

# The Washington Center and Faculty Development at Evergreen: An Overview<sup>1</sup>

By Barbara Leigh Smith

*Abstract: This report was requested by the Washington Center to provide a historical overview of faculty development at Evergreen and the Washington Center's role. I also share my personal reflections on what I think is needed in this arena.*

Evergreen has a long history of supporting faculty development and community building, which, in my early years at the college, were regarded as inextricably linked. At many institutions faculty development means money allocated to attend one's disciplinary conference, or to fund release time to do research or develop a new course. While Evergreen does have some conventional elements of most faculty development programs including professional travel funds, sabbaticals, and sponsored research, faculty development has always had an additional greater aim to support its distinctive educational approach and promote team teaching and student learning. Teaching always has been and remains the central role of the Evergreen faculty.

I arrived in 1978 as an academic dean, so I was not part of Evergreen's start-up years. I was the first outside senior dean to be appointed after the Board of Trustees reorganized the academic deans into two longer term senior deans and two shorter term rotating deans from the faculty.<sup>2</sup>

I was told I would spend my first quarter in an academic program. This seemed unusual: I joined the program called "Voices of the Third World" with York Wong, Peter Elbow, and Rainer Hasenstab. I assumed "fit" with the College's mission was clearly a concern, and participating in an academic program would help with this. It did. That approach continued when Les Purce became president and joined a core program in his first year.

I am dividing this discussion of Evergreen faculty development & the Washington Center into several periods of time. I think it will be clearer to readers if I write this part in the third person.

## **The First Period: 1965-1977**

Evergreen was established at a time when the higher education system was substantially expanding to accommodate the surging population of college-age students. The expansion

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<sup>2</sup> This system of longer term senior deans (curriculum and budget) and short term deans from the faculty never really worked and was changed in 1984 to longer, equalized maximum terms for all deans.

was at all levels, in both two- and four-year institutions, and both independent and public institutions.

This was also a period of great innovation around teaching and learning practices, and there was an overall climate supporting innovation. Many alternative colleges (for example, Hampshire College, New College in Florida, Empire State) were established in this period, and many “traditional” colleges established small cluster colleges (for example, Western Washington University’s Fairhaven College, the Paracollege at St Olafs, Western College at Miami University, the Goodrich Program at University of Nebraska-Omaha). Some of these “experiments” were focused on individualizing the curriculum while others, as in the case of Evergreen, focused on interdisciplinarity and collaborative learning. While the above mentioned innovations survived, many other alternative colleges closed or became traditional.

Evergreen’s establishment was fueled by both the need for a college to serve southwestern Washington and an unusual openness to how a new institution might be organized and operate. Evergreen benefitted from being established in a period of relative prosperity, in a climate of bipartisanship in the Legislature, and with a governor, Dan Evans, who was strongly committed to education.

Once the decision was made to build a new institution in southwest Washington and then Olympia, the Governor, and the Republican and Democratic leaders in the legislature made the unusual decision to establish a college that was not a replica of the conventional design. Richly funded, they decided to hire a founding faculty, who enjoyed an entire planning year to design the new institution. Eventually the planning faculty embraced a design from an earlier era in higher education -- the curriculum structure and approach that Alexander Meiklejohn had created at the University of Wisconsin in the 1920’s, which was also later used in experimental programs at San Jose State and the University of California-Berkeley. Evergreen’s curricular design around team-taught interdisciplinary coordinated studies has remained intact now for nearly 50 years. In its early years the College was often described in terms of the “four No’s” – no grades, no academic departments, no faculty rank, and no academic requirements.”

Team teaching and yearly reinvention of the curriculum were probably the most important early forms of faculty development at Evergreen. Faculty teaching in a team not only learn about and from their colleagues, they also come to see their own work in different ways. I believe this remains the backbone of effective faculty development at Evergreen as long as faculty are team teaching (only 59% were in 2016-17), and faculty teams are built that purposely integrate new teachers with experienced faculty members who are open to teaching with new partners. In the early years weekly faculty seminars were held in all programs. Some retired faculty regard this as THE most important form of faculty development. Whether these seminars are still in place everywhere in the College, I do not know.

When Evergreen began, the relatively small size of the institution, the structure of the deanery, and the faculty evaluation system also supported faculty development. The faculty were divided into dean's groups, and these groups met periodically. Deans visited and evaluated each faculty member in their group every year. This provided significant time and opportunities for mutual learning, validation, and sharing ideas about teaching. Both the dean and the faculty shared portfolios at this conference. The deans also played a very significant role in creating and encouraging teaching teams. This was successful because the deans actually knew the individual faculty members and their interests well.

