



President's Self-Evaluation for 2021-2022

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One year ago, the Board of Trustees asked me to step into the role of president for a two-year period. Although I had not been seeking the role, I felt well-prepared. More importantly, I knew that many people were eager to help. Faculty, staff, students, and alumni were ready to pitch in to help the college find pathways to recovery. Local community leaders and other friends of the college offered enthusiastic support. I was particularly encouraged when the board recruited Dexter Gordon to serve as Executive Vice President, as this meant that I would have an energetic and experienced partner in this new leadership endeavor.

It is now time for the board to consider initiating a search for Evergreen's next president. To complete a national search before the end of this two-year interim appointment, the college would need to begin that search very soon. Instead, the board chair suggested at the board's May 20 meeting that the board may put off that search for a while longer in the interest of continuing to work on stabilizing the college and growing enrollment.

The possibility that the board may extend my contract makes this self-evaluation especially important. I hope that in response to this self-evaluation, the board receives feedback that will help inform their decision. I also hope I will receive feedback that helps to guide my work next year and, if the board extends my contract, beyond next year.

Work this year

I am conscious that the Evergreen Presidential Self-Evaluation has some shortcomings as a literary form. I have read at least 24 of them over the years. By college policy, presidents are evaluated on the performance of the college as a whole. This makes the President's self-evaluation a somewhat different endeavor than the reflective exercise of a typical Evergreen self-evaluation. Presidential self-evaluations typically contain a lengthy catalogue of the college's accomplishments. Ideally, these accomplishments are presented with expressions of gratitude to the people who did the work, but it is hard to escape the impression that presidents are seeking to claim some measure of credit for the work of others. Still, Evergreen does have significant accomplishments this year, and they should be noted here.

In the context of the COVID pandemic, the simple fact of having completed another academic year might count as the first notable accomplishment. From Fall orientation to Chibi Chibi Con, each in-person event we have held this year has felt like a victory over adverse circumstances. Residential and Dining (RAD) Services managed to adapt through an evolving pandemic so that students were housed and fed. Student Activities managed to organize two in-person activities fairs and an employment fair. After a long hiatus, our student athletes were able to compete again. Next week, we will have our first in-person Commencement since 2019.

The pandemic required us to adapt in many ways. As we have returned to more in-person work this quarter, we have found a college that has changed. Some of these changes are tangible and for the better. The new Student Wellness Center is a major improvement over the previous space. We've created a Student Basic Needs Center, received a Homeless Student Pilot Grant, and opened a Social Justice Center to implement the requirements of SB5227 passed in 2021. Parking payments have modernized, and parking appeals, which used to take months, are now handled in days. We have a strengthened workplace safety program. With the support of a grant from PSE, we have made repairs to the campus steam system that will save 730,000 gallons of water each year.

Beyond tangible changes to the physical campus, the curriculum is changing, and some of these changes are for the better. One key to growing enrollment is to launch new academic programs that will attract students who otherwise would not come to Evergreen. Three such projects made significant progress this year.

- In spring quarter, at the Tacoma campus, we gained an early childhood education program that was previously supported by Goddard College. This will allow people working in early childhood education to earn a bachelor's degree from Evergreen with tuition support from the state's Department of Children, Youth, and Families.
- The legislature increased our budget by \$600,000 to expand our service to incarcerated and previously incarcerated students. This builds on the many years of work by staff and faculty in Evergreen's Gateways Program, Sustainability in Prisons Project, and our Re-entry Scholars program. In 2023, when Pell grants are once again available for incarcerated students, we will be ready.
- The initiative that received the most attention is the launch of Professional and Continuing Education (PaCE). In fall of 2022, we will offer 15 credit-bearing academic certificates, and by fall 2023 we will offer a full range of academic and professional certificates, along with degree completion programs for adult learners. For students who already have a bachelor's degree (and for students considering enrolling to earn a bachelor's degree), certificates offer a way to document job-related proficiencies. For potential students unable to commit to a four-year degree program, a certificate offers an alternative to a bachelor's degree. We expect that many of those students, having secured a certificate from Evergreen, may subsequently go on to earn a bachelor's degree.

