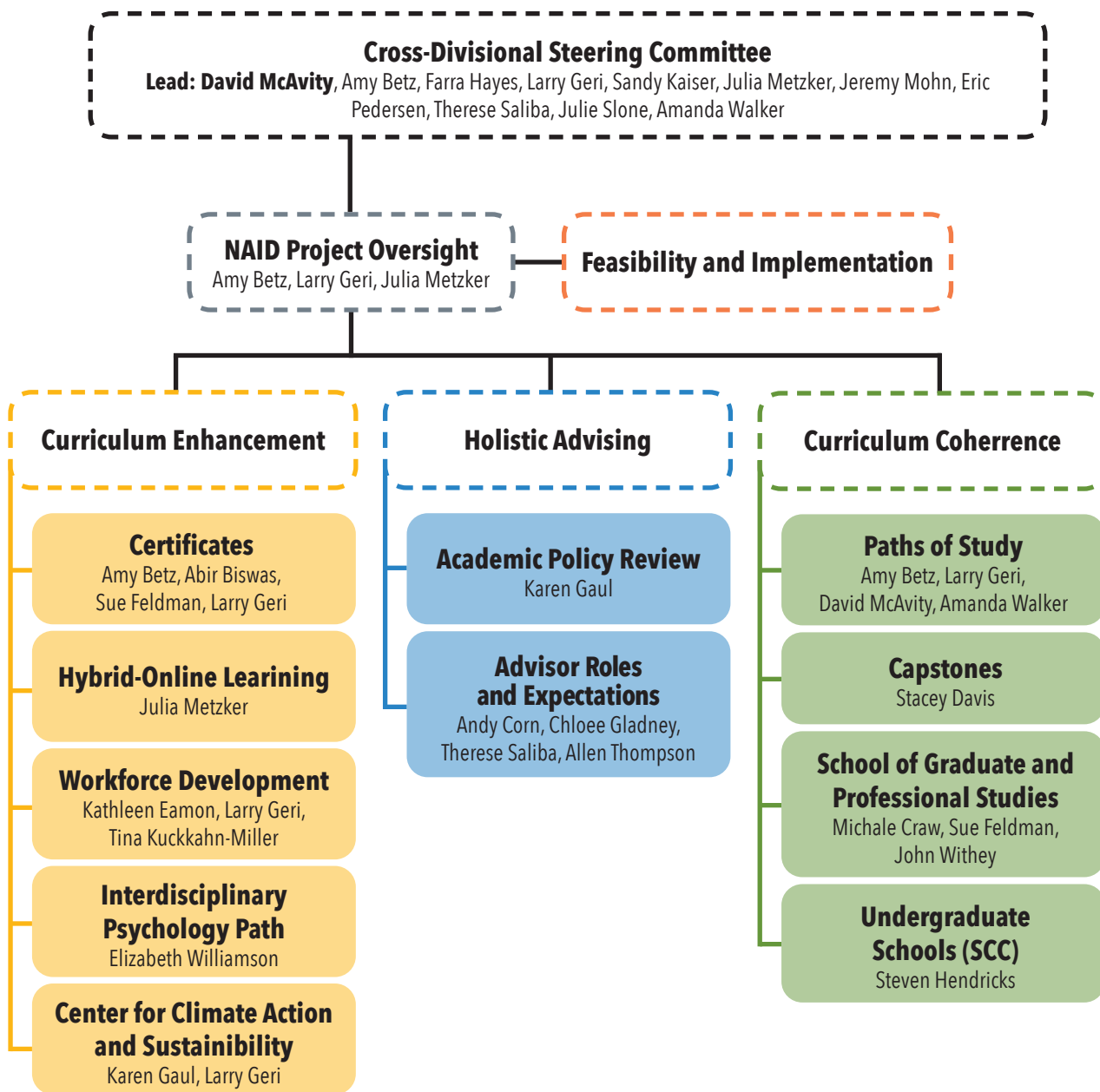
It is important to note that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are central principles for the initiative, which is reflected in each curriculum proposal. Additionally, the teams reviewing the proposals placed DEI as critical considerations in their analysis. Further, planning Evergreen's future during a pandemic that has impacted communities of color disproportionately and a renewed national movement to address racial inequity in the United States clarified the critical need to consider how new curricula, systems, and structures empower and provide new opportunities for students from traditionally underserved and minoritized groups.

In June 2020 the Evergreen faculty and the Board of Trustees each approved a Conceptual Plan for the project. The final approvals will be made by the Board for elements under its authority, such as establishing academic divisions, schools, and departments connected with the College.

