Year Seven Peer Evaluation Report
The Evergreen State College
November 4-7, 2018

A confidential report of findings prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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I. Introduction

This report was prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities as a component of the Year Seven Peer Evaluation of The Evergreen State College (Evergreen), having its principal location in Olympia, Washington. The report is based on the examination by Evaluation Committee members of the self-study document and related materials prepared by Evergreen, and on observations made by the Committee during the site visit of November 4-7, 2018.   There were no unresolved Recommendations from previous reports that the Team was asked to address. The institution had undergone the normal Year 1 and Mid-cycle evaluations on schedule.

As context for this report, Evergreen is a public, liberal arts college serving the State of Washington. The school's hallmark is its distinctive approach to education based heavily upon individual student design of program, interdisciplinarity, and the absence of traditional majors and departments, characteristics that will be discussed in detail in the body of this report. The only undergraduate degrees offered are the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science. The institution takes great pride in its distinctive approach to education and the educational concepts pervade everyday life on the campus. The institution is approved by the State of Washington and by NWCCU for offering work at the undergraduate and Masters level. In addition to the undergraduate programming, Evergreen offers three Masters degrees.

Evergreen opened its doors in 1971, so it is relatively young by public institution standards. In addition to programming at the main campus in Olympia (including an Evening and Weekend Studies Program), the school offers off-campus programming in Tacoma, at Peninsula College, and at the Quinault Nation. The main campus is located outside of Olympia, Washington, in a beautiful forested setting.

Significant changes have occurred since the last comprehensive evaluation. A Presidential transition occurred during this time. President George Bridges came on board in September 2015, after fifteen years of service by the previous President, Thomas "Les" Purce. With President Bridges arrival has come a substantial transition in administrative leadership, which will be discussed further. During the past seven years or more, financial support from the state has varied in significant ways. As in most states, an erosion of state support occurred with a concomitant substantial increase in tuition. However, since 2013, tuition has been decreased by state mandate and state general fund support has increased in proportion. At the present time, state support and tuition support are approximately equal.

Enrollment has been a significant challenge during the timeframe of this evaluation. Enrollment had been increasing up through 2009, and has gradually declined each year since. As of fall 2017, enrollment had declined to about 20% less than it had been at the peak. Fall 2018 brought further declines, partly in continuation of the longer-term pattern, and partly in response to a significant event that occurred in 2017 (see paragraph below in this section). The official Fall 2018 enrollment is 3345 FTE, putting

the institution at 74% of its peak enrollment in 2009. As a result of the enrollment declines and related financial trends, Evergreen has made significant adjustments to its administrative structure, the details of which will be addressed in appropriate sections of this report. Some of those changes went into effect quite recently, between the writing of the self-study and the Team visit.

Programmatically, a number of new initiatives have been launched, and will be discussed as relevant to sections of this report. Formal academic programs have not been added, since the school does not offer traditional majors. The Masters of Education program was suspended in 2010 due to low enrollment.

During the period covered by this evaluation, the physical plant has undergone some upgrading with both state support and private support. The College purchased the building in Tacoma that was previously leased. A series of new buildings focused on Native American art and tradition have been constructed.

A significant series of events attracting national publicity occurred at Evergreen in the spring of 2017. Student protests, faculty actions, and external threats thrust Evergreen into national attention. The events were of a magnitude such that President Bridges afterward commissioned an Independent External Review to examine the events and their causes, and to develop actions to be taken by Evergreen in response. The protests were racially charged and brought significant divisiveness to the campus. A major lawsuit involving a faculty member ensued and was eventually settled. The campus believes that the events exacerbated the enrollment challenge, manifesting in an even steeper enrollment decline for Fall 2018. Relevant details will be discussed in later sections, but the campus climate that the Evaluation Committee encountered included attributes of healing, responsiveness, and optimism.

This Evaluation Committee report is organized according to the NWCCU Standards, but begins by specifically addressing the Response to Student Achievement Data as required by the Department of Education. Throughout the body of the report, Concerns and Compliments are embedded. Commendations and Recommendations are gathered at the end of the report in a separate section. As usual, the Commendations and Recommendations were communicated to the campus community in the open exit meeting at the end of the Evaluation Committee visit.

II. Response to Student Achievement Data

1. What are the key challenges of the institution related to the institution's graduation rate and other data provided? Several factors contribute to the challenging enrollment and success rates of Evergreen students. With the reputation as a liberal arts school, today's student focus on jobs and professional majors present a challenge to Evergreen. The college has quite a large percentage of transfer students (over 50%), so the level of preparation varies considerably and the transition to the highly individualized education offered by Evergreen is an abrupt transition for some students. Retention rates for full-time first-year students have remained quite steady

at around 70% with a slight decrease in recent years. Graduation rates remain quite steady at about 56%. Cohort default rates peaked in 2010 at 10.7% and have been stable in the 7-8% range for the past four years.

2. What is the institution doing to improve graduation rates? The college has put in place quite a number of mechanisms to address retention and graduation rates. Those items are discussed in a following section on Standard 2D of this report.

3. What initiatives appear to be effective in improving graduation rates? The college expresses particular enthusiasm for ongoing work in developing Paths of Study. The college acknowledges that today's students are interested in having a higher degree of structure to their academic programs than they were during earlier years. Paths of Study provide that structure while remaining true to the institution's founding philosophy of allowing maximum student freedom to design their own programs. First-year orientation is also a mechanism that is contributing to improvements in retention/graduation.

4. What might accreditors do to assist institutions to improve graduation rates? The responsibility of reporting to the NWCCU is serving as motivation for Evergreen to pay close attention to these parameters. Evergreen is keenly aware of its performance in this area and is working diligently to address it.

III. Assessment of Self-Evaluation Report and Support Materials

The Evaluation Committee recognized the high degree of organization and readability of the self-study document. All Eligibility Requirements and Standards were addressed in the body of the self-study. The report contained a large number of links, and several Committee members commented that they needed to "chase down" evidence that should have been included in the report itself. A number of links appeared to be broken.

Two qualitative aspects of the report are worthy of comment. The report was somewhat short on self-reflection, focusing more on factual information. For example, the enrollment pattern was presented, but without much reflection. We did find, however, that during conversation on campus, much deeper thinking about that issue and others had occurred than what was indicated in the self-study. In addition, the report struggled in some areas to communicate the dynamic changes occurring at the institution. For example, administrative structural change has been underway during recent months, so the report acknowledged that some information regarding structure might not be accurate. Again, the Committee found good description of such change during the visit.

The visit itself was especially helpful in learning about Evergreen, with the faculty, staff, students, and administration being highly responsive, professional, and forthcoming. The campus as a whole worked hard to respond to the Committee's questions. Turnout at the various open meetings (staff, students, faculty) was strong and represented a good cross-section of the campus.

IV. Topics Addressed as Addenda to the Self-study

There were no outstanding Recommendations for Evergreen, so the institution did not need to report on Recommendations. Based on the Year One Report, the NWCCU had issued two Recommendations, which were addressed satisfactorily subsequent to the Year One report. While not obligated to respond officially to Concerns, the Year Seven self-study did address four Concerns that were articulated in the Commission's Year Three Report. Those Concerns focused upon 1) Analysis of Mission Fulfillment; 2) Staff Compensation; 3) Content specific learning outcomes at the course level and in the area of writing; and 4) Effectiveness of advising. During the Team's reading and observation, we remained attentive to each of those areas.

V. Eligibility Requirements

The Eligibility Requirements (ER's) are all addressed in the relevant sections of the report. All ER's are met to the satisfaction of the Evaluation Committee. ER 5, Non-discrimination, will be the subject of further discussion in our report, but the institution clearly meets ER 5. ER 12, General Education, is met in an uncommon way at Evergreen because of the manner in which coursework is organized, but ER 12 is met both in spirit and in practice. Issues around ER 15, Academic Freedom, were tested in recent events, but the evidence shows that this requirement is clearly met. Budgetary stress is relevant to ER 18, but not in a manner that jeopardizes compliance with the requirement. In summary, all Eligibility Requirements are met.

