

The Evergreen State College
Evergreen New Student Survey 2007
Olympia Campus – Transfer Students

Why New Transfer Students Left Previous Institution

On the Evergreen New Student Survey 2007, students were asked to respond to the question: “If you are a student transferring from another college or university, why did you choose to leave your previous institution?” Students’ responses were grouped and analyzed by transfer from two-year institutions and from four-year institutions.¹

Broad themes among transfer students

(Note: Some students had comments that fit within multiple categories; therefore, percentages add up to more than 100%.)

	Number Transfers from 2-year (N=187)*	Percent of Transfers from 2-year**	Number of Transfers from 4-year (N=88) *	Percent of Transfers from 4-year**
Transferred from 2-year institution, left to pursue four-year degree and/or completed degree	120	64.2%	3	3.4% ²
Drawn by academics at Evergreen and/or dissatisfaction with academics at other institution	36	19.3%	53	60.2%
General match/fit with institution/did not specify academics	14	7.5%	12	13.6%
Location	13	7.0%	14	15.9%
Social climate and community	5	2.7%	13	14.8%
Cost/financial issues	3	1.6%	8	9.1%
Need a change (General comments)	3	1.6%	0	0.0%
Other	7	3.7%	11	12.5%

*N refers to the number of students who responded to the question.

**Percentages exclude students who left question blank.

The most frequent response among students from two-year institution was a general comment about completing an associate’s degree or the fact that they previously attended a two-year institution. Among the responses of students who had transferred from a four-year institution, there was a greater proportion who wrote about being drawn by academics at Evergreen or dissatisfaction with academics at another institution. Also, there were greater proportions of students from four-year institutions who wrote about location and social climate/community as factors.

¹ Data is from BANNER. It should be noted, that students sometimes “swirl” between two- and four-year institutions; therefore, there are some limitations in creating viewing students simply as two-year or four-year transfers.

² There were three students who were coded as transfers from four-year institutions in BANNER, but had comments about transferring from two-year institutions. Further investigation revealed that these students did transfer most recently from two-year institutions.

Detail on the Comments of Transfer Students from Two-year Institutions

The most common response to this question by students transferring from two-year institutions was simply that they were ready to pursue a four-year degree and had either graduated with an associate's degree or were simply ready to go to a four-year institution. Many wrote short statements, such as "2 year college, graduated" or "My transfer degree was complete :)" A few combined a statement about attending a community college with sentiments about receiving a quality advanced education, for example: "My previous institution was a community college. I feel after attending there for nearly three years, it is time to move on and further expand my learning."

The second most common response pertained to either being drawn to academics at Evergreen and/or dissatisfaction with academics at their previous institution. Some students emphasized the draw to Evergreen; others described being repelled from their previous institution. The following quotes represent the kinds of themes among those students who had comments about academics.

Alternative Approach to Education at Evergreen (N=7)

- "I wanted to seek out a college that was more like my very alternative public high school and Evergreen was very similar."
- "I was attending community college and I wanted to further my experience in the Environmental field. Community colleges do not have such an interdisciplinary approach to learning esp. in the environmental field."
- "More opportunities for the kind of learning I want."
- "I want to graduate from Evergreen and be involved in their great style of learning."
- "More opportunities for the kind of learning I want."
- "Too big, wanted a new style of learning, wanted to be surrounded by more people similar to myself."
- "I graduated with an AA, which included taking every interesting elective the school had to offer. My next step was to find the school that would let me continue to study multiple fields without choosing a 'major.'"

Curriculum at Evergreen (N=4)

- "Liked the course selections available at Evergreen"
- "Unique curriculum, one class at a time, broad field of study, reputation for environmentally focused school"
- "I heard TESC has great computer course."
- "To pursue more advanced course work."

Prior institution was unfulfilling, unchallenging, boring (N=8)

- "Community College felt too much like high school, and I found it to be boring and unenjoyable."
- "Community college unfulfilling"
- "Didn't really enjoy the educational process at other universities."
- "I am going to a community college- kind of bored there."
- "I have attended four colleges prior to Evergreen... All of them expected me to follow an academic plan that would have forced to take numerous courses that I had no interest whatsoever in taking (namely in the fields of mathematics and science). My focus was more based in the fields of politics and art, neither of which these colleges offered me much educational support in."
- "I attended community college before and it (trad. ed.) is not up my alley."

- "I could not find what I wanted there as far as educationally and socially."
- "I hate conventional school at college level."