Elements of the conceptual plan approved in 2020 include:

- Changing the institution’s name from The Evergreen State College to Evergreen State University.
- Evergreen State University would be comprised of an undergraduate college with Interdisciplinary Schools (built from existing and emergent Paths) and a School of Graduate and Professional Studies.
- Development and implementation of a support system for students that includes close advising and coaching throughout their experience at Evergreen, a revised transcript that includes a clear indication of certificates and capstones completed, and e-portfolios.
- An ongoing racial equity assessment for New Directions proposals, and (support for) appropriate changes being made to prioritize racial equity in its implementation.

During summer 2020 the college formed a series of teams to support detailed design of the critical elements of the project. This is summarized in Figure 4.1 (below).



As work on the project progressed, it became evident the college did not have the capacity to successfully manage the volume of complex work entailed to support its many elements concurrently. The NAD leadership and steering workgroups prioritized these elements in early spring 2021, which is documented below. The project now features the following components:

- **Creation of a School of Graduate and Professional Studies.** This conceptual plan for this new structure, which received support from the faculty and Board of Trustees in June 2020, will be designed to house the college's current and future graduate programs in the graduate School. The intention is to organize our certificates and completion curriculum geared toward working learners and returning adults in what would be the School of Professional Studies. The college has charged a working-group to create a mission, vision, and curricular programming for this new school, with a goal of bringing a proposal for approval by the Board of Trustees in time to launch the school by fall 2022.
- **Paths.** A cross-divisional initiative has the goal of deepening student engagement with Paths, which provides a curriculum leading from foundational to advanced work within an area of study. Students may now indicate which Path or Paths they will follow or if they will craft their own Path and will be linked to Path curriculum and activities. This initiative will strengthen advising structures and provide improved marketing of the Paths to current and prospective students. We are also creating new Paths in Psychology & Health, and in Business & Entrepreneurship.
- **Hybrid-Online Learning and Flexible Study (FLEX).** As part of our strategic plan, Evergreen has the goal of expanding access to educational opportunities for working adults and other students wanting to complete an unfinished degree, earn additional credentials to support their career, or explore other educational interests. Such students need more flexible and more targeted options than those currently provided by our central Olympia undergraduate curricular model of 16-credit in-person coordinated studies programs. FLEX is the working name for these sets of flexible pathways for completing a degree or credential. The FLEX curriculum, which is under development, will aim to offer flexible pathways to a degree or other credentials in curricular areas with high student interest and relevancy to workforce development in our region. Flexible options can include part-time, online, and/or alternative schedules. Design work for the FLEX curriculum and supporting organizational structures is planned for summer 2021 with full implementation aimed for fall 2022.
- **Certificates.** Our goal is to expand access and grow our enrollment by offering micro-credentials such as certificates or badges that may be taken separately or stacked to complete a degree. Two main types of certificates will be for-credit academic certificates embedded in our undergraduate or graduate curriculum, and not-for-credit certificates offered outside the college's standard curriculum on a self-supporting basis in partnership with external organizations. The college is developing policies and procedures to support the implementation of certificate proposals. We will be offering four new certificate programs by fall 2021 and plan to have as many as 20 by fall 2022. Certificates will be administered through an office of professional studies.
- **Holistic Advising.** A cross-divisional group of staff and faculty are currently designing a new program to support holistic advising, aiming to address the whole student, including meeting basic needs, building resilience and student success strategies, and guiding the student toward curricular and professional interests. We are seeking a Title III grant that would support us in funding the initiative in the 2021-22 academic year and beyond. The model will provide a strong network of student-centered, proactive, equitable, and adaptive coordinated services for our existing students and for those we anticipate through New Directions initiatives.
- **Holistic Advising: Policy and Practices Review (HAPPieR).** A group of faculty and staff are reviewing current academic policies and practices with an eye toward improving equity in student outcomes.

- **Workforce Development.** Our goal is to build on Evergreen's strengths to contribute to regional, state, and national workforce development by developing low-residency curricula and/or certificate programs that respond to established and emerging workforce needs. This component of the initiative will be included in the School of Professional Studies.
- **Capstone.** This is a longer-term initiative that aims to provide a senior-year capstone experience for all students. This group is exploring how to expand our capacity to more consistently offer these experiences in our curriculum.
- **Center for Climate Action and Sustainability.** The college received a significant donation that is funding the creation of the Center for Climate Action and Sustainability. The mission of the Center is to support students and the broader community in developing justice-oriented, science-based, and equitable solutions to the climate crisis. We are now in the process of hiring a Director for the Center. The Center will support development of climate-oriented curriculum, including internships and capstone experiences and the Director will develop and teach certificate programs and other curricular elements that support climate action and sustainability.
- **Changing the institution's name to The Evergreen State University.** With the approval of the Board of Trustees, this would be pursued during the 2022 legislative session.

