

**Jules Unsel and Sarah Williams**  
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**Minding Education's Business in an Evergreen Program:  
Reflections on *Money's Value, Soul's Worth***

My first quarter of *Money's Value, Soul's Worth* has not only been an extensive exploration of money and the soul, but it has been an insightful exploration of who I am in relation to both. Ryell Carley, Fall Student Self-Evaluation

As an entering transfer student of The Evergreen State College I had no idea what to expect. A school without grades and a philosophy geared toward an all-comprehensive program gripped my attention, but left my imagination wandering and active. I came into Evergreen not knowing how to truly talk about connections. Now, I have begun to understand that connections can be made between money and the soul in all sorts of ways. How much must be offered in exchange for a tribe's tradition of whale hunting? ... What are the spiritual implications of debt? Anonymous Student, Fall Student Self-Evaluation

I learned that the empathy we feel for each other as humans is not a discreet feeling inside a person, but only a small part of a very large interconnected web of human emotion that encompasses life. Ben Ortlip, Fall Student Self-Evaluation

More than anything else, being an educated person means being able to see connections that allow one to make sense of the world and act within it in creative ways. Every one of the qualities I have described here—listening, reading, talking, writing, puzzle solving, truth seeking, seeing through other people's eyes, leading, working in community—is finally about connecting. A liberal education is about gaining the power and the wisdom, the generosity and the freedom to connect. William Cronon, "Only Connect..." *The Goals of Liberal Arts Education.*"

*Money's Value, Soul's Worth* was a year long, coordinated studies program designed in keeping with Evergreen's most successful and enduring model of interdisciplinary undergraduate pedagogy.<sup>1</sup> Our program description framed our central question and design in this way:

How is it that so-called modernized cultures organize around the questionable principle that money buys happiness? Although individuals, families, organizations and nations function in many different and competing value systems, under capitalism money appears to have and to create global value. But does it? For whom doesn't it? New Zealand parliamentarian Marilyn Waring

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the original vision see Richard M. Jones, *Experiment at Evergreen* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Pub. Co., 1981).

(in)famously asked, "Why is the woman in labor the only person in a hospital delivery room not being paid?" How *does* money work? In contrast to the acquisitive capitalism and individual success that contribute to the economic measure of America's well being as Gross National Product (GNP), Bhutan established a moral and spiritual index for building an economy based on quality of life--Gross National Happiness (GNH). What can money buy, what can't it?

In this all-year, lower-division program, we'll ask questions to explore our consciences and material needs. We will seek to identify the kinds of life paths, career choices and spiritual and economic practices that provide a foundation for prospering in loving consideration and respect of other people, ourselves, and planet Earth.

We'll juxtapose the history and contemporary function of money with diverse cultural and historical understandings of spiritual worth and the human soul in a series of interdisciplinary case studies of specific goods and services. Contemporary case studies might include wilderness experience, the fast food hamburger, gallery art, prosthetic limbs, yoga lessons, student loans, or self-help products. Historical case studies might include homesteading, funerary objects, firearms, papal dispensations, charitable work, or slave trading. We'll frame our case studies within three epistemological categories: nature, religion, and science.<sup>2</sup>

We designed and executed the program in the method of interdisciplinary teaching and learning we've developed through the faculty team's fifty years of combined teaching experience at Evergreen. We initiated the program curriculum with the juxtaposition of a set of multi-disciplinary readings, scholarly ideas and activities, experimental practices, and through the coordinated and sustained execution of assignments, which over the year invited our students to engage in rich interdisciplinary learning. The program juxtaposed and integrated the ideas and methodologies of several scholarly disciplines, among them economics, finance, moral philosophy, consciousness studies, anthropology, literature, gender studies, writing, and somatic studies. As teaching faculty, we chose these disciplines in cognizance of the strengths and limitations of our own expertise, the demands of our program topic, and our desire to provide both depth and breadth of

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix catalog copy.

content coverage in a single coordinated studies program. Indeed, the coordination of this juxtaposition of multiple disciplines in assignments and classroom activities, required that we put numerous, and at times seemingly conflicting, facts and practices into conversation with each other. We required students do the synthetic and integrative analytical and creative work necessary to resolve program materials into their own single, albeit complicated set of learning experiences and small “t” truths.

**Would a Real Entrepreneur Take a Course on How to become an Entrepreneur?  
Are We Re-Modeling Teaching-Learning at Evergreen, or Still Experimenting?**

At Evergreen, you can be an entrepreneur of your own education. Sean Johnson, MVSW Alumni Lecture

Seminar forged a skill that allowed me to converse and bring together ideas in real life situations. Cyndia Sieden, MVSW Alumni Lecture

*Money's Value, Soul's Worth* (MVSW) began in a collegial conversation among faculty members. Its subsequent development took place amidst passions, curiosities, and agendas within overlapping – and at times disparate – conversations. At a curriculum planning meeting in winter 2009, a small group of faculty discussed a recent administrative decision to develop an organized business curriculum at Evergreen. The creation of such a curriculum was a novelty in the College's history for a number of reasons. First, with exception of the College's founding curriculum, curricular planning has been conceived and implemented by faculty design and direction. Second, administrators at the College historically have acted to defend Evergreen's autonomy and independent character as an alternative, experimental liberal arts college and, as such, rarely have made such a direct curricular response to State legislative funding incentives. And, third, without an organized or focused business curriculum, Evergreen historically –

and ironically – has produced a disproportionately high number of successful business entrepreneurs among its graduates when compared to other liberal arts colleges: 14%.<sup>3</sup>

As faculty colleagues discussed the novelty of this new situation, we developed an appropriately novel response: we began to plan a critical cultural studies curriculum that addressed the Faustian conditions of education's business. Students were introduced to this contemporary version of creditor-as-devil through Canadian novelist, Margaret Atwood's Massey Lectures, published as *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth*. As became clear as we worked with this text with students in seminar, the ultimate Faustian condition is the price of debt consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Because humans have taken more from the planet than we've given, because we've used technology to escape, in the short term, apparent natural limits on human expansion in relationship with other species and elements, even a liberal arts education is now subject to economic rationalization. In this contemporary version of the Faustian bargain, we're already soul-less, and from this place of debt – from our cosmically, or as some have said, our God-shaped holes – what's at stake is our home. Unlike Bhutan with its Gross National Happiness Index, the measure of well being in the USA is Gross National Product, which is based on home sales.<sup>5</sup> The modern creditor doesn't want your soul, s/he wants your home. Under these conditions, how could we assess the money's value of the liberal arts, which were originally part of an educational design for a soulful education ordained by God?

Evergreen faculty across a range of disciplines have discussed how the liberal arts, and in particular the liberal arts as taught at Evergreen, might under gird and

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<sup>3</sup> Conversation with Laura Coghlan, Director of Institutional Research, TESC

<sup>4</sup> Atwood, *Payback : debt and the shadow side of wealth*.

<sup>5</sup> "A New Measure of Well-Being From a Happy Little Kingdom - New York Times"; "Gross National Happiness Web Site."

encourage a sustainable and entrepreneurial spirit in students and provide the skills necessary for long term success not only as consumers and producers but as good citizens and happy people after graduation. In the course of these conversations, we asked ourselves: What are the skills necessary for this kind of success? Are they taught at Evergreen and, if so, how and by whom? From where does the motivation, drive and confidence for this kind of success come? What in Evergreen's larger - and largely centrally unplanned curriculum - feeds such motivation and confidence? Is it the cultivation of a sense of community and connection to the planet? Is it a spirit of adventure? A love of money? A moral concern for right livelihood? A passion for social change and social justice? A radical spirit of independence? An awareness of the human potential for wisdom, personal happiness and global peace? We suspected the innate as well as learned impulses to nonconformity and quirkiness, which are legendary among Greeners (students and faculty alike), were a factor. We wanted to explore and discover what factors were in play.

