

Self-evaluation
Thomas L. Purce
2002-2003

Introduction

The hallmark of this year is the extraordinarily high quantity and quality of the work accomplished by every area of the campus community to advance the goals of the college. In the face of continuing state economic challenges, the community responded with even greater creativity and commitment.

Reflecting on the state of the college in my self-evaluation last year, I wrote “I am concerned that this very difficult year has begun to cause tension and mistrust at a time when we must find ways to pull together for the common interest of our college.” There seemed to me to be a real risk that the campus would spend the year so consumed with anxiety at the prospect of further legislative budget reductions that we would be unable to respond constructively to our financial challenges, or even to continue progress on the good work we had underway, until the legislature adjourned late in the year. That was not the case.

As we began planning for this year, it was apparent that we needed to find ways to take greater control over our own future. Last summer the vice presidents and the senior staff devoted our planning retreats to this effort, focusing and clarifying the college’s goals for the year. In the early fall, both the management group and the faculty retreat engaged in this work with great creativity, energy and good will. Out of this work, the Core Values Group, the Financial Futures Group, the College Budget Council and the Communications Group were formed.

The college’s success this year in meeting its challenges is truly commendable. By focusing on our core values and working together to build communication and trust, we made great progress toward creating a college that remains true to its mission while transforming itself in ways that ensure its future financial and academic health. A review of the work we accomplished on our five primary goals makes this clear.

1. Preserving the excellence of the academic program

Our ongoing commitment to enhancing general education by continuing to implement programs that address the report of the Commission on Colleges reflects our commitment to preserving the excellence of our academic program. The interim accreditation report is completed and is in the process of being forwarded to the Commission on Colleges. The report documents the outstanding work of the academic community and other divisions in the college. We are prepared to meet with the commission in the early fall.

Our achievements this year are especially remarkable given the additional challenges in academics this year. Illnesses in the Deans’ and Provost’s offices have required the deans to seek additional help and to redistribute desk assignments during the year. I am grateful to the deans for their flexibility and dedication this past year. In the year ahead, I invite the deans, the faculty and the governance DTF to discuss whether additional support or alternative structures may help to maximize the effectiveness and improve the survivability of our unique system of academic governance.

In spite of limited resources, we continue to make progress on our efforts to support the work of our faculty. We maintained our commitment to faculty development, devoting \$140,000 to summer institutes last year, and providing over 25 percent more funding for institutes this year. At the same time, we committed to doubling the funding available to support faculty sponsored research. We increased faculty salaries by one percent through internal reallocation and remain committed to improving the competitiveness of faculty and staff salaries.

The Provost convened an Assessment Study Group to review Evergreen's teaching and learning current practices. It focused on advising, curricular innovations, and support of General Education. It also established a baseline for assessing student learning outcomes based on the six expectations of an Evergreen graduate.

The most recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provides an important endorsement of the continued success of our academic program. Of particular note was the fact that Evergreen ranked in the 90th percentile in academic challenge and engagement with faculty in and out of the classroom. NSSE also selected Evergreen as one of 20 colleges for its "Documenting Effective Educational Practices" project. In its interim report, it found that "Evergreen is a model for enacting the idea that students are whole thinking and feeling persons who learn best when all dimensions of their lives are acknowledged and valued."

2. Fostering an engaged, informed, vital and diverse community

The successful hiring of an Associate Vice President for Human Resources marked the culmination of a year-long effort to elevate the role of Human Resources and to keep our commitments to our employees. The Human Resources office began reorganizing to provide broader and more integrated services. The Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity positions will be moved organizationally from the President's office to Human Resource Services to better align our Human Resources efforts. Human Resources made major advances in providing essential training to the college. More than 200 staff attended training sessions to learn about critical campus policies. The first leadership development summer institute is planned for this summer, work is underway to develop a comprehensive management training program, and e-learning programs are now available to college staff.

Following the Management Group retreat in the fall, we formed a Communications Group to improve internal communications on campus, especially with respect to the budget planning process. The group created a new Web page, *Connections*, to keep the campus apprised of the budget planning process, newsworthy college items and other important discussions. My staff produced "Budget 101" and "Legislature 101" documents to provide background on these issues. The faculty Agenda Committee made improving campus communication about budget issues a major goal for the year, and members of the Agenda Committee played a critical role in conveying information and collecting input.

Faculty and staff across campus, sometimes with support from the President's Diversity Fund, organized a rich series of discussions and events on issues related to diversity. The Day of Absence/Day of Presence program was especially effective this year in identifying how race affects the experience of students in our academic programs.

The college received a Gear-Up grant from the Department of Education. This \$4.4 million grant, the largest in the college's history, focuses on working in partnership with middle schools to prepare and encourage students to attend college. Staff in Academic Support Services spent many hours this spring in the middle schools, hosted a campus visit by 550 seventh grade students, and completed the hiring of five positions.

Overall, this year has been marked by serious work on communication and greater transparency in the budget planning process. We will continue this work by conducting a well-designed audit of internal communications to understand how communication currently happens on campus and how to improve it further.