VI. Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

a. Standard 1A Mission

Evergreen has a well-publicized mission statement that was adopted by its Board of Trustees in 2011. The statement is readily available through the institution's website and it is repeated consistently throughout appropriate materials, including the Self-Study document. The statement is:

> *"As an innovative public liberal arts college, Evergreen emphasizes collaborative, interdisciplinary learning across significant differences. Our academic community engages students in defining and thinking critically about their learning. Evergreen supports and benefits from local and global commitment to social justice, diversity, environmental stewardship and service in the public interest."*

Tied closely to the mission statement are the Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate, a set of statements that serve as an umbrella to the various aspects of the Evergreen experience. Evergreen emphasizes these high level outcomes to a great extent, in part because of the unusual nature of its curriculum. Briefly, those expectations are:

> *1. Articulate and assume responsibility for your own work.*
> *2. Participate collaboratively and responsibly in our diverse society.*

3. Communicate creatively and effectively.
4. Demonstrate integrative, independent, critical thinking.
5. Apply qualitative, quantitative and creative modes of inquiry appropriately to practical and theoretical problems across disciplines.
6. As a culmination of your education, demonstrate depth, breadth and synthesis of learning and the ability to reflect on the personal and social significance of that learning.

In addition, Evergreen articulates prominently its Five Foci, which it characterizes as "actualization of academic values." The Foci are:

1. Interdisciplinary Study
2. Collaborative Learning
3. Learning Across Significant Differences
4. Personal Engagement
5. Linking Theory with Practical Applications

All of these ideas are displayed prominently in the College's materials and website. The Team formed the impression that there is widespread awareness of the mission, the expectations, and the foci. In the section on Planning (Standard 3.A and 3.B), we will have more to say on the integration of these statements.

b. Standard 1B Core Themes

Evergreen has put considerable organizational energy into the development, articulation, and assessment of Core Themes. Each will be discussed in considerable detail in later sections, but to establish fulfillment of Standard 1B, the Core Themes are listed here:

Core Theme 1: Integrated Interdisciplinary Learning
Core Theme 2: The Individual Engaged in Community
Core Theme 3: Environmental Stewardship and Social Justice
Core Theme 4: Diversity and Equity

Each of the Core Themes has multiple objectives and indicators of performance accompany each objective. The scheme around which the Themes, Objectives, and Indicators is built is shown clearly in the self-study.

VII.   Resources and Capacity

a. Standard 2A Governance

i. Governance (Standards 2.A.1-8)

Evergreen is governed by its own Board of Trustees, whose focus is solely this institution. The Board has eight members, appointed by the Governor for six-year

staggered terms, except for a student member, who is appointed for a one-year term. The Board is authorized to make official decisions only as a full board and the Board chair is the official spokesperson. The Board is required to comply with the State of Washington Open Public Meetings Act. The Board has three standing committees: executive, audit, and nominating, and the committees make recommendations to the full Board for action.

The Board selects the college President, the most recent search resulting in the appointment of President Bridges in 2015. The Board carries out an annual review of the President in Executive Session, followed by a public statement regarding the Board's assessment. The Board conducts its own annual retreat, where it evaluates itself, sets goals, and examines the financial position of the College.

During the visit, the Team met with three representatives of the Board, including the Board Chair. The Trustees were highly engaged, supportive, and enthusiastic about the leadership and direction of the institution. One of the new members of the Board had served many years in the state legislature, and brings important new expertise to the Board. All acknowledged and expressed concern regarding enrollment, but demonstrated support for the College's actions to address that issue.

Shared Governance is a practice of high importance to the campus. Faculty involvement is codified in the Faculty Handbook (related to teaching and academic offerings) and the Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement (related to pay and working conditions). The College uses some interesting and novel tools to promote and implement shared governance. One such tool is the "Disappearing Task Force" (DTF). DTF's are established with quite specific charges and timeframes. In addition to DTF's, a host of typical standing committees is employed. Another tool is the weekly Governance time on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, when no classes are scheduled and the time is set aside specifically for activities associated with governance.

Interestingly, there is no Faculty or University Senate, and the student governance model is undergoing changes to enhance participation and engagement. Some people expressed concern that the lack of or status of these structures hindered effective communication. However, recently the school added a Campus Leadership Group, which has approximately 125 members and is representative of the campus. The Evaluation Committee's meeting with that group was energizing.

ii. Leadership and Management (Standards 2.A.9-11)

As indicated, President Bridges began his tenure in 2015 and comes to the institution with experience as a President within the State of Washington. He previously served ten years as President at Whitman College, and had experience as a Dean and Vice-Provost at the University of Washington. He is well qualified to lead Evergreen. Upon meeting with President Bridges during the visit, he demonstrated passion and dedication to the institution, a high degree of knowledge about Evergreen and higher education in

general, responsiveness to challenges before him, and optimism regarding the College's future.

President Bridges has reorganized the senior leadership team. The team is now comprised of six Vice-Presidents, the names and dates of appointment to the position shown here:

> Provost and VP for Student and Academic Life- Jennifer Drake, 2017
> VP for Advancement- Amanda Walker, 2015
> VP for College Relations- Sandra Kaiser, 2017
> VP for Finance and Operations, John Carmichael, 2018
> VP and Vice-Provost for Equity and Inclusion- Chassity Holliman-Douglas, 2017
> VP of Indigenous Arts and Education- Tina Kuckkahn-Miller, 2018

The dates of appointment show that the leadership team is "young" in terms of their current appointments. The incumbents are all permanent at this point, with the only interim being a short-term replacement for VP Holliman-Douglas. We observed the dynamics of the team to be healthy and collegial. The College clearly has ample administrative positions to conduct the work of the college. The team meets weekly, and they hold an annual retreat before each school year.

iii. Academic Policies (Standards 2.A.12-14)

Student responsibilities and community responsibilities are outlined in a Social Contract and a Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. They are also communicated in course descriptions, covenants, and syllabi. Academic policies, including those related to teaching, service, scholarship, research, and artistic creation, are clearly communicated to students, faculty, administrators, and staff with responsibilities related to each area. Policies related to teaching rights and responsibilities are found in the Faculty Handbook and the Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement between the College and the United Faculty of Evergreen. They are also communicated in orientation training.

Library procedures and information policies are publicly available and clearly articulated on the college website. Policies and procedures are in place for finding and using library resources as well as for communicating information to students, faculty, staff, and administration about library services. Policies on copyright, library reserves, media services access, and loan policies are also clearly articulated on the library website. In addition to books, electronic books, journals, chat, and videos, tools are used to provide virtual support and research consultations for Tacoma students.

Evergreen's policy on transfer students is quite liberal, allowing the College to accept up to 135 quarter credits, of which up to 90 may be in lower-division work. Given that over half of Evergreen's student body has transferred in from other institutions, it would appear that the policy is working well. The policy is posted online and is easily available for those who might be thinking of transferring.

iv. Students (Standards 2.A.15-17)

Evergreen student rights and responsibilities are articulated in the Social Contract and Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. The policies have undergone recent review and revision and are available via the campus website, New Student Handbook, and catalog.

The college has established admissions, readmission, and appeal policies administered in adherence with professional standards. Consideration of implementing or strengthening an evaluation of prerequisite skills of student writing could enhance probability of success of entering students meeting academic expectations.

Evergreen has established policies and procedures for student organizations, student fee distribution, student media and student government. The current student leadership is in the process of establishing a Student Assembly delegate model that would enable them to expand their interaction with a greater number of students and provide a vehicle for greater student advocacy regarding student interests and needs.

