Alumni were asked in an open-ended question, “Is there anything that Evergreen could have done better to prepare you for further education or for your career?” 168 arts alumni answered the question.

**Skills**

78 arts alumni responded that Evergreen could have better prepared them by helping build the following skills:

- **Networking** (20 people) – Alumni want better networking skills, and they also want Evergreen to provide/encourage connections to students, alumni, and professional artists.
- **Business management skills** (19) – Alumni often reported that they did not come away with a clear understanding of the business of art. One alumni mentioned non-profit management skills are important because they apply to almost all of the arts.
- **Technical skills** (14) – Alumni thought Evergreen could better prepare them for their career by providing more technical skills. Skills specifically named include common American acting techniques, computer shading languages, fundamentals of animation, formal art critique, and skills to work in the film industry.
- **Professional practices** (12) - Including grant writing, cover letters, project management, exhibition proposals, residency applications, negotiating gallery representation, auditions, bookings, and how to handle yourself as a professional.
- **Entrepreneurial skills** (10) – Alumni wanted entrepreneurial/freelancing skills, one alum specifically said they wanted to practice these skills while at Evergreen.
- **Portfolio** (10) – Alumni mentioned wanting to have a portfolio when they graduated, but also mentioned they wanted skills in portfolio creation and portfolio review. Some alumni wanted a requirement to produce a portfolio in order to graduate, or wanted time in senior year dedicated to creating a portfolio.
- **Technological** (10) – Specific technology mentioned: coding, digital arts, computer editing skills, Adobe, and computer graphics.
- **Writing** (7) – Alumni wanted more stringent writing requirements, including learning how to follow style guides and writing for the professional world.
- **Marketing** (6) – Alumni wanted to know how to market themselves and their art after graduation, and how to represent themselves in social media.
- **Other skills** mentioned include research skills (3), critical thinking (2), listening to someone you don’t agree with, statistics, and concrete skills that stand out on a resume.

**Academic, Career, and Real World Advising**

63 arts alumni wanted better career advising. This ranged from simply encouraging students to prepare for a career to requiring a bi-yearly check in. Alumni wanted advising more often from counselors rather than faculty (although they thought that faculty should speak more often about career choices during class), and mentioned being interested in career-exploring workshops, seminars, and forums. The alumni who went to the career center had bad experiences, one said the advisors were unmotivated and acerbic, and another said the advisors had no expertise in the professional art field and suggested to that alumni that they could “play your guitar in a coffee house and pass the hat.” Another alumni said
that advisors “could have taken more time to assess my talents/interests and helped me apply them toward creating a career pathway.” A couple of alumni appreciated the independence and autonomy that Evergreen offers, along with the “culture that fosters exploration,” but wanted more career guidance and exposure to career options, especially for those who cannot afford graduate school. Some alumni wanted career guidance during their junior year so that they could change or revise their academic trajectory, others wished there was more career planning help after graduation. Many alumni stated that they were taught how to be an artist, but not how to have a career as an artist.

“Evergreen could’ve simply encouraged me to prepare for my career. For whatever reason, the subject rarely came up, and I was so caught up in the (very inspiring and artistically adventurous) world of Evergreen in the present tense, I hardly ever thought of what life would look like beyond it. As a young & inexperienced artist, I just did not grasp the incredible importance of identifying steps to take to get your next chapter started, so I never took the initiative to seek the school’s services. I realize that was my own fault, but if it had been more clearly & directly suggested to me that I identify how or where to find resources outside of the campus and the city, and brainstorm career goals and ways to use my skills beyond personal artistic expression, that would've been so helpful”

**Academic Advising**

An additional 23 arts alumni wanted stronger academic advising - requesting assigned advisors, or at the least more formalized relationships with academic advisors. Four arts alumni wanted a mentor. Alumni wanted more support in thinking strategically about how to gain diverse opportunities, and wanted advice that goes beyond basic research. Specific examples include orientation for transfers, concrete steps towards getting a teaching credential, advice for transitioning into traditional grading systems, and how to navigate graduate programs that are housed within departments. Alumni often mentioned wanting this type of advising earlier in their Evergreen career, and wanting preventative advising, not reactions to bad situations they were already experiencing.

“I wish I had been pulled into advising much earlier. Evergreen has so much to offer and I wish I’d experienced more.”

**Real World**

Another 20 arts alumni talked about ‘the real-world,’ some mentioned very general worries like feeling unprepared for the real world or translating [their] Evergreen education into the world, while others wanted specific knowledge including the current status of [their] profession, what working in the art world looks like, or insight into how various creative industries work and how to break in. Many wanted help finding ways to actually apply what they were doing to the real world.

“Evergreen was deeply enriching for my life and cultivation of skills to rapidly learn subjects, but as an art student I did not receive enough coaching about the realities of trying to make a living as an artist in today's economy, much less thriving at it.”

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Academic Structure & Content

44 arts alumni made comments about Evergreen’s academic structure or content.