**External Funding.** Early faculty development was also richly supported by large-scale grants from prominent foundations, including the Lilly Foundation, the National Science Foundation, and the Danforth Foundation. These grants funded various forms of faculty development including the following:

- The NSF RULE grant funded the establishment of a Self -Paced Learning Lab and the development of a variety of courses that were written up and could be taken as self-paced learning units, like correspondence courses. This approach was before its time (online courses would later adopt this approach) and never really took root with Evergreen's wholesale commitment to face-to-face collaborative learning.
- The Lilly Foundation Grant funded an "each one, teach one" approach that paired faculty up to teach one another something during the summer. One example was a pairing of Pris Bowerman and Susan Fiksdal where Pris taught Susan some economics and Susan taught Pris some literature.
- The Danforth Foundation funded the "Danforth Visitor" approach where a faculty member was given release time to work with willing colleagues to collect feedback on their program by visiting classes, examining written work and feedback, and interviewing students and colleagues. This approach continued after Barbara Smith arrived with Danforth visitors focusing on writing across the curriculum.

**Retreats.** Retreats and other community building events were also a major part of the early approaches to faculty and curriculum development. In the early years these were often well attended, all-college retreats that brought key staff and faculty together and were often held off-campus at camps or retreat centers. This has continued.

This was an era when the college was relatively small, starting with 10 year long coordinated studies programs and 1000 students and reaching 1900 students in 1978. There were 120 faculty in 1978 and an enrollment shortfall of 600 students. The College experienced strong enrollment growth at the beginning but a period of under enrollment hit in the mid and late 1970s. The downturn in the Washington economy led to many of the state's colleges being substantially under-enrolled. Critics of Evergreen argued that the College should be closed. Early ideas about Evergreen being a college for as many as 10,000 students were ramped down when it became apparent that the original growth projections had failed to take account of the College's design.

## **The Second Period: 1977-1984**

The second period of Evergreen history was somewhat rocky since the state economy slid into a recession. When Dan Evans, a much admired three term Republican Governor, became president in 1977, a number of critics gave the college a second look. Evans did lots of reaching out and listening. He decided the College needed to be able to better describe what it did to change largely uninformed negative opinions about the new institution. He asked a highly regarded member of the faculty to spend a quarter exploring the Evergreen experience and how it could be presented to outsiders. One of his first findings was that 50 of our early graduates were now in the best graduate schools in the country! That turned some heads.

Meanwhile the legislature asked the higher education coordinating committee, the Council for Postsecondary Education, to do a study of Evergreen. Critics saw it as a way to close Evergreen while others saw it as a way to make it more successful. The final report became the agenda for the next five years and included a variety of recommendations to expand the College's programs to attract more students (open an MPA program, expand weekend and evening studies, start an education program in collaboration with the University of Puget Sound, and others). The study also included a surprising finding: most people said they wanted the kind of educational environment that Evergreen had (small classes, great teachers focused on student learning, etc.) but they didn't associate those practices with Evergreen! New marketing and public relations efforts were clearly needed. (2018 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History Project interview with Dan Evans). Faculty development would also become an important part of the overall effort to make the College successful.

When Barbara Smith came to Evergreen in 1978 as Budget Dean (1978-80) and then the Curriculum Dean (1980-90) she brought a commitment to faculty development and considered it part of the job. She also came with experience writing successful grants at the University of Nebraska and continued to write grants at Evergreen, attracting small to very large grants for more than 35 years. Early faculty development work included continuing the Danforth Visitor approach and Teaching Strategy Workshops, often put on by Evergreen faculty. The Teaching Strategy sessions were held once a month on Wednesday afternoons during the academic year. Years later, when schedules got much busier, the decision was made to replace these with summer workshops.

One of Barbara's most memorable early encounters was a meeting in Spokane where she met a man who had been on the College's early planning committee. He told her they had hoped Evergreen would be a beacon of innovation for the entire education system, but it seemed like the college was doing nothing to reach out to others. This memory stayed with her.

### ***Reaching out to Others to Learn and Share Lessons of Alternative Colleges***

On Evergreen's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Barbara Smith and faculty member Richard Jones organized a national conference on alternative and experimental education. A call for

proposals elicited 220. The conference drew many of the new alternative colleges as well as longstanding earlier experimental colleges such as Goddard College. The conference later resulted in the book *Against the Current: Reform and Experimentation in Higher Education* (1984). This conference was followed in 1997 by a National Conference on Interdisciplinary Education and the publication by Smith and John McCann, *Reinventing Ourselves: Interdisciplinary Education, Collaborative Learning, and Experimentation in Higher Education* (Anker Press, 2001). Eventually President Joe Olander, along with others, founded several organizations of public ivies and like-minded alternative colleges which continue to hold annual meetings, including CIEL (Consortium for Innovative Environments in Learning) and COPLAC (Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges). A dean usually attended these annual meetings, sometimes with Evergreen faculty members.