> *Concern:* Students expressed a desire for more formalized processes to communicate and provide input to institutional decisions.

v. Human Resources (Standards 2.A.18-20)

Human Resources policies and procedures adhere to applicable state and federal law and mandates. Conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, maintenance and confidentiality of records, and evaluation methodology are published and available on the website. Human Resources administer recruitment practices for classified and exempt employees, whereas the Provost's Office is responsible for faculty recruitment, hiring and development. The campus might consider periodic reviews of recruitment methodologies and hiring committee preparation for classified, exempt, temporary, adjunct, and faculty positions to ensure alignment with the college's commitment to inclusion and student success (Core Theme 4).

vi. Institutional Integrity (Standards 2.A.21-26)

Evergreen has in place all of the requisite policies and practices to ensure ethical and legal integrity in its operations. Its catalogue, website, and other publications accurately represent the institution. Evergreen belongs to organizations, such as the National Association for College Admission Counseling, to help ensure the college operates according to the standards of the profession. The College is aware of and abides by applicable state laws regarding public meetings, public records, and accountability. Regular periodic training is provided for staff, and faculty. Ethical expectations are set forth in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

During the events of 2017, there arose considerable tension and disagreement among campus personnel, but there is no indication that the College met the situation with anything but high ethical standards in mind.

vii. Academic Freedom (Standards 2.A.27-29)

The faculty at Evergreen is accorded academic freedom to pursue scholarship, research and artistic creation consistent with the College's goals. This guarantee to protect diverse perspectives is included in the Social Contract and the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and students, faculty, and staff are exposed to these principles in new student and new employee orientation materials. The Social Contract and the CBA likewise require faculty to abide by the Statement of Professional Ethics as adopted by the AAUP to present only one's work as one's own and to cite the sources of derivative scholarship. The evaluation committee confirmed, via faculty interviews, that Evergreen adheres to these policies. During the Faculty open meeting, the Evaluation Committee specifically asked about academic freedom, expecting some mixed response. However, we heard a resounding "yes" that academic freedom is supported.

viii. Finance (Standard 2.A.30)

The responsibilities of the Board of Trustees versus college administrators regarding financial resources are clearly outlined in the Delegation of Authority. The Board of Trustees are well-versed in financial matters impacting the college and approves budget requests and spending plans for both the operating and the capital budgets as well as other specific financial arrangements which again are clearly outlined in the Delegation of Authority. At the institutional level, the college has well-documented finance and budget policies which are accessible on-line and further delineate responsibilities within the college.

b. Standard 2B Human Resources

Staffing levels at Evergreen are more or less in line with national norms. Faculty-to-student ratios are consistent with the highly interactive form of education and evaluation that the college offers. Staff and faculty evaluation and performance feedback methods are outlined in the bargaining agreements and college policy. The agreements also include staffing ratios and workload responsibilities. Budget reductions have resulted in layoffs and, in particular, some staff members called attention to gaps in staffing that require reorganization of duties of remaining personnel, sometimes without proper training, orientation and resources. Currently there are limited funds for classified staff development.

> *Concern:* During these times of serious budget constraints, the college must monitor closely its staffing levels in all categories to ensure that qualified people provide services.

c. Standard 2C: Education Resources

As noted in the discussion later around Core Theme One, the programs offered by Evergreen are consistent with its mission of collaborative, interdisciplinary learning across significant differences by engaging students in defining and thinking critically about their own learning. The B.A., B.S., and all three master's degrees have clearly articulated outcomes and the graduate programs have additional program-specific outcomes for each degree.

Course, program, and degree learning outcomes are provided in written form to enrolled students. This is achieved through the academic catalog and program syllabi. The Five Foci and the Six Expectations of an Evergreen graduate are widely printed and posted online and prominently available to all students.

Credit and degrees are based on documented student achievement that reflects generally accepted learning outcomes, norms, or equivalencies in higher education. Unlike most institutions of higher education, the College does not give grades but instead documents student achievement through a narrative evaluation in each course by faculty.

Degree programs at Evergreen demonstrate a coherent design with appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing of courses, and synthesis of learning. In addition to organized programs overseen for content and availability by faculty and administrators, students also have the option of individual study. Beginning in fall 2013 students were required to write an Academic Statement to reflect and to plan their courses and degree plans. The final statement is a graduation requirement and introduces each student's transcript. Beginning just in spring 2018, incoming students are assigned an academic advisor to support their course selection and planning.

As an institution committed to shared governance, Evergreen makes the faculty clearly responsible for the design, approval, implementation, and revision of the curriculum. The Standing Committee on the Curriculum is leading the process of including more Paths of Study, to bring greater clarity and order to academic areas. At the graduate level, curricular planning is conducted by faculty in the program. Faculty members also participate in the hiring process by designating hiring priorities, defining positions, and recommending specific candidates for hire.

The Daniel J. Evans Library considers faculty collaboration to be an essential library service with a goal of integrating library instruction and media services into programs and individual courses as well as to provide for individual student needs. The interdisciplinarity and the flexibility of the Evergreen curriculum presents unique challenges for the library, however there is strong evidence that both informal and formal librarian/faculty collaborations exist and that librarians are integrated into the planning and curriculum design processes. The library faculty and staff also provide online disciplinary research guides and course guides, as well as citation help, reserves, and database searching support and instruction. Evergreen is a member of the Orbis-

Cascade Alliance, a resource sharing collaborative, that provides expanded access to library holdings beyond the college campus.

Evergreen has established policies in regard to accepting credit for prior learning assessment, which starts by candidates submitting a portfolio of their experiences. A faculty member makes judgment on the portfolio before credit is granted.

Transfer credits are accepted in a variety of ways depending upon the institution and the type of transfer. A maximum of 135 quarter-hour credits, up to 90 of which can be lower-division, can be transferred in toward the 180 credits needed to graduate. These credits may come in course-by-course, by a Direct Transfer Degree, by a mechanism called the "Upside Down Option," or by evaluation of nontraditional credit.

In addition to accepting transfer credit, Evergreen offers programs specifically targeting their significant numbers of transfer students. Evergreen also extends the reach of its programs into other communities. Evergreen Tacoma is a community-based program that allows place-committed students of the Hilltop and surrounding areas access to high-quality liberal arts education that is centered on inclusivity, hospitality, and reciprocity.

Evergreen does not have a general education program in the traditional form of distribution requirements, but the Six Expectations direct students to meet general education while giving them freedom and responsibility to achieve their own course of study. End of Program Reviews indicate that students are receiving a breadth and depth of coursework and acquire synthesis and integrative learning. General education outcomes at Evergreen are framed as learning outcomes and are aligned with the College's mission.

Evergreen currently offers three master's programs (MPA, MiT, MES). The programs are designed to meet professional needs while also meeting the College mission of providing interdisciplinary subject matter. Expectations are greater for graduate than undergraduate programs with an increased concentration in relevant literature and research.

All three master's programs are designed to develop knowledge and skills necessary for effective practice in each of the three areas targeted: public administration, teaching, and environmental policy. Policies for graduate recruitment, application, and admission are established and administered by each program. All policies are published and posted in numerous places. Transfer credit is not accepted in the MiT program, but the MPA and MES accept up to 12 and 8 graduate credits, respectively. Internships, field experiences, clinical practices, and individual learning contracts are available to graduate students in all three programs under the supervision of relevant faculty. Students are not given credit for experiential learning that occurred prior to matriculation.

d. Standard 2D: Student Support Resources

Evergreen's self-study outlines the breadth of student life and support services to assist students in the achievement of their academic goals. The services are consistent with the college's mission and commitment to interdisciplinary learning. Personnel involved in student life and student success programs exhibited a strong commitment to the institutional mission and their role in supporting student success.

In 2017-2018 the college implemented a reorganization of its student support services in response to a decade-long decline in enrollment and the subsequent financial stress. There were also recent declines in specific population retention and graduation statistics. This reorganization has undergone several iterations up to the Fall 2018 quarter. Services and support services are now distributed to a Vice-Provost for Student Engagement reporting to the Provost, the Vice-President of College Relations, and the Vice-President for Inclusive Excellence and Student Success. The reorganization was designed to align student life activities more closely with the academic leadership and to strengthen support systems for student success within the context of greater inclusion and equity. Additionally, enrollment services were merged with college relations to enable a consistent identity and marketing strategy for recruitment of students.

