

THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

November 26, 1996

TO: Kathe Taylor, HECB
FROM: Steve Hunter, TESC
RE: Six-Year Assessment Retrospective

I've organized this report under five headings: Accomplishments, Assessment and Accountability, Assessment and Accreditation, The Six Reporting Categories, and The Biennium in Review. A copy on diskette (Word 6.0) is enclosed. I appreciated the chance to work with a different conception and format for a report on assessment. The old format was getting awfully long in the tooth. I hope this serves your purposes for summary report. Call me with questions.

Accomplishments

1. We can say the word, do the work, and employ the results.

The work is being used to identify areas for improvement, to suggest strategies for improvement and to evaluate the success of new teaching and learning strategies directed at improvement. The President and Board of Trustees ask for assessment data and use it to evaluate overall operations. The Provost and Deans not only monitor the curriculum through assessment reports but also direct the work toward issues important to the academic administration. Faculty propose and conduct assessment research judged valuable to subunits of the curriculum. Students have engaged in the assessment process through the conduct of assessment research and discussion of the implications of assessment reports with the faculty.

The major accomplishment for Evergreen in the past six+ years has to be completion and acceptance of the Long-Range Curriculum task force report. The recommendations of this report propose the most substantive changes in Evergreen's curriculum in at least 12 years. Assessment results were

instrumental in defining problems and shaping solutions during this process. The occasion of a large-scale curriculum review provided a forum for sustained discussion of assessment data and reports produced during the past several biennia. I continue to fumble for a more unequivocal way to state this but, for lack of any better: years of assessment work at Evergreen came to fruition during this process. We did the work and we made changes.

It is worth remembering where we started with this work in 1987. The campus environment was hostile. Students protested. Faculty were deeply suspicious and openly resistant. I didn't use the word "assessment" to characterize the work we were doing for four years. That is no exaggeration. You could not say the word without setting off brush fires. I don't mean to convey that assessment no longer encounters skepticism. It does. But I think it meets with no more or less than is the norm for most issues on our campus. That is progress.

The HEC Board's sustained commitment to "institution-specific" forms of assessment made it possible for this work to take root on our campus. Challenging the college to use its inventiveness to make this work our own made all the difference in allowing faculty to see potential benefits in assessment. Some artful balancing between external reporting requirements and support for internal initiatives helped, especially during the early going when suspicions about control of the work still ran high. Committed academic administrators supported the work internally and defended it publicly. Finally, many individuals -- faculty and staff -- joined the effort over the years, for longer and shorter periods of time, each committed to the notion that good people would produce good work given a little time and support. I believe they were right and am indebted to them for whatever good has come of our labor.

2. Assessment has a role in institutional planning processes.

Evergreen completed two major long-range planning processes in the last four years: first, an institution-wide Long-Range Planning effort resulting in a formal Plan in June 1994; second, and growing out of the Long-Range Planning effort, the first overall curriculum review in 12 years which was

completed in February 1996. Assessment results figured prominently in each of these planning projects. Formal recognition and use of assessment data in central planning documents set an important precedent for future planning efforts and marked a turning point for assessment work on our campus. The results finally found a home and commanded some sustained air time from the institution's attention span. Assessment work contributed to some of the most substantial changes in our curriculum since Evergreen's inception.¹

I experienced a bit of an epiphany on the topic of employing assessment findings during the course of these planning processes. I think it's worth passing on: it is much harder to manufacture occasions for change on campus than it is to take advantage of the "naturally" occurring change processes. My advice is to get a firm grasp on the ring when formal occasions for planning and change come around.

For several years prior to these planning/change processes, we (alternately and together, the provost, the deans, and the Assessment Study Group) tried a variety of forums for discussion of assessment results. We circulated reports and invited people to meetings. We circulated reports with response papers from Academic Deans and invited people to meetings. We had faculty members who conducted assessment research invite colleagues to presentations of their work. We presented results at faculty meetings. We offered tea and cookies. In general, we covered the campus in a blizzard of paper and talked ourselves blue in the face. The response was always modest and noticeable effects on some form of change were underwhelming.² Add to this conundrum a sustained administrative upheaval, as we did, and you have a recipe for going nowhere in a hurry.

¹ To touch upon a few, we reconstituted our curriculum planning structures, revamped our first-year curriculum, put forward a clearer set of faculty obligations to be shared within planning structures, and developed a more prescriptive (but not stifling) curriculum planning process. We initiated a process to improve academic planning and advising for students. We also endorsed the creation of a "College of Part-time Studies" through which we will expand considerably the success of our new evening/weekend offerings.