***Writing across the Curriculum.*** Enhancing student writing skills has been a perennial issue at Evergreen. In the absence of required English courses, writing across the curriculum (WAC) in the context of interdisciplinary themes has been the preferred approach. Many of Evergreen's early faculty had a strong interest in teaching writing. Peter Elbow was one of the early faculty who went on to become a national expert on the teaching and learning of writing. Many others from a wide variety of fields, including the sciences, shared this interest and developed innovative approaches to teach writing. In 1981 Barbara wrote a successful large three-year National Endowment for the Humanities grant (\$375,000) to support Writing across the Curriculum in collaboration with University of Washington, University of Puget Sound and Pacific Lutheran University. This grant supported common work between the partner institutions as well as faculty development activities at each school. Evergreen produced six monographs and a series of faculty workshops. Several notable examples include Pete Sinclair's monograph on using field journals and Leo Daugherty's monograph, *The Teaching of Writing at Evergreen: A Collection of Strategies*, which describes the approaches used by 31 Evergreen faculty members whom he interviewed. Don Finkel's monograph described "Finkel workshops" which were adopted by many faculty. He later published a valuable book *Teaching with Your Mouth Shut*.

***Learning through Faculty Exchanges.*** Internal and external staff and faculty exchanges were another innovative approach to faculty development. Internally these included faculty exchanges into the library and the advising center. In 1984-86 the exchange idea was extended to exchanges with local high schools with funding from the Northwest Area Foundation, the Matsushita Foundation, and the Lassen Foundation. This idea also nicely supported Evergreen's student recruitment efforts and broke stereotypes about the strange college on the westside. International exchanges of faculty and students with Kobe University of Commerce (later became Hyogo University) began in this period under the leadership of Richard Alexander. International exchanges were a rich form of faculty development which involved more than 30 faculty over many years.

***Other Approaches.*** During this period, external experts were also brought to Evergreen, such as a session on Alverno College's innovative approach to assessment.

### **The Third Period: 1985-1994**

The period between 1984 and 1994 was one of relative prosperity in the economy and growth in the college enrollment. In its 1989 reaccreditation report the College made a significant change in how it described its approach. Matt Smith, one of the authors of this report, wrote a section called “What We Believe: The Five Foci of Learning.” This was an important turning point of moving beyond the “four no’s” to a positive statement of what the College stood for. The five foci –interdisciplinary learning, collaborative learning, learning across significant differences, personal engagement, and linking theory and practice-also provided an explanation for numerous teaching structures and practices at Evergreen such as seminars, team teaching, interdisciplinary coordinated studies programs rather than discipline-based courses, collaborative learning, and narrative evaluations. The College also began to see how many of its practices could be profitably used in traditional institutions.

**Establishment of the Washington Center.** As recounted in the article “*The Washington Center: A Grass Roots Approach to Faculty Development and Curricular Reform.*” (To Improve the Academy), a chance encounter in 1984 led to the establishment of the Washington Center (originally called the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education) when the potential and interest in inter-institutional work became apparent. With seed funding from the Ford Foundation and the Exxon Foundation an assistant director—Jean MacGregor— was hired and within a short two years, thanks to Jean and Barbara making campus visits all over the state, there were over 30 institutions interested in working with the Washington Center. State funding was quickly secured in 1987.

**Faculty Exchanges.** A first and highly effective Washington Center strategy was brokering faculty exchanges between institutions to promote both the adoption of learning communities and effective teaching practices such as team-teaching, book seminars, and collaborative learning. These faculty exchanges eventually involved hundreds of teachers, either exchanging faculty or welcoming them to their teaching teams. Four of the faculty who came to Evergreen as exchange faculty were eventually hired by Evergreen. These faculty exchanges in Washington pretty much disappeared after Barbara left the deanery though other exchanges within the College, and some new international exchanges were developed later.

**Structural Linkages and Faculty Involvement.** Barbara was both Academic Dean for Curriculum and Faculty Hiring (75%) and Director of the Washington Center (25%) for many years so there was close integration of Evergreen faculty development with the work of the Washington Center. Both Barbara and Jean (and later directors) carefully cultivated and monitored the involvement of Evergreen faculty in all Washington Center activities and projects, to make sure that Evergreen faculty were both contributing to and benefitting from the Washington Center’s work, and at the same time, the Washington Center was seen as benefitting its home institution.