In addition to the immediate context of these conversations, the program took shape within a second, larger institutional conversation at Evergreen. A recent series of faculty and administrative initiatives has begun to question the continuing efficacy of the college's most fundamental pedagogical structures: the principled rejection of content requirements in favor of radically self-directed learning, the narrative evaluation process and narrative transcript, the provision of faculty mentoring and academic advising to students through integrated program activities, and the ongoing feasibility of the year-

long coordinated studies approach itself.<sup>6</sup> These questions appear to arise out of the concurrence of three institutional conditions: pressures from the State legislature to provide directly targeted credentialing and vocational training for Washington citizens, concerns raised by the Accrediting Board with respect to conventional content coverage and requirements in the liberal arts, and the generational retiring of the college's founding faculty and their replacement by new faculty trained in today's more tightly disciplined graduate programs and hired within Evergreen's own more tightly disciplined curriculum units.<sup>7</sup> As we planned with these pedagogical issues in mind, it happened that the planning and staffing faculty for MVSW changed over time to include faculty who were near retirement, at mid career, and newly hired. This serendipitous mix, which is often the case with Evergreen's flexible and faculty-directed curriculum planning structures, gave us a broad range of insights and experience to become mindful of and respond directly to these institutional conditions and concerns.<sup>8</sup>

This report is itself a response, in part, to an invitation by Evergreen's director of Institutional Research, Laura Coghlan, to reflect on our teaching experience in MVSW in relationship to alumni entrepreneurs, pedagogical innovation, ongoing concerns of the

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<sup>6</sup> See "» DOCUMENTS and LINKS Re-Modeling Teaching and Learning at Evergreen DTF 2009-10," n.d., <http://blogs.evergreen.edu/rtaledtf/documents-and-links/>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Initial conversations included new and recently hired business faculty who subsequently chose to teach either in the MPA program or together in business-specific programs. While many faculty were involved in various parts this conversation, and one faculty who drafted the first program description did not rotate out of the Master's in Public Administration program to teach MVSW, the team that entered the class room the first day of class did draw on a well-established Evergreen tradition for generating program curriculum and faculty teams. As part of the "dream program" exercise at the 2008 faculty retreat Bill Bruner and Jules Unsel created "Dollars to Donuts: Freud Foods and American Capitalism." Local Mortgage Broker, Dave Nugent, stepped in to provide a series of personal finance lectures during winter quarter.

college's Remodeling Teaching and Learning DTF. These concerns include "improving student synthesis and integration, interdisciplinarity, faculty-student advising, transcript clarity, student reflective writing as a means of deepening learning, student articulation and responsibility for their education, breadth and depth of learning, and improving opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities to apply quantitative or creative modes of inquiry."<sup>9</sup> We were also asked to address a recommendation from the NW Commission on Colleges and Universities that "The Evergreen State College strengthen the teaching and documentation of the natural sciences, mathematics, and fine arts as parts of a substantial and coherent program of general education."<sup>10</sup>

The final conversation that shaped the development of the program curriculum of MVSU was an awareness of current national trends in K-12 and higher education. Historians, cultural anthropologists and professional educators concur that education has been revolutionized in the fifteen years, since Windows 95 and Netscape first combined to decenter paper print media from childhood, adolescent and adult schooling.<sup>11</sup> Educators even now are only beginning to recognize and respond to the impact that the digital turn in letters is having on children born since 1990 (dubbed "the Millennial generation"), on the acquisition of literacy, the development of analytical and critical thinking skills, the culture and structure of writing, and the nature of reading and the

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<sup>9</sup> Email from Laura Coghlan, spring 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Alvermann, *Adolescents' online literacies : connecting classrooms, digital media, and popular culture*; Livingstone, "Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies."; "THE INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY INTO LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE LIBERAL ARTS."; Carr, *The shallows : what the Internet is doing to our brains*.

habits of mind that reading creates.<sup>12</sup> Social and neurological scientists, too, have begun to explore the developmental impacts that long-term media saturation is having on human creativity, educability, conscious awareness, and psychological well being.<sup>13</sup> As we follow the literature of these radical transformations in education, social relationships and popular culture, we collect our own anecdotal experiences of an apparent, fundamental change underway among the first and second year undergraduates – and especially the “13<sup>th</sup> grader” frosh students – whom we teach from year to year. As we encounter increasing numbers of students who have acquired their English literacy in a multimedia environment, we are experimenting broadly with our strategies to reach them and teach the skills, knowledge base, and self-direction needed to support the goals of education in the liberal arts. In his now widely circulated and often quoted liberal arts manifesto of sorts, William Cronon identifies these goals as: “listening, reading, talking, writing, puzzle solving, truth seeking, seeing through other people’s eyes, leading, working in a community.”<sup>14</sup> In Evergreen lingo, these goals might translate as the ability to enjoy a lifetime of learning, career achievement, personal growth, and community engagement.

## **Program Design**

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<sup>12</sup> “Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials: Understanding the “New Students” (EDUCAUSE Review) | EDUCAUSE”; Downes, *Interactive realism : the poetics of Cyberspace*; Glazier, *Digital poetics : the making of E-poetries*; Nye, *Technology matters : questions to live with*.

<sup>13</sup> Godwin-Jones, Bob, "Messaging, Gaming, Peer-to-Peer Sharing: Language Learning Strategies & Tools for the Millennial Generation," *Language Learning & Technology*, v9 n1 p17-22 Jan 2005; Runco, M., "Creativity and Education," *New Horizons in Education*, Vol 56, No.1, 2008; Beavis, Catherine, "Games within Games: Convergence and Critical Literacy," in Rebekah Willett, et al, eds., *Play, Creativity and Digital Culture* (London: Routledge, 2008). See also Robert D. Strom and Ellis Paul Torrance, *Education for Affective Achievement*, (Rand McNally, 1973). Nicholas Carr’s *Shallows*

<sup>14</sup> Cronon, “Only connect...!”

Over the course of winter quarter, I recognized a new duality hung under the issue of money versus soul: being a consumer versus a citizen. Matthew Newton, Winter Student Self-Evaluation

I learned to understand the small details, the important pieces that make up the whole picture. Sandy Desner, MVSW Alumni Lecture

The programs I took expanded my horizons. Madeline Cantwell, MVSW Alumni Lecture

Money for women changes values. Anonymous Student, Evergreen MPA Graduate Student

Maybe consciousness is like money. Here's a possibility: my consciousness now – with all its particular quality for me now – depends not only on what is happening in my brain but also on my history and current position in and interaction with the wider world. David Chalmers, forward to *Supersizing the Mind*.<sup>15</sup>

We approached the burden of these multiple conversations and their contexts with the light touch of curricular design. From an institutional perspective, we guided our design with two sets of principles articulated by our faculty: the *Five Foci of Learning at Evergreen* and the *Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate*.

*Five Foci* – interdisciplinary study; collaborative learning; learning across significant differences; personal engagement; and, linking theory with practical applications.

*Six Expectations* - Articulate and assume responsibility for your own work; Participate collaboratively and responsibly in our diverse society; Communicate creatively and effectively; Demonstrate integrative, independent, critical thinking; Apply qualitative, quantitative and creative modes of inquiry appropriately to practical and theoretical problems across disciplines; and, 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.

These foci and expectations suggest that the stable scaffolding of the former, through thoughtful program planning and student assignments design, supports and enables in students the increasingly independent achievement of the latter. As is the case with any college curriculum, the process of growth from entering frosh to graduating senior at Evergreen is a developmental one. Building an adequate foundation of knowledge, developing college level reading, writing and thinking skills, and acquiring the

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<sup>15</sup> Clark, *Supersizing the mind : embodiment, action, and cognitive extension*.

confidence of thought, self-direction, range of interests, and personal maturity offered by the liberal arts is incremental. In our teaching experience, focused cultivation of personal traits – confidence, self-direction and maturity – early in a college career provides students the basis to build their own stable scaffolding that will support learning and achievement through their college years and beyond. Although our content selection and assignments were designed to introduce our students to all elements of our guiding pedagogical principles, our program design depended on the development of self-directed learning and the encouragement of competence, autonomy, and confidence.

From the wider perspective of current developments in higher education, we planned MVSW as a program for first- and second-year students with the digital turn in education in mind. We as a faculty at Evergreen have a commitment to design and offer some quota of programs every year with specific reference to first- and second-year students. Evergreen is a complicated and unusual place, even without such rapid changes in education elsewhere. The college's decentralized curriculum and principled rejection of content-based credit requirements can be difficult to navigate for students who have been trained to thrive in the highly structured curricular environments of most public and private K-12 schools.<sup>16</sup> We determined that MVSW would be an ideal program to socialize new students to the routines, structures and goals of the college, and to engage in a reciprocal form of socialization between their generation's digital culture and the bookish culture of the faculty's own educations.

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<sup>16</sup> Chaltain, *American schools : the art of creating a democratic learning community*; Boyles, "Schools or markets? commercialism, privatization, and school-business partnerships."

A yearlong program provides a seeming luxury of time for such reciprocal socialization. But, here is just one example of how critical time is for the development of a community of self-directed learners. One of us had a seminar experience in which everyone was exhausted by the third week of debate regarding the “text” requirement specified in the program covenant. We were exhausted but had reached no consensus regarding whether it was possible to participate successfully in seminar (i.e. to be on the same page as one’s colleagues) if one had read the text on-line and taken notes, or, equally controversial, if one had the text available but on a Kindle, which does not have pages. Although exhausting, taking the time for students to express their beliefs about the value and worth of owning and reading the same edition of the assigned text contributed directly to students’ sense of empowerment as well as their heightened sensitivity to the iconic qualities of money’s value and worth, particularly the controversy surrounding the “face value” of paper money, which originated in the USA and is quickly being replaced by electronic banking.

The organizing principle behind the design of the program was to provide students with an opportunity to examine and address directly their own goals in pursuing a non-credentialing, liberal arts degree. Such an explicit examination provided us with opportunities to explore students’ goals and decisions and, at the same time, to devise experimental curriculum and research protocols to address directly our own larger questions about Evergreen’s pedagogy in relation to the liberal arts.