A market study of this initiative was completed in June 2020. It concluded that this model, viewed comprehensively, contains an impressive combination of curricular and co-curricular innovations, and is of sufficient magnitude to have a positive impact on the college's biggest single challenge, our long-running reputational issues that have negatively impacted our enrollments. Our Strategic Enrollment Plan quantifies the potential outcome of our NAD initiatives.

The New Academic Directions leadership team is in the process of refining the implementation schedule for these elements of the initiative. The college's highest priorities for New Academic Directions, based on our overarching goal of directly increasing enrollment and responding to the needs of new majority students, are the development of the FLEX model, continued implementation of Paths, and development of a certificates program and the required supporting structures in the School of Professional Studies. We will begin offering four new certificate programs in fall 2021, with a goal of expanding to as many as 20 certificate programs in four to five key thematic areas of excellence relating to work force development and professional studies by fall 2022. Other elements of the initiative will be refined and implemented over time.

4.2 • Furthering Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Evergreen

The following initiatives are aimed at furthering diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at Evergreen.

Campus Climate Survey

In winter 2020, nearly 40% of Evergreen's community participated in our first [Campus Climate Survey](#). The survey was administered to all members of our Olympia and Tacoma campuses, including undergraduate and graduate programs. In September 2020, the Campus Climate Work Group wrote an [Executive Summary](#) and released results to the campus community. The Campus Climate Workgroup has since engaged in conversations, presentations, and workshops to educate administrators, faculty, staff, and students about the survey, and to leverage climate data in review of policies and programs that affect our underrepresented community members.

Evergreen's 2020 Climate Survey sets a baseline to understand experiences of value, inclusion, belonging, and discrimination for our diverse community. It will inform our diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives moving forward. While most students had a positive or very positive perception of campus climate, and reported high levels of value, belonging, and growth at Evergreen (72-84%), the data point to several challenges and opportunities for growth:

- In general, community members who identify as trans, people of color, and people with a disability had a less positive sense of belonging and more frequent experiences of discrimination than members of other groups.
- In some areas, community members who identify as women and LGBTQ+ reported less positive experiences of campus climate.
- Nearly half of faculty and staff reported dissatisfaction with the overall climate at Evergreen, suggesting a need for more meaningful engagement, more opportunities to experience value, and more options for professional development.
- Most community members said they would like to see more programs and resources to foster the success of diverse students, faculty, and staff.

In response to the above data, our Director of Climate & Belonging Education and Associate Director of First Peoples Multicultural Trans & Queer Services organized a 5-hour training on Unlearning Racism for campus leadership led by the People's Institute Northwest. Throughout the 2020-2021 Academic Year, they also organized campus-wide workshops and conversations on Belonging, Unlearning Racism, Unlearning Gender, and Unlearning Ability which have been well attended. In addition, we recently held our 3-day campus-wide Equity Symposium, in which nearly 800 community members engaged in an array of inspiring keynote speakers and faculty/staff led workshops promoting racial equity and intersectional justice. Similar types of engagements responding to the findings of the Campus Climate Survey are planned for the future.

Social Justice Center

Building upon our experience with mandatory DEI and systemic racism training for faculty, Evergreen played a critical role in consulting on the recent Washington State Senate Bill 5227, which would require DEI and anti-racism training and assessments for faculty, staff, and students in higher education. On a related note, Evergreen is opening a new Social Justice Center in fall 2021 which will house and facilitate trainings, particularly for students and staff. Inclusive Excellence and Student Success (IESS) will continue to partner with our Learning and Teaching Commons@ The Washington Center for Improving Undergraduate Education to provide equity pedagogy trainings for faculty, as well as staff.

Equity Action Plans

IESS Leadership has revitalized the work of divisional Equity Action Plans originally launched in Fall 2019. We are preparing revised guidelines and templates, using Climate Survey results to inform recommendations for training programs and policy changes. In August 2021, IESS staff will lead a campus-wide summer institute, "Taking Action on Equity," guiding division leaders and Curricular Area Teams through the process of developing detailed one- and three-year plans for advancing Inclusive Excellence at Evergreen. We are also developing tools to assess our growth in cultivating a strong sense of belonging and value, dismantling institutional barriers to equity and inclusion, and bridging gaps in opportunities and access at Evergreen.