Academic Structure
13 arts alumni commented on Evergreen’s academic structure. Many wanted more organization including more required courses, required math and science courses, a cohesive art department, upper division classes with students at a similar skill level, and more structure and support surrounding internships. Three alumni wanted more interdisciplinarity – for example, more faculty working towards combining art with other fields, or encouraging students to study outside of the arts. Alumni also wanted higher academic standards, “certain guarantees for quality/quantity of work,” and to have Evergreen hold students accountable. Arts alumni wanted more options/availability of upper division work. Two alumni suggested having GPAs.

Access
Access to resources, facilities, and curriculum was a barrier to arts alumni (11 alumni); this included those whose schedule did not coincide with the availability of the studios on campus, an alum who wanted better equipment, a Tacoma student who did not have the same equipment available to them, skill building classes and popular programs that were hard to get into or were only offered once a year, EWS courses that seemed “inexplicably marginalized,” and a lack of organizations that students could readily join (e.g. chorus/theatre performance).

Alumni also found that utilizing independent learning resources “was like pulling teeth,” and getting sponsors for contracts (which were encouraged) was very frustrating because faculty were over-committed. One transfer had a difficult time deciding between broad foundational programs and upper division work in the short amount of time they were at Evergreen; another wanted more classes focused primarily on film production.

Content
Nine alumni thought that Evergreen should hire faculty and/or guest speakers who are currently successful working arts professionals.

“Provide more exposure to career paths by bringing role models to campus.”

Five alumni wanted practical hands-on experiences in the field and job shadowing with connections to diverse occupations and art organizations.

Two alumni wanted more focus on art history - one said

“I was blatantly missing knowledge of some major historical works in my field.”

Other
A few of alumni suggested offering a Bachelor of Fine Art and one suggested a Master of Art program.
Internships

20 alumni responded that Evergreen could be more involved with student internships. Five alumni thought internships should be required, emphasized, or integrated into the curriculum, while others just wanted some help finding internship opportunities. A couple arts alumni wanted Evergreen to develop relationships with community organizations in order to facilitate internships, and one alum wanted more financial support so that he could have been able to complete an internship.

“I have found the lack of opportunities through the college for placement into [internships] slowed my progress on my career path. I was required to look for resources and develop these aspects of my professional persona post-graduation, with no guidance.”

Campus Climate

Six alumni thought Evergreen’s campus climate could be improved. Some felt isolated, unwelcome, and devoid of encouragement. Others wanted a more diverse campus, or the opportunity to learn without the expectation of teaching others about their culture.

“The most challenging thing at Evergreen was to feel like I was being looked at by my non-Native peers to give them answers about Native culture and to teach them when I was also trying to learn. It seems like there are more Native people enrolling there these days, so I hope there’s strength in numbers. It was isolating for me.”

Comments about Faculty

The following comments were made about faculty at Evergreen.

“Culturally, I think Evergreen faculty and advisors are resistant to the for-profit sector.”

“I didn’t feel as though I was receiving the critical feedback I needed to get into grad school.”

“[One] point of contention is the professors often seemed to be more focused on indoctrinating a social or political agenda over what the student could actually take away from the course. I felt if I was given readings and ideas from both ends of the spectrum, this would make me a more well-rounded individual and storyteller, cultivating more critical-thinking rather than being mocked and graded on ideas that may not align with my professors.”

“There was documentation of my performances that I never received from faculty because they were too busy to follow through.”

Other Comments

Eight alumni made comments that did not fit into the previous categories. These comments are summarized below.
Three alumni felt that Evergreen film offerings lacked a connection to/respect for the workforce/commercial sector.

“I felt that my program lacked in connecting students to the workforce post-graduation. Almost as if working were treason to our artistic selves. I exited my program fully inspired, creatively charged, and well versed in the techniques needed to start my career - only to find all doors closed to my services due to my lack of experience in industrial/commercial work. One simple internship with a production house could have changed that, but my programs seemed to actively dissuade participation in the commercial world, and no internship opportunities were ever provided. The above issue is my one gripe regarding my time at Evergreen. While I did eventually break through the walls into the workforce, I felt that the lack of internship opportunities in my program set me behind my peers in the industry.

“We were expected to work outside the studio system for film and animation and therefore not given any information about what it takes to make it in the commercial world but we were also never given any classes or information on getting grants or fellowships.”

“I wanted to pursue a career in mainstream filmmaking… My filmmaking professors had nothing but negative things to say and teach about mainstream media and ‘Hollywood’.”

Two alumni felt that they should have received better information about the consequences of taking out student loans.

Two alumni wanted more information available to students; one wanted public faculty evaluations, the other wanted alumni information (geographical information, careers, etc.) which might have provided some insight into the future.

One alum said, “Evergreen fails to acknowledge that an interdisciplinary education is highly marketable. The true gift of my education from Evergreen is the understanding that an individual can learn from everything.”