### **Program Content**

The texts for our class helped me delve into views I had never previously had about both soul and money. After reading *People of the Whale* we spent a week in an area where the book was based. We attended a heartwarming museum tour that was led by a Makah Elder. I had a revelation that this culture, which was seemingly primitive, had more soul than me. Also, while there our class hiked Cape Flattery where I beheld the breathtaking beauty of nature unspoiled by

skyscrapers. Later in the quarter it turned out that a piece in *Orion Magazine*, an assigned text, discussed the museum and details which I was very familiar with from first hand experience. To culminate taking texts to experience, I wrote a three page research paper near the end of the quarter on Poe's "Gold Bug," which included MLA style references from multiple sources. During this process I learned how to use multiple scholarly voices with my own to create a paper with less bias and more fact.

[C]onstellations and Yoga Nidra were two concepts that would have sounded foreign to me had it not been for this class. The author of one of our texts and pioneer in Family Constellations, Dan Booth Cohen, gave a workshop for our class in which he performed a constellation and helped give us a better framework for exploring the soul. I became more aware of the unity and connectivity of the forces of life, from nature to family, and how these collective forces from the soul. In yoga nidra I explored my mind to better find the soul and found the answers arose in me instead of being thought up. This happened in ways that were completely new and even painful. .. I felt the hamburger case study was a major project in my life since I am still the vegetarian I became since my research. Through economic lectures, weekly quizzes, and financial workshops I have come to better understand exploitations of capitalism, how a hamburger can be sold for a dollar, the economic impact of the arts, which bank has the best financial deal for you, and sustainability. Anonymous Student, Fall Student Self-Evaluation

The program syllabus, contained in the appendix, provides a detailed record of our program readings, lectures, workshops, and assignments. The curriculum provided students opportunities to explore and weave together ideas about the history and cultural meanings of money, the depth and complexity of the social organization of economic production and consumption, and the similarities and differences between consumer exchanges of currency, aesthetic value, and meaning. We put together reading lists across the three quarters that placed a diverse and multidisciplinary selection of texts together side-by-side, ranging in fall quarter alone from *Art and Money*, through *How to Get a Financial Life*, to *Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Gold Bug."*<sup>17</sup> We designed term research projects, based on a case study model, which required students to work individually and together in teams to develop and support presentations of consumer products in terms of their economic costs, real costs, total costs, social implications, and cultural meanings. We structured small group discussion seminars and reflective writing assignments around the readings that required students to practice synthesis and

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<sup>17</sup> Appendix 2, Reading Lists for Three Quarters

integration.<sup>18</sup> Students learned about strategies of scholarly literature review and meta-narrative research and about scholarly community and dialogue. They learned about the distinction between primary and secondary sources, and about the critical acumen required to distinguish reliable and unreliable research sources in print and online. We provided structured classroom time for contemplative practice and personal introspection as both balm and stabilizing platform to explore the frenetic, media-saturated, surface level thinking many of our students seemed to display in keeping with digitally acquired English literacy, personal identity, and popular cultural consciousness. This work in the soul sensing studio was balanced fall and winter quarters with lectures on economics and finance that included small group exercises for quantitative skill development as well as multiple-choice tests. A second seminar period at the end of each week was devoted to integrative and synthetic discussion of the week's offerings. This second seminar period, held each Friday afternoon, provided two hours for students to discuss the week's materials and experiences, to identify and draw together disciplinary content into new ideas and potential connections, and to build learning community through a creative, easy going, and sociable end to the week.

In winter quarter, we expanded our explorations into the soulful meanings of money by expanding our analysis beyond money, to what money can buy. We added a lecture series and set of readings to provide a lay introduction to the use of neuroscience in contemporary advertising, branding, marketing. We provided lectures on basic brain anatomy and function, as currently understood by scientific medicine, and contextualized this material with discussion of what it means to be taught by – and to learn from –

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<sup>18</sup> Appendix 3, Syllabus

commercial advertising. We read and discussed two seminar texts in support of this material. *Buyology*, by marketing professional Martin Lindstrom, provided an account of the deliberately manipulative use by advertisers and marketers of current understandings of neuroscience. *Mirroring People*, by neuroscientist Marco Iacoboni, provided an introduction to the specific neural circuitry in the brain that a new brand of “neuromarketers” use. In brief, neuromarketing uses recent findings regarding the neural correlates of identity and emotion to sell products, the consumption of which provides consumers with the feeling of security, belonging, and success. Put differently, Barbara Kruger’s reformulation of Descartes’ “I think therefore I am” to “I shop therefore I am,” has been reformulated as “Stimulation occurs there I am.”<sup>19</sup> Neuromarketing capitalizes on the neuroscientific fact that the brain’s motricity becomes the mind’s mentality.

We integrated this material with our fall quarter consideration of consumption as the commodification of happiness. One measure of the appeal of this approach was demonstrated by the stunning graphic art and political activism of Hank Willis Thomas presented to the class by a student. One student shared two examples of Thomas’ work from his series “Branded.” The first was a high resolution black and white image of the Nike swoosh integrated as a brand—in both senses of the word—into the haircut of a young African-American man. The second appeared to be an Absolut Vodka ad. But on close examination, the bottle takes on the shape of a slave ship and the fine inscription becomes the figures of bodies as slave captives. To enter Thomas’ website you must

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<sup>19</sup> See “From Motricity to Mentality » American Scientist,” n.d., <http://www.americanscientist.org/bookshelf/pub/from-motricity-to-mentality>; Emily Yoffee, “The powerful and mysterious brain circuitry that makes us love Google, Twitter, and texting. - By Emily Yoffe - Slate Magazine,” n.d., <http://www.slate.com/id/2224932>.

choose one of three boxes, which mirror the pedagogy of our branding case study: Box 1) “Ads Imitate Art,” Box 2) “Art Imitates Life,” or Box 3) “Life Imitates Art.”<sup>20</sup>

At the end of winter, we challenged students to pull together a broad synthesis of the materials and ideas of the previous two terms with a final essay exam to discuss the money’s value and soul’s of commodities presented in selected television commercials and web content. This final exam required them in real time to view and interpret multimedia advertising and sales content from television and online sources, including analyses of the most brain stimulating advertisements (as assessed by MRI research) shown during the Super Bowl.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the most challenging component of the exam required both analytic and metaphoric thinking. In the following question students were asked to use program themes to engage key axioms of feminist and gender theory. The first part of this question asked students to consider the cultural logic whereby nature is to culture, as body is to mind, as woman is to man, as irrational is to rational, as home is to office, as mac is to pc, which we expressed in this way:

*nature:culture::body:mind::woman:man::irrational:rational::home:office ::mac:pc*

We then asked students to discuss the following statement, including a gendered analysis in their responses: “Conventional thinking would associate our program themes of economics and marketing with rational aspects of money’s value. It would characterize our yoga nidra practice and experiential exploration of branded meanings as an irrational or emotional exploration of soul’s worth.” At the end students exchanged their exams with a colleague, and then as part of their own exam, answered the following question:

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<sup>20</sup> “Hank Willis Thomas.”

<sup>21</sup> “2010 Super Bowl Commercials -- NFL FanHouse”; “This is your brain on a Super Bowl ad - CNET News.”

“What lessons about soulful worth and monetary value do you see in your colleague’s exam responses?”<sup>22</sup>

### **Contemplative Education: From a Personal to a Cultural Awareness of the Subjective Experience of Interconnectivity**

As anyone who has moved from high school and living at home, to college and living on your own, I have found it tough yet motivating to be independent. A harder aspect that I have encountered is the fact of reading. I have never been a great reader. For most of my life if someone were to ask me my opinion about a novel I would promptly say, “Sorry, I don’t really read.” Anonymous Student, Fall Student Self-Evaluation

When class initially began, I was very enthusiastic and excited about the unique opportunity to broaden my horizons at Evergreen. This enthusiasm wore off gradually as the weeks went on. I began to deal with classmates who were obviously unenthusiastic about changing/opening up their minds: it began to affect what I felt regarding what I was learning in a negative way. I was giving in to my peers’ negative attitudes and it began to make me question why I even started school here. Since then I took time to assess why I was here and came to the understanding that my peers simply were not committed to broadening their horizons like I had assumed they would. Nicholas Prager, Fall Student Self-Evaluation

Through the process of reading *Art and Money* I learned how to possess the courage to read tough research books and have the patience to understand them. After this, I was rewarded for my effort handsomely when reading the second book by Shell called *Money, Language and Thought*. When I started to read it, it was surprisingly understandable. There were brief references I got immediately and complex ideas I comprehended because of my prior reading for this class and possibly a growth in understanding about the subjects in the context of this class. Sonora Bravo, Fall Student Self-Evaluation

Technology, iPods, for example, are socially acceptable narcissim. ... We are more impressionable than we know. Madeline Cantwell, MVSW Alumni Lecture

Ed, a tribal elder, had been our tour guide at The Makah Museum. Imagine that you were there with us. Imagine that you’ve just heard him finish telling our program about what was critical for a successful whale hunt: prayer. After saying, “prayer,” he looks into your eyes and then slowly also into those of the students surrounding him. Most students drop their eyes and lots of feet begin shuffling. Imagine that you ask, as one of us did, “Why do you think adding spirituality to the whale hunt made a difference?”

Ed, replies “Prayer.”

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<sup>22</sup> Appendix 4, Winter Quarter Final Exam

“Yes,” you persist, “but from a cultural perspective, why did prayer matter?”