² Colleagues on campus sometimes remind me that I have no way of knowing how much good has accrued to the College from circulating reports and hosting small discussions: individuals benefit quietly by making use of assessment results in their classrooms and teaching is improved. I concur on both counts: good may accrue and I have no way of knowing.

The two planning processes provided formally sanctioned occasions to get assessment results publicized, discussed, and incorporated into broad-based decision-making. In particular, the curriculum planning process opened up a space on the institutional agenda where assessment results got the attention they were due. Until these more naturally occurring occasions arose, it was very difficult to sustain a broad enough conversation about assessment results for the implications to gain any momentum. Our experience has convinced me that, beyond having assessment results to report in the first place, the most important strategy for seeing assessment lead to improvements is to link the work clearly to major campus planning/review events.

3. We have used assessment to identify, study and make improvements in major problem areas.

Notwithstanding the foregoing section, we have used assessment to focus successfully on a few issues that emerged outside of major planning events. It can be done, but in my experience at least, the issue must be of widely recognized importance -- an harbinger of abject catastrophe is best -- that can be documented in fairly undeniable terms. Our most prominent example is freshman retention to the sophomore year.³

In 1989, while reporting to our Board of Trustees on the fifth successive year of increase in freshman retention, I cautioned that expectations for continued increases were becoming unrealistic. We had to be approaching a ceiling beyond which improvement was unlikely. I should have knocked on wood. Retention dropped slightly in 1990 and even more in 1991.

Freshman retention became a primary focus for assessment. We surveyed students who left and students who stayed. We surveyed faculty who taught in freshman level programs. We collected student comments from Academic Advising staff. We met with the faculty who were teaching

³ And even as our best example, I would say we didn't go far enough -- by entertaining major structural changes as part of the solution -- until we were well into the formal curriculum review process mentioned earlier. We did, however, exhaust most opportunities to dither on the margins of the problem, which probably helped us move more quickly to the topic of structural changes once the curriculum review began.

current freshman programs. We had faculty who were about to teach in freshman programs meet with students and faculty from past freshman programs. Regression equations were produced. Advice from experts was sought. Advice from the less-than-expert was accepted.

We increased program planning time for faculty teaching freshman programs. We brought student affairs staff in to lecture to faculty on the travails of adjustment to college and alert them to referral opportunities in Academic Advising, Counseling, Health Services and the Recreation Center. We struggled long and hard with whether the solutions lay in doing better with the design and execution of the current freshman curriculum or in a more substantial redesign of the curriculum.

Short of revising the structure of the first-year curriculum, I think the most worthwhile change we made to improve freshman retention was to link student affairs staff and services to the freshman curriculum in a more “seamless” way. We created positions called “core connectors” who are student affairs staff attached to each freshman program. These staff attend as many day-to-day program activities as their schedules permit, attend faculty planning meetings throughout the year, and provide workshops as judged appropriate on a variety of topics (writing self-evaluations, time management, budgeting, etc.). I think that a more intentional integration of student affairs staff and the academic programs has made awareness and use of student support services a much more natural activity for both faculty and students.⁴

Retention in our first-year programs finally began to inch upward last year. Both within-year retention and retention to fall 1996 has improved. I’ve treated this a little glibly, but it is an example of a persistent problem around which we conducted numerous assessment projects, developed intervention strategies, and have seen improvement.

⁴ A note on uses of technology: One of our core connectors designed a short assignment very early in the quarter that required each of the freshmen in her program to use the internet to turn in the assignment and receive her comments. Once that contact was made, she used the internet as a way to stay in touch with students throughout the year. Students employed the internet as a non-threatening way to pass on comments about what was difficult, confusing, or not working well in the program which the core connector could relay to the faculty team. It turned out to be an effective feedback loop for issues students weren’t always comfortable bringing up with faculty face-to-face.

4. We have made improvements in several student service areas that were motivated, at least in part, by assessment findings.

Surveys and focus group interviews with current students and alumni helped to bring attention to improving services in: the Registrar's Office – we implemented a telephone registration system to streamline the process and instituted a preference system to give priority to upper classmen; the Financial Aid Office – we purchased new software and revised procedures to improve the timeliness with which financial aid awards can be announced; and in the Academic Advising Office and academic advising processes within the curriculum to improve the timeliness and quality of academic advising by staff and faculty.