Did not like focus of prior institution/General learning Environment (N=7)

- "I was attending an art school, I felt the liberal art classes were inadequate and missed 'the point.' I didn't feel like I was getting any smarter, I just felt like I was spending a lot of time and money doing things I did not want to do."
- "Poor learning environment, unhappy with progress."
- "The school administration seemed far less focused on the depth and roots of real, creative education and instead focused on simply mimicking other traditional institutions with little consideration for the effectiveness of their chosen methods."
- "Too skill oriented"
- "I have different goals for my education than what my previous college offered."
- "I was unimpressed with the institution's methods and capacities..."
- "Not a good place for me to learn."

Prior institution did not facilitate faculty/student interaction (N=3)

- Did not feel that the proper attention was paid to undergraduates. Very difficult to even meet with the professors, let alone get to know them.
- "The faculty was very unqualified helping with advising problems."
- "Desire for a BA, better teachers"

Did not have classes wanted/required to take unwanted classes (N=3)

- "They didn't have the type of classes I wanted. I was also forced to take a lot of useless classes."
- "It did not offer the environment or educational opportunities I was looking for."
- "I didn't want to take two more years of Math or an AA."

Some students focused on both the pull of Evergreen and the lack of enthusiasm for the prior institution. For example: "My community college education felt stagnant and Evergreen allowed me to concentrate on what I really want to do in life." Another wrote: "...Community College seemed to be more of a transition from high school, and I wanted classes to really sink my teeth into."

One student wrote "academic problems" without explaining if they had a particular issue with the previous institution. Another wrote of "poor grades and a sense of failure because of undiagnosed ADHD." Again, it is uncertain how much emphasis the student would put on either Evergreen or the prior institution in transferring.

There were an additional set of comments in which students wrote about general fit with Evergreen or a lack of fit with their previous institution. These comments lacked specificity, and therefore, were not included in the category related to academics.

Greater match with Evergreen (N=8)

- "[Previous institution] could not offer me what I wanted."
- "Evergreen offers so much more."
- "Evergreen will be a much better fit for me."
- "Because I like Evergreen a lot better than a Community College."
- "I left because I couldn't wait any longer to get to Evergreen."
- "I was only there to build credits to transfer to Evergreen"

- "It didn't fit me as well as I think Evergreen does."
- "My previous institution was a 2 year college and I wanted to continue my education. Evergreen seemed like a good place to do that."

Lack of fit with previous institution (N=6)

- "I could not stand community college."
- "I didn't like my previous situation at community college."
- "I hated it."
- "...My first time in college I was not satisfied with my experience."
- "It wasn't meeting my personal needs."
- "They didn't meet any more of my needs."

Thirteen transfers from two-year institutions wrote about location. Some emphasized wanting to leave the place where they had been living (N=4) and two wrote about moving closer to family. One student merely wrote "location" without clarifying their reasons and some students just wrote that they had moved (N=4). Others mentioned traits, such as "West coast" or their desire to move out of a city.

Location (N=13)

- "Did not want living at home"
- "I wanted to leave my hometown."
- "Got a job and moved."
- "Get out of the house and [state where living]"
- "...now that my parents have retired, and have returned to Washington State, which is where they are originally from, I ended up applying and being accepted to Evergreen State College, which I ironically had been hoping to attend ever since my teenage years!"
- "I was eighteen and I had nothing in common with the other students and hated the area, it was a bad choice to begin with."
- "Left the state."
- "Location."
- "Moved."
- "Moved from area."
- "My family lives in the area."
- "Wanted out of busy city."
- "West Coast..."

Social climate was cited by five of the transfer students from two-year institutions.

Community and Social Climate (N=5)

- "I chose to leave the community college I was attending because I wanted to experience the social difference between a community college in the east to that of a top notch institution such as Evergreen in the west."
- "I could not find what I wanted there as far as educationally and socially."
- "I have attended four colleges prior to Evergreen... all of these institutions carried a somewhat conservative and elitist atmosphere with them, causing me to feel incredibly isolated and alienated socially during my time at all of them. I strongly believe Evergreen will be a breath of fresh air for me on many levels."

- "I was eighteen and I had nothing in common with the other students and hated the area, it was a bad choice to begin with."
- "...wanted to be surrounded by more people similar to myself."

Three students mentioned reasons related to **cost and financial aid**:

- "I was unimpressed with the institution's methods and capacities, lack of organization, cost, and financial aid opportunities."
- "Too expensive."
- "Too expensive, received AA degree."

The comments of 7 students did not fit within categories of three or more similar comments. Therefore, they were grouped in "Other":

- "Evergreen accepted me."
- "Hadn't attended in years."
- "I found the Evergreen administrative team to be much more personal than other colleges."
- "It was all in the plan."
- "It was time."
- "Went to work full time in [1970s] and am just resuming study now."
- "Work and lack of discipline."