Ed’s eyes grow very steady as they look over our group as he responds, “There’s a greater spirit you know.”

In addition to the “soul” content of MVSW, the weekly soul sensing studio during fall and winter quarters used three experiential practices—constellations, yoga nidra/iRest, and participant-observation--to provide opportunities for students to explore what by definition is a pre-disciplinary topic. That is, as a result of secularization Aristotle might be considered the last non-Christian to have written anything like a scholarly treatise on the soul. The rise of the modern university, with the Catholic Church as its midwife, makes any serious treatment of what was once spoken of as the soul a decidedly, if not suspiciously, religious—or pagan--as opposed to academic inquiry. Unfortunately, simply saying this repeatedly and concurrently defining the soul as nothing more than a subjective awareness of interconnectivity did not effectively counter the unconscious or conscious meanings of the soul prevalent in our culture and held by members of the MVSW learning community. Thus, there was a powerful tension throughout the year between the culturally dominant belief in money’s value and its shadow—a belief in soul’s worth. You need only do a google search to discover the multiple ways in which soul has come to symbolize the penumbral between white and black.

Constellation work encouraged an awareness of the role of the ancestors, particularly our ancestors’ roles in the institutions of slavery and colonization, in American political economy. Yoga nidra/iRest cultivated mindfulness regarding our separation of mind and body; the relationship between this disembodiment and soul-

lessness as manifest in sexism, capitalism, racism, and environmental degradation; and our association of death with darkness, sleep and the unconsciousness. Field studies regarding popular brands using participant-observation were designed to put students in touch, literally, with the ways in which advertising and marketing reinforce money's value in defining who we are by what we buy. Our studio work, including weekly readings as well as experiential practices, was guided by the following questions:

- \_\_\_ 1) What is the soul?  
What are the words by which it has been named or identified? What images have been used to "capture" the soul? Given its mystery, what are the metaphors by which it is recognized?
- \_\_\_ 2) How is the soul known?  
What skills or sensibilities are necessary for knowing the soul or for soulful knowing?
- \_\_\_ 3) What kinds of experiences lend themselves to soul recognition?  
In your experience how do iRest and Constellations create a sense of resonance with the soul? Use specific examples, described with rich detail. Compare and contrast your experience with that of others. Is the soul individual or collective, personal or universal?
- \_\_\_ 4) What is the soul's worth?  
How do you know? How can you prove it to someone else?
- \_\_\_ 5) How is the soul's worth valued?  
Can the worth of the soul be commodified? At what cost? Is there anything that money can't—or shouldn't--buy?
- \_\_\_ 6) What does the soul care about? What attracts--or is attracted to--money? What have you learned about the relationship between money and soul?
- \_\_\_ 7) What difference does what you've learned in order to answer questions 1-6 make to you, those near to you, or the planet?

A recent science news article by Sharon Begley provides a powerful explanation for the critical role of contemplative practices in education.<sup>23</sup> Begley reports that when

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<sup>23</sup> "Why Your Brain Never Really Rests - Newsweek."

neuroscientists turned their focus to the “hidden brain” they discovered that the mind at rest—the mind doing nothing—is, in fact, more active than when we are conscious of it being active. The mind in a relaxed state is a mind free to do the crucial work of building connections, integrating sensory experience, and converting short term memory into the coherency and stability of long term memory. The soul sensing studio, as noted above, focused on experiential practices aimed at making the Faustian bargain a subject of secular academic inquiry. Indeed, when any enterprising person comes to a crossroads and sells her or his soul, such as Faust, or Blues legend Robert Johnson, what is actually compromised and how could one who has compromised it know it?

We began the year and ended with a working definition of the soul that proved both deceptively simple and adaptable: “What if the soul is an awareness of the subjective experience of interconnectivity?” Whether confronting the phenomenon of post-traumatic-slave-syndrome among contemporary African-Americans, the genocide of Native American cultures and ecologies upon which our nation was founded, or the debt to the maternal that remains if not unconscious then uncompensated, this definition of soul provided a phenomenological perspective and methodology for making connections within a diverse curriculum that integrated the spiritual hunger of college students, and their adolescent bodies into a contemporary, classic liberal arts education. UCLA’s seven-year study of “Spirituality in Higher Education ” has consistently reported that a spiritual quest for meaning and purpose accompanies students’ intellectual quests during the college years. Joseph Chilton Pearce, among others, has argued that a quest for altered states of consciousness, even when labeled “sex, drugs, rock’n roll,” is part of the natural development of the human mind. More precisely, exactly when the frontal lobes

are developing to maturity in the adolescent and young adult mind is also when what is sought are transcendent states characterized by nonduality, nonlocality, and nontemporality. Or, positively put, college-age students have a developmental capacity for cosmic connection. Curiously enough, if a sense of cosmic relations of reciprocity are not experienced during the college years there is much less likelihood that such experiences will be part of one's later life experiences.<sup>24</sup> A winter quarter retreat with Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, provided a unique opportunity for our learning community to engage with a cultural practice committed to the cultivation of a sophisticated understanding of states of consciousness as well as an accounting system interested in gross national happiness as opposed to gross national product.<sup>25</sup>

Begley's report on what the mind now knows about the brain and Stanislas Dehaene's neuroscience of reading in the brain are good to think with relative to our integration of soul and business and our incorporation of art, natural science, and quantitative reasoning within an Evergreen-style business program. The meaning making function that is integral to reading and writing is the result of interconnectivity across the "global workplace" of the brain.<sup>26</sup> Different modalities of learning are as important as content, which we explored using cross-cultural applications of Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences.<sup>27</sup> If a goal is to educate students in becoming happy as well as productive citizens, then building into the curriculum time to reflect, contemplate, and create—individually and collectively-- is of critical importance.

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<sup>24</sup> "Spirituality in Higher Education"; Pearce, *The biology of transcendence : a blueprint of the human spirit*.

<sup>25</sup> Wangyal and Lukianowicz, *Wonders of the natural mind : the essence of Dzogchen in the native Bon tradition of Tibet*.

<sup>26</sup> Dehaene, *Reading in the brain : the science and evolution of a human invention*.

<sup>27</sup> Chen, Moran, and Gardner, *Multiple intelligences around the world*.

Writing across the curriculum is more than a metaphor for understanding the neurobiological process whereby neurons that fire together wire together. Writing a narrative self-evaluation is a cognitive as well as a motor skill that, when reviewed by peers and faculty, aligns a student's subjective experience with the objective reality of program content that is co-created within and through participation in a learning community. For example, surprising and inspiring results came from our framing of writer's block, missing, or poor writing as a "failure of the imagination."<sup>28</sup>

### **Development in Persons in Community through Time**

At the beginning of the quarter I had some second guesses about enrolling in this class again. This class challenged a lot of my beliefs about reason and views of a liberal arts education. For a long time I had trouble with the soul sensing studios. I didn't understand them fully. I only came to understand them a few weeks ago when I finally made the connection from all the other class work. *Mirroring People* and *Buyology* offered insight into the fact that the majority of our actions are sub-conscious. It clicked when I realized that constellations were an example of the unconscious at work. In the future I would like to explore this bridge between to the unconscious more. Matthew Donovan, Winter Student Self-Evaluation

Though this class has frustrated me beyond belief, it has been for the greater good. I have learned so much and really enjoyed doing my research for both case studies. My fears towards re-entering academia have been dispelled because of this class and the community I have found within it. Anonymous Student, Winter Student Self-Evaluation

The absolute most important thing that I believe I've learned is the ability to lead. I've always had feelings like I could lead, but nobody ever gave me a chance or never believed in me enough to lead. ... I also learned how to confident in situations I was unsure. ... I learned how to handle people more maturely...Having a lot of face to face interaction with a vast range of people [during my community-based learning project] helped me understand people with disabilities and different people in general. I got to know people were deaf, transgendered, senile, and paralyzed. It was humbling and made me feel like a vastly better and more understanding person. Nicholas Prager, Spring Student Self-Evaluation

"Knowing that I belong opens up an origami of potential inside of me." Dee Williams, MVSW Alumni Lecture

Perhaps one of the most innovative and paradoxically conservative aspects of Evergreen's founding curriculum was the belief that the best teaching and learning

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<sup>28</sup> Hustvedt, *The Shaking Woman or A History of My Nerves*; Flaherty, *The midnight disease : the drive to write, writer's block, and the creative brain*.

happen within intentional learning communities. Designed as a lower-division program for first and second year students, MVSW invited students to anticipate, experience and reflect on what can happen when a group of people commit to being “in community” 16-40 hours per week for nine months. The operative word here is commitment. The absence of grades, sunshine, and a required curriculum combined with the radical informality of protocols for faculty, student and staff relationships at Evergreen mean the success of a learning community is commensurate with the members commitment to it. Large and small group work seems easy, almost a form of slacking or cheating, until deadlines arrive, assignments are due and presentations are made. Then, and also when credit is awarded, can be occasions for grumbling, accusations, and exploding as well as imploding group and inter-personal dynamics. The perception that members of one’s group didn’t contribute, didn’t do their part, didn’t show up, or did show up only to claim center stage for a final presentation led to particularly rich learning moments. While we listened and were also, on occasion, the object of discontentment because we weren’t teaching by telling students what to know, our counsel was always for individuals to take their complaints back to their groups for discussion and resolution. The ripple effects of the following faculty mantra often found expression in large group discussions as well as seminars: “You get out of an Evergreen education what you put into it.”