In fall 2020, Evergreen participated in the #Real College survey from Temple University's Hope Center for College, Community & Justice. The [results of this survey](#) show that Evergreen students experienced food, housing, and job insecurity, as well as economic and health repercussions from the pandemic, at a level considerably higher than the national average. For example, 67% of Evergreen students experienced some form of basic needs insecurity compared to an average of 53% of students participating 4-years institutions. In spring 2021, Evergreen opened a Basic Needs Center, funded by a MultiCare grant and Geoduck Student Union capital funds, and in partnership with multiple divisions to address some of these basic needs. Our goal is to develop programming for this new center further over the next year, expanding access to other student populations at other sites and for students learning remotely or on alternative schedules.

4.3 • Re-structuring Evergreen administrative and student support structures to meet the needs of a new and smaller student population.

With declining enrollments reducing total student population significantly over the last five years, Evergreen is engaged in a process of strategic reorganization of our administrative and student support structures to achieve financial stability. The intent is to gain efficiencies and effectiveness in how we deliver our services, while continuing to support student success. For example, in fall 2020 the president charged a Reimagining Student Affairs time-limited committee to bring forward recommendations regarding best practices to improve the student experience and proposals for a re-design of student affairs functions. This work was informed by Institutional Research reports, grounded in (Student Affairs) literature, and included extensive community feedback. Their report was delivered in spring 2021, and it will inform the larger institutional re-structuring that is part of the budget stabilization planning over the next biennium. This restructuring process will include a similar strategic analysis of other core college functions that are currently dispersed across divisions and areas, and finding ways to consolidate them to gain efficiencies and improve service. Our goal is to complete this work by July 2023, forming a solid fiscal foundation upon which to build our enrollment growth initiatives.

5 • ADDENDA

5.1 • Response to Recommendation 3

As revised in response to Evergreen's Spring 2020 Ad Hoc Report: The Commission recommends that The Evergreen State College develop a realistic multi-year enrollment management plan to ensure short term financial health and long-term financial stability and sustainability.

As presented to the Evaluation Committee in the 2018 Year Seven Report and the 2020 Ad Hoc report, enrollment planning to address Evergreen's enrollment trends has been underway since December 2017. The first iteration was Evergreen Renews, which laid the foundation for our New Academic Directions, upon which our [Strategic Enrollment Plan \(SEP\)](#) is built. The framework for Evergreen's enrollment recovery and strategic enrollment planning effort remains Terrence MacTaggart's (2010) work *Academic Turnarounds: Restoring Vitality to Challenged American Colleges/Universities*. Under this framework Evergreen has pursued three priorities since 2017:

1. Restoring Financial Stability
2. Marketing and Branding
3. Strengthening Academic Programs and Culture

College leadership understands that priority one, Financial Stability, will not come without significant action on priorities two and three in McTaggart's framework. Furthermore, given Evergreen's enrollment challenge, significant action on both is necessary.

Several of the action plans and initiatives in Evergreen Renews focused on goal two – Marketing and Branding. Prior to Evergreen Renews, Evergreen contracted in the fall of 2016 with a nationally known firm, [GMMB](#), to partner with the college on rebranding and messaging. Implementation was disrupted by the events of May 2017, but over the successive months significant staff time and financial resources applied the new messaging and visual elements into new student recruitment, alumni, and college relations work broadly.

Evergreen contracted with a second firm, [MediaCross](#), who brought greater expertise in new student recruitment and visual elements to expand on this work in 2018 and 2019. This updated work included a second round of surveys and interviews with internal and external stakeholders, with more focus on interviews with current students, and produced an updated strategy in response to our spring 2017 events.

Evergreen's website was identified as a source of concern in conversations with internal and external constituents in both GMMB and MediaCross' work. Addressing this was a component of Evergreen Renews, but the work was initially sidetracked when the college was required to address accessibility issues across the website. In 2020 the college contracted with two firms to assist with both content and technical issue improvements. This work is on-going and will continue to the end of calendar year 2021. To date, nearly \$500,000 has been invested in website improvements.

Part of the foundation Evergreen Renews laid for Evergreen's strategic enrollment plan were advancements in these areas:

1. Boosted and institutionalized several best practices in recruitment and marketing.
2. Changed the conversation about enrollment as more than just a problem for admissions and marketing to solve to an institutional conversation, which;
3. Spurred the community wide conversations in the Big Bets strategic planning process, which;
4. Led to New Academic Directions, that forms the core of Evergreen's emerging Strategic Enrollment Plan.