3. Financial Health and Fundraising

We began this year recognizing that the trend of diminished support from the state would continue to accelerate and that, to preserve the college's mission, we would need to cultivate diverse and robust funding sources. I am thankful for and proud of the energy and creativity that faculty and staff across campus have brought to this work this year. The brainstorming began at the faculty retreat in the fall and continued in earnest after the Financial Futures Group put out the call for ideas that would raise new revenue or reduce costs through new efficiencies. The Financial Futures Group held forums to collect and discuss further ideas and, in the end, winnowed more than 300 ideas to six that can improve our financial outlook in the near term:

- Increase Conference Services Revenues
- Develop an Extended Education program
- Streamline Acquisition of Personal Computers
- Implement Web Payments with Convenience Fees
- Modernize our phone-athon equipment
- Enhance Prospect Research of Alumni/Donor Database

I am grateful to the Financial Futures Group for launching this work. Our ability to minimize budget reductions in the next year depends on our ability to realize the potential of these projects and to continue to make progress on other new opportunities.

Gifts from alumni and other private donors form an important part of the college's financial health. We had great success in fundraising this year and laid the groundwork for significant future growth. In a year when the economy declined and colleges around the country experienced a decline in giving, Evergreen received more cash gifts than in any year in its history. The Annual Fund, which supports scholarships, research grants and discretionary money for the college, surpassed its goal of \$300,000 more than a month before the end of the year. As of the end of May, overall giving to the college reached over \$1.4 million dollars.

Our multi-year effort to increase the number of students applying for admission is beginning to bear fruit. The college closed admissions for in-state first-year students in early March, the earliest closing in eight years. This year we gave more attention to the financial implications of enrollment. Our goal is to have 23 percent non-resident students next year to begin recovering the funding lost whenever less than 25 percent of our students pay non-resident tuition. Thanks to the hard work of staff and faculty across campus and the leadership of staff in Enrollment Services, the goal is certainly within reach.

At the close of the 2003 legislative session, we received the best operating budget we could obtain under the circumstances, with enhancements in the areas of facility maintenance and recruitment and retention funds for faculty and staff. We also received a very good capital budget with funding to complete the furnishings for Seminar II, conduct the first phase of modernization for the Evans Library Building, remodel a chemistry lab, and undertake a number of small preservation projects across the campus.

Financial health is not only raising new money, but also being more efficient with existing resources. As part of Banner implementation, we have redesigned a number of business processes. For instance, all purchasing will now be done on-line. Technical Support Services reduced the time required to prepare a new computer for installation from two weeks to four days.

4. Strengthen planning functions

One of the themes that emerged last summer was the need for greater integration of the college's planning efforts. As communication improved, the complex interactions among enrollment, the curriculum,

student life, college finances, capital planning, space allocation, fund raising and accreditation became increasingly apparent.

Planning and overall financial management are improving with the implementation of the Banner information system. I want to acknowledge the hard and committed work of the business office in coordinating this effort along with our computing and communications staff. The three banner products purchased by the college will be fully implemented by July 1, 2003. After that, additional financial reporting and performance measures will be developed for each area of the college to help us in our long term planning.

Much of our planning work this year took place through the College Budget Council, which took a broad, college-wide view of its charge. To produce its recommendations, the group worked to better understand how the enrollment mix, tuition, and financial aid interact to affect the overall financial health of the college. Led by the curriculum dean and the associate vice president for enrollment management, the Senior Staff worked to better understand how the enrollment mix affects the curriculum and to ensure that adequate resources are available to support our goal of returning to an enrollment mix of 25 percent non-resident students.

5. Provide statewide leadership

The Board of Trustees and the President played a significant role in addressing the long-term funding for higher education. In the legislature, we worked closely with the Joint Governing Boards of Trustees and Regents and Presidents to send the message that shrinking resources statewide were jeopardizing access to quality higher education.

Evergreen trustees and staff worked with Governors Dan Evans and Booth Gardner and the 2003 Legislature on a proposal to provide increased funding for higher education capital projects. Funding will come through an increase in the statutory debt limit and an expansion of the definition of state general revenues used to calculate the debt limit. The 2003 Legislature approved a compromise version of this proposal, which should result in additional capital funds for higher education over the long term. Evergreen staff also worked closely with the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) staff on their Higher Education Facilities Preservation Study. Evergreen piloted the JLARC condition assessment methodology to survey its building stock.

As this legislative session ends, it is becoming clear that while higher education will face ongoing cuts, we have not been targeted for reductions at the higher levels of other state agencies. More importantly, it dramatizes the importance of increased collaboration among higher education institutions. I want to particularly acknowledge the extraordinary work this year of our Director of Government Relations, who coordinated our overall legislative efforts, and of our Director of Facilities for his work in the capital facilities area. Thanks also to all the other staff who contributed to our efforts this year.

