

EVERGREEN

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 12, 2008

TO: The Evergreen Community

FROM: Thomas L. Purce, President

SUBJECT: Board Evaluation of the President

At their regular meeting on Wednesday, July 9, the Trustees will evaluate my performance as president during the past year. I invite you to take part in that process by responding to my self-evaluation or by making any observations you wish, in writing by Tuesday, July 1.

The Board's Bylaws specify that the president shall be judged by the performance of the College as a whole, so it is in my interest that each of you should be successful in your own work. I need to know how I can most effectively serve Evergreen, and how I can help you to work most effectively as well.

My self-evaluation is posted on the Web at <http://www.evergreen.edu/president/selfeval.htm>. If you would like a printed copy of my self-evaluation, please call my office at 867-6100.

Comments regarding my performance can be sent to the Board of Trustee's e-mail (tescbot@evergreen.edu), or to me (purcel@evergreen.edu), or to both the Board and me.

I hope you will participate in this process. A tradition of regular self-evaluation is an important part of Evergreen. Thank you for reading and responding to my self-evaluation.

Self-evaluation
Thomas L. Purce
June 11, 2008

This self-evaluation marks the end of my eighth year as Evergreen's president. Writing this self-evaluation gives me an opportunity to recall some extraordinary work that has taken place this year. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the campus climate, which has emerged as an issue this year with some urgency.

Personally, I began this year participating in *Fashioning the Body*, the core program taught by Elizabeth Williamson and Julia Zay. My participation was limited by other demands on my schedule, but it gave me an opportunity to see a creative and exciting core program, focused in the humanities and pursuing inquiries in a way that can provide students with a strong foundation in the liberal arts. Each year, my engagement with academic programs has renewed my appreciation for the work of our faculty and the quality of our students. I can truly say that this was a program that allowed me to be a student, as I learned much through the program's readings and workshops about issues of gender identity. This winter, I had an opportunity to travel to China with the Silk Roads program that Hirsh Diament taught this year focused on children and education. The trip reinforced my understanding of the tremendous benefits of international study at Evergreen. It was a great opportunity to spend some intensive time with a wonderful group of students.

Evergreen's academic programs continue to provide an excellent educational experience for our students. The 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement compared responses from Evergreen freshmen and seniors to student responses at other institutions nationally. The survey found that Evergreen scored in the top ten percent for "academic challenge" for both freshmen and seniors, the top ten percent for "active and collaborative learning" for both groups, the top ten percent for freshmen in "student-faculty interaction," and the top ten percent for seniors in "enriching educational experiences." We scored above average in all other categories.

Within Academics, the college's work advanced in several important ways. The Masters in Teaching program underwent an exhaustive reaccreditation by the state, earning an "exemplary" rating in six categories, an extraordinary accomplishment. Our new Masters of Education program was approved by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and recruitment of both faculty and students is underway. Additionally, the first two years of the Biochemistry Scholarship program (funded by the National Science Foundation) have met with much success. The program is serving an impressive cohort of under-represented students, including students of color, low-income, first generation, and women students. Also, the Enduring Legacies project continues to win competitive grants to fund our work with community colleges serving reservation-based Native American students.

Much of our work this year has been focused on preparation for the college's ten-year accreditation review, which will take place October 6-8, 2008. Don Bantz and Matt Smith, with support from the Provost's staff, led the group drafting our self-study document, a comprehensive review of all aspects of the college that responds to the accrediting commission's

voluminous standards in great detail, describes for the commission what is unique about Evergreen, and engages in some serious reflection about where we are and where we are going as an institution. The collaborative work of producing the self-study involved people from every part of the college: every division, planning unit, graduate program and Public Service Center. I want to extend my thanks to everyone who contributed to the document. Don has observed that the final document provides a thorough and honest orientation to the college that will serve us well beyond the immediate needs of the accreditation site visit.

Our work on the accreditation self-study builds on several years of work to update our core planning documents. After completing the Strategic Plan Update last year, we turned this year to the Campus Master Plan, which provides a comprehensive vision for campus building and land use. The process was a model of consultative governance, grounded in the college's academic plans and values, and engaging students, staff, faculty and the Board of Trustees. The final document, which the Board approved in March, will guide our facilities planning for years to come.