Detail on the Comments of Transfer Students from Four-year Institutions

Among students transferring from four-year institutions, the most common kind of comment pertained to academics at Evergreen or at the previous institution.

Alternative Approach to Education at Evergreen (N=3)

- "Academic freedom, community based opportunities, location, cost, programs."
- "I am interested in a 'non traditional' education."
- "I missed Olympia, and was very attracted to the contract study style"

General Learning Environment at Evergreen (N=1)

- "I wanted smaller, more personalized institution."

Prior institution was unfulfilling, unchallenging, boring (N=8)

- "Academic structure was too constricting, and I ultimately found it unfulfilling."
- "Didn't feel like I was bettering myself or becoming better prepared for a career."
- "Felt stagnant at last institution."
- "I was attending [a private Washington university] and was EXTREMELY unhappy with my education. I was getting very little back in return for the money and effort I was putting in."
- "It did not fulfill my needs as a student in terms of independent learning."
- "It was not intellectually stimulating enough; students were unmotivated and apathetic; it was like one big rat race; and the environment was completely unstimulating."
- "The classwork and academic environment were not intellectually, morally, or socially stimulating."
- "The school I was attending before had a pathetic approach to teaching Environmental Science. We NEVER left the classroom or did anything besides memorize facts from a book and regurgitate them onto a test. I cannot prepare for the future of the Environment like that so I decide to go someplace else."

Did not like focus of prior institution/General learning Environment (N=29)

- "An anonymous shuffle-through education is not interesting to me."
- "Because the previous institutions that I have attended did not allow for interdisciplinary study or educational flexibility."
- "Did not satisfy my hopes for college education i.e. very stiff and not career oriented for non-professional degrees."
- "Didn't fit academically or socially."
- "Divided departments, academic, personal struggles and complications."
- "Every class had over 200 people in it. I had ONE class that had 45. I excelled in that class."
- "...also the school and the teachers were not very open-minded helpful and a lot of time was wasted on projects unrelated to what I wanted to do. I went to an art school and it was not inspiring."
- "I did not like... the massive student body... the lack of power of student government, the letter grade system, the classes everyone had to take that no one actually took the time to even learn in anyway, the lack of activities on campus, the apathetic attitude towards environmental stability by the school..."
- "I did not like the rubric."
- "I don't do well at traditional schools."

- "I grew in a different way than many of my peers and my worldview and direction did not fit in with the schools' as much as it did when I entered..."
- "I wanted to learn what I wanted, not what they told me to."
- "It didn't provide me academically, environmental, and to small degree socially what I expected."
- "It was 12 years ago and I didn't see any value to that style of education."
- "It was an intellectually and spiritually stifling establishment."
- "It was too expensive, and I was unsatisfied with the traditional style of education."
- "Lack of interdisciplinary incorporated studies and lack of arts college."
- "No way to design own educational programs."
- "Poor education, poor school."
- "Social and geographical incompatibilities as well as a desire for more choice in classes."
- "The academic environment did not complement my skills or intelligence, actually hindered them. I was unable to focus on just one field of study but had no decent way of bridging fields, so I ended up doing poorly."
- "The learning environment there was unengaging and arrogant... I am self-motivated and diligent when I am interested in the subject matter but grossly apathetic if I feel that I am not truly learning anything and I am tired of being graded on different scales so that all the grades amount to nothing! The learning atmosphere at Evergreen seemed much more appropriate for me because of its less structured approach to degree earning and its location."
- "The previous institution was not conducive to my being successful creatively. I did not feel like I had ample opportunity to accomplish the goals I had set for myself."
- "Too big of a school/ too big classes."
- "Too big/impersonal/institution-y."
- "Too large anonymity."
- "Uncreative, unapproachable, too large, taught by TAs, no practical application, too much red tape to conduct independent research."
- "[University] was too large, not integrated learning, not practical learning, impersonal staff, overall inadequate education."
- "Wanted a more round/broader education than was offered at last college."

Prior institution did not facilitate faculty/student interaction (N=5)

- "Didn't like the politics of the school and how impersonal [previous institution] was with students and the professors."
- "I was attending [a college in California] and felt it was far too bureaucratic and there wasn't a close connection between faculty and students."
- "It was bad. Had bad teachers and bad students."
- "The faculty... were awful."
- "I did not like the style of teaching my previous school offered. Large class sizes and the feeling of unimportance in classes."

Did not have classes wanted/required to take unwanted classes (N=5)

- "...I didn't feel as if the academics fit my personal needs, and didn't want to take classes that had no use to me, and didn't interest me. Sitting through a class that is full of material you already know, because it's a requirement is painful. It is also very uninspiring. I want to be inspired and motivated to do the things I want to do in my life, and my previous institute [sic]... was not capable of providing that for me."