5. The 1994 Interim Accreditation report gave our assessment efforts a very positive review.

The quantity, quality and creativity of our assessment work was applauded by the interim reviewer. I was especially pleased with this review since the 1989 ten-year accreditation chided us slightly for not being as creative in our assessment as we were in curriculum design. The 1989 observation was made before the influx of state support for assessment. Once resources became available, the challenge to be creative in our approaches was one I wanted to meet in the 1994 review.

6. We have experimented with non-traditional forms of assessment and done some very respectable, traditional evaluation research.

A benefit of the HEC Board's support of institution-specific forms of assessment is that we were given latitude to employ a variety of assessment techniques. Evergreen has used ethnographic research and video documentary as evaluation strategies. We also conducted a straight-ahead piece of evaluation research on employer perceptions that has received national recognition. I think the range of assessment work we have supported has been instrumental in bringing larger numbers of faculty and staff into the discussion of improvement. In my opinion, one of the most important elements of any success we have had on this campus with assessment is that we did not limit it to the purview of "measurement professionals".

7. The baccalaureate institutions, community and technical colleges, HEC Board and SBTCC are collaborating on state-wide assessment issues.

We're still at it. I really don't know what the longest standing inter-sector initiative for higher education in this state is, but collaboration on assessment has been underway for nearly ten years. The state assessment conference continues and we've just concluded our second colloquy with baccalaureate faculty. The assessment coordinators are called upon with increasing frequency to serve as resources on committees studying state-wide issues.

I've attached the report on assessment prepared for the 1997-99 Request Budget as an additional resource. It summarizes assessment work in the current biennium and plans for the future.

Assessment and Accountability

There has always been a tension in this work between the need to "improve" and the admonition to "prove". It goes back to the very beginning of the assessment discussions in this state. I view continued support for institution-specific assessment as recognition of the importance of a focus on improvement. The balance seems to be shifting toward the need to "prove" in the form of accountability. I have mixed feelings about the shift. On one hand, shifting priorities among the elements of the assessment equation is a sign that the work is alive. It has always been asked to serve a variety of masters and it makes sense that the relative weights accorded to different audiences need adjustment over time. It could be argued that the work is maturing and that until assessment finds a place at the table among institutional decision-makers and state policy-makers, it will never have appreciable effects on change. Until assessment meets the budget, it will never amount to much.

On the other hand, entering into budget decisions means operating in a heightened political context, internally and externally. While operating in that context is probably necessary and might even be good, I see some downsides we need to mitigate against. They are not new. Still, I think it is as important to revisit these concerns as it is to adjust the balance between

accountability and assessment. Maybe listing some of the concerns is a step toward finding solutions. In that spirit, here are a few.

1. It's political.

I have seen this observation drop like a bombshell in assessment discussions. For those asked to impose precise measures on imprecise phenomena (physicists, accountants and assessment coordinators are a few examples of this group's membership), being "political" often manifests itself as "nonsensical". This is debilitating. I submit as exhibit A, the inclusion of average parental income for freshmen as a common "performance" measure. This is political. It is also ludicrous. The best, and most, of our work should be directed at improvement of teaching and learning. That important work is jeopardized as more of our collective energy is siphoned off into the (albeit necessary) politics of assessment. It seems to me that most of the conversation we have across institutions, and an increasing amount within my own at least, is about the politics. Especially as we move this work more visibly into the political arena, we need to be mindful of a balance between the political and the efforts to improve teaching and learning.

2. Keep it simple.

Common measures were resisted in the early going for fear of invidious comparisons. They have been adopted now in the interest of demonstrating a seriousness about accountability. We have agreed to put forward bottom-line measures, to judge ourselves by them and to invite judgment by others based upon them. As I write this, the public relations folks on my own campus are calling up anxiously to see if we're "still number one on time-to-degree and degrees/faculty."⁵ Assessment has entered the big time with all attendant frou-frou.

⁵ Bad enough that these measures beg the question of whether or not I should dash out and invest in some green eyeshades, now the picture crystallizes. It appears that I am involved -- instrumental, even -- in the operation of an off-track betting parlor (without the damn booze). I swear, herein lies the road to perdition. Yikes.

It is pointless to dispute the move to common measures but we need to be careful. I think we are on one very slippery slope. I hope we do not reduce this work to a set of single statistics that can be reported by fiscal year in a cell on someone's spreadsheet. I can see pressure building for those bottom-line measures to define OFM, legislative, HEC Board, and institutional attention.