The Campus Master Plan's focus on sustainability reflects one of the priorities that emerged through our strategic planning process last year. That priority led to other significant work this year. We collaborated with Saint Martin's University, South Puget Sound Community College and Centralia College to organize a series of events around the January 30 Focus the Nation dialogue on global warming. With the support of the presidents at each of the institutions, the four campuses organized campus-based presentations and discussions during the day and a major community event at the Washington Center for the Performing Arts that evening. Evergreen's leadership in the event included strong collaboration among a group of students, staff and faculty and engagement with local municipal governments and school districts. We will continue to build on these collaborations, both on-campus and off, in the years ahead. In support of this work, we have hired the college's first Director of Sustainability, and the vice presidents have provided a new charge to the college's Sustainability Council.

The Strategic Plan highlighted and renewed Evergreen's commitment to diversity. Following-up on the Diversity Disappearing Task Force recommendations, I charged a standing committee on diversity and equity, with Art Costantino as chair. The group is meeting regularly and will produce its first report to the campus next year. The CARE Network was initiated to provide resources and assistance to students, staff and faculty in conflict. The President's Diversity Series continued this year to present engaging speakers and performers, reaching an astonishing number of students and faculty largely through academic programs. Each quarter, the Diversity Series engaged between 11 and 13 academic programs, and the lectures were attended by between 430 and 620 students. The President's Diversity Fund received increased funding this year to support more diversity events around the college. We also had a very successful Day of Absence/Day of Presence program thanks largely to the leadership of staff in Student and Academic Support Services.

We also continued work this year to improve student retention at Evergreen, focusing on the recommendations of the First-Year Experience DTF. The DTF report included 42 recommendations several of which were implemented in 2007-08, including the Beginning the

Journey program. With new funding for the governor's Washington Trio Enhancement Program, we have enhanced orientation programs and significantly expanded our services to low-income students, students with disabilities, and first-generation students. Two new advising staff have been hired to build on the success of KEY Student Services. Remaining priorities from the DTF's recommendations include a vision/implementation plan for the first-year experience, enhanced collaboration between Academics and Student Affairs, a coordinator, and an assessment of reading, writing, and quantitative reasoning skills. Faculty are actively working on a First-Year Cohort structure to begin in fall 2009 and experimenting with peer mentors for the 2008-09 academic year.

A growing portion of my time this year was focused on external work, with legislative work taking a central place as usual. We entered this year's short legislative session with a large number of requests for a supplemental session. We received money from the legislature and the governor's Office of Financial Management to complete the renovation of the Library building. This legislative support, combined with our own resources and fundraising, will allow us to build the Center for Creative and Applied Media, maintaining interdisciplinary media studies as an important part of Evergreen's curriculum. We were less successful with our other requests. We asked the legislature to recognize faculty and exempt staff salaries as an urgent problem that would merit action during a supplemental session. We also sought funding to improve safety and emergency preparedness. Although neither request was included in the final budget, we continue to focus on these priorities.

This year saw some significant transitions in college governance. We had some significant turnover among the Board of Trustees, with several long-serving Trustees leaving the Board and new members joining. At the same time the Geoduck Student Union in its second year on campus grew to play a prominent role in college governance.

This winter, we met with the United Faculty of Evergreen to begin negotiating our first collective bargaining agreement with faculty. Those discussions are currently underway. I remain confident that our common commitment to Evergreen and our students will reinforce a good relationship with the new union and produce an agreement that supports both the faculty and the academic mission of the college. We continue to have a strong relationship with our classified staff union, where we are beginning negotiations through the state Office of Labor Relations. For exempt staff, the Human Resources Office is following up on the recommendations of the Exempt Staff DTF by developing a framework for exempt compensation that will inform our strategy to make progress on the issues of salary compression and competitiveness over the next several biennia.