**Diversity Work.** The Washington Center expanded its local work toward academic success for all students in 1989 when the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the legislature established and funded a “Minority Student Success” initiative. The State Board approached the Washington Center for advice and leadership with capacity-building on behalf of “diversity.” Working closely with the State Board, Barbara and Jean developed a faculty-development/organizational-development format that continues today: it is built around the creation of institutional teams with required background reading, data-gathering, and homework; multi-day retreats with invited experts; the development of action plans, and follow-up activities. The tremendous success of the “Minority Success Project” (involving 23 of the state’s community colleges) led to a much larger grant (\$718,000) in 1992, on “Cultural Pluralism in the General Education Curriculum” from the Ford Foundation. The University of Washington’s Department of American Ethnic Studies was a key partner in this project, which involved 26 colleges and universities in Washington over a three-year period. The culminating conference in Seattle drew over 800 participants.

**Calculus Reform.** During this same period, Evergreen faculty member Rob Cole and Janet Ray (a math instructor at Seattle Central who had team-taught with Rob on a faculty exchange) led a regional Calculus Reform Project with two NSF grants (1991-94). This project brought the national calculus reform work to Washington.

**Curriculum Retreats.** Starting in 1986, the Washington Center hosted annual overnight curriculum planning retreats to support learning community faculty teams. They continue to this day.

**Faculty Hiring & Community Building.** This was also a period of robust faculty hiring at Evergreen, which Provost Patrick Hill vigorously supported to develop a more diverse faculty. In the 1980s, Evergreen’s faculty of color went from 11% to 26%. Intensive new faculty development efforts were designed to support the large number of new faculty. Community building and having fun were also cultivated. One example was having the new faculty put on a skit at the annual faculty retreat. Older members of the faculty and Evergreen practices were often the target of these skits which everyone enjoyed. These are still in place.

### **The Fourth Period: 1994-2001**

In 1994, Barbara was selected as Provost. When she left the deanship, she upped the Washington Center director slot to full-time on the condition that the Washington Center use that additional capacity for Evergreen faculty development. She saw the Washington Center as an ideal import-export organization—promoting and sharing transferable Evergreen practices with other institutions and importing effective practices from the outside into Evergreen. Having an Evergreen Dean with the desk assignment of faculty development partner with the Washington Center with its substantial and deep experience with adult professional development seemed an ideal partnership. In 1995, Jeanine Elliott

became the Washington Center Co-Director (with Jean MacGregor), and in 1996, Emily Lardner replaced Jean.

***New Initiatives.*** This was a time of strong enrollment and a healthy Washington economy. Evergreen received state funding to establish some new public centers: a K-12 Center (later closed), a Labor Center (later moved to another institution), the Longhouse Education and Cultural Center, and a Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute (later closed). All of these public service centers had some faculty involved in their activities. A Writing Center and a Quantitative Reasoning Center were established at Evergreen in 2001. These Learning Resource Centers replaced the existing and less formal Math Tutoring and Writing Centers by expanding physical space and budgets, establishing a new administrative faculty status for its fulltime directors, and articulating expectations to reinvigorate writing and quantitative reasoning across the curriculum and assess student learning outcomes—all in support of major General Education reforms.

***Strengthening Curriculum Planning and Leadership.*** A major DTF was appointed to work on curriculum planning structures and faculty hiring priorities, a perennial concern since the College opened. This DTF recommended paid planning unit conveners and other means of strengthening faculty curriculum planning structures. Areas were encouraged to create more opportunities for advanced work so students could see coherent pathways to a degree. A general education DTF took the step of further articulating Evergreen's expectations of its graduates which moved beyond the simple, often misunderstood, "no statement" –no academic requirements. This dtf produced the "Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate."

Strengthening curriculum planning required real leadership from the deans and the planning unit conveners. The decision was made to give conveners release time in spring to accomplish this. It seemed ideal since that was when they were working on catalog copy and firming up faculty assignments. Teaching teams were voluntary associations so the conveners and the Dean, Jin Darney, spent considerable time encouraging and nudging faculty into teams and core programs. She also worked extensively with the planning unit conveners to help them become an effective group.

***Strengthening Faculty Development.*** Jean MacGregor recalls that Barbara asked her to interview all the new faculty at the end of their first year to find out how it went as one of her new steps in faculty development. She also strengthened faculty development through additional funding, allocating \$200K for faculty development, primarily through summer institutes specifically focused on identified needs in writing, seminar skills, diversity, and Core (entering student) program planning as well as planning time for other significant programs such as the Tacoma program and the Reservation-Based Program. Content issues in the curriculum were also a focus as the college stepped up its commitment to international studies.