Kurt Vonnegut gave some good advice on this score when he said we need to be careful about what we pretend to be because we are what we pretend. The design, execution, evaluation, and improvement of what we do in higher education is not simple.

3. If you can measure it, you can do it 5% better next year.

Simplistic measures lead to sophomoric goals. I know that the pressure to set goals and monitor progress is motivated by the best of intentions. Evergreen's budget document is a testament to this pressure as are HEC Board reports on efficiency. I'm no expert when it comes to sizing up what's necessary in the current political environment. I do think that poorly conceived goals work against garnering much understanding and support of good intentions on campuses. I hope that we can promote better understanding of: (1) what lies within an institution's ability to affect and what lies outside of our control; (2) the existence of reasonable ceilings on some measures -- the ideal time-to-degree is not zero -- and its corollary, that goals of 5% improvement per year for every institution are not especially insightful; and (3) the fact that variation within an institution is much greater, more interesting, and of greater use for improvement than the variation among institutions.

4. Where are the faculty?

Here is what I view as a sad story. The American Association of Higher Education started an Assessment Forum in the late 1980s. Assessment was a new "movement". It started as a grassroots discussion among faculty on the topic of how to learn more about teaching and learning and how to improve it. It was small. It belonged to the faculty. It had the infectious excitement

of several hundred missionaries. People shared stories and frustrations about how this work could spread on individual campuses and be supported by the administration. I went to a few of these conferences and brought others from my campus. We joined this conversation. Over the years, the movement spread and the conference grew from hundreds to thousands. I returned to this conference in the mid-'90s. Assessment had "arrived". It was supported by the administration. In fact, it had been swallowed by the administration. Presidents, provosts and deans now populated this conference. I don't think I heard the word "student". Students had become "customers". Teaching and learning had become "customer satisfaction" as near as I could tell. Deans were "restructuring" nursing and business schools. They had lots of data and graphs to prove it. The several hundred missionaries I had met seven years before were gone.⁶ I hope they found a better conference. It wouldn't be hard.

We just completed our second "fall colloquy" on teaching and learning in Ellensburg. We didn't measure much. Faculty attended this colloquy and talked about teaching. I think that most everyone found it stimulating and useful. It is pretty hard to "miss" when you convene a group of faculty around the topic of teaching. I believe that improvement comes from these conversations. We don't have them often enough on our respective campuses or collectively. We should do more on this front. I propose it as a quid pro quo for the time we invest in "accountability".

Assessment & Accreditation

Accreditation is the next major review process on the horizon for Evergreen. We plan to complete our self-study during the 1997-98 academic year. Barbara has us organizing for it now. I'm working closely with our curriculum dean to create the structures and identify tasks for completing the academic review. Assessment will play a significant role in the accreditation. I just received a copy of the almost-final new standards yesterday. The curriculum dean is attending a workshop in early December to hear more on the new standards. My attention to accreditation and assessment will shift into higher gear in January. We will begin the formal self-study this spring with a focus on conducting new research as needed

⁶ To be fair, some may have become deans and I just didn't recognize them.

during the summer and fall of 1997. One question I have already is how much overlap will there be between the Program Review requirements of the HEC Board and accreditation standards? I realize that the HEC Board isn't responsible for accreditation, but substantial overlap in reporting requirements would be efficient. I need to take this up with Rick Page at the HEC Board. I believe several of the institutions are undergoing accreditation in the near future. Maybe it's worth having occasional conversations with you about how accreditation is shaping assessment as we move through this process.

The Six Categories

I'm tired of the six categories. The "collection of baseline data" has always seemed like a throw-away to me. The "intermediate skills" category is an artifact of the "three Cs" emphasis (communication, computation and critical thinking) put forward by the HEC Board in 1987. It directs us to evaluate "writing, quantitative skills and other skills as deemed appropriate". I suppose we'll always deem evaluation of some skills appropriate. It is unclear to me what we are doing about Employer Perceptions. I know interest continues in this topic. Evergreen hasn't done much since our survey of alumni and employers in 1991. There is some interest on our campus in replicating that work in time for inclusion in our self-study.

Evergreen's assessment agenda develops out of a sense of institutional priorities going into the biennium and is modified as additional issues emerge. At the moment, accreditation and monitoring outcomes of curriculum changes are clear priorities for the next biennium. If I had my druthers, I'd like more latitude to build an assessment report for the HEC Board around institutional priorities and to play down the old six categories. If I remember correctly, one major argument for common categories was to make a system-level roll-up possible for the HEC Board. That was attempted a few times in the early years, but I haven't seen such a roll-up for quite a while. Given the advent of "common performance measures", I wonder if the need for a system-level report beyond the common measures exists anymore. Maybe it doesn't. If it doesn't, I vote to scotch the six categories.