With these initiatives launched, early indicators suggested that the college was on track to stabilize new student enrollment. After continuous declines starting in 2010, Evergreen experienced two years of consistent fall quarter new student enrollment of about 750 (764 actual in fall 2018, 750 in fall 2019). Based upon application and admission counts in February 2020 Evergreen was on track to meet new student enrollment of 750 again for fall of 2020. However, as the impacts of the pandemic unfolded in the spring and summer of 2020 it became clear by early summer that Evergreen was not likely to reach the target of 750 new student enrollments for fall 2020. In fact, we enrolled only 610 new freshmen and transfer students. As more data became available, and national stories emerged, it became apparent Evergreen was particularly vulnerable. It has become well-documented that the pandemic is having a disproportionate impact on underrepresented students and their families. Historically Evergreen has enrolled large numbers of students with these characteristics. Perhaps the most revealing metric is a comparison of FAFSA reported income by first-year students. Based on the most recent data available from IPEDS, almost 50% of FAFSA filing first-year students in the Fall of 2018 report an individual or family income of \$30,000 or less. This compares with fewer than 30% of students with this level of family income for our regional university peers in Washington, and the University of Washington Tacoma campus.

Fall 2020 enrollment and the impacts of the pandemic make it difficult to know if the college has reached a point of stability in new student enrollment from which it can grow. While Evergreen is not the only college facing uncertainty and changes in enrollment due to the pandemic, the pandemic impacted Evergreen at a particularly challenging time. As of July 1, 2021, the college is projecting to again enroll fewer than 700 new students in the fall of 2021, although the outlook has been improving from earlier forecasts.

While the outlook is improving, a major shift has occurred in the undergraduate application pool for fall 2021. A sizable portion of our students often come from traditionally underserved backgrounds. Nationally, this population of students are not applying to college at the usual rate. We are seeing this reflected in our data. In response, the College has launched a Direct Admission initiative with six local school districts: Tacoma, North Thurston, Olympia, Tumwater, Yelm, and Shelton. Through sharing data, we are able to offer admission to qualified students (under all current admissions policies) without the student first submitting an application. To take advantage of Direct Admission all a student must do is return a free short-form application for admission; partner districts are providing transcripts and standardized test-scores, removing that barrier for students.

It is in this challenging landscape that Evergreen is finalizing and launching a five-year strategic enrollment plan. It is often difficult to distinguish between the short-term impact of the pandemic and long-term factors when trying to make one, three, and five-year enrollment projections. In our budget and enrollment planning process we know that enrolled headcount of approximately 4,000 is the long-term target for Evergreen to thrive given the size of our physical plant, the administrative requirements of our unique curriculum, and the level of state support. At this time, our strategic initiative planning indicates we have the potential to grow enrollment to as many as 3,000 students in five years. The college regards this as a stretch goal, since this represents growth between 40% and 50% in five-years, a rate rare in American higher education.

We continue to follow the four-phase recursive strategic enrollment planning model recommended by Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL): as documented on pages 11 and 12 of the 2020 Ad Hoc report:

Evergreen’s enrollment planning process has been a grass-roots approach rather than a more traditional top-down approach in which the college president or Board of Trustees might appoint a strategic enrollment planning committee or similar body, with the expectations that group would work through the four phases.

Throughout 2018 and 2019 various workgroups and individuals completed the work in Phase 1. Key elements include an organizational structure to divide the work among subject-matter experts and a steering committee to prioritize the work. Each workgroup was responsible for moving their strategy or tactic from idea to implementable plan through stakeholder discussions and consideration of internal and external data and conditions. Each of these strategies is represented in the [Strategic Enrollment Plan](#). The New Academic Directions initiatives described in section 4 was the culmination of the grass-roots, community-wide efforts to generate ideas for strategies and tactics in Phase 2 of the RNL model (described as the Big Bets process, 2020 Ad Hoc report).