Examples of other summer institutes included the following:



- Susan Fiksdal led workshops on seminars for part time and fulltime faculty.
- Jovana Brown led a workshop for Environmental Studies and other faculty on Native American issues, history and policies that educated us on the important leadership role of tribes in environmental issues in the PNW.
- Jeanne Hahn led a workshop in the 1990s on issues of globalization where the participants read and discussed four books on globalization.
- MES faculty met to focus on how to coordinate the teaching of qualitative and quantitative reasoning.
- Community Building Workshops featured outdoor education and field trips.
- Finkel Workshop: Don Finkel was a master teacher who passed away too soon. After his death, a weeklong summer institute was held to both celebrate and share his “conceptual” teaching approach. It drew 80 Evergreen faculty.

At this time, the Washington Center staff worked closely with the faculty hiring/faculty development dean on the substance and delivery of the summer institutes. A stronger new faculty-orientation system was developed and jointly run with the Washington Center. A new faculty retreat was held at the end of the school year and monthly meetings with the new faculty took place during the school year. Faculty buddies were assigned to each new faculty member. Borrowing an idea from another college, Smith established a Provost’s start-up package of books<sup>3</sup> on important pedagogical approaches. Dean Jin Darney wrote a “Real Faculty Handbook,” an insider practical guide to the internal workings of the College. Nancy Taylor, the faculty development dean during this time, indicated that the Summer Institutes focusing on program planning made a big difference and were probably the most effective faculty development practices while she was dean. She purposely built on the work of the previous dean in charge of faculty development, Rob Knapp.

In 1995, Jean MacGregor indicated she wanted to step away from co-directing the Washington Center in order to get back into the classroom (teaching as an adjunct in the MES program) and also to see if funding could be found to launch a national learning communities dissemination project. By this time, a nationally renowned scholar on student retention, Vincent Tinto, and his doctoral students were churning out one research paper after another on the promise and effectiveness of learning communities and the Washington Center was being deluged with requests for advice about learning community start-up and teaching. Jean wrote a successful proposal to the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) to launch the first National Learning Community Dissemination Project. (1996-2000). In 1997, the FIPSE funding enabled the Washington Center to hold its first National Summer Institute on

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<sup>3</sup> Books included Barkley, Major and Cross, *Collaborative Learning Techniques*, Angelo and Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, Bean, *Engaging Ideas*. Other more recent titles to use might profitably include Fiksdal, *A Guide to Teaching Effective Seminars*, Finkel, *Teaching with Your Mouth Shut*, and Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, and Gabelnick, *Learning Communities: Reforming Undergraduate Education* (2004).

Learning Communities, at which many Evergreen faculty served as resource faculty to visiting teams from across the country, a practice that continues today.

### **The Fifth Period: 2001-2015**

**Washington Center.** Gillies Malnarich joined the Washington Center directorship in 2000. Barbara resigned from the Provost position in 2001 after President Jane Jervis stepped down. For several years (2001-2004) she returned to the Washington Center to co-direct a second and much larger National Learning Communities Project with Jean MacGregor. In 2000, the Pew Charitable Trusts hired Russell Edgerton (the former President of the American Association for Higher Education) to lead a new higher education initiative focused on significant educational improvement efforts. The Washington Center was awarded \$1.2 million for its learning community work. This funding supported a variety of initiatives: a leadership development strand with 57 Pew Learning Community Fellows; continuing National Summer Institutes on Learning Communities; a series of monographs on learning communities; the establishment of several regional learning community networks around the country, and a large culminating national conference in 2004.

While the National Learning Communities Project occupied the attention of Washington Center's founders, the new co-directors—Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich—intensified the Center's involvement in faculty development at Evergreen while working nationally on math reform and throughout Washington state on equity and college readiness initiatives.

At Evergreen, the Center was active in revitalizing summer institutes, designing the new faculty retreat, and facilitating a year-long new-faculty orientation to Evergreen. With so much faculty development underway on the Olympia campus, leads from Institutional Research, the Writing and Quantitative Reasoning Centers, and Washington Center held monthly planning meetings with the Faculty Development and Hiring Dean to rationalize efforts and co-sponsor faculty development tied to Evergreen's foci and expectations. Faculty also participated in the Center's statewide conferences, symposiums, curriculum planning retreats, and think tank; some wrote for its magazine-style newsletter.