The Biennium in Review

Assessment Activities Completed during the 1995-97 Biennium

Assessment findings and projects developed for the Long-Range Curriculum Task Force included: (1) *retention statistics and survey data* describing trends in retention rates from Fall-to-Fall and quarter-to-quarter as well as the reasons students gave for the decision to drop out or remain at Evergreen; (2) *focus group interviews with current freshmen* to collect perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the first-year curriculum from currently enrolled students; (3) *focus group interviews with recent alumni* to collect perceptions of strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum from recent graduates; (4) *student pathway analysis* of the curriculum to compare uses of the curriculum intended by the faculty with actual patterns of use by students; and (5) *survey data and focus group interviews* with current students and alumni describing strengths and weaknesses of Evergreen's academic advising system.

Assessment activities evaluating and/or attempting to improve Freshman Retention and the first-year curriculum included: (1) *core Workshops* designed to provide information on freshman retention for faculty preparing to teach in freshmen-level programs; (2) *assessment of a science-intensive freshman program* to evaluate teaching strategies and learning outcomes; (3) *monitoring freshman retention in the 1995-96 curriculum* which experimented with some of the new models for the first-year curriculum proposed by the Long-Range Curriculum Task Force; and (4) *an assessment of "mixed-level" programs* [programs admitting freshmen and upper-division students] attempting to describe freshman experiences and learning in this curricular offering and to suggest advising strategies to best match freshmen to "mixed-level" programs.

Assessment activities focused on Evergreen's expanding part-time, evening/weekend programs included: (1) design and analysis of two *student satisfaction surveys* identifying strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and student services delivered to evening/weekend students; (2) a three-year *analysis of retention and graduation rates in the evening/weekend offerings*; and (3) planning discussions with the dean of part-time studies and

evening/weekend faculty to design “*capstone*” projects for part-time students.

Assessment activities focused on improvements in academic advising included: (1) *compilation of prior research on student and alumni satisfaction with academic advising* and presentation to the Long-Range Curriculum Task Force and the Academic Advising Task Force; (2) *focus group interviews with current students* to collect additional student perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the current advising system; and (3) a pilot project to develop and *evaluate an interactive database for academic advising* containing profiles of faculty backgrounds and teaching histories.

Assessment activities designed to evaluate curriculum planning and staffing issues included: (1) a study of *4-credit course-taking patterns* to determine whether there was an increase in students enrolling in courses only (as opposed to interdisciplinary programs) without student attention to integration and academic planning; (2) *analysis of enrollment and staffing trends in the 1995-96 curriculum* for the curriculum dean; (3) *analysis of 1995-96 faculty credit hour loads* for the provost relating to workload considerations arising from the Long-Range Curriculum Task Force recommendations.

Assessment activities focused on alumni satisfaction included: (1) design, administration and analysis of a survey of *graduates one year out* of the College; (2) design, administration and analysis of a survey of *graduates five years out* of the College; and (3) in recognition of Evergreen’s 25th year of operation, a survey of *graduates 25 years out* of the College.

Additional survey projects on various topics included: (1) a *summer school survey* to evaluate student satisfaction with the quality and array of summer offerings; (2) a *student housing survey* to evaluate student satisfaction with campus housing and housing services; (3) administration of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program’s *Freshman Survey*; (4) administration and analysis of a locally designed *New Student Questionnaire* designed to assess interests of entering students; (4) administration and analysis of a *withdrawal survey* designed to assess reasons for applicant’s decisions to drop out of the admission process; and (5) design, administration and

analysis of a *six-county needs assessment* assessing prospective student needs and interests in part-time study at Evergreen (not funded by assessment dollars, but employed in redesign of the expanded Part-time curriculum called for in the Long-Range Curriculum Task Force).

Additional assessment-related activities completed in the 1995-96 biennium included: (1) *participation in Inter-institutional meetings* on accountability, time-to-degree, and remedial education; (2) participation in the annual *State Assessment Conference*; and (3) preparation of reports and presentations on *transfer student retention, graduation rates, and subject area interests at South Puget Sound Community College, Centralia College and Grays Harbor College* to begin discussions on how to improve articulation between Evergreen and its major two-year feeder colleges.