An all-program retreat to Neah Bay the second week of fall quarter provided the time and opportunities for the group bonding necessary to establish a learning community. In addition to recreation time and social activities at the UW Environmental Learning Center near Forks that introduced students to each other and the Olympic Peninsula, the trip included activities related to our case study of the money’s value and

soul's worth of nature. We hiked Cape Flattery, toured the Makah Cultural Center Museum with a Makah elder, and discussed Linda Hogan's controversial *People of the Whale: A Novel*. Various definitions of what constitutes spiritual intelligence were distributed to students who were then assigned the task of discussing the novel's characters in relationship to the intelligence each displayed in coming to terms with the money's value and soul's worth of contemporary tribal whaling. The lively discussion demonstrated as much about the values and beliefs of the students as of the novel's characters. And, the violation of community norms, including those of the program covenant and the Environmental Learning Center, also mirrored critical aspects of the novel, including the long-term effects and cultural impact of cultural transgressions.

Evergreen's recent adoption of a reconciliation model of social justice combined with the assessment practices built into our curriculum brought unexpected opportunities and challenges to the contemplative component of our curriculum. It takes time to involve an entire community in a reconciliation process just as it takes time to involve an entire community in a reflection and assessment process. Even though the reconciliation process was integrated with the practice of constellation work and yoga nidra, which were already the focus of a weekly soul sensing studio, students resistance to engaging with the hidden as well as visible dynamics of perpetrator-victim dynamics—whether in relation to economic atonement or illegal drug use—stretched our work over several weeks. As planned, all of week 5 and week 10 were devoted to mid-quarter and final assessment processes that included the presentation of group integrative projects, peer-review of portfolios and self-evaluations, and meetings between individual students and faculty that included the exchange of faculty evaluations of students, student evaluations

of faculty, and student self-evaluations. Because of the time required and the challenges of this pedagogy, an explicit and foundational component of a program curriculum needs to include the development of students into people capable of connecting.

### **The Case Study Approach: What is the Money's Value as well as the Soul's Worth of a Hamburger? The arts? Nature?**

I am proud of organizing the barbecue for after our case study on the hamburger. I first made a list of items we would need to have a successful BBQ. Then I got a group together to buy the materials. My first reaction to buying food was to buy in bulk, but as I was with a bunch of Evergreen students, they convinced me to go the local Co-Op. I had 200 dollars to spend so we made sure everything was organic. I purchased all the necessities [including veggie burgers] and more except for the meat. The irony of the whole event was that I bought the meat at Safeway. After that part, I found a grill, got students to prep the food, cook it, and clean up. It was quite an experience. I found that a skill I have is bringing people together and I hope that I can incorporate this skill into my future job. Anonymous Student, Fall Student Self-Evaluation

I learned community problem solving and how to work in a group. Ben Alexander, MVSW Alumni Lecture

We're here to create, not to consume. Kim Gaffi, MVSW Alumni Lecture

The centerpiece of our design for academic work in fall and winter quarters was the case study assignment, which brought our pedagogical goals together into a single dynamic mix of activities and learning outcomes.<sup>29</sup> We very deliberately incorporated stepwise pedagogical elements into the program curriculum and case studies assignments to structure the kind of developmental acquisition of content knowledge, critical skills, and self-direction that only a year-long coordinated studies program environment can afford.

In fall quarter, we began by modeling the case study approach to students by presenting several of them in class. Our examples were the hamburger, the fine arts, and the wilderness. In each case, we presented the history, concepts, economic factors, material elements, and cultural contexts of these diverse commodities. We provided

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<sup>29</sup> Appendix 5, Fall Quarter Case Study Syllabus

conventional lecture instruction and testing in micro- and macroeconomics alongside lecture presentations and small group discussions of the history and cultural meanings of money. The content of the program required students to engage and understand notions of monetary value. This in turn required acquisition and deepening of student quantitative reasoning skills. In presenting the faculty's example case studies, the economist on the program faculty—as well as guest finance lecturers-- taught students to write and read demand and supply curves; defined and distinguished the related terms of price, cost, real cost and total cost; explained the fundamentals of currency and currency exchange as expressions of relative economic value; analyzed the current mortgage crisis in national and international historical contexts, and taught the basics of using a computer spreadsheet for data organization, manipulation and calculation.<sup>30</sup> Once we had modeled several examples, we supported students as they organized themselves into groups, chose a commodity or consumer product to study, and divided the labor to conduct their study as a group. This design introduced them to college level research, structured opportunities to work cooperatively, and began the synthetic practice of integrating economic calculations, cultural meaning, and social worth into a single, layered assessment of value. The design encouraged creative and technological innovation as well as giving them experience in public speaking. In their group presentations students demonstrated an amazing range of creativity including musical performance (vocal and instrumental), video production, photography, graphic design, and costuming.

In winter, students conducted a second case study as a group member and a third on their own. They then completed a critical, comparative analysis of their two case study

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<sup>30</sup> Appendix 6– excel workshop something from Bill's stuff

products in a single, conventional college research paper. This enabled them to build on and deepen as individuals the skills introduced in group work in fall: college research and integrative thinking; self-discipline, time management and focus for meeting deadlines; individual commitment and sense of responsibility to the learning community; and public speaking. It introduced them to organized college instruction and practice in English composition. In support of these winter activities, we added instruction in the sociology of consumerism, a participant-observation based cultural study of branding, a lecture series on consciousness studies in neuroscience, and another on macroeconomics and personal finance. The neuroscience offerings in particular were meant to provoke students to think about their own awareness and habits of mind in the contexts of both the digital turn in letters and neuromarketing. These multidisciplinary offerings added both depth and breadth of perspective as well as pertinent scholarly resources, to the expansive, integrative thinking the fall case studies had structured.

### **Our Year-Long Case Study of a Liberal Arts Education: Evergreen Alumni Entrepreneur Lecture Series**

American universities may well produce “products for which there is no market” but the answer is not to capitulate to market logics, the answer, in part, is to use a refurbished university to re-imagine the relations between markets and ideas, teachers and students, institutions and knowledge town and gown, community and scholar, smartness and learning. Mark C. Taylor and J. Jack Halberstam, “The End of the University as Who Knew It?”

Evergreen prepares us for the autonomy of REAL life, allowing the freedom to problem solve. While some alumni speakers may have said that they ‘never’ used their transcripts, that makes the case that people do not look at grades either, thus making evals that much more valuable as they prepare you for REAL life. Matt Triplett posed an interesting problem in that, essentially Greeners are ‘good’ people, which is negative in business. Dee Williams exemplified the true spirit of TESC through her actions--thinking outside the box and even RE-INVENTING the box! Brian Boyd interested me in that he really rose above his upbringing and ‘class’ status in order to professionally give to others what he lacked while growing up. All the speakers have successfully incorporated TESC values into their lives. Will Terry, EWS, *Living the Greener Dream* Final Reflection Assignment

There has been knowledge gained in the scholarly sense and also in the more interpersonal, emotional and unconscious sense. I have experienced a wide spectrum of emotion from despair

toward life's inevitable crises to euphoria in awe of fleeting moments in which life's trivialities seem to reveal themselves to me. The latter emotion occurred primarily in our constellation work....While constellation work has been the most profound avenue of the program for me, I must also allude to the great joy that was participating in the Alumni lecture Series—Living the Greener Dream. I use the “participated” because the faculty invited us, the students, to meet and schmooze, or network in more conservative terms, with the alumni speakers. I enthusiastically took this opportunity and indeed made a large contribution to my ever increasing list of contacts that I began when I arrived at Evergreen. Anonymous Student, Winter Student Self-Evaluation

At Evergreen they teach you how to figure out what works for you and go for it. ... Other schools are about competing and conforming, and at Evergreen you choose your own place. Matt Triplett, MVSW Alumni Lecture

It's capitalism out there – get over it. Susan LaSalle, MVSW Alumni Lecture

Throughout the year, we used our case study methods to conduct an inquiry into the current money's value and soul's worth of an Evergreen education and a liberal arts education in general. In designing our own case study, we pointedly set out to open the black box of educational processes at Evergreen that historically have created, in the absence of an organized business curriculum, a steady supply of graduates who go on to create entrepreneurial success and independent careers. In fall and winter, the case study revolved around a lecture series that featured an invited cohort of successful Evergreen entrepreneurs and independent professionals.<sup>31</sup> We reasoned that Greeners who have achieved such successes might bring some leverage to pry open that black box, and at the same time, provide insight into larger questions of the value, worth and continuing viability of a liberal arts education. In fall and winter, we selected readings in support of the lectures, and the design of the lecture series, and held organized seminar discussions to bring the lectures and supporting readings into direct conversation each week.