In 2002, the Center launched the *Assessing Complex Learning Project* at Evergreen which invited faculty to help the Center explore ways "to describe complex knowing experienced by students in interdisciplinary learning communities" and "to document the thoughtful practices that make epistemological development and deep learning possible." Faculty and student interviews as well as their writing about learning that mattered most to them was posted on the Institutional Research website and, later on, influenced Washington Center's national learning communities' assessment projects. A number of colleagues from Evening and Weekend Studies where both co-directors taught as part-time adjunct faculty participated in this project. This shared interest in teaching and learning brought daytime and evening faculty together.

An Evergreen team—a mix of faculty from Olympia's day-time program and staff from First Peoples' Advising, the Writing Center, Student Services, and Academic Advising—participated in Washington Center's *Critical Moments Project* (2000-2004), funded by The

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Pluralism and Unity Grant. Based on a similar project at the Goodrich Program at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, the Evergreen team joined teams from three other schools to learn how to write case stories based on underrepresented and students of color's experiences which make them decide to leave college. These cases were then used in facilitated conversations to develop students' advocacy skills and to kick-start campus change. Evergreen has continued to use *Critical Moments'* case studies at the Day of Absence/Day of Presence activities and in class discussions. *Critical Moments*, along with work on implementing the AACU *Diversity Scorecard* at Evergreen and a similar diversity assessment rubric the Center helped the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges develop and use across the state, spawned an annual Educational Equity Retreat organized by Washington Center and attended by two- and four year campus teams focused on diversity work, including Evergreen.

Invited to participate in national conversations on math reform, the Center helped found the *National Numeracy Network* (NNN) made up of two- and four-year schools across the country. In 2003, the NNN, with support from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, co-sponsored *Quantitative Literacy Across the Curriculum: Everybody's Project* along with the Mathematical Association of America Professional Enhancement Program, National Science Foundation, and Washington Center. In this project, *Critical Moments* case studies on learning math and Robert Moses's insight that learning algebra was "the civil rights issue of our times" linked math reform to social justice and educational equity work. A series of national gatherings led to the development of quantitative literacy (QL) course materials, the creation of a QL assignment bank for use in disciplinary courses, and the establishment of an annual workshop for faculty teams focused on the how to's of QL interdisciplinary assignment design that Washington Center co-sponsored with the University of Southern Florida. Evergreen faculty and the new QR Center were actively involved in this work.

By 2004 with funding for the National Learning Communities Project coming to an end, the Center co-directors—in response to multiple requests from a burgeoning learning community field's requests—elected to continue the national summer learning community institutes despite a drastically reduced staff and no external funding in sight. Since this time, institutes have been self-supporting with the Center managing to bring in enough money to seed its own national projects as well as some faculty development work at Evergreen.

Money set aside by the NLC project funded a re-working of Washington Center's website to include the project's Learning Commons website. And, as this new site has evolved, selected Evergreen programs have been highlighted—syllabi, book lists, assignments and student work are featured. This follows a practice of making good work available to anyone interested that the Center adopted in relation to its integrative assignment work with campus teams.

From 2004 on, a shift in emphasis occurred in learning community practice influenced by the co-directors scholarship on college readiness and educational equity as well as their

involvement in *Building Engagement and Attainment for Minority Students* (2003-07)<sup>4</sup>, a project fostering data-based campus change at four-year Historically Black, Hispanic-Serving, and Tribal colleges and universities. In particular, the co-directors' experience of designing professional development for over 100 participating campuses based on each school's participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) underscored that without *campus* involvement any reform endeavor, including learning communities, would never move beyond niche programming which benefitted a few fortunate students. By 2005, teams applying to the summer institutes were asked to examine campus data on student success in relation to their aspirations for initiating, reworking or scaling-up learning community programs.

This direction marked a new era for learning community work and fleshed-out the potential of learning communities to be a genuine "high-impact practice" if informed by campus data, specifically curricular trouble spots for students, and if learning community programs intentionally wove together best practices in diversity work and developmental education. This re-articulation of learning communities as a student success initiative continued to include key components of learning community practice "done well": involvement of senior administrators, support of academic advisors, ongoing program assessment as well as robust and continuous faculty development based on an analysis of student learning.

Balancing the workload between national, statewide, and Evergreen work not only required a concerted effort to do more with less but to rethink commitments. Coinciding with the pressing need to become more strategic in the deployment of co-director energies, the Center also needed to learn how to work in a changing higher education landscape where funding faculty development per se did not interest private philanthropic organizations who were more interested in solving persistent problems related to college completion through large-scale state and regional initiatives which might have faculty development components. This drying up of typical funding sources such as FIPSE coincided with cut-backs to state funding for higher education with its own dire ramifications for Evergreen's public service centers. In response—and with the then provost's support—Washington Center raised funds to pay shortfalls in staff salaries through an increase in EWS teaching time and by taking on more external work as faculty development consultants, coaches, and project leaders on national multiple-year Lumina Foundation and Gates Foundation projects related to college readiness. At the state-level the Center also intensified its work with the State Board by becoming part of its *Rethinking Pre-College Math* leadership team as well as doing professional development and campus coaching for its I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training) programs.