- "I left because they wanted me to pay them to teach me things I didn't want to learn."
- "It felt like a continuation of high school, and it offered no classes that intrigued me or peaked [sic] my interests."
- "Not personal enough, few opportunities in feminist theory."
- "The school I went to before was overseas and it was too expensive and way too small. It also didn't have the major I was interested in."

One student simply wrote: "lack of focus," but was not specific as to whether it was their own lack of focus or a previous institution's lack of focus. Similarly, another student wrote: "Lack of individual engagement."

Thirteen students cited a **general lack of fit**, without specifically citing academics:

- "Didn't fit it. Bad experience."
- "...it didn't offer me the opportunities I needed."
- "I was tired of settling for something I didn't know I wanted"
- "It was not a good fit for me."
- "It was not at all the right environment."
- "It was not suited for my needs... and I flunked out at the end."
- "It wasn't what I had expected."
- "Many reasons; it was a terrible experience."
- "[Specific University] is the worst ...school ever."
- "Simply wasn't working."
- "Universities suck."
- [Specific University] was not the college for me.

Location was mentioned by 14 students who had transferred from 4-year institutions:

- "...location."
- "Distance."
- "I chose to leave [previous institution] and attend Evergreen because of the location. [The previous institution] was too far from my home town and I am very close to my mom."
- "I did not like the location, the car-oriented area, the unhealthy cafeteria, the massive student body, the lack of diversity and culture of the town, the lack of diversity in the student body..."
- "I missed Olympia..."
- "I no longer live in the area."
- "I wanted to move out of the South as well as a red state... Enough said."
- "Location change"
- "Moved."
- "Relocated."
- "Social and geographical incompatibilities..."
- "...The physical environment was seasonally severe and made me feel glum all winter. The challenge of being away from my family and Olympia, the best city in the world, was becoming increasingly difficult rather than subsiding with time..."
- "The weather of [Northeastern city] was too demanding and expensive."
- "Too expensive, far away."

Thirteen students commented on social climate at the prior institution as a reason that they transferred.

Social Climate and Community (N=13)

- "Didn't fit academically or socially."
- "Felt restrictive, conforming rigid social paradigm."
- "I chose to leave because of the lack of community and diversity at the school and city..."
- "I did not like... the lack of diversity and culture of the town, the lack of diversity in the student body... the apathetic attitude towards environmental stability by the school..."
- "I didn't like the people there..."
- "I didn't like the social situation at my previous university and didn't feel as if people there understood the ways in which their actions affected others. I didn't like the way the administration handled these issues..."
- "I grew in a different way than many of my peers and my worldview and direction did not fit in with the schools' as much as it did when i entered..."
- "It didn't provide me academically, environmental, and to small degree socially what I expected."
- "...students were unmotivated and apathetic..."
- "My previous college had absolutely no sense of community and there were no activities in which to meet new people that were at that time possible to attend..."
- "Not making any connections. Just going to classes and sitting alone and eating alone and no effort made by the college to show me groups or ways to get involved."
- "Social and geographical incompatibilities..."
- "The classwork and academic environment were not intellectually, morally, or socially stimulating."

Some students mentioned financial reasons for transferring from another institution.

Financial/Cost Reasons (N=8)

- "Academic freedom, community based opportunities, location, cost, programs."
- "Financial reasons."
- "I grew in a different way than many of my peers and my worldview and direction did not fit in with the schools' as much as it did when i entered. also, i could not afford to go to the school any longer."
- "It was too expensive, and I was unsatisfied with the traditional style of education."
- "...Also, there were very few job opportunities in and around campus."
- "The school I went to before was overseas and it was too expensive and way too small. It also didn't have the major I was interested in."
- "The weather of Philly was too demanding and expensive."
- "Too expensive, far away."

There were 10 students who had comments that could not be categorized into groups of three or more comments.

Other (N=10)

- "[Previous institution] is closing."
- "Because evergreen is a sister university."
- "I applied as a transfer student but I have graduated from a university in another country. This will be my second bachelor's degree."

- "I did not like the... unhealthy cafeteria... the lack of activities on campus, the apathetic attitude towards environmental stability by the school..."
- "I left [the college in California] in [the 1990s] because I knew I no longer wanted to pursue a fine arts education. It only took 9 years to determine what I did want to study..."
- "I was attending [an institution in California] and felt it was far too bureaucratic..."
- "I was only a part time student. This was purely to get some experience before i began full time."
- "I went to [previous institution in California]... seriously. c'mon..."
- "The... facilities were awful."
- "Time for a change of passe [sic]"
- "na"