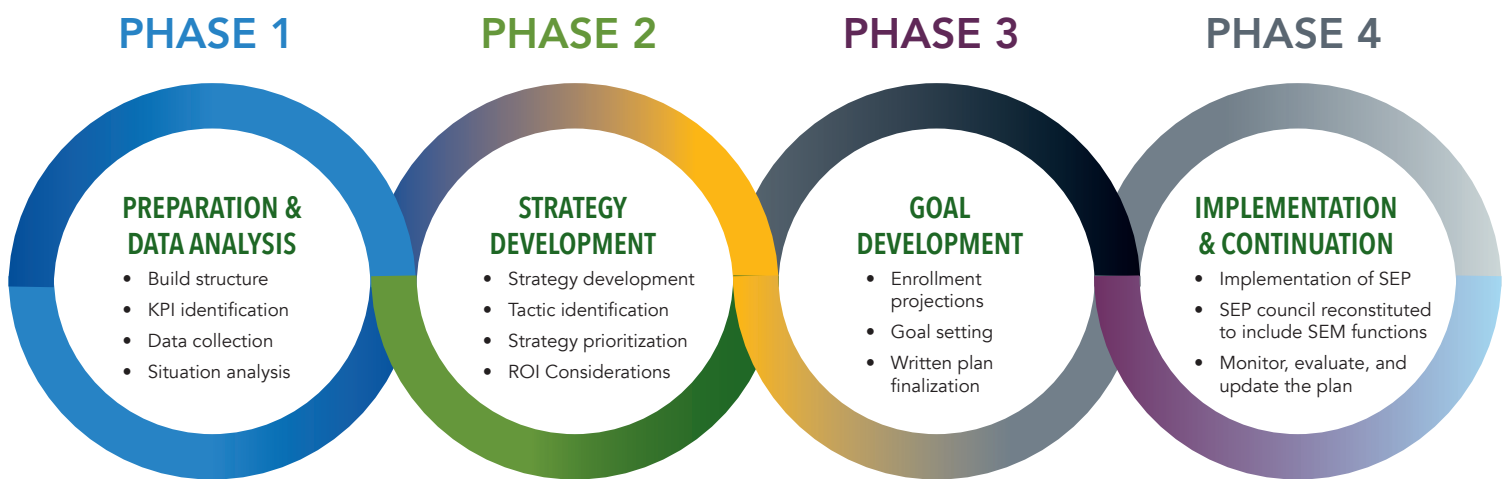


Table 5.1 lists the strategic enrollment initiatives in play to grow enrollment; descriptions of most can be found in section 4.1 of this document. Some will have a direct impact on enrollment and can be quantified, though others are indirect and maybe difficult to quantify. For some initiatives, a year or two of data collection will be needed for us to make informed projections. The Strategic Enrollment Plan quantifies the expected enrollment impact, following Phase 3 of the RNL model, and, using a methodology provided by Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL), the expected return on investment. This methodology accounts for startup and investment costs, expected revenue gained (or lost) based on Evergreen's average revenue per student and historic retention and graduation rates. The contract with RNL was initiated in June 2021 and the work in calculating return on investment will not be concluded until mid-fall 2021.

#	Initiative Title (sorted by impact year)	First year of expected impact on enrollment)	Type of Impact		Primary Enrollment Impact		
			Direct	Indirect	New Students	Retention	Reputation
1	Paths	Fall 2021	■		■		
2	Certificates - Academic (embedded)	Fall 2021	■		■		
3	Direct Admissions	Fall 2021	■		■		
4	Learning & Teaching Commons	Fall 2021		■		■	
5	Master in Teaching (MIT) re-design	Fall 2021	■		■		
6	Master in Teaching (MIT) impact on undergraduate recruitment into "Education"	Fall 2021		■	■		
7	CELTC - Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership & Transformational Change	Fall 2022		■			■
8	Certificates - Professional (adjacent)	Fall 2022	■		■		
9	FLEX (hybrid and low residency curriculum)	Fall 2022	■		■		
10	Interdisciplinary Business & Entrepreneurship Path (ties to CELTC)	Fall 2022	■		■		
11	Interdisciplinary Psychology Path	Fall 2022	■		■		
12	Native Pathways Program Expansion	Fall 2022	■		■		
13	School of Professional Studies Structure	Fall 2022		■			■
14	Tacoma Program renewal	Fall 2022	■		■		
15	Academic Policy Review (Holistic Advising: Policy & Practices Review, HAPPiER)	Fall 2023	■			■	
16	Capstones	Fall 2023		■			■
17	CCJC - Center for Climate Action & Sustainability	Fall 2023		■			■
18	Holistic Advising	Fall 2023		■		■	
19	Workforce Development	Fall 2023	■		■		
20	Interdisciplinary Climate Path (tied to CCJC)	Fall 2023 or 2024	■		■		
21	Interdisciplinary Art, Design, Technology Path	Fall 2024	■		■		
22	Undergraduate Schools Structure	Fall 2024		■			■
23	Institutional Name Change	TBD		■			■
24	Master in Public Administration renewal	TBD	■		■		
25	Student Affairs Revitalization/Re-organization	TBD		■		■	
26	Master of Environmental Studies renewal	TBD	■				

Table 5.1. New Academic Directions SEP enrollment initiatives, by first year of expected enrollment impact

This approach to strategic enrollment planning, with broad community input at the front end, reflects our strong interest in shared governance and is characteristic of Evergreen's culture which values discussion and the ability to provide input on major college decisions. The result is an SEP that has capitalized on community input, gaining feedback and ownership throughout the process with active faculty, staff, and student participation, in meetings, forums and focus groups. This discussion is ongoing at the micro level (implementation and tactics), and the macro level (broader components of plans), reflecting that a good strategic enrollment plan is a living document that remains open to adjustment and refinement.