We structured our research in cooperation with the college Alumni Relations office and an Evening and Weekend Studies (EWS) course hosted by faculty emeritus,

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<sup>31</sup> Suggestions for alumni entrepreneurs were invited from the TESC campus community through email beginning in the spring of 2009. RJ Burt in the office of Alumni Affairs extended invitations to these alumni and others as we faced the challenges of scheduling busy people willing to come to campus without financial compensation.

Oscar Soule. The series comprised a dozen ninety-minute presentations by Evergreen alumni selected in part according to the range and diversity of their career paths and life successes. We wanted to expose first- and second-year students to successful alumni to facilitate visions of future success for themselves. MVSW students, along with students in an EWS program called *Living the Greener Dream*, were required to attend each lecture and take notes on what was meaningful for them through the completion of a qualitative and quantitative questionnaire.<sup>32</sup> Students in both programs read and discussed what turned out to be a truly foundational text, William Cronen's "Only Connect: The Goals of a Liberal Arts Education." A fundamental inquiry guided students through the lecture series: Is career success with a liberal arts education from Evergreen most attributable to money's value, soul's worth, or some alchemical product of the two? A weekly email from Alumni Relations invited all members of the campus to attend each lecture. We held a reception after each lecture that included food and drink to which all faculty, students, and staff who attended the speech were invited to attend. In cognizance of the importance of social skills and networking for career success, we required our MVSW students to "schmooze" at least one speaker at a reception ask and discuss at least one "networking question."

We asked the alumni lecturers to address these questions: How has their Evergreen education proved valuable? How has their Evergreen experience played a part in their professional development? What about Evergreen influenced the path[s] taken to reach their goals? The speakers and their fields included: Cyndia Sieden and Judith Cohen, opera and concert piano; Brian Boyd, non-profit foundations; Dee Williams,

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<sup>32</sup> Appendix 7, Alumni Questionnaire

sustainable housing technology; Ben Alexander and Susan Buis, environmental restoration; Kim Graff and Blue Peetz, urban gardening education; Kevin Ranker, government; Matt Triplett, marketing, management and web design; Madeline Cantwell, development for *Orion Magazine*; Deirdre Cross and Susan LaSalle commercial documentary film production; Sandy Desner, real estate development and urban renewal; Sean Johnson, music and yoga instruction; Ian Pounds, international orphan relief; and Christina Labra, domestic violence prevention and treatment. We also sent speakers a copy of their transcript prior to their presentation and asked them to assess, at some point in the discussion, the utility and value of Evergreen's narrative evaluation process as well as that of their narrative transcript regarding their careers.<sup>33</sup> In spring quarter, we provided students the opportunity to further their fall and winter learning through readings, reflective writings, and seminar discussion of the alumni lectures in retrospect. We also involved the students in the collection and analysis of our research findings based on the questionnaire and video transcripts of the lectures.<sup>34</sup>

### **Spring Quarter Learning: “The Mind is Not a Vessel to be Filled but a Fire to be Kindled,” Plutarch**

The experiences that I have had in my community-based learning project have greatly connected me to the experience of the soul through connecting with and nurturing others. Human beings require more nurturing than any other being on the planet. Human beings have the power to create life. What good is that power and what is being created if it is not used for love and nurturing? Anonymous Student, Spring Student Self-Evaluation

We bring our values to what we do, the actions we take are what really matter. Sandy Desner, MVSU Alumni Lecture

Find connection in the world, and passion. Follow your bliss. Sean Johnson, MVSU Alumni Lecture

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<sup>33</sup> Appendix 8, Living the Greener Dream program description

<sup>34</sup> Appendix 9, Alumni Lecture “Best Quotes”

Plutarch's metaphor of learning as a process akin to tending a fire provides a compelling image for our developmental approach to pedagogy across the year. While during the fall and winter quarters, we as individuals became a learning community to tend the fire lit by faculty with kindling prescribed in the syllabus, during the spring quarter it was to students' own fires to which kindling of their choice was added. Due to campus staffing changes that drew program faculty into additional responsibilities for spring quarter, students were advised early in winter quarter of an assessment process that would limit the size of our spring quarter learning community. Based on their previous performance in the program, their responses to a spring quarter questionnaire, and our evaluation of their self-direction, maturity and readiness to work independently, we ended winter quarter with a core group of students committed to continue with a spring quarter curriculum divided between all-program activities and individual community-based learning projects. With the assistance of the Center for Community-Based Learning and the Volunteer Center of Thurston County, we structured opportunities for them to model the experiences of our alumni lecturers who took the lessons of program learning communities into the campus community, as well as the Olympia community at large.<sup>35</sup> The majority of these alumni, who had fired their passions and sustained their souls while also realizing in the market place the money's worth of their Evergreen education, had engaged in community-based learning projects while at Evergreen. We gave our students the autonomy and responsibility to search out, organize, participate in, and report on a community-based learning assignment equal to half of their academic responsibilities for the quarter. The all-program half of their spring quarter work included a weekly seminar,

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<sup>35</sup> Margraf, "Volunteer Center - Volunteer Center Home"; Robbins, "Center for Community-Based Learning and Action at Evergreen."

a case study workshop, and a series of campus activities, all of which were accompanied by reflective writing assignments. For their term integrative assignment, we chose a creative writing project meant to help our students synthesis and summarize their learning for the year. We asked them to prepare their own alumni lecture, ten years hence, which would describe their own post-graduate career success and analyze the final value and worth – in terms of both money and soul – of their liberal arts education at Evergreen. Our case study workshop structured not only the third quarter of our inquiry regarding the value of a liberal arts education, but was the occasion for our analysis of our data for the alumni lecture series.

We began spring quarter not by handing out a syllabus, but by creating one together with the students. Everyone proposed seminar texts and participated in the negotiation process that resulted in texts that allowed us to extend some themes from previous quarters as well as pursue new areas of inquiry. One lens through which we read these texts, regardless of their content, was pedagogical and concerned with community-based learning. For many students a very real and vexing question was why and how community- and service-based learning projects were the basis for credit generating academic work. Bluntly put, students struggled productively with the perception that they were paying tuition dollars to help others. Cronon's article, "Only Connect," along with *Learning Through Service* enabled them to appreciate anew an Evergreen adage we think is of increasingly critical importance regardless of one's perspective on the link between service learning and a liberal arts education. At Evergreen credit is awarded not for what a student does, which can be pretty much anything, but for what a student can demonstrate s/he learned from doing it. It is the

process of doing, reflecting, and articulating that makes Evergreen's experimental approach to learning unique and remarkably effective.

The campus events we attended as a program during the spring quarter provided excellent kindling for igniting new fires connected with the themes of MVSW. For example, Dr. Greg Cajete, in his lecture as part of Evergreen's Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute's spring conference, argued that our choice of metaphors influences how we think about the ways in which we affect others.<sup>36</sup> He urged the use of living, biological metaphors in order to address the most pressing concern of pedagogy in indigenous communities. "People today are searching for meaning. We lack a sense of the communal good." Cajete argued that a new kind of vocational education needs to happen in relationship to community. The image he used was a figure-ground artistic rendering of a sand hill crane. "We are it, it is us: we are one and the same." In a separate event, distinguished professor Martha Nussbaum made explicit the wisdom of Plutarch's metaphor of mind relative to the historic and now global need for the kindling of liberal arts values in order to imagine a world that is other than market-driven, ecologically threatened, or consumed by religious strife.<sup>37</sup> Nussbaum argued that, "The humanities make a world worth living in" through the development of three skills: the ability to deliberate; the ability to think of the nation as a whole *and* as part of a diverse world; and the ability to have concern for the lives of others. Nussbaum's vision of curriculum for developing these abilities included critical thinking (the wedding of

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<sup>36</sup> Jacobs, Cajete, and Lee, *Critical neurophilosophy and indigenous wisdom*; Cajete, "Indigenous scholar Greg Cajete visits Salish Kootenai College."

<sup>37</sup> Martha Nussbaum is the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago. Her numerous publications include *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* and *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*.

tradition and difference through imagination); an understanding of world religions; and foreign languages. She was particularly animate in arguing that the enemy of moral imagination is narcissism, which is rampant in our culture. She argued that empathy is “the passport out of self.”

To complete our case study of the liberal arts, we analyzed the questionnaire and video transcript findings from the alumni lecture series. Strong patterns emerged from alumni memories and responses to our questions about their Evergreen experiences. As video recordings of the talks attest, speaker after speaker reported that it was the skills they learned at Evergreen, resting on a foundation of content knowledge and experiential pedagogy, that supported and enabled their business and career successes.<sup>38</sup> The acquisition of these skills had been all the more important, as they were gained in context of liberal arts traditions that support social engagement, life long learning, political responsibility, and good citizenship. Most of our speakers mentioned specific academic skills that include expository writing, critical reading, analytical thinking, and scholarly research methods. Most also mentioned specific communication and collaboration skills learned through seminar experiences, group assignments, classroom presentations, and the giving and receiving criticism through the narrative evaluation process. Most mentioned personal skills they learned through the coordinated studies format and the stable learning communities it creates: self-confidence and self-direction, appreciation for both short-term insights and long-term developmental processes, can-do attitudes, hands-on experiences, familiarity and openness to technologies, and openness to new ideas. Overwhelmingly, our alumni speakers reported that their happiness and successes in life

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<sup>38</sup> DVD recordings of the Alumni lectures are on file with TESC’s office of Alumni Affairs.

grew in large part out of the use of their skills and drive in community, by providing goods and services in their present communities as the means to belong. Dee Williams' passionate testimony to the importance of developing a sense of belonging—a multi-layered sense of belonging to, and congruence between, one's self, one's learning community, and the world beyond campus--while at Evergreen reverberated in student work throughout the quarter.