Our fundraising efforts continue to grow. Our Annual Fund goal for this year was \$500,000. Gifts to the Foundation are projected to reach nearly \$2.5 million this year, significantly adding to our ability to provide scholarships to students, support faculty development and enhance other college programs and priorities. This includes significant grant awards and other major initiatives, including a new planned giving program and preliminary planning for a major fundraising event. We have raised the \$25,000 in private gifts required to generate the \$25,000 match for the \$50,000 Higher Education Coordinating Board Fellowship for a Tribal MPA

student. Additional funding for endowed scholarships is now over \$120,000 for the year and ten new scholarships and fellowships are underway. A little over \$65,000 was added through new gifts to faculty development endowments and an equal amount was added to Library endowments.

Our work over the past several years on student recruitment and enrollment continues to serve us well. We met our enrollment goals comfortably this year and remain on target for next fall, despite some very challenging trends. State-wide, the number of students transferring to baccalaureate institutions from community colleges (traditionally a mainstay of Evergreen's enrollment) is lower now than in recent years. Concurrently, the number of graduating high school students in Washington State is leveling off and expected to decline. At the same time, the state seeks to increase the number of students earning bachelor's degrees, recognizing that Washington State ranks low by that measure. Given that these trends are likely to continue to challenge us in the years ahead, we formed a Strategic Enrollment Management Group this year, including representatives from the Academic Deans, Enrollment Services, Communications and Marketing, and Budget and Planning. This year, that group's work included an effort to improve enrollment support and coordination for the Tacoma Program and the graduate programs. To meet the expectations of the state's planning and budgeting processes, the group worked to further define our long-range goal of 5,000 FTE. At the same time, the group's work has intersected with the Hiring Priorities DTF to consider how the college's academic priorities can be framed within the state's funding priorities for higher education. At a time when the state economy is declining and the state budget will be tight, it is very helpful to be in a strong position with enrollments. This is an area that we will need to continue to pay attention to in the years ahead.

We are preparing to respond to a significant set of new state requirements that may shape higher education budgets in the years ahead. The legislature now requires us to propose a performance agreement, linking our mission to state priorities and linking future budget enhancements to measurable outcomes. The team that will draft our performance agreement includes the vice presidents, faculty members, staff and students. The state's framework for performance agreements is still evolving, but we will be required to submit a first draft of an agreement on September 1. In many ways, we are well prepared to do this work. The Faculty Advisory Panel on the Budget has prepared the faculty to engage in this work, and the Geoduck Student Union has demonstrated this year that it can engage in complex policy issues in a thoughtful, thorough fashion.

All this work took place at a time when Evergreen was confronted with several contentious and public events in which some of our staff and students were participants. These events highlighted the complex relationships the institution maintains with its many communities. Evergreen is both a public agency and a thriving academic community. Our employees and students are both members of the larger, off-campus community and of the college community.

As an academic community, Evergreen has a long tradition of activism and a core belief in social justice. These traditions and core beliefs are also shared by many other citizens in our larger community.

Given the frustration about the war that many in the college and the larger community feel, it is not surprising that many Evergreeners made the personal decision to participate in the protest at the Port of Olympia in November. As that protest developed, we were all disturbed by the violence that ensued.

I heard from many Washington citizens who wanted the college to condemn the political actions of the Evergreen faculty and students who participated in the Port protest. In turn, I've heard from members of the college community who were disappointed and angry that the institution did not publicly defend their actions and condemn the Olympia Police.

I have always made the point that when Evergreeners engage in protest or other forms of political action, they are acting as private individuals exercising their democratic rights, not as state employees who should be held accountable to their employer nor as students who should be held accountable to the Student Conduct Code.

Furthermore, as a public agency, the institution can take no political position. It is because of this political neutrality that the citizens of the state of Washington allow us to operate with academic freedom to implement the academic mission of our college and provide us the financial resources to do so. This political separation is more complicated and blurred at Evergreen than at traditional colleges because our core values include an explicit concern for social justice and a strong tradition of public engagement. It can often be misjudged as political advocacy in the larger community and gives rise to an expectation of support for individual actions in our internal community.

Following the November protests at the Port, I submitted a short essay to the *Olympian* that attempted to make that argument and to call for peaceful action in the future. I heard a wide variety of responses to that article. Some said they appreciated the call for peace. Others felt that the essay seemed to distance the college from the protesters rather than defend their right to protest. The article served as a catalyst for much discussion and feedback on campus. I was pleased that a healthy discussion seemed to be developing over e-mail, in casual conversations in the CAB, and in academic programs. I personally had many discussions with students and faculty on Red Square about these events. That kind of critical engagement, reflection and debate are central to what Evergreen (or any college) should be doing, both for its students and for the community that supports it. Admittedly, a short article in the local newspaper is, at best, a small contribution to that kind of dialogue, but I was pleased to see the discussion unfolding.