The continued discussion and Phase 4 begin in fall 2021 and will come under the leadership of Evergreen's new president and senior leadership team. Many things will impact the plan's success. In the immediate term, success will hinge upon the severity and nature of any long-term effects of the pandemic. Evergreen will remain vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic on traditionally under-represented students. Any on-going instability in Evergreen's enrollment due to unforeseen external circumstances will make it difficult to assess the impact of strategies and tactics within the plan. We enter Phase 4 with optimism and the resilience for which Evergreen is known.

Evergreen finds itself at a defining moment in its 50-year history. Can Evergreen's founding idea of creating the "un-college," one without all the usual trappings of tradition, requirements, and boundaries thrive in its next 50 years. Our own data and research, and that of other entities we've sought the assistance of tell us that prospective and current students struggle to understand interdisciplinary education, despite also being drawn to it. Some students find our dynamic coordinated studies curriculum challenging to navigate at times while also finding it responsive and exciting. The goal of our Strategic Enrollment Plan for 2021-2026, and likely the next SEP, is to balance these tensions in our mission and core values to adapt to today's student and marketplace, while retaining our unique innovative identity.

5.2 • Response to Recommendation 4

As revised in response to Evergreen's Spring 2020 Ad Hoc Report: The Commission recommends that The Evergreen State College's decision-making structures and processes be documented and publicly available and include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.

Background:

The last accreditation visit in October 2018 came at a challenging time for the college. It was one year after the protests of spring 2017, which were heavily covered in the media and led to campus disruption by external groups. The communication challenges at that time were significant, given competing needs and strongly differing views within the campus community. The college had also just completed some of the biggest budget reductions in its history, due to a steep decline in enrollment that followed the unrest. Some of the bigger budget decisions had a deep impact on morale. One of those was a difficult decision to reduce staff positions supporting the performing arts. Another was a reorganization of the Student Affairs division. Both changes left some students, staff, and faculty, disoriented and upset at the suddenness of the changes and lack of consultation.

Finally, leading up to the protests we had embarked on changes to make the college and the curriculum more clear, coherent, and equitable. The president had charged an Equity council comprised of students, faculty, and staff to develop a comprehensive plan for advancing equity at Evergreen. The plan generated extensive debate in campus forums. Some members of the community urged rapid adoption to respond in a timely way to address racial inequity, others were concerned that the usual process for discussion and deliberation through faculty governance was bypassed.

Another change the faculty had been discussing was ideas for structures to bring clarity and coherence to our complex curriculum. A vote on Paths of Study and how to support them was disrupted by the unrest before it was complete. Because the proposal had implications for working conditions, it was refined and finalized the following year around the bargaining table. This led some to question whether the traditional faculty governance model had been followed.

With this as context to the recommendations from our accreditation review, the remainder of this section of our report outlines key questions related to communication and decision-making on which we are working, followed by illustrations of how we have addressed them:

Key Questions

1. When making organizational changes and implementing strategic initiatives, what structures and processes do we put in place to ensure the involvement of students, staff, and faculty in the development of the ideas and the decisions about how to move forward?
2. When making budget decisions, what is the right balance between transparency and consultation on the one hand, and privacy and due process on the other, especially when budget reductions result in the elimination of positions?
3. How do we adapt our communication and decision-making in times of crises to be timely and responsive to needs of our community?
4. How do we find the right balance between internal communication to inform and consult, while being mindful of the different voices and messages that are needed for external audiences, particularly during a time of heightened external scrutiny and pressures on enrollment?

Addressing the Key Questions:

The college has made the following changes to address the recommendation and the key issues outlined above.

Strategic Initiative Planning

Members of the College's Senior Leadership Team charge workgroups, disappearing task forces (DTFs) and time-limited committees (TLCs) make recommendations for actions that lead toward mission fulfillment and tactics to realize the strategic plan. Sometimes these charges are given in partnership with other governing bodies, such as the Faculty Agenda Committee and the Geoduck Student Union. These workgroups, DTFs and TLCs, are charged to consult broadly, seeking feedback from faculty, staff and students, and bring recommendations to senior leadership. In cases where recommendations have bearing on faculty governance, these recommendations are brought the Faculty Agenda Committee, to decide if a discussion leading to a faculty vote is appropriate.