In partnership with the United Faculty of Evergreen and with the leadership of Nancy Koppelman and Brad Procter, we have begun a collaborative effort by faculty and staff from across campus to support the work of Admissions. This is the kind of "all hands on deck" effort we have long needed. A little extra help navigating the catalog and getting registered helps new students get started. To admitted students who are on the fence about enrolling, outreach from a faculty member shows them the supportive relationship that Evergreen students have with their faculty. And this engagement helps all of us see and address the hurdles that new students face when trying to enroll.

This year, Marketing and Communications, under new leadership, re-organized so that the department is more directly connected to the ongoing work of the college. We're seeing the benefits of that re-organization with daily engagement in social media and more support for internal communications. Working with staff in Information Technology, the Marketing and Communications staff did some behind-the-scenes work to re-host our website on a newer technology platform.

Over the next couple of years, we plan to spend significantly more on marketing to support the PaCE initiative and the curriculum more broadly. That marketing will bring prospective students to the website. Now, with \$750,000 from reserves and from donations, we are embarking on a major re-creation of the website. By the end of next year, we expect to have a website that reflects well on Evergreen and works well for prospective students, while making the web resources that faculty and staff rely on easier to find and keep up to date.

We began this year with some serious staffing challenges in student services, but by the year's end have rebuilt these areas by hiring new, energetic staff in First People's Multicultural, Trans and Queer Support Services, Student Activities, and Academic and Career Advising. And while programming in the newly opened Social Justice Center has been difficult under COVID conditions, the space is a visible promise of the equity work called for in SB 5227. Additionally, our annual spring Equity Symposium and Juneteenth celebrations were successful and serve to remind us of the importance of infusing Evergreen's commitment to racial equity and inclusive excellence in all our work. We made further significant steps in that direction this year, as staff in Inclusive Excellence and Student Success led a year-long effort to develop Equity Action Plans for divisions across campus. Work on developing, integrating, and implementing those plans will continue this summer.

The legislature is the largest contributor to Evergreen's budget by far. This year's legislative session was a short, supplemental session, focused on making mid-biennium adjustments to the two-year budget passed in 2021. In the summer and fall, I traveled around the state, meeting with legislators, often joined by Dexter Gordon, Jeremy Mohn, or Nora Selander. When the session began, that work shifted to Zoom. The new funding Evergreen received from the legislature includes support for a 3.25% wage increase, \$338,000 to address COVID-related student support needs, and \$600,000 to expand corrections education, as noted above. We also received \$1 million for some critical repairs to the CRC and \$1 million to update our emergency communications systems so that they meet current standards.

In parallel with our government relations work, we have significantly expanded our tribal relations efforts this year. We have an opportunity to build on many decades of work at the undergraduate and graduate level and in public service centers. To realize that opportunity, we need to listen closely to what Northwest tribes need from the college now. With new legislative funding, we have recruited experienced tribal relations staff, who have led us in three formal tribal consultations and many more informal meetings. Already, we see some signs of increased interest in the MPA Tribal Concentration. I am looking forward to continuing this work next year.

One of the highlights of the year for me has been working on fundraising. It has allowed me to meet dozens of alumni and friends of the college who are full of stories about the good that Evergreen does in the world. I wish every member of the staff and faculty could tap directly into this source of inspiration. This year so far, I have completed 49 donor visits, which represents a small fraction of the total effort by Advancement staff.

We have made significant progress on Evergreen's first comprehensive fundraising campaign. We have raised \$35.9 million dollars toward the campaign's \$40 million goal. This includes the recent award of three Upward Bound grants and \$1.85 million in commitments from our newly launched planned giving program. Despite the challenges of safely hosting events in the COVID-era, this spring we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Evergreen with a special event celebrating Daniel J.

Evans and the first in-person Art of Giving since 2019, which surpassed all prior years' fundraising with over \$430,000 raised for scholarships.

Looking forward

Ideally, this list of accomplishments should be accompanied by some reflection on the part of the president. The public nature of this document puts some kinds of reflection off limits. Still, it is worth asking whether all the hard work catalogued here is taking us to a better place.