In retrospect, I was not fully in touch with the residue of anger and mistrust that continued to exist for many members of both the larger and campus community following the actions at the Port. When the Thurston County Sheriff's car was overturned and destroyed following the Dead Prez concert in February, the issue returned with great urgency. After the incident, I heard from several people who saw the escalation in the intensity of the conflict after the Olympia Police arrived on the scene and blamed the Olympia Police for aggravating the conflict. Some believed that the actions of both the crowd and the Police were motivated by their memories of the Port protests. I remain unconvinced that the Olympia Police can be fairly blamed for the destruction

that occurred that night, but it is clear that a significant breach has opened up between some members of the Evergreen community and the Olympia Police. This is the kind of breach that has to be attended to.

For the first time, the college community faced the reality of a violent event occurring on our campus that resulted in criminal action, significant property damage, and the arrests of students and their subsequent prosecutions. In addition, we've been distracted from the academic work of teaching and learning by an array of citizen public records requests, criminal proceedings, requests for evidence, and subpoenas — all of which the college is obligated to fulfill as a public institution, but which have also engendered suspicions and mistrust by some on campus.

We have begun steps to engage in a community-wide dialogue that both respects and critically examines all points of view from the campus and the larger community. That is the kind of dialogue that a college should be especially good at, but in the immediate aftermath of the February 15 incident, the hurt and division in our community were so great that we found it difficult to have that kind of discussion. Even within the campus community, we were polarized. In some of those initial forums, some comments seemed to exclude our campus police and other members of the college from the college community.

Since then, some more positive dialogue has begun. Once again, Evergreen's flexible curriculum served us well as academic programs engaged in critical inquiry and discussion about the February 15 events. Our students provided tremendous leadership. The Geoduck Student Union worked to provide factual information and venues for discussion. Student groups, including the new Greeners for Truth and Reconciliation group, organized discussions and workshops in non-violent communication. The City joined us in asking the Thurston County Dispute Resolution Center to organize additional dialogues. Fortuitously, Reverend James Lawson, who is a nationally recognized theorist on non-violent social change, was scheduled to come to campus in early May, and we benefited from his knowledge and the opportunity that his visit provided to engage a wide-ranging group of people in the larger community, including leaders from the city, county and port. For some, these discussions have been helpful; others continue to view this work with some suspicion.

While these discussions have been a helpful first step, much more is needed if we are to reach new understanding and overcome the mistrust that persists in our communities. That mistrust is deep enough that steps the college has taken to fulfill its obligations as a public agency – responding to public records requests, complying with legal subpoenas, and temporarily halting some events until our procedures could be improved – have been perceived by some as “taking sides” against students or as efforts to suppress discussion and dissent.

Clearly, much more dialogue is needed. That dialogue must include ALL of the campus community, including the campus police. As we prepare to break for the summer, it is important that we resolve to return to these issues in fall. I see this as essential work for the coming year. I ask you to share your ideas about helpful ways to open this discussion. I hope that we can approach this work from a foundation of common interest and mutual caring. In 1971, the conclusion to Evergreen's first governance document, “Governance and Decision-Making at

Evergreen,” said “At Evergreen, we assume a community built upon commonality of interest, instead of upon inevitable conflict between irreconcilable interest groups. We assume cooperation between members of a single interest group.” When we come back together in the fall, let us remember that founding value as we return to the work of tending our college community.

All in all, it has been an extraordinarily productive year for the college and for me personally. The college will enter into the accreditation visit this fall with an impressive record of reflection, learning and accomplishment. We will enter next year's legislative session – a major, post-election budget-setting session – with strong enrollment and a clear sense of our mission. We will begin the next fundraising cycle with a record of continued success. While there are undoubtedly challenges ahead, we are well positioned to meet them. I want to thank everyone for the part you played in putting us in this position. I continue to marvel at and enjoy our extraordinary college.