In recent years the college has been engaged in substantive institutional change initiatives, prompted by a decline in enrollment and a recognition that the foundational academic model needs to adapt to support a new generation of students. The pace and scale of change that is required has tested the usual governance structures, with one constraint being limited faculty meeting time for deliberations. We have adapted in a variety of ways, as illustrated by the following examples:

- The Faculty Agenda Committee adopted a process of conducting advisory votes and recommendations to administration on some lower stakes actions and decisions without going to the full faculty meeting, to give more time for substantive deliberations on larger issues.
- For our most recent New Academic Directions initiative, we engaged in six months of broad community wide consultation and action research which include “Blue Sky” conversations, design charrettes, and shared online resources. These involved open workshops, forums, and surveys for students, staff, and faculty, which resulted in a conceptual plan to guide further work and, as mentioned in section 1, became the basis for the college’s Strategic Plan.
- The New Academic Directions development, planning and implementation work is moving forward using a teams approach, with team leads coordinating with senior academic leaders, who in turn take on responsibility for pacing the work and working with the Agenda Committee and the GSU to ensure the essential elements of the initiatives are shared and that advisory votes can occur when needed.
- While considering organizational and cultural changes to improve support for students, the college charged a Reimagining Student Affairs Working group, which adopted a governance model that included open and transparent planning meetings, with shared online resources, team consultations, and two community retreats to build community, shared ideas, and reflect on recommendations.

Budget Decisions

In 2018, the college formed the Core Budget Team (CBT), a standing committee of senior budget managers from different divisions, along with the Vice President for Finance and Operations, and the Vice Provost for Academic Operations. The CBT is tasked with the overall institutional management of the college’s budgets. The committee establishes recommended spending and revenue targets on an annual basis and informs the community about these targets. In addition, the CBT ensures coordination between budget and area managers – mid-level and senior managers across all divisions responsible for local budgets, workgroups, and areas. They are in turn tasked with developing scenarios that meet the established spending targets.

Area managers are encouraged to engage with student, staff, and faculty stakeholders, and coordinate amongst themselves when putting together their scenarios. Scenarios are reviewed by divisional leads who provide a formal recommendation for a spending plan to the Senior Leadership Team for a decision.

In 2018 the college also established an advisory group, called the Resource Allocation Advisory Committee (RAAC), comprised of four faculty representatives from the Faculty Advisory Panel (FAP) on the college budget, two staff and two student representatives from the Geoduck Student Union (GSU). The RAAC is regularly apprised of the college’s financial position, gives advice about setting budget targets, and provides feedback on scenarios that are proposed by budget managers prior to recommendations being developed by divisional leads. The RAAC’s advice is informed by feedback from community forums and regular meetings. The Senior Leadership Team considers the recommendations before deciding on a budget plan for formal approval by the Board of Trustees.

Communication and Decision-Making in Times of Crisis and Emergency

While Evergreen followed best practices in crisis communication during the unrest in 2017, the willingness of members of the community to use external platforms to present their opposing views made it difficult to maintain a unified message. The college's tradition of no-holds-barred discourse did not help the situation, and legal issues limited what could be said in official channels. These environmental conditions, along with our nation's polarized political landscape and social media backlash, presented high hurdles. The experience helped us learn as well. In particular, clear, timely, and consistent communication is essential, and achieving this often involves creating new emergency response decision-making and communication structures.

This experience set us up well to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The college created response teams to address the emergent health and safety issues and the shift to remote operations. Several teams were set up for communication, health and safety, instructional support, staff support, and altered student services. This was a team-of-teams approach that was instrumental in ensuring that all students, faculty, and staff were informed of decisions being made, protective protocols established, and assessments of risk described. The charges for these groups have been adjusted in several iterations as the pandemic has evolved and circumstances changed. Timely communication is a focus, with weekly bulletins and regular all-campus forums to take questions, suggestions, and other input from campus community members.

Internal Communication

The college recognizes the value of clear, coherent, and coordinated internal communication. Here are some improvements we have made in recent years:

- Regular all-campus presidential communications and status updates.
- Regular forums regarding, budget, enrollment, COVID-19.
- The Academic Deans have instituted a regular biweekly communication to faculty about events, deadlines, process, and advice.
- The Provost's Office sends messages every three weeks to the Student and Academic Life division outlining goals, progress on key initiatives, and timelines for key decisions, along with opportunities for community building and collective information sharing.
- There is a monthly meeting of the campus leadership group, comprised mostly of staff who have supervisory roles, the purpose of which is to share information, seek feedback on strategic initiatives, and engage in community building activities. Participants in this meeting are routinely asked to provide feedback on initiatives and strategic issues in addition to sharing the content of our meetings with their respective teams.
- The biweekly faculty meetings are also a regular venue for sharing information and discussion.
- There is an institution-wide internal communication team, led by a new internal communications officer who coordinates items and topics for strategic communication to student, staff, and faculty audiences. This position is charged with drafting and sending key information to the campus community. The position is also assessing all of our communication avenues and considering possible restructuring for clear internal communications on accessible platforms.



the
evergreen
state college

2700 Evergreen Parkway NW
Olympia, Washington 98505
(360) 867-6000 • evergreen.edu