These ventures as well as articles co-authored by the Washington Center co-directors in *Change* magazine which highlighted Washington Center and Evergreen's unique approach to teaching and learning led to greater demands for summer institutes, regional networks, curriculum planning retreats, conference presentations, keynotes, and consulting contracts.

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<sup>4</sup> BEAMS was a partnership between NSSE, Alliance for Equity in Higher Education, managed by Institute for Higher Education Policy supported by Lumina Foundation.

Where appropriate, the Center recruited Evergreen faculty to fulfill the responsibilities which come with being a nationally-recognized center in new areas of educational work beyond the liberal arts and sciences.

During this period, the “high” of the cross-unit collaboration on faculty development referred to earlier came to an abrupt end when the provost decided that the Center should *not* participate in Evergreen faculty development, save for less public work with faculty via DTF service, private consultations, off-campus curriculum planning retreats, and national projects.

This provost’s decision did not deter Evergreen faculty from involvement in Washington Center’s work nor Washington Center’s involvement in faculty development at Evergreen. As budget cuts continued and the co-directors were advised that the Center would not survive another round of cuts, many faculty supported the Center’s decision to appeal directly to the Washington State Legislature whose intervention on behalf of the Center forced Evergreen to retain the Center at 1987 funding levels. In the aftermath, the same provost re-instated faculty development at Evergreen as part of the Center’s mandate. A few years later and towards the end of this extended budget crisis, the Center gave a new provost revenue earned through consulting and work to help support faculty development related to the Academic Statement initiative.

Over the years and under different provosts, faculty development and the role Washington Center played and might play has never been assured. Throughout, Washington Center has supported the establishment of a teaching and learning center for Evergreen, hopeful that Washington Center could be involved in this undertaking. That Evergreen has been Washington Center’s home institution has held the Center in good stead, including during an especially difficult time when a well-known quantitative research firm engaged in a very public critique of learning communities’ viability as an educational reform strategy for under-represented and underprepared students. In response, Washington Center seeded a series of research projects to investigate institutional and student learning outcomes when learning communities are done well. Early work with Evergreen faculty and students on the *Assessing Complex Knowing Project* provided insights for this work.

In turn, Evergreen faculty—especially those from EWS—became stalwart supporters and participants in these assessment research projects. The *National Project of Assessing Learning in Learning Communities*, led by the co-directors and Veronica Boix-Mansilla from Harvard Graduate School’s Project Zero, engaged a core of Evergreen faculty who went on to pilot the use of an assignment design heuristic for integrated learning and a collaborative learning protocol for faculty assessment of student learning in their team teaching. Washington Center hosted regular monthly gatherings on Friday afternoons where faculty used the collaborative assessment protocol to assess students’ work and to talk about teaching puzzles. Evergreen was among the 27 college faculty teams participating in this project whose focus on assessing student interdisciplinary learning led to a new level of scholarship and research on learning communities and the development of the Online Survey of Students’ Experiences in Learning Communities launched in 2012.

Soon after, the Center established an online peer-reviewed journal on learning community research and practice. Evergreen faculty have served as peer reviewers, contributors, and editors.

Even though the consequences of Washington Center being barred from “public” faculty development diminished the Center’s reputation and work at its home institution, the Center continued to work with interested colleagues on summer institutes, faculty retreats, EWS workshops and the Liberal Arts forum. Behind the scenes, the Center also worked on a range of grant proposals with Evergreen colleagues including those specifically related to first-year student retention, science programs for students first-in-their family to attend college, and educational programs for the incarcerated. And, when proposals were successful (e.g. Center for Community Based Learning and Action), the Center helped design professional development.

Finally, as a review of Washington Center annual reports and self-evaluations submitted to the provosts from 2001 up to now indicate, the desire to be more deeply involved in faculty development at Evergreen—and proposals for how this might be accomplished—has been a reoccurring theme. The Center’s work in this “recent” period, often involving Evergreen faculty, indicates the expertise and resources a re-invigorated faculty development program and the proposed teaching and learning center could draw on, including the Center’s extensive library and archives of workshop materials.