Our trustees again showed strong involvement during the legislative session in supporting the message of The Evergreen State College. Their work and time in this effort made a real difference in all of the work we did in this legislative session.

Reflections on my work

This has been a rich, demanding, and rewarding year for me. We accomplished so much. Like everyone here, the work load is heavy and continuous. I work hard to balance the internal expectations of the president with the external demands on the presidency.

Externally, I served a second year as president of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges and on the board of directors for the Association of American Colleges and Universities. I continue to appreciate the national respect with which Evergreen is regarded. The majority of my national work this year centered on advancing the understanding of the role that liberal arts colleges play in educating our citizens.

I also spent significant time raising private funds for the college and working with our alumni across the nation. We had perhaps the most successful private giving year in the history of the college. We contacted over 100 donors and potential donors. Our student callers reached our annual fund goal five weeks before the end of the fiscal year. We will add at least six new members to the Evergreen Foundation Board of Governors.

In the local community, I continue my work with the business Roundtable and as a founding member of the Boys and Girls Club of Thurston County. These activities reflect my belief in the role the college should play in the economic and social health of the community.

Internally, I had the pleasure for the third year of participating in a core program. "The American City Since 1945" was a one-quarter program that explored the sociopolitical evolution of the American city, particularly focusing on the great migration of African Americans from the deep South to the Midwestern industrial cities. Each year, I marvel at the growth that our students experience in our coordinated programs and the extraordinary energy and talent our faculty bring to the classroom.

As I consider the past year, there are three themes that come to mind: celebration, loss and conversation. We celebrated at an inspiring Convocation in the fall, at a music-filled holiday gathering, and during a much deserved employee-recognition event in the spring. We also came together to mark the passing of members of our community: faculty, staff and students, both current and former. In each case we tried to find a way to celebrate their lives and acknowledge their contributions to our community. We also did what educational institutions do best. We engaged in conversation about important issues, most notably about the conflict in the Middle East, the role of a college in war time, and when a college president should speak on these questions, either personally or on behalf of the institution. The death of our student, Rachel Corrie, brought these issues home. We attempted to create an environment where many voices could be heard and where ideas could be tested, no matter how controversial. We trusted in the judgment of our students and colleagues to weigh ideas and arrive at their own conclusions. I continue to believe that such conversations are at the heart of any college, and that the role of a president is to work to create an environment where such conversations can take place.

Emerging themes

1. Statewide leadership in higher education policy

Higher education policy in Washington state remains an active area that will require careful attention over the next year. Legislative initiatives call for priority ranking of four-year capital projects, a new statewide education master plan and a study of performance contracting for higher education. The governor committed to participating in a national collaborative effort on higher education performance and planning. At the same time Governors Evans and Gardner, who were active this past year in advocating for increased capital funding, are now turning their attention to building support for increased operating budgets for higher education.

2. Campus life

Within a few years, we will have the opportunity to make some significant improvements in campus facilities that support campus life for students, faculty and staff. We will have an opportunity to consider adding housing for students and to begin planning a renovation of the CAB building. At the same time, we will have a chance to modernize our food services facilities. Taken together, these

projects could significantly re-shape and improve our shared spaces. In the next year, we need to begin careful planning to take full advantage of these opportunities.

3. Academics

The next year should see some significant work on faculty vitality with respect to faculty salaries, faculty development, and governance. We need to maintain our commitment to improving faculty salaries. At the same time, we have some significant new resources available to support faculty development. Also next year, the Faculty Governance DTF will conclude its work, which gives us an opportunity to consider how best to ensure that the time faculty spend on governance work is effective, rewarding and supported.

4. Financial support and planning

Clearly, continuing the work of the Financial Futures Group will be a high priority next year and for years to come. Launching an Extended Education program, enhancing our Conference Services operation, implementing web payments and more efficient computer acquisitions will require significant work, but the potential benefit to the college is enormous as we make progress toward providing ourselves with more stable funding. In addition, we will modernize the equipment used by the student phone-athon and update our prospect research tools. We will also assess the feasibility of conducting a major capital campaign by talking with current and potential supporters and by working together on campus to develop a clear set of fundraising priorities.

Over the next year we will build upon the planning improvements of the past few years. Work will concentrate on space management and facilities planning, improved management reporting using the Banner finance system, developing a strategic plan and governance structure for information technology, and continuing to improve our human resources functions.

5. Campus climate and diversity

As we begin planning for the next year, it is important that we consider how we will work together to improve the campus climate for all students, faculty and staff. Racism and bias of all kinds is ever present, and our work in this area must be continuous. We must make room to hear, understand and respond to the day to day experience of members of our community from diverse backgrounds and ideologies. This is work for the whole campus, not just a few, and should be a priority in next year's planning process.

We have some specific opportunities to carry out this work next year. It is clear to me that the campus holds a number of diverse, complex and deeply held views on the conflict in the Middle East. It is important that the campus community and the larger community engage in an open dialogue about these views next year. The college can do its best work by serving as a facilitator and providing resources for these conversations.