

Students Deciding Not to Attend Evergreen, Fall 2003

“Executive Summary”

Jenni Minner, Research Associate, Institutional Research and Assessment

Last year, Institutional Research and Assessment surveyed students who were admitted to Evergreen, but chose not to attend. We received over 570 responses from this population of prospective students.

Here are some highlights from the report:

- The population of students who were admitted, but chose not to enroll were asked why they decided not to attend Evergreen. The **most common response among nonresidents** was to cite at least one **financial reason** for choosing not to attend. Forty-three percent of nonresidents and 24% of residents cited financial reasons. The most common response among residents was to cite a general preference for another institution (26% of residents).
- **Residents cited academics at Evergreen** as a factor in their decision not to attend more often than nonresidents. Twenty-three percent of residents cited at least one reason related to academics at Evergreen compared to 15% of nonresidents. Academic reasons included the inability to study in a field that the prospective student was interested in, weaknesses in particular fields of study at Evergreen, Evergreen's academic reputation, lack of structure, lack of specific majors or degrees, dislike of or being unsure of program structure, inability to get into academic program or independent contract, written evaluations instead of grades, family pressure not to attend, conflicts in class schedules and/or inflexible timing of programs/courses, perception that Evergreen students are unable to get accepted into a graduate school or transfer credits from Evergreen, and being unsure of or disliking the teaching and learning styles of Evergreen.
- **Forty-eight percent of the respondents who ranked Evergreen as their first or only choice** for college cited at least one **financial reason** for choosing not to attend compared to 28% of respondents who ranked Evergreen second, third or fourth, or fifth or more.
- **Nonresident transfers appeared to be the most sensitive to cost** with over 50% reporting that cost was very important or the most important factor in their decision not to attend Evergreen. Nonresident first-time, first-years appeared to be the next most sensitive group, with a little over 40% reporting cost to be very important to the most important factor. Residents, whether first-time, first-years or transfers, were less sensitive to the cost of attending Evergreen. About 26% of resident transfers reported the cost of attendance to be very important or the most important factor, while about 17% of resident first-time, first years reported cost to be very important to the most important factor in choosing not to attend Evergreen.
- Respondents were asked whether they were **currently attending or planning to attend another college** in the near future. The majority of all respondents were attending another college or university; 74% of nonresidents and 60% of residents reported attendance at another institution. Eighteen percent of nonresidents and 25% of residents were planning to attend a college or university in the future.
- The greatest number of prospective students ended up **attending Western Washington University** (N=115), according to a combination of survey responses and data obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse. The most common response among nonresidents was the University of California - Santa Cruz (N=23) and Western Washington University for residents (N=94).

Some comments to accompany the Executive Summary

Chris Ciancetta

What does this document tell us about what we are doing well?

Both non-resident and resident students mentioned that Evergreen is a good school or they heard it was a good school from friends and family. This may point to positive PR and the work many Evergreen staff/faculty/graduates have done in positioning the college as a quality choice for liberal arts education.

Some other positive factors include our location in the Pacific Northwest and our proximity to home (for resident students). More students commented that liked the atmosphere and people more than those who found the atmosphere too liberal or “hippy-ish.” There were a few comments that Evergreen is not diverse enough.

What does this document tell us about where we can improve?

The reasons students cited for not attending Evergreen were 1) financial reasons, 2) general preference for other institution, 3) geographic reasons, 4) academic reasons, 5) personal circumstances, 6) other institutional characteristics, and 7) other. Of these reasons, two that merit further examination are the financial reasons and academic reasons categories.

Cost of attendance is the primary factor in non-resident students' (first year and transfers) decision not to attend Evergreen. This finding should be taken seriously as other categories in the document indicate that a non-resident student's reasons to apply to Evergreen point to an understanding of the curriculum and educational philosophy. There were 62% of non-residents who cited Academics as a reason to apply to Evergreen. When asked about Academics, 26% said they liked the idea of studying in multiple disciplines and 25% said they liked the unique learning environment. This compares to 47% of residents who cited Academics as their top reason to apply with 17% noting our unique learning environment and 14% studying in multiple disciplines. Simply stated, our non-resident applicants are well educated about Evergreen and are most likely good matches. We should be enrolling more non-resident students, if not for our cost of attendance. (Non-residents cited financial aid or insufficient scholarships (14%) along with lack of residency status/cost too high/study in own state (14%) as their specific financial reason for not attending Evergreen.)

More residents (23%) than non-residents (15%) cited an academic reason for deciding not to attend Evergreen. Not being able to study in a particular field of interest or Evergreen is not strong enough in a particular field was the most common specific academic reason students mentioned (9%). Appendix A lists the fields these students indicated were not offered or strong enough at Evergreen. Though the numbers are small and probably not statistically significant, the top two areas are Sciences (13) and Arts (11). Interestingly, these fields are ones in which Evergreen is very strong, but students don't perceive them to be. This may indicate areas in which further education/public relations could be beneficial.

What are some interesting/unexpected findings?

More residents chose to attend a more expensive college than Evergreen. Conversely, more non-residents chose to attend a less expensive college than Evergreen.

Of the students (11) who planned on attending Evergreen later that year, none did.

In thinking about possibilities for enrollment growth, is there a clear direction to particular academic offerings?

In examining the specific fields of study mentioned as a factor in students' decisions to apply to Evergreen, Environmental Studies/Science (11) and Media – Film (4) are the only ones with more than two responses. The top general categories are Social Sciences (16), Arts (14) and Humanities (8). In examining fields that students indicated were not offered or strong enough, Science (3), Art (3), and Business (3) were identified. The top general categories not offered were Sciences (13), Arts (11), Business (5) and Social Sciences (5). The information in this document needs to be considered along with other sources to find some stronger connections.

Who are we competing with?

Evergreen was a first or only-choice school for 33% of respondents. First choice institutions for other respondents are listed in Appendix C. Resident students identified their first choice institutions in this order 1) Western Washington University, 2) University of Washington, 3) Washington State University, 4) Eastern Washington University, 5) South Puget Sound Community College. Non-resident students identified their first choice institutions in this order 1) University of California – Santa Cruz, 2) Lewis & Clark, 3) University of Oregon, 4) Western Washington University, 5) Portland State University. While WWU is our clear competitor, it is interesting to see that Evergreen is an option for resident students in the same way as the other public institutions.