At the time of the Committee visit, the reorganization had not been in place long enough to demonstrate its effectiveness. Staff stated that changing student needs, interests and demographics require a periodic reevaluation of services and staffing levels to assure adequate support for student success (5.B.2).

The campus provides for the publication and distribution of required federal and state reporting of crime statistics. The campus employs a police force for the Olympia campus and provides a cooperative arrangement for the Tacoma campus. The safety and security of students has become of paramount concern as a result of recent events on campus. The campus police leadership is undergoing change and a number of campus services have developed or reviewed existing protocols to enable responsiveness to campus safety issues and protection of students. The events and the subsequent response to these events have had a significant impact on the institution's reputation.

Concern: There remains a need for ongoing internal dialog around safe spaces, inclusion, and equity.

The decline in enrollment has led to a reorganization of the enrollment services including a number of initiatives to improve retention. The college has renewed its participation in the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) and started to participate in the Common Application. They have employed a financial aid consultant to review and restructure financial aid packaging methodology. The advancement office has initiated a capital campaign to strengthen scholarships and student support programs. However, a multi-year enrollment plan with specific goals to achieve a balance of new students, transfer students, and out of state students is missing (See Recommendation 3).

Evergreen student retention and graduation is another critical aspect of student success and enrollment planning. Student and alumni surveys identified a concern regarding predictability of curricular paths as well as predictable offerings to enhance their completion. Some promising practices to address these concerns are in varying stages of development and implementation:

- First Year Experience program -proposed goals for adoption (assessment, programming, policies, training and structure) designed for Fall 2019 implementation
- Paths of Study
- Assigned advisor for incoming undergraduate students
- New Student Handbook & Degree Planning Guide
- Learning/Teaching Commons
- Academic Statement
- Equity Center

These initiatives will need continued support, monitoring and evaluation as they are fully implemented. TRIO and First Peoples programs have had documented success in supporting student retention. Identifying the effective components of these programs and expanding to larger student populations through new grants or campus initiatives can inform practices.

The administrative components of admissions, records, registration and financial aid are guided by Washington state regulations and profession association standards and have secured technology support. The college is participating in SALT, a financial literacy program, and provides exit loan information. Default rates have declined during the past several years and are in the range of other public colleges and universities.

Student Support Services are in a period of transition as staff and student adjust to a new organizational model and budget reductions. Student involvement in governance is also in transition as new models of student engagement are being designed and promoted. Attention to the collection of data on student success and effectiveness of student support services is a necessary component of the evolving institutional plans and renewal efforts (2.D.11; 4.B.2).

e. Standard 2E Library Resources

The Daniel J. Evans Library resources and services strategically align to Evergreen's mission and provide access to resources and support with appropriate depth and breadth to support the interdisciplinary mission (2.E.1). Since new programs and courses are planned annually, library support for student learning, inquiry research, and collections development must be agile and flexible. Partnerships and collaborative practices inside and outside the library are in place to manage these challenges. The library dean is a member of the academic deans team and since library faculty are

required to teach, there are many opportunities for collaboration and curriculum planning and student support. The team curriculum design culture of Evergreen presents an opportunity for library faculty partnerships. There also appears to be a strong partnership with the campus IT group and the housing of media services in the library. Librarians also have a historical and substantial presence on the Tacoma campus (2.E.2). Evergreen is a member of the Orbis-Cascade Alliance, which provides access to additional monographs, e-books, and media items for faculty and student research. This partnership provides an impressive collection of digital and physical resources for a library and campus of this size. This partnership also provides reduced consortium pricing on periodicals needed to support interdisciplinary research and this is very important considering increasing periodical costs on a national level.

Support for individuals utilizing library and information resources is provided through a variety of venues such as face-to-face research and help desk consultations, online support resources, especially for those not on the Olympia campus, and structured interdisciplinary curriculum planning driven by faculty partners. Library faculty members are assigned as liaisons to coordinated studies program. Instructional and resource support format varies, similar to the fluidity of the interdisciplinary curriculum, and is driven by the needs of the faculty or student (2.E.3). The model of embedding a faculty member as the Dean of the Library provides additional evidence of the importance of library inclusion in the overall campus community teaching and learning processes. Observations also indicate the value librarians place on the building faculty partnerships to contribute to the Evergreen mission.

Decision-making for overall student, faculty and community users drive the planning of library resources, services and information literacy instruction. The Resource Selection Committee considers and evaluates requests for subscriptions and databases (journals, video streaming, reference sources, and e-books). Statistical data help to improve services, resource holdings and library space. In addition, ACRL and IPEDS statistics are used for peer institutional analysis. User satisfaction surveys guide library and media services improvement. Questions about the library are also included in alumni and end-of-program surveys. Regular communication with faculty through participation in committee work also provides channel for collecting feedback from library patrons. Investigation of Evergreen participation in the Orbis-Cascade Alliance, across 39 Pacific Northwest colleges and universities, indicates a culture of collection collaboration and feedback practices. Positive and supportive feedback collected from student users at the site visit is evidence of the important role that library faculty and staff play at Evergreen.

The self-study report does discuss how the library uses a variety of different measures for evaluating library teaching, services and resources, such as surveys, usage statistics, and listening sessions (2.E.4). However, the Evaluation Committee expresses the following concern.

> *Concern:* There is relatively little assessment evidence in place for addressing library learning outcomes. However, the self-study document and the on-site campus discussions confirmed the promise of a commitment from both the library and

curriculum teams for inclusion of information literacy competencies into the newly evolving first year experience program.

f. Standard 2F Financial Resources

The college has been faced with several financial challenges in recent years including changing state funding structures and the impact of nearly a decade of enrollment decline. Despite these challenges, the college has been able to set aside significant reserves, which play a key role in funding plans outlined in the college's *Evergreen Renews* document.

The college demonstrated an awareness of its financial challenges and it continues to assess the stability of key funding sources including state appropriations, tuition, grants, donations and other non-tuition revenue sources. The campus believes that the state-funding model has stabilized and there are new opportunities for growth in development funding with the appointment of a new Vice President for Advancement. As of yet, philanthropic fund-raising is not included in regular operating budgets.

The key area of concern in terms of financial stability remains tuition revenue. The college recently underwent significant budget reductions in anticipation of further enrollment decline and while plans for enrollment recovery have been identified, the college anticipates that it will take at least three years for renewal plans focused on enrollment recovery to have a material impact on enrollment and therefore tuition revenue at the college. As mentioned above, the college does have significant reserves, which it feels are sufficient to fund elements of the renewal plan while leaving reserves at an adequate level at least in the near-term. However, while current processes do include routine updates to current year enrollment and tuition revenue and there were indications of plans to develop a multi-year enrollment and tuition revenue model, the Evaluation Committee is concerned that college financial planning is not currently based on a realistic multi-year enrollment management plan, thereby putting the institution at risk in terms of long-term financial stability (see Recommendation 3). The Evaluation Committee is also concerned that the current budget process does not provide adequate opportunities for constituent participation in budget development or input on budget decisions, most specifically budget reductions made in response to further enrollment decline in fall, 2018 (2.F.3). The current process does involve input from budget coordinators and vice presidents across campus as well as the Budget Advisory Committee, but the sharing of information by leadership with the faculty and staff in their units appears to have been inconsistent. In addition, concerns were raised that the Faculty Advisory Panel's decreased level of involvement in or opportunity to provide input on budget decisions has reduced the institution's ability to disseminate budget information to the faculty (see Recommendation 4).

The state is the primary funding source for capital funding with some additional capital funding coming from advancement activities. The funding request to the state is based on the college's ten-year capital plan and reflects the institution's strategic plan and related goals. Institutional narratives around three of the four Core Themes reference

facilities as a need. The institution bases its request to the state on these facilities needs as well as other strategic priorities.