Assessment Projects In-progress or Planned for the balance of the 1995-97 Biennium

Assessment activities to evaluate student retention, use of the curriculum and curriculum planning include: (1) monitoring of *freshman retention rates from Fall 1995 to Fall 1996*; (2) monitoring of *quarter-to-quarter freshman retention rates in the 1996-97 first-year curriculum*; (3) continuing evaluation of academic advising strategies and design of assessment projects to *assess the impact of adopted changes in academic advising*; (4) conduct an *analysis of student "transition points"* in the curriculum (bridges between lower-division and upper-division work); (4) establish a set of *"baseline" measures for monitoring impacts of curriculum change* adopted in the Long-Range Curriculum Task Force recommendations; (5) conduct an analysis of *liberal arts exposure* addressing issues of breadth and depth in student preparation; (6) produce a description/evaluation of *strategies for teaching writing* drawn from Evergreen faculty; (7) complete the program review for the Master in Teaching program offered in Tacoma 1994-96; (8) *evaluate and redesign the business/management curriculum*; and (9) prepare data and reports for use in the *1997-98 Accreditation Self-Study*.

Additional activities for the 1995-97 biennium include: (1) an *assessment of retention rates among subpopulations* including the federally funded KEY (Keep Enhancing Yourself) program and students of color to identify

strategies proven to be effective with these groups and to explore the feasibility of employing those strategies with the general student population at Evergreen; (2) a schedule for assessment *projects providing employer input/evaluation* for appropriate areas of the curriculum; and (3) planning and *participation in the November 1996 Fall Colloquy* sponsored by the four-year institutions.

Impacts on the Improvement of Teaching and Learning

The last three years have been extraordinary in terms of changes made at Evergreen to improve the undergraduate curriculum and services to students. As mentioned in several portions of the 1997-99 Budget Request document, Evergreen has been engaged in a sustained planning process during the past three years that, among other changes, led to the most substantive revision of the curriculum in at least 12 years. A Long-Range Plan was completed during the 1993-94 academic year. Assessment results from past years were distilled and presented to the Long-Range Planning Committee. The Long-Range Plan called for a major curriculum review to be charged in the Fall of 1994. President Jervis charged the Long-Range Curriculum Task Force in June of 1994 and this committee worked through February 1996 to produce a plan for curricular change which was adopted by the full faculty. Results of assessment projects were a regular feature of the Curriculum Task Force deliberations. The Curriculum Task Force kept a steady focus on student retention, academic advising and curricular coherence -- consistent with themes identified during the 1993-94 planning process and through assessment findings -- throughout its 18 months of work.

Through a combination of assessment activities, the following areas of emphasis for curricular review and revision were identified: availability of advanced work; the balance between student specialization and breadth; faculty affiliation with and participation in specialty areas; academic planning by students; integrity and coherence of the degree; curricular consistency, quality and sequencing; student retention; lack of student program choices; and uneven functioning of specialty areas.

In response to those concerns the College has implemented the following changes: a reconstituted curriculum planning structure, a redesigned first-year curriculum, put forward a clearer set of faculty obligations to be shared within planning structures, and developed a more prescriptive curriculum planning process. A process to improve academic planning and advising for students has been initiated. Also, a Part-time Studies Program was created through which we will expand considerably evening/weekend offerings for placebound adults in the region.

Change was not driven solely by assessment, but it enjoyed a sustained presence during the past three years while the College was engaged in evaluation processes and developing an agenda for change. Assessment's role in curricular improvement at Evergreen is a success story. If there is a transferable object lesson from our experiences it is that when assessment results are available and incorporated into major occasions for change -- like long-range planning, accreditation, and curriculum review -- improvements are made. Details of the curriculum review process at Evergreen are presented in the committee's final report and are available on request.

Plans for Assessment Activities in the 1997-99 Biennium

Assessment activities for the 1997-99 biennium are still being negotiated with the provost, president, board of trustees and Evergreen's curriculum dean. Evergreen will undergo a ten-year accreditation in the next biennium and a good deal of assessment resources will be applied to completing the comprehensive review of the curriculum required for the accreditation Self-Study. Student retention, especially freshman retention, will continue to be a focus of assessment work in the future. The new curricular structure, advising practices, and faculty curriculum planning structure will not be fully in place until the 1997-98 academic year. Assessment projects will be designed to monitor whether or not these changes are associated with desired effects and to assist in making mid-course corrections as needed to bring the plan for curricular change to fruition.