Most speakers reported that their transcripts were surprisingly detailed and accurate, that the evaluation process was a powerful learning experience in itself, and that it had been enjoyable to see the transcript in retrospect, at this point in their careers. Several said they had expected their transcript to be embarrassing and were relieved that it was not. All expressed appreciation for the time, consideration, honesty, and insight that faculty had shown in responding to student self-evaluations and in composing their faculty evaluations of students. Several pointed out that the reciprocal evaluation processes, whereby faculty and students exchange evaluations, had proven in the long run to be enormously useful in managing relationships and communication with employees and business partners. Every one of our speakers reported that they had never requested their transcript or been asked for it in the course of seeking employment. The universal sentiment was that Evergreen transcripts, when it comes to entrepreneurial and independent career success, are about the journey of their creation and not the destination of the final product. This conclusion must be qualified with the observation that this cohort of Evergreen alumni are not people who applied for jobs to others; they are people

who created their own. In a period of declining creativity, this outcome is all the more important.<sup>39</sup>

The following anecdote demonstrates, as do the student voices quoted throughout this report, just how central relationships of reciprocity are at Evergreen. In response to the welcome and introduction by his former faculty member, Russ Fox, Evergreen alum Kevin Ranker, paced the floor. Then, looking at Russ and the lecture hall full of other faculty and students, told us he wanted us to know how disappointed he was that Oscar Soule was not here. Russ rallied with a mischievous and knowing smile, telling all of us that Oscar felt his absence was an appropriate payback for all the times Kevin hadn't asked but announced his intended absence from class in order to surf. Russ, this week's fill-in alumni lecture series host, then announced that Oscar, emeritus biologist who also taught a course about baseball, wanted everyone to know he was at the season opener in Cuba. Kevin joined in the laughter that swept through the hall.

### **Conclusion: Passion, Commitment, Responsibility, Reciprocity**

She is a committed and passionate teacher who demonstrates an authentic desire to give her students a compelling education. Subsequently, as a student I was expected to possess a strong desire to learn. The "just get by" attitude did not appear to be something that she was satisfied with. Students who were unwilling or unable to take responsibility for what they wanted to take away for their education had trouble staying motivated while in the program. Orin Hardy, Winter Student Evaluation of Faculty

I have learned so much being here at Evergreen that I have changed my area of education. I originally came to Evergreen to be a part of the women's basketball team and pursue a career in business, but after taking *Money's Value, Soul's Worth* I'd rather follow my past career goals to be an athletic trainer and digital web designer. Seeing people do what they feel, or do what they think is right, made me think about what I want to do and whether it will make me happy. Anonymous Student, Fall Student Self-Evaluation

Evergreen lit my fire. Blue Peetz, MVSU Alumni Lecture

Don't apply for a job, create it. Kevin Ranker, MVSU Alumni Lecture

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<sup>39</sup> Bronson, Po, and Ashley Merryman, "The Creativity Crisis."

Did we succeed in imparting the skills and values necessary to empower students to make a successful independent career? What did we learn about Evergreen as an alternative liberal arts college in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What did we learn about the money's value and soul's worth of the liberal arts?

One example demonstrates the quality of illumination possible when one fire becomes many. In response to issues that arose during program activities related to guest presentations by Dr. Robert Jensen on race and US economic history<sup>40</sup> and Dr. Dan Booth Cohen<sup>41</sup> on religion and US political economy as well as our campus-wide Day of Absence/Day of Presence, including an in-class reading of Ward's play,<sup>42</sup> a student in the program, Sheila Smith, brought to seminar a copy of "Stages in the Development of a Black Identity."<sup>43</sup> As an experienced community activist and a leader of the newly formed Evergreen Black Student Union, Sheila herself understood that the "shattered worldviews" her peers were experiencing was part of a developmental process requiring intellectual understanding as well as personal integration. The article provided a model for her peers to understand and process what they were experiencing in our program.

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Jensen is professor of journalism at the University of Texas and the author of *All my bones shake* (New York; London: Soft Skull ; Turnaround [distributor], 2009); Robert Jensen, *The heart of whiteness : confronting race, racism, and white privilege* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 2005).

Dan Booth Cohen, Ph.D. is a professional Constellation facilitator and the author of, *I Carry Your Heart in My Heart. Family Constellations in Prison* (Heidelberg, Germany: Carl Auer International, 2009).<sup>41</sup> bio Dan Booth Cohen, Tuesday 30 March

<sup>42</sup> Ward, *Happy ending; and, Day of absence; two plays.*; "Day of Absence / Day of Presence at Evergreen."

<sup>43</sup> The stages discussed and tested in this article by William Hall, Roy Freedle and William Cross, Jr. include: 1) Pre-encounter: the world as seen through the oppressor's logic (e.g., nonblack or antiblack); 2) Encounter: experience shatters current interpretation of the Black condition; 3) Immersion: everything of value is related to Blackness; 4) Internalization: focus can be other than self and Blackness

Through word and example Sheila's passion for understanding Black identity formation kindled others' fires regarding race and identity formation within our learning community.

While every student who completed the spring quarter ended by writing and presenting her or his own alumni lecture, we've chosen to end with the first two paragraphs from the lecture of a student for whom writing was, at the beginning of the year, a major obstacle. That is, the final assignment of spring quarter was for students to imagine themselves ten years into the future living their own Greener dream, and returning to campus to present an alumni lecture in a reincarnation of a program like MVSW. All of the lectures were inspiring, and described, without exception, the dreams and achievements of another generation of Greener social entrepreneurs. The student voice in these final paragraphs makes explicit the interconnectivity not only between money and consciousness, but between consciousness and the ABC's of education's business.

It's ironic that I, Orin Hardy, have become an educator. School was not something I enjoyed. I didn't learn my ABCs until the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The teachers wouldn't explain to me why the letters had to be in a specific order and my mind didn't see any good reason for A to always go first. The experts diagnosed me with dyslexia. I diagnosed the classes of my youth as an environment that did not encourage me to shine as students are meant to do. I'm suspicious that it didn't provide an environment for anyone to truly shine. Perhaps dyslexia is really just a name for the condition people have when they refuse to believe school is what an education is really about. Learning must never become a chore. It must be about empowering people to become wholesome humans. Humans who are deeply connected to who they truly are, empathically bound to the welfare of others, and hardwired to understand that they belong to the earth, which they inhabit, as much as the earth belongs to them.

The professors and students I met at Evergreen often shared my suspicions about school. Evergreen was like attending a "not school," or getting an uneducation. It wasn't long before I discovered that the ethos of this institution was founded on a collection of 'no's." When describing it to others I found it hard to avoid calling it, "an alternative liberal arts college that has no grades and no majors." Whenever I didn't explain it as a "no-school" college, and someone asked, "What's your major?" I'd take a good look at them and determine whether I should give them an honest explanation, or simply supply them with a conventional description, such as: "economics," "ethical entrepreneurship," or "sustainability studies." I did learn about these things, but the richness of my Evergreen

education happened **between** the disciplines. My time here gave me more than just the status of a BA degree. It taught me to discern the fine line between going to school to get a degree and becoming an educated human being.

### **POST SCRIPT: Insights and Recommendations**

The ability to take and accept criticism from others helped me to do my own thing in the world.  
Cynthia Sieden, MVSU Alumni Lecture

My transcript told a story, the story of my life. Blue Peetz, MVSU Alumni Lecture

You can study anything and everything that appeals to you. Dee Williams, MVSU Alumni Lecture

Much of what I learned was through community activities and volunteering that led to valuable experiences. Susan Buis, MVSU Alumni Lecture

- **On Narrative Evaluations and Transcripts:** Based on our experiences in the classroom and what we learned from TESC alumni, the narrative evaluation has a critical pedagogical role at TESC. Alumni reported that although they did not use it to get their jobs, the process of reflection, articulation, and live-time inter-and intra-personal evaluation and assessment involved in its creation contributed directly to their success in the world. However, since our sample was of alumni entrepreneurs who did not conform to the graduate school career route of over 50% of TESC graduates are recommendation is two-fold. 1) The narrative evaluation serves an important function within the context of multi-quarter, interdisciplinary programs and should not only be preserved but strengthened by devoting class-time to its creation, peer review, and integrative function relative to interdisciplinary course content. Faculty workload and program curriculum should reflect the considerable amount of time and energy that is involved if the narrative evaluation process is engaged with as an integral component of thinking, writing, peer review, and faculty assessment. Narrative evaluation conferences, which we scheduled with each student at mid-quarter and during week eleven of each quarter, are an ideal time for teaching and learning assessment skills as well as for engaging in mentoring and

advising with each student. 2) For the 50% of TESC students who continue to graduate school, including the 85-90% of seniors who are admitted to their first or second choice of graduate programs, the narrative evaluation has an external role as well. We recommend TESC faculty and staff do a field study to discover exactly what the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the narrative evaluation-as-transcript are for specific graduate school admissions offices. E.g., Is length an issue? Is the transcript even read? If so, by whom and how (e.g., in its entirety or, if selectively, how)? Do the letters of recommendation carry particular kinds of weight relative to our extensive narrative evaluation documentation? What changes might serve to preserve both the internal role of narrative evaluations and the external role?