The college utilizes an accounting system that follows generally accepted accounting principles, providing decision-makers with timely and accurate financial information. The college undergoes a financial statement audit as well as an internal controls review each year and the results of these are presented to college leadership. The Board of Trustees also accepts audit results. Recent audit opinions have been clean and the institution has implemented changes as needed to address internal control issues. The college has well-defined relationships with its auxiliary enterprises and with The Evergreen State College Foundation.

g. **Standard 2G Physical and Technological Infrastructure**

As indicated in the section above on Standard 2.F, the college aligns its capital funding request with its strategic plan and Core Themes. Adequate state funding for renewal of existing buildings has enabled the campus to continue providing facilities that are accessible, safe, secure and sufficient in quantity to meet the needs of students, faculty and staff. Many buildings having undergone recent state-funded renovations and the institution is seeking state support for several additional projects in the upcoming budget request cycle. The state has also been consistent in its funding for equipment, ensuring that the college has the equipment needed to achieve its goals as reflected in its mission and Core Themes.

The college has experienced some significant infrastructure failures which, while causing short-term issues have served to bring funding needs in this area to the attention of the institution and the state. The state has provided funding for emergency situations in a timely manner and continues to provide funding for improvement to the campus' aging infrastructure. The state has engaged an outside consultant to do deferred maintenance assessments statewide. The college anticipates that its facilities will score relatively well in this assessment due to it being a newer institution and having undergone extensive renovations, but the college is optimistic that this assessment will provide additional evidence in support of the college's infrastructure needs.

The Space and Land Use Group (SLUG) plays a key role in space utilization campus-wide, both in terms of internal uses by faculty, staff and students and in terms of use by external parties. This group reviews space requests, scoring and prioritizing them based on how requests align with the mission of the college, cost, safety, code issues and other relevant elements.

The college has an Environmental Health & Safety office that follows state of Washington regulations related to hazardous or toxic materials. EH&S maintains up-to-date inventories of appropriate substances on campus, it submits annual reports, and provides policies, procedures and training to the campus. Students handling hazardous or toxic materials as part of their studies receive training on safe lab practices from their

faculty as part of the curriculum or from EH&S. Facilities Services performs life safety audits and testing across campus to ensure safety-related systems are performing adequately.

The college has developed and routinely reviews and updates its campus master plan. This master plan reflects the evolving needs of the campus in support of mission fulfillment and is used as a guiding document for determining state funding request priorities in the institution's 10-year capital plan.

While the college has maintained a reliable and up-to-date technology infrastructure there are concerns regarding the availability or quality of technology at the individual employee level. The college currently has a decentralized model for funding information technology, with individual units responsible for identifying resources for technology updates and equipment replacement. The Computing and Communications unit within Finance and Operations has worked with some areas on campus to develop equipment refresh cycles, but participation by units is voluntary and funding comes from the units. The Computing and Communications AVP hopes to create a more centralized funding and refresh model and the evaluation committee encourages the college to consider this approach. The evaluation committee is concerned that the lack of centralized oversight has led to some units not prioritizing technology upgrades or replacements, thereby resulting in staff not having access to adequate information technology resources (2.G.5). Some units indicated that they are using outdated equipment, do not have access to appropriate software related to their areas of responsibility and in some cases have equipment that is no longer functioning and lack access to resources to fund repairs or replacement (2.G.8). The college does have plans to address software deficiencies related to student tracking as part of the *Evergreen Renews* plan.

While support is offered through the computing support center and the help desk, some staff indicated a lack of adequate and consistent training opportunities related to use of technology (2.G.6). The college has begun using Canvas as a tool to provide some required training and is encouraged to explore use of this or other tools to provide on-demand technology-related training opportunities.

The Information Technology Steering Committee provides input on technology needs for specific units across campus. The Chief Information Officer/AVP for Computing and Communications acknowledged that students could have a better voice but indicated that the feedback they do get from students informally via student employees indicates that students feel their technology needs are being met.

>   *Concern:* The Evaluation Committee heard multiple times that ongoing support for technology maintenance is lacking.

VIII. Planning and Implementation

a. Standard 3A: Institutional Planning

Planning has occurred at multiple levels over the timeframe of this review. A comprehensive strategic plan, named "Shaping Our Future, Building on Our Past, 2015-2020." was developed beginning in 2014, and approved by the Board of Trustees in 2016. That plans appears to be the result of extensive campus input, discussion, and review. The plan used as context the Six Expectations and the Five Foci that have been foundational for the campus throughout this period. In addition, the plan reviewed the four Core Themes that had been developed for the Year One report submitted by EVERGREEN. The plan was constructed around six Goals that "integrated with" the Core Themes. The Report includes a paragraph on Assessment, but without substantive detail as to how assessment will be done.

In September 2018, the institution released "*Evergreen Renews,*" a strategic summary. This document was constructed partly in response to continually declining enrollment starting in 2009. By the time the new administration was in place, enrollment had declined at a steady and substantial rate. In anticipation of further decline exacerbated by the campus events of 2016-17, *Evergreen Renews* sought to capture strategies that would reverse the enrollment trend. The plan was written around the McTaggert three-stage model of revitalization. The stages in *Evergreen Renews* are: 1) Restoring Financial Stability; 2) Marketing and Branding; 3) Strengthening Academic Programs and Culture. Built around four goals, specific actions include Paths of Study, a First-Year Experience, the Learning-Teaching Commons, Indigenous Arts and Education, and others. *Renews* appears to be a substantial and creative effort to strengthen the institution. The plan was developed rapidly, and the Evaluation Committee did not get the impression that there had been much collaborative input to the report from campus.

Between the original Strategic Plan, the Evergreen Renews effort, and the Core Theme planning for accreditation, there exists a confusing array of "plans" at the College. There are Goals, objectives, strategies, and assessment plans associated with all of the documents, so it is not surprising that a fair level of confusion exists on campus regarding goals and strategies. This concern forms the basis for Recommendation 4 at the end of this report.

b. Standard 3.B.: Core Theme Planning

Core Theme 1: Integrated Interdisciplinary Learning

INTRODUCTION: It is significant, logical, and positive that this is Evergreen's first Core Theme given that it was established and continues to educate its students in an interdisciplinary environment. Within this Core Theme are three objectives: Integrative, Interdisciplinary Learning; Multiple Modes of Thinking; and Breadth and Depth of Learning. Each is rationalized by its relationship to achievement of the liberal education

promised by Core Theme One and by Evergreen as an institution of higher education. Clearly these three objectives are appropriate to the theme.

STANDARD 3.B. CORE THEME PLANNING: It would appear that all constituencies on campus contribute to planning related to Core Theme One. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators have a role to play whether it is the annual catalog summit at which these stakeholders review and evaluate faculty offerings by the faculty or whether it is through the deans' reviews of how program activities advance learning outcomes.

> *Compliment:* Evergreen State College is to be complimented for the inclusion of all stakeholders in the Core Theme planning processes.

STANDARD 4.A. CORE THEME ASSESSMENT: There certainly seems to be a great deal of activity targeting assessment of Core Theme One. In addition to the planning activities and widespread participation noted in the prior discussion of Standard 3.B., other activities include a Standing Committee on the Curriculum composed of faculty, staff, students, and deans to assess the curriculum and its reflection of the College's Five Foci and Six Expectations.

Nonetheless, assessment of Core Theme One is problematic. Many of the most frequently cited measures that are utilized for assessment are indirect measures based on such indices as student *perception* of achievement (e.g., NSSE) or alumni *satisfaction* surveys. For example, Objective 1 (Integrative, Interdisciplinary Learning) measures achievement of what is an objective matter of having achieved or not achieved this learning goal with, among other tools, a satisfaction survey of alumni asking if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with Evergreen's interdisciplinary approach to higher education. Whether alumni are satisfied is not the same as concluding that the college has achieved this goal. Similarly, the measure of interdivisional learning included in Objective 1 is not an objective or direct measure of whether such learning is occurring, but of the percent of programs (36% in 2016-2017) that included substantive work in at least three divisions. Likewise, Objective 2 (Multiple Modes of Thinking) uses as one measure to gauge students' ability to think the NSSE Engagement Indicator that gauges students' subjective perception of how much their coursework emphasizes higher order thinking. As in the case of the alumni survey, student perception is not the same as goal achievement.