When I took on this role last spring, the board made it clear that it did not want caretaker leadership. The board charged Dexter and me with working to stabilize the college and laying the foundation for enrollment growth. We are now half-way through that two-year project.

I do believe that the path we are on can take us to a better place. That does not reduce the disruption and loss that we feel as valued colleagues leave and long-standing practices have been disrupted. During much of this time, we have been unable to gather in-person to honor our departing colleagues and make meaning together of these losses. I am encouraged to find that we are once again finding ways to safely gather on these occasions.

The urgency of our work on enrollment is clear. After peaking in 2009, Evergreen's enrollment headcount has now declined for 12 consecutive years, leaving us with less than half the number of students that we once had. That decline in enrollment steadily depleted the college's financial cushion, even as we repeatedly made budget cuts. Those cuts in turn meant less breadth in the curriculum, fewer student services, and greater strain on the faculty and staff working to support the curriculum and services that remained.

Clearly, this trend cannot continue. Our first task is to stabilize and then grow enrollment. If enrollment is stabilized and growing, we'll then be able to stabilize and grow the college's budget. We face some significant demographic headwinds. During the pandemic, enrollment at the state's community colleges, which sends many students to Evergreen, fell 24%.

We will know that enrollment has stabilized when the number of new students entering Evergreen each year is the same or greater than the number of students who entered in the previous two years. Thanks to the work described above, that goal may be within reach this fall, though it is still far from certain. We certainly have more interest from high school students and from out-of-state students, even though in-state transfer applications are down. In October, we'll know how close we have come to our goal. And we should expect some further improvement in 2023-24, when the effects of our new outreach efforts, the new website, and new programs will be more fully felt.

It is also in 2023-24 that we will need our operating budget balanced, ending the practice of deficit spending. We need to balance the budget then for two reasons. First, to avoid dipping into our emergency reserve. We will still have an emergency reserve, but it would be unwise to use it to temporarily fill a deficit. Secondly, the only way we'll end this long cycle of budget cuts is to create a balanced budget. Only then can we begin to rebuild from a solid foundation.

The work that is immediate and critical is necessarily focused on stabilizing enrollment and budget. But what then? What kind of college do we want Evergreen to be on the other side of this long contraction? That is a question for us to decide collectively. For my part, I want Evergreen to be a college that remembers its founding principles, especially the idea that is memorialized in the Social

Contract, that we are “a community that continues to organize itself so that it can clear away obstacles to learning.”

The obstacles are, and always have been, many. Some obstacles require constant attention: maintaining our commitment to interdisciplinary education while providing students with foundational, disciplinary knowledge; maintaining an open curriculum and preserving student agency without bewildering students with unstructured, unguided choices; and functioning as a state agency with many external accountabilities without becoming mired in needlessly tortuous administrative processes.

During the pandemic, two more obstacles have come into sharper focus for me. We want to think of Evergreen as a welcoming, friendly college, but we have accumulated evidence over the past few years that suggests we could do better. To pick just one number from the 2020 climate survey, 50% of the women faculty who responded to the survey reported that they had considered leaving Evergreen because they felt isolated or unwelcome.

Also in 2020, the basic needs survey showed us that Evergreen students face significant food and housing insecurity. Thirty-six percent of respondents reported food insecurity in the previous month, and 23% reported experiencing homelessness in the previous year. Clearly these are major obstacles to learning.

The past few years have shown us that big changes can happen fast sometimes. As we stabilize enrollment and budget and begin to grow the college, we can address these obstacles to learning. We can be an interdisciplinary college committed to knitting together knowledge across disciplines. We can be a college where students find it easy to enroll and navigate a meaningful path in the curriculum. We can become a college that listens to what students need and supports their learning holistically. We can be a college where we all belong, feel welcomed, are challenged to do our best work, and are supported as we do it.

The very fact that this extraordinary one-of-a-kind college has survived this long, and the fact that we have managed to keep going during years of pandemic and budget cuts, makes me believe that we can do it.