

EVERGREEN

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 10, 2009

TO: The Evergreen Community

FROM: Thomas L. Purce, President

SUBJECT: Board Evaluation of the President

At their meeting on Tuesday, July 7, 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 June 30.

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

2008-2009

Thomas L. Purce

This self-evaluation marks the end of my ninth year as Evergreen's president. I began this year participating in Toward a Sustainable Puget Sound, the all-level program taught by Rob Cole, Vauhn Foster-Grahler and Amy Gould. One goal of the program was to gain an understanding of how species have been sustained by the Puget Sound using perspectives from ecosystem ecology, cultural anthropology, American and Native histories, public policy and math. We began the fall with field trips to the Nisqually delta watershed and Kennedy Creek during the beautiful chum salmon run.

Unfortunately, we weren't very far into the quarter before I began to be pulled away from program meetings by a series of increasingly urgent budget meetings. As the national and state economy worsened, the governor took steps to restrict spending, and Evergreen followed suit. As we all know, it turned out to be one of the most difficult budget years that the state has faced, and concern for the college's budget came to dominate much of our administrative work this year.

Early in the year, it appeared quite likely that the college would face a budget reduction of more than ten percent. With the leadership of the vice presidents and the support of the budget coordinators and many others, we began to prepare budget reduction scenarios up to (and in some areas beyond) 15 percent. We tried to pursue a budget process that was open, that invited ideas and feedback from across the college, that demonstrated concern for the people affected by proposed cuts, and that remained consistently focused on our mission as a liberal arts college. The process wasn't perfect, but I was consistently impressed by the level of engagement and concern displayed by everyone concerned throughout the process. I especially want to acknowledge the Faculty Advisory Panel (Sarah Pedersen, Clarissa Dirks, Jules Unsel and David McAvity), the student participants (Ben Anderson, Stephanie Hurlburt, Josie Jarvis and Neil Twilla), and the many people who made comments and suggestions on the Web site, by e-mail, and in our campus forums.

At the same time that our internal budget process was unfolding, we were working intensively in the legislature. Legislators were under tremendous pressure in this session. The years Evergreen has invested in developing credibility with the legislature and our long track record of concern for students and the public interest served us well in the session. During a session in which many long-standing relationships were sometimes strained, we found doors opened for us at some critical moments. This is a real credit to the college, to the many staff, faculty and students who have engaged with the legislature over the past several years, and especially to our Director

of Government Relations, Julie Suchanek, who incredibly managed to do this work while completing her doctorate.

In the end, while we are faced with a very significant budget reduction, we avoided the "worst case" scenarios that troubled us earlier in the year. In part, this was due to a significant infusion of federal stimulus money to the state and, equally important, due to the legislature's decision to apply that federal stimulus money in a way that does not create an additional shortfall at the end of the biennium. Another major factor was the effort we have made over several years to place the college on a sound financial footing. We entered this financial crisis with a strong enrollment base, including a comfortable enrollment cushion. We have consistently attempted to maintain a budget contingency fund to address potential funding shortfalls. These resources will help us in the first year of the next biennium until additional revenue is available in the second year. And early in the year, we implemented hiring and spending limitations, which left us with enough vacant positions that we were able to minimize the number of layoffs required.

Nevertheless, the budget reduction we are about to experience is a major one. We will lose 30 positions and seven million dollars. Our state funding is rolling back to 1999 levels. Students and their families will bear the responsibility for a larger portion of the cost of their education, and the college's responsibility for growing our financial aid programs increases proportionately. At the same time, the reporting and accountability measures that are tied to the state support we receive continue to grow. I wish that I could say that this is a temporary condition or a cyclical phenomenon, that the pendulum was about to swing back toward greater levels of state support. It seems likely, however, that what we experienced this year was an acceleration of a long-term trend. At least for the foreseeable future, we would be prudent to prepare ourselves for a period in which state support continues to be relatively constrained and the need to demonstrate the value of what we offer – both to legislators and to students – continues to grow.

The Strategic Plan we have been following has served us well in preparing for these times, and in spite of the intense and sometimes disruptive budget work this year, we made some significant progress on that plan. We completed our ten-year accreditation site visit and had our accreditation reaffirmed in extraordinarily positive terms. The eight commendations and three recommendations that came out of the site visit serve as a strong endorsement of the work that we have done together and continue to do. I want to thank Provost Don Bantz for leading us through the accreditation process, Matt Smith for serving as the synthesis writer for the self-study document, and all the authors and contributors to the self-study and site visit.

We also reached some significant milestones this year in the work life of the college. We began fall quarter with the highest enrollment in the history of the college. Our men's basketball team made it to the "sweet sixteen" in the national championships.

We negotiated and ratified the college's first collective bargaining agreement with the faculty, producing an agreement that respects both the integrity of the collective bargaining framework and the unique mission and values of the college. We implemented a college-wide, transparent process for evaluating and adjusting compensation for our exempt employees, and we participated in contract negotiations with the classified staff union, continuing our long and positive relationship with that group.

Our strategic goals around diversity continue to advance. This quarter the committee on diversity and equity produced the first of its annual reports to the campus, summarizing the work we have accomplished and making recommendations for continued progress. For me, two events this year are particularly emblematic of our work in this area. The Unsoeld Seminar with the Thirteen Grandmothers was an extraordinary and moving event. They spent nine days at Evergreen, met with multiple groups, and touched the lives of more people than we can know with their powerful and personal message of traditional wisdom about our right relationship with the earth. That same month, we held a Veterans' Medallion ceremony that provided a tangible demonstration of Evergreen's commitment to serve the growing population of returning veterans with respect for the service they have given us. This builds on the work of the Veterans workgroup, which made recommendations to enhance the educational experience of veterans on campus. We will continue that commitment in the years ahead by bringing the Veterans Day holiday back onto the campus calendar.