It is also at least somewhat problematic that much of the evidence provided for assessment purposes depends upon transcript reviews. For example, such reviews are used to provide evidence that students can appropriately apply modes of inquiry across disciplines (Objective 1), that they can reflect on the personal and social significance of their work (Objective 2), and that they demonstrate depth and breadth of learning (Objective 3).

Although faculty members are provided an Expectations Coding Key, such assessment practices introduce the elements of human variability and error both in terms of writing and reading. As Evergreen academic assessment relies heavily on the transcript review,

it will be critical for the institution to maintain robust investment in the selection, training, and support of reviewers. The Expectations Coding Key should also be evaluated regularly to ensure it reflects the objectives it is intended to measure. It may also be beneficial to offer all faculty members some training on the transcript review to assist them in providing the most useful narrative evaluations possible.

STANDARD 4.B. CORE THEME IMPROVEMENT: According to the College's assessment metrics it has "mostly achieved" its goal to "improve" Objective 1 (Integrative, Interdisciplinary Learning) by increasing the percentage of students completing interdivisional degrees, increasing the percentage of students taking culminating senior experiences, and high rates of alumni satisfaction. One area the College assesses as not being successful is that more students should take a culminating senior experience. Currently that rate is 53% while its COPLAC peers have closer to 80% of students completing these experiences. One imagines a possible cause for the difference is that the peer schools likely require such an experience whereas Evergreen does not. Although the culture of the College is not to impose course requirements on its students, if Evergreen considers these to be important experiences, the college may wish to explore ways to make them more integral to the curriculum.

The College's assessment of Objective 2, Multiple Modes of Thinking, is that they wanted to "maintain" their metrics and that they have "mostly achieved" that goal. This conclusion is based on rising indicators since 2009 of students' demonstration of integrative, independent, and critical thinking; demonstration of synthesis of learning; higher order thinking; and reflective and integrative learning. The one area in which the percentage has fallen is students' ability to reflect on the personal and social significance of their work (from 91% to 86%).

According to Evergreen, Objective 3, Breadth and Depth of Learning, had set a goal to "improve" and has "achieved improvement." Rises in breadth and depth of knowledge and the ability to demonstrate an ability to use qualitative, quantitative, and creative models of inquiry are attributed by the College of the rise in interdivisional programs, increased faculty emphasis to students of its importance, and implementation of the Academic Statement.

The rise in the indicators for all three objectives since 2009 is impressive and they should be recognized as noteworthy steps in the right direction. However, as noted under Standard 4.A, it is not clear that they are, indeed, actual indicators of the stated outcomes. More objective and direct measures would make the College's argument stronger.

Core Theme 2: The Individual Engaged in Community

INTRODUCTION: Core Theme 2 reflects the institution's deep commitment to social justice and individual responsibility. This Core Theme is echoed in Evergreen's mission, the Five Foci, and the Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate. Within this Core Theme are three objectives: Participate collaboratively and responsibly in our diverse

society; communicate creatively and effectively; articulate and assume responsibility for one's work; linking theory and practice. These objectives comprise both the foundations necessary for meaningful community engagement and the application of those foundations. These objectives are all directly drawn from the Foci and the Expectations, and thus are consistent with Evergreen communications of the purpose and outcomes of the education it offers.

STANDARD 3.B. CORE THEME PLANNING: Planning related to Core Theme two is accomplished in many ways across Evergreen and at many levels. This reflects the institution's overarching investment in community engagement. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators participate in planning and supporting activities for this Core Theme. EVERGREEN has several centers, organizations, and policies that support active engagement in a variety of ways both within Evergreen, proximal, and international communities.

> *Compliment:* The Evaluation Committee compliments Evergreen on the deep commitment to community engagement reflected in this Core Theme, consistently expressed in Evergreen published communications, and actively embraced throughout the institution by students, staff, faculty, and administration.

STANDARD 4.A. CORE THEME ASSESSMENT: The main source of data for assessing the objectives of Core Theme two is the transcript review. The transcript review is an example of Evergreen drawing on its distinctive approaches as it depends upon faculty narrative evaluations of students. The inclusion of the student generated Academic Statement enhances the data available for review in this process. The transcript review is used to evaluate every objective under Core Theme two, and is supplemented by indirect sources that gather student self-assessment date (NSSE), institution inputs (End-of-Program Review), and satisfaction feedback (alumni surveys). The Evergreen discussion of the assessment results for these objectives reflects the primacy of the transcript review in their considerations; however, they do not ignore opportunities for improvement presented in the indirect (self-assessment, inputs, satisfaction) data. For example, Evergreen discusses satisfaction data along side institutional retention data (page 150), and notes that addressing student satisfaction earlier through advising may improve both.

As Evergreen academic assessment relies heavily on the transcript review, it will be critical for the institution maintain robust investment in the selection, training, and support of reviewers. The Expectations Coding Key should also be evaluated regularly to ensure it reflects the objectives it is intended to measure. It may also be beneficial to offer all faculty members some training on the transcript reviews to assist them in providing the most useful narrative evaluations possible.

STANDARD 4.B. CORE THEME IMPROVEMENT: Evergreen reports that they have "mostly achieved" or "achieved" their performance goals for each of the objectives under Core Theme 2. Evergreen s accreditation report and other documents (*Evergreen Renews*, MOU with the union on Paths of Study, Academic Statement student guidance

through Writing Center, etc.) demonstrate the use of academic assessment results in planning, decision making, allocation of resources, and academic learning and support. The example of advising discussed in the section above has already been included in internal planning documents with resources identified to enhance those services to students.

Evergreen's transcript review found an impressive 100% of students demonstrated achievement of Objective 2: Communicate creatively and effectively. The table on page 163 seems to indicate that challenge remains to support students in demonstrating their communication skills in their Academic Statements. The work to include support in the Writing Center is an example of Evergreen using academic assessment to enhance learning support. Evergreen results on Objective 4: Linking Theory and Practice also yielded impressive student achievement, but the inclusion of the indirect measure on inputs helps signal that academic planning revealed the need to support the Center for Community Based Learning and Action to ensure students have access to community-based learning experiences.

Evergreen's assessment of Core Theme 2 indicates the college is collecting meaningful data and using it to maintain important aspects of their educational mission. Evergreen combines direct and indirect data sources to inform their institutional planning and allocation efforts.

Core Theme 3: Environmental Stewardship and Social Justice

INTRODUCTION: Environmental Stewardship and Social Justice have been a part of the College's mission since its inception.   The ongoing infusion of this Core Theme into programs and the services are reflected in various initiatives. Many features of Evergreen's campus and curriculum revolve around the overarching intent to promote awareness of this theme. Programs and services are goal-oriented with desired outcomes that contribute to the accomplishment of the three objectives: Environmentally sustainable institutional operations, Environmental and social justice curriculum, and Foster awareness of sustainability and social justice beyond the curriculum. These three objectives are explicitly appropriate to the theme.

Evergreen defines sustainability broadly to include topics such as ecology, consumption, sustainable design, sustainable business, social justice, environmental justice, environmental ethics, climate change, environmental health, conservation, and understanding the interaction of society and the environment.   Such content appears across planning units and is found in both the undergraduate and graduate curriculum (Master's in Environmental Studies).

Many features of Evergreen's campus and curriculum successfully promote awareness of sustainability and social justice beyond the curriculum. The campus itself is an environmental treasure and seamlessly weaves theory-to-practice teaching about environmentalism and sustainability into its everyday life.

Many campus initiatives facilitate increased community awareness. Examples from 2011 include Synergy, the Science Carnival, the Center for Community-Based Learning and Action, and many others.   Fundamental pedagogical strategies support the connection of sustainability and justice theory with real-life applications, emphasizing field studies, hands-on research and community service.