We imagine that Evergreen's development of an electronic, on-line transcript could include a "first page" in which program evaluations serve as fieldnotes for students to craft a synthetic, externally-oriented academic statement demonstrating their unique fulfillment of our expectations of a Greener grad.

- **On Keeping Evergreen Public and Experimental:** We've become curious about why TESC has no forum for faculty and staff to stay abreast of what it means to be a public, alternative, liberal arts institution. Why has a commitment to, and experience with, innovative and experimental pedagogies disappeared from faculty job announcements? Our case study research regarding the money's value and soul's worth of a liberal arts education made us aware of national and international research and debate regarding the pedagogical effectiveness as well as the political economies of many of our institutional traditions. What do we know, and how can we learn from those among us who know, the current research regarding: 1) interdisciplinary scholarship in a

post-secular, global, and digital age that is sensitive to our own bioregion and indigenous cultures? 2) the merits and limitations of intentional learning communities? 3) the relationship between entrepreneurial education and the liberal arts? 4) the relationship between financial literacy and social justice?

**- On Doing Anything for College Credit, Or Motivational Interviewing as Entrepreneurial Pedagogy for At-Risk Young Adults:** We believe our institution should actively promote the “myth” that a student can do whatever she or he wants at Evergreen by also stressing *how* this doing of anything becomes worthy of academic credit. That is, students must be able to articulate what they learned from doing “whatever.” A revised version of the principles that have guided some on-campus Native American Studies programs captures the spirit of our recommendation. These five principles can apply to an entire program’s pedagogy or an individual study component of a program as was the case in this example taken from the 06-07 *Awareness* program:

All students will be required to develop and complete an individual research project (or field study) within the structure of this course. Guidelines will be established, but ultimately you must determine what you want to learn, and how you want to learn it, in connection with course themes and activities. If you’re feeling pulled in several directions due to these themes and activities or due to your own diverse interests, this is your opportunity to integrate your multiple interests within the 16 credits of this course. Put differently, some of the 16 credits are yours to shape according to your particular interests. Begin by answering these five questions: What do you want to learn? How are you going to learn it? How are you going to know when you have learned it? How are you going to show others—faculty and colleagues—that you have learned it? And, what difference will it make?<sup>44</sup>

If we combine what we’ve learned about the centrality of the quest for meaning and purpose during the college years and the insights of the burgeoning field of contemplative education with just two characteristics of Evergreen’s unique study body,

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<sup>44</sup> “Awareness TESC Winter 2006.”

it's possible to see our recommendation for a "follow your bliss-based pedagogy" as a highly integrated form of academic advising. We earlier referred to Evergreen students and faculty as "quirky," a word that allows for both the positive and negative associations of being innovative and different. The two characteristics of this quiriness of interest here are 1) entrepreneurship and 2) a heightened or intense sensitivity regarding the importance (or, for many, the necessity) of satisfying the quest for meaning and purpose by marching to the beat of their own subjective experience of rhythm. This second characteristic might be called "subjective coherence" to include both the negative and positive aspects of following one's own bliss. For example, during the fall and winter quarters MVSU had a striking number of students whose major developmental challenge was aligning their inner values and goals with their external or social behavior. The lack of congruence between their subjective sense of who they were, their social actions, and others' perceptions of them could be attributed to specific habits:

- Fatigue and exhaustion. One student always came to class wrapped in a blanket that allowed him to cocoon and sleep through most class activities; many others regularly didn't hear alarms, overslept and came late or skipped class.

- Social anxiety, PTSD, SAD, depression. Based on professional as well as self-diagnosis all of these were common explanations for poor academic performance or the inability to engage socially, which then prevented classroom and small group engagement.

- ADD, ADHD, dyslexia, and seizure disorders including migraines, writer's block, and epilepsy. Many students were challenged not only with these conditions, but even more so with their learned habits for accommodating past diagnoses of this kind.

- Financial and time limitations. Many students said they did not have funds to purchase required texts. Many had jobs that they said prevented them from devoting 40 hours of full-time study to MVSW. Many did not know how to manage their time regardless of jobs, dependents, or financial limitations.

- Drug use. During the three quarters of MVSW students spoke to us about issues with marijuana, including extremely high levels of THC and marijuana laced with amphetamines; ecstasy; LSD; alcohol; Ritalin (ground up and inhaled); cocaine; ayahuasca; heroin; meth; and tobacco.

- Relationship or connection issues. Many students suffered personal losses related to family, friends, cultural resources, or sexual liaisons during MVSW. Many struggled with a long-held sense of alienation and lacked a sense of belonging—to their families, their dorm or housemates, their ethnic, religious and geographical identities; their academic career, to our species, and to the planet.

- Motivational issues. Many students reported not knowing why they were in college. They didn't know what they wanted to learn or why. They didn't know if they even wanted to learn anything. Many students longed for practical skills that could be applied to solve the world's problems, or at least their own, while due to family obligation or financial aid they also were full-time students.

This list, which is not intended to be exhaustive or clinical, but descriptive of our experience, suggests to us two things. The first is that we would like to emphasize the importance of community-based learning, group projects, and individual study options including internships and study abroad as ILC options, but also as components of study within full-time learning communities. The second recommendation is that advising and

mentoring be viewed as an integral component of the development of a learning community within academic programs.

Although there are numerous frameworks for addressing such an integral approach, the language and techniques related to Motivational Interviewing are both pertinent given national research related to MI and campus drug use and congruent in relationship to Evergreen's education mission and existing staff orientation. While this report is not the place for a full discussion of how MI could be used by faculty and staff to address students' academic performance and well-being, the following summary highlights MI in a language that complements the MSVW curriculum and pedagogy. The following list highlights specific and trainable behaviors that are considered characteristic of a motivational interviewing style, all of which would be useful for faculty-student advising as well as student-student problem solving, especially within the context of relationship dynamics in peer group projects within academic programs.

- \* Seeking to understand the person's frame of reference, particularly via reflective listening
- \* Expressing acceptance and affirmation
- \* Eliciting and selectively reinforcing the client's own self motivational statements expressions of problem recognition, concern, desire and intention to change, and ability to change
- \* Monitoring the client's degree of readiness to change, and ensuring that resistance is not generated by jumping ahead of the client

\* Affirming the client's freedom of choice and self-direction.<sup>45</sup>

**- On Faculty Autonomy, Curriculum Planning, and Modeling Teaching and Learning:** Nothing about MVSW was ideal. As noted above, the very idea of a business curriculum at Evergreen is contentious. Equally contentious is whether true entrepreneurship can or should be taught. Some would argue that “entrepreneurial course” is an oxymoron. Furthermore, by scientific standards our second focus, the soul, does not exist and never has. Accordingly, our subject matter was complex; to deal with money’s value *and* soul’s worth required not only an interdisciplinary but a pre-disciplinary approach. The faculty staffing of MVSW, from its conception to the spring quarter faculty-student ratio restriction, was equally fraught. And, the students who registered for this course fall and winter quarters seemed to be challenged with an unusual quantity and quality of developmental issues and opportunities. Our insight is that these challenges perhaps mirror the state of the world and provide the ultimate purpose and meaning for offering a program on money’s value and soul’s worth. Thus, our final insight and recommendation is that curriculum development should begin with what faculty and students want to learn. We need a mechanism for students to voice their interests so as to shape curricular offerings in collaboration with faculty each quarter, especially late-breaking, topical or timely issues. Faculty should be encouraged--through hiring practices, curriculum institutes, faculty retreats, and administrative intellectual leadership--to develop curriculum according to what faculty want to learn rather than what faculty already know and teach. We’ve also learned that faculty want to

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<sup>45</sup> “What is MI?.” Dr. Jason Kilmer presented a workshop based on these principles at TESC, Summer 2010.

learn should include what we want to learn from each other, both in terms of our individual disciplinary training as well as how and why this training matters as it is applied to real-time, community-based teaching and learning in and outside the classroom. Paying attention to our motivations for with whom we choose to teach what, how, and why can provide the much-needed model for how students also can connect. When engaged in by a team of differently disciplined faculty, inquiry-based teaching and learning provides critically needed modeling, especially for those students (and faculty) who have not yet drunk the kool-aid<sup>46</sup> of Evergreen's public, alternative liberal arts mission.

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<sup>46</sup> Thanks to Steve Hunter for this analogy to Tom Wolfe's Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, which occurred during a conversation about when in the outreach, recruitment and admissions process students and their parents do (or should) become conscious of Evergreen's alternative educational mission.

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*Note: Excerpts of student work and quotes that are attributed to individuals in this report appear with the written consent of the authors. Students who requested anonymity and those who did not return a consent form are presented as "Anonymous Student."*