Our strategic goals around sustainability also moved forward this year. Evergreen's students, faculty and staff were engaged with the Thurston County Climate Action Team to help chart a course for Evergreen and the region. As part of that work, we began a new symposium series entitled "South Puget Sound Climate Action Series." The most recent in the series focused on regional transportation planning. Transportation is a major contributor to Evergreen's carbon footprint, and any solutions are likely to require a comprehensive, regional plan. Consequently, regional transportation plans were a major focus of the county-wide climate summit held on campus this winter.

Our sustainability work benefits greatly from student energy and leadership. We have students working in sustainability-related internships in state and local governments, other colleges, and in local businesses. Throughout our work on sustainability, and especially after the departure of Sustainability Director John Pumilio, we have relied on graduate students to carry part of our work forward. This approach was strengthened this year with a commitment from the Cargill Foundation to provide \$50,000 over five years to the sustainability fellowship programs.

Among the challenges we faced this year was a very difficult fundraising environment. Along with almost all charities, we experienced a drop in giving last year. We expect the Annual Fund to close the year down about 15 percent, and the economy has affected endowments as well as

donations. With hard work by staff in Advancement and our student phone-athon callers, we made up a lot of lost ground in the past few months, and currently stand with more than \$1,000,000 in gifts so far this year. We have been able to maintain our commitments to supporting scholarships, and we continue to cultivate friends of the college and to tell our story to prospective donors and students. Grants from government agencies and private foundations have been a major part of this effort. We have received more than \$7.3 million in pledges from grant makers since July 1, 2008. This year may be one of the best, if not the best, ever in terms of grants pledged to the college. This total includes the six-year renewal of our GEAR UP program (\$5.6 million), a four-year grant of \$459,600 from the National Science Foundation for scholarships in mathematics, computer science and physics, and a two-year partnership with the Washington Department of Corrections to help create sustainability programs at state prisons. The Ford Foundation continues its support with its third grant to the Longhouse – \$200,000 over the next two years to maintain programs and help meet some of our operational needs that have been affected by cuts.

We anticipate that the year ahead will continue to present significant challenges for our fundraising efforts. As the full effect of investment losses in the endowment begins to be felt, we will face a real challenge in maintaining scholarship support for students, and that will necessarily be a major focus of our fundraising efforts.

The physical renewal of the campus continued this year with the completion of the Library building renovation, including the Center for Creative and Applied Media and, soon, a renovated Library 4300. The next phase of this renewal is already beginning as we prepare for the CAB remodel. We also received major funding to initiate much needed renovation of the arts annex and facilities improvement at the organic farm. Although we were not successful in getting construction funding for the COM Building renovation in this legislative cycle, the design money we received will help us build the case for updating the COM Building in the next biennium. In keeping with our sustainability efforts, our Facilities operation worked to identify and implement energy savings ideas on campus, and our budget situation now demands that we realize those savings over the next biennium. In addition, some truly innovative ideas have come forward from our sustainability efforts. We are now taking initial steps to explore the feasibility of a biomass generation plant, which could reduce the college's reliance on natural gas, move us toward our carbon neutrality goal, and serve as an innovative model for energy conservation for the state.

Last year at this time, I wrote about my concern for the campus climate and the steps we were taking to generate better dialogue both on and off campus. Over the summer and fall, we facilitated and participated with the Thurston County Dispute Resolution Center in community dialogues that brought together citizens, activists, police and other officials for a series of facilitated conversations. At the same time, Evergreen faculty members took a leadership role in

reaching out to local police jurisdictions to demystify the campus to the police and vice versa. In true Evergreen fashion, an Evergreen faculty member has proposed an academic program to focus on this topic next year. The Agenda Committee also initiated a discussion this Spring about free speech and campus dialogue that promises to be fruitful and, I hope, continues in the Fall. Taken together, these efforts signal a heightened level of awareness about the importance of working across significant differences and an institutional willingness to do that work. These steps are promising, and we should continue to push for open dialogue and engagement next year.

Reflecting on the year, I also note goals that I did not accomplish that I had hoped to, given the press of budget issues and the demands of the legislative process. Most notably, this is the first year that I do not feel that I have spent enough time with students on campus, in academic programs or in the residence halls. I have missed that contact. I have had less opportunity this year to witness first-hand the tremendous talent of our faculty, and it leaves me less certain that I know how students are experiencing the college. Ironically, at a time when we have greater pressure than ever to seek private gifts, the demands of the legislature and restrictions on travel have led me to spend less time that I would have liked on fundraising.

I am excited to contemplate the next year, my tenth as Evergreen's president. It will be a critical period for the college. The economic decline is bringing to the surface a crucial discussion, both nationally and at the state level, about our system of public higher education. Over the past several years, I have had an opportunity to advocate nationally for public liberal arts colleges and was pleased to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Asheville this spring in recognition of that work. However, it is clear to me that in coming years Evergreen, public liberal arts colleges generally, and the systems of higher education we are a part of will be subject to scrutiny and an intense public policy debate. We will have to work hard to ensure that our voice is heard in that discussion. To the extent that we are successful being heard, we will also need to be prepared to listen and respond thoughtfully and effectively to the feedback we hear. I fully anticipate that we will spend an increasing amount of time in the years ahead working to increase access for students and, at the same time, control costs.

It continues to be a great joy and privilege to live, work and to serve this institution. As I prepare for my annual evaluation with the Board of Trustees this summer, I appreciate any comments or feedback that you may have to share with me or the Board.