STANDARD 3.B. CORE THEME PLANNING: All constituencies on campus (Students, faculty, staff, and administrators) appear to have contributed to planning of Core Theme Three. The campus itself was defined with 70% (700 acres) of the land set aside as a forested environmental preserve. Sustainability, social justice and environmental studies figure prominently in several undergraduate and graduate programs.   The College also hosts targeted events, such as Science Carnival to increase community awareness of this Core Theme.

> *Compliment:* The Evaluation Committee compliments Evergreen for infusing environmental stewardship and social justice into its curriculum, services and operations.

STANDARD 4.A. CORE THEME ASSESSMENT**:** It is evident that the approach to planning for Core Theme objectives and evaluation of their accomplishment is data-driven. Data is used to determine if College achieved, mostly achieved, partially achieved, or did not achieve the goals and either maintenance or improvement of the Core Theme objective is further planned.

This data driven approach applies as well to planning for programs and services that support this Core Theme. The Core Theme makes use of data that provides multiple dimensions of perspective for each of its objectives. These measures are meaningful in the context of the Core Theme and its objectives and are assessable.

One of the indicators of success for Objective 1, Environmentally sustainable operations, is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.   The office of sustainability gathers data on the total greenhouse gas emissions/carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCDE) by tracking emissions from on-site sources, purchased electricity and indirect sources.   Another indicator is the campus waste volumes-landfills data collected by the Facilities Services and the third indicator is the percent of local and organic foods used in campus dining services. In 2013 the college identified a need to improve the environmentally sustainable institutional operations based on the data available.   In 2018, this objective is indicated to have been partially achieved. The institution aims to improve. The College appears to be deeply committed to this Core Theme objective; however, several limiting factors appear to hinder accomplishment. For example, Evergreen's greenhouse gas emissions/carbon footprint (GHG) from purchased electricity has dropped to zero due to a student fee that pays for renewable energy credits. However, other sources of GHG such as commuting, travel, waste, and the use of natural gas are more difficult to stem because they require changing human behavior or replacing expensive infrastructure.   Likewise, data on campus waste volumes in landfill indicates a drop in

recent years from 316 tons to 283 tons, and the percentage of local/organic food sourcing from a high of 37% in 2012 to a low of 18% in 2017.

Data gathered from End of Program Review and graduate directors on percentage of programs that addressed sustainability, environmental and social justice and alumni survey is used to assess the accomplishment of Objective 2, Environmental and Social Justice Curriculum. The curriculum appears to have gained momentum with introduction of a "Sustainability and Justice" (S&J) planning unit in 2011.   Data from End-of-Program Review Assessments indicates a consistent rise in the percentage of sustainability studies in undergraduate and graduate curricula. Data from alumni survey indicates similar increases. Alumni communicate satisfaction with their achievement of this Core Theme objective. Alumni Surveys show that between 2010 and 2016, 61% to 71% of alumni were satisfied with how their Evergreen education contributed to their learning about sustainability. This includes their ability to understand the interaction of society and the environment, and to understand and apply scientific principles and methods to inquiry about sustainability.   The institution claims to have achieved its goal and indicates maintaining the focus in this area.

Four indicators are used to assess the level of success in achieving Objective 3, Fostering awareness of sustainability and social justice beyond the curriculum. Data indicates that the number of organizations that maintain active relationships with the Center for Community-Based Learning and Action has grown from 80 in AY2010-11 to 104 in AY2016-17. During that same period, the number of active student organizations specifically involved in sustainability and social justice has grown from 3 to 16. And the percentage of new residential students who participate in sustainability training and education, which was not reported before 2014, was at 55% in 2015, an increase of 3% from the prior year. Finally, the percentage of new students who participate in Community-to-Community Day of Action during orientation increased from less than 10% between 2010 and 2016 (38-100 students) to 39% (449 students) during fall 2017 orientation. The increase resulted from the decision to make community-to-community day mandatory for first-year students. The institution claims to have achieved this objective and intends to maintain the progress it has made.

STANDARD 4.B. CORE THEME IMPROVEMENT: Further progress is necessary to accomplish objective one, "Environmentally sustainable institutional operations". The institution aims to improve but does not indicate a plan other than better overall coordination of planning and execution across the divisions of the College. The institution needs to find means to improve the infrastructure, and other methods to collect and assess meaningful data. A clear understanding of what Evergreen means by sustainability is not obvious since faculty from different areas of the College appear to have different definitions and concerns about the inclusion of sustainability studies in the curriculum.   Continued interdisciplinary and multidimensional dialogues are necessary to develop a better understanding of sustainability.   Maintaining recent growth in the curricular focus may not be sufficient to meet the intended goals. Evergreen should strive to increase the percentage of sustainability studies in

undergraduate curricula. Data used to make informed decisions about whether to continue, or modify, the programs and services appears to have gaps.   There is no data reported on the percentage of new residential students who participated in sustainability training and education, beyond 2015.   Data on participation of new residential students in sustainability training and education needs to be up to date.

> *Concern:* Continued work on Core Theme 3 is needed to provide reliable data in support of the Theme and to assist in communication and understanding about the theme.

Core Theme 4: Diversity and Equity

INTRODUCTION: The founding mission of The Evergreen State College had diversity and equity as foundational values. Evergreen has embedded this value in coursework, student support services, and co-curricular activity. For instance, a commitment to diversity and equity informs the university's five foci and "Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate." Several institutional offices and programs such as the First Peoples, Multicultural, Trans & Queer Services, The Multicultural Scholars Program, Evening and Weekend Program, and the Longhouse Education and Cultural Center reflect this commitment. Student scholarship allocation undergirds this focus, with the bulk of their aid supporting "the most vulnerable students." Recently, the institution has made further strides at institutionalizing their emphasis on diversity and equity. These include, but not limited to:

- The creation of a vice president and vice provost for equity and inclusion and making a successful hire in 2017 into that position. That position, since the report's writing, has been elevated to a Vice President of Inclusive Excellence & Student Success.
- The new Washington Center Learning and Teaching Commons, with a group focused on "equity-minded" pedagogies, among other strategies, to "promote inclusive excellence" within the curriculum.
- A common read for faculty on the theme of equity
- Incorporation of an equity measure in faculty five-year reviews
- Community Forward, an academic deans' initiative "to build connection among members of the Evergreen Community."
- A review of retention proposals supporting Latinx/ELL students and their academic pathways.
- A summer 2018 "inclusive excellence" professional development opportunity for faculty.
- The Fall 2018 Equity Symposium

These efforts, initiatives, and structures support Evergreen's interest in a "strengthened systemic commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion" and provide evidence of their achievements in that regard.

While the College is able cite numerous efforts to demonstrate its efforts to enhance diversity and equity, the institution still has much work to do in this arena. Reports by the Equity and Inclusion Council and Report of The Independent External Review Panel on The Evergreen State College Response to the Spring 2017 Campus Events offer insights that suggest the nature of the work to be done and challenges to which the College must prepare to respond. These reports may be instructive in identifying efforts that might contribute further to success in Core Theme 4.

STANDARD 3.B, CORE THEME PLANNING: Evergreen clearly offers programs, curricula, and activities that align with its emphasis on Diversity and Equity. Examples include: First Peoples Multicultural Advising Services, The Multicultural Scholars Program, The Trans & Queer Center, the Unity Lounge, the Legacy Hall Community and Rainbow Fort. Student groups, including those committed to diversity and equity, have space on campus to meet and plan and receive funding from the university. Evergreen's Indigenous programming has gained international renown and includes a signature space on campus: the Longhouse.

Evergreen has recently elevated its intention to provide services and programs for Diversity and Equity through the creation of and hiring to fill the position of Vice Provost/Vice President for Equity and Inclusion. (The title for this position has subsequently been changed to Vice President for Inclusive Excellence and Student Success.) Dr. Chassity Holliman-Douglas holds that office and has begun the initial phases of further institutionalizing Core Theme 4. Among these plans are: "annual divisional plans to promote inclusive excellence, the creation of an equity and arts lounge, and new programming in the Washington Center to further develop faculty development on the theme of diversity and equity."

STANDARD 4.B, CORE THEME ASSESSMENT: Dr. Holliman-Douglas has occupied her position for one year and she has conducted listening sessions, professional development, and a Campus Culture and Climate Assessment. The College may benefit from establishing metrics and a process for assessing, over time, the degree to which this position contributes to advancing its diversity and equity Core Theme.

The Evaluation Committee had the opportunity for a conversation with students, in which students were especially engaging and expressive. Students praised the College and its performance relative to this Core Theme, particularly as it relates to *learning across significant differences*. Students were able to provide concrete examples of how the diversity and equity Core Theme and the related objectives are evident in their educational experiences. Students were especially appreciative of the commitment of faculty, the level of collaboration fostered among students, and the competence faculty demonstrate in facilitating difficult conversations in the classroom. While these student perspectives on their learning experiences were compelling, the Evaluation Committee is concerned that the data provided relied upon indirect measures versus direct measures of student learning in relation to *learning across differences* and experiences in regards to a *supportive community*.

STANDARD 4.B, CORE THEME IMPROVEMENT: Evergreen charts declines on the specific indicators for Objective 1, Learning across significant differences, and for Objective 2, a Supportive Community. Evergreen notes this explicitly with respect to a partial achievement of Objective 1. They note that Objective 2 "is the only objective where the College did not meet its goal to improve." On both counts, the decline in progress represents a concern, both to Evergreen and to the Evaluation Committee. For example, Evergreen reports a drop of 5% or greater across both students and alumni across four indicators of learning across differences and community. First-year students experienced the steepest drop, with 9% fewer first-year students expressing satisfaction with the freshmen seminar designed to be a supportive classroom environment. Evergreen further observes, "students are significantly less likely to engage across political differences than students at other public liberal arts colleges," which they call out as an area for "further reflection and growth."

In the institutional self-study, the College notes that it has not achieved at a satisfactory level relative to its objective to build a supportive community. Additionally, previous work and reporting on this issue cite a range of examples of how the College should strive to improve its performance in the area of diversity and equity. It seems imperative that the College develops a plan for how it will prioritize, approach, and implement the many recommendations that have been received. Such planning will make visible the direction of the institution's efforts. This Core Theme would be strengthened by more direct measures of student learning.

Objective 3, Student Access and Success appear as an area of challenge, but also improvement for Evergreen. They report more than 10% growth in low-income student enrollment at the college. That is a clear indication of their dedication to be a place of access as are the tuition waivers offered, which amount to nearly $3.5 million. At the same time, low-income student retention has fallen from 84% to 78%. That 78% rate, however, exceeds the overall student retention rate, which sits at 75%. Evergreen's success with low-income populations, even accounting for a recent retention dip, raises a question about how efforts to serve low-income populations might also positively impact their efforts at diversity, equity, and inclusion? Of course, there is likely substantial overlap between their low-income population and underserved populations with other identity indicators.

Faculty expressed concern that the level of support services provided is not sufficient to meet the educational and personal needs of the Evergreen student body, which is comprised of a significant populations of students who required academic remediation and other supplemental academic support. Additionally, faculty believe attention should be given to the fact that students appear to be struggling with increased anxiety, persistent time demands, and mounting financial challenges, along with other stressors. The College should reexamine its resource commitments to these areas that directly influence student access, success, and retention. Given the dynamic changes in demographics of the College's student population, the Evaluation Committee believes it is important that the College give focused attention to building visible and durable

student support structures to support the needs of students who are identified as underprepared.

The social context of the Evergreen campus and its mission is important in understanding their approach to leading and managing issues and incidents related to diversity and equity. These contexts influence the ways in which College leaders communicate with each other personally and broadly. College leaders are learning to adapt in the midst of difficult internal circumstances and diverse external audiences of supporters and detractors. Leading in the face of intense scrutiny greatly influences the degree to which the institution is transparent in its communication of issues. The repercussions of this newly adopted approach to communication is a lower sense of inclusion, fragmentation of faculty from administration, a loss of awareness of the campus leadership agenda, and a greater sense of isolation among various campus communities. This communication dynamic and its influence on the campus community seems to call for attention, as it appears to affect the College's ability to build a supportive community and advance other important work (See Recommendation 4).

II. Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability

a. Standard 5A Mission Fulfillment

Evergreen is fulfilling its mission. In fact, in the face of significant budgetary, enrollment, and public relations hardships, the college has remained true to its roots, working diligently to provide students with a distinctive educational experience. That experience is novel in the world of public higher education, but that model, capitalizing on interdisciplinarity, freedom of student choice, and narrative feedback, is a good reminder for all of us in higher education that educational experimentation remains important, and that students learn in different ways. Evergreen freely admits that their approach is not for every student, but the college is committed to serving the students who choose to come there.

There are areas of special responsibility that come with such a model in terms of defining the expected outcomes and assessing them effectively. Subject to the recommendations to follow, Evergreen is delivering a strong educational experience through a highly dedicated faculty, assisted by committed staff and administration.

The institution is fully aware that this is a highly dynamic time for itself. The future will require serious and ongoing introspection on the part of Evergreen in the areas of addressing student needs, demonstration of effectiveness, enrollment management, and financial diligence. The faculty, staff, and administration are committed to addressing these challenges.

b. Standard 5B Adaptation and Sustainability

The Evaluation Committee recognizes that in the *Evergreen Renews* plan, the college has made significant progress in identifying potential next steps, including the sources of

resources needed to implement these steps. However, as indicated under Standard 2.F and reflected in the below recommendation, the Evaluation Committee is concerned that the college is not including a realistic multi-year enrollment forecast in its planning process. Failure to meet enrollment goals has a material impact on the institution's resources both in terms of current year funding versus expenses and potential erosion of critical reserves. The evaluation committee encourages the college to continue development of the elements of its *Evergreen Renews* plans, including detailed implementation timelines and estimated timing of results for each elements and to use the results of this process to inform future enrollment projections. The Evaluation Committee also encourages the institution to implement its plans for regular review of outcomes from the *Evergreen Renews* initiatives in order to make changes, as necessary, for improvement.

III. Summary

Evergreen provides an important alternative to a traditional college education, and the college has remained true to their mission. They have evolved their programming over the years and they are continuing to do so. The institution is going through significant change at the present time, and it will be important for accreditation standards to remain high on their priority list. The Evaluation Committee was proud to work with the faculty, staff, students, and administration on this evaluation.

IV. Commendations and Recommendations

a. Commendations:

1. The Evaluation Committee commends faculty, staff, students, and Trustees for their collective spirit and dedication to the foundations of Evergreen in the face of challenging circumstances and events.

2. The Evaluation Committee commends Evergreen for the high level of mutual respect between students and faculty, and their enthusiasm and engagement in the interdisciplinary teaching and learning process.

3. The Evaluation Committee recognizes and commends the level of energy and dedication required to maintain a distinctive opportunity for interdisciplinary higher education. The Evaluation Committee further notes the Academic Statement and Paths of Study initiatives are well aligned with Mission, Five Foci, and Six Expectations of an Evergreen graduate.

b. Recommendations

1. The Evaluation Committee observed that some objectives lack direct measures for the assessment of Core Themes. The Evaluation Committee recommends that Evergreen better align Core Theme indicators and measurement tools to achieve more meaningful results that lead to improvement. (Standard 4.A.6)

2. The Evaluation Committee recommends that planning for Core Theme 4 should address recommendations from previous work done in this area in order to better achieve Core Theme 4 objectives (Standard 3.B.2).

3. The Evaluation Committee recommends that given the consistent decline in enrollment starting in 2010, Evergreen develop a realistic multi-year enrollment management plan in support of financial resource planning (Standard 2.F.2).

4. The Evaluation Committee recommends that Evergreen conduct institutional planning in a systematic and integrated manner, making use of comprehensive opportunities for input and communication among all constituents of the campus. Further, the Evaluation Committee recommends that when plans are implemented, they be made available and communicated to appropriate constituencies. (Standard 3.A.1, 3.A.2)