***The Academic Statement and Mentoring Proposal.*** In 2011 the faculty approved the Academic Statement and Mentoring Proposal by a wide margin (72 in favor, 13 opposed, 5 abstentions). This was probably the most ambitious change in the College in many years. It required all students to write academic statements and established a series of required opportunities for new students to receive more substantial guidance as they entered Evergreen including an orientation 0- week course, periodic mentoring workshops during the academic year, all campus advising days, and a standing Mentor Council to oversee and plan the overall effort. In addition, it recommended a “serious commitment to substantive faculty development through summer institutes to engage faculty in developing curriculum for the 0-week course and assist faculty in developing skills to mentor students” (Koppelman, final report June 2015).

***Native American Initiatives.*** Barbara formally retired in 2004 and has since worked part-time for the past 14 years on Native American initiatives at Evergreen. She raised more than \$2 million to support the redesign of the Reservation-Based Program and the development of the Native Cases Initiative. This work continues today where she and Linda Moon Stumpff provide focused faculty development through summer institutes and case development for faculty at Evergreen and other institutions. More than 95 Evergreen faculty have participated in these institutes. This work is completely self sustaining with no paid staff and small grant support from tribes for its summer institute. The Longhouse is another strong ongoing Native American initiative. It involves Evergreen faculty in

conferences, workshops and its small grant program. It is now in the process of building an Indigenous Arts Campus with a carving studio and a fiber arts studio nearing completion.

***Sustainability Initiative.*** At the conclusion of the National Learning Communities Project, Jean MacGregor approached the Washington Center Directors (then Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich) and Interim Provost Don Bantz about launching a new Washington Center initiative around sustainability education. With the agreement that such a project would have to be entirely grant funded, Jean wrote a series of grants (about \$1 million over a decade) to build the Curriculum for the Bioregion initiative. Its series of workshops, summer field courses, and year-long faculty learning communities have involved over 1600 faculty members on over 60 campuses in Washington State and beyond. As with the original Washington Center work, this project has intentionally involved Evergreen faculty: over 70 have been involved in Curriculum for the Bioregion as resource faculty, conference speakers, and as participants. Since Jean is retiring this academic year, Curriculum for the Bioregion is moving to Western Washington University where Grace Wang, a professor at Huxley College of the Environment, will take over as its new director.

***Computer Center Faculty Development.*** The Computing Center staff have made and continue to make MAJOR contributions to faculty development. As institute funding was shrinking the Computing folks were still offering a summer series of classroom technology workshops for faculty, and currently, Bridget Irish is leading the campus-wide development on accessibility improvement. This work in the Computing Center has been particularly important since some of the state online systems have changed several times over the past years.

***Institutional Research and Assessment Office and Faculty Development.*** The Institutional Research and Assessment Office also provided supplemental opportunities for faculty professional development through its history of Inter-institutional Learning Assessment 2000-2005, support of First-year faculty planning institutes, End-of-Program Review Reflection and Synthesis workshops, Transcript Review, and participation in New Faculty Orientation activities. Depending on who the Dean of Faculty Development was, their level of coordinated engagement in faculty development and summer institutes has varied. In some years, they participated in selected institutes or team-planning workshops directly. They have co-facilitated and funded several collaborative institutes with the Washington Center, and sometimes have simply funded one or more faculty-proposed institutes when they included assessment and addressed key priorities that aligned with critical student concerns. Institutional Research and Assessment workshops have faculty professional development implications and benefits (such as clarity of learning objectives or assignments, evaluation practices, use of rubrics, etc.), even when the primary purpose of the activity is learning assessment. Institutional Research also provided mini-grants in 2004-05 and 2005-06 for more than a dozen faculty to write essays about various teaching practices. These essays are posted on the Institutional Research webpage and referred there by the Deans Faculty Development website.

***International Faculty Exchanges.*** At Evergreen new international faculty exchanges were established in China at Xing Wei College and in Denmark at Roskilde University. Both of these institutions are alternative colleges with unique progressive designs. Faculty are quite interested in these exchanges. Meanwhile the longest standing faculty exchange with Kobe/Hyogo University, which was the best funded exchange providing airfare and housing, has been suspended as a result of budget cuts.

***September Symposium.*** Starting in 2001 a new strategy was put in place of offering a September Symposium for faculty. This came right after the 9/11 attack so there was some discussion about whether to go ahead with it which they did. Attendance was very large with emeritus faculty invited as well. In the years that followed, faculty and staff proposed sessions. Some were on scholarly research and others on teaching practices, student assessment, or topical seminars. The Symposia were organized by the Dean of Faculty Hiring and Development and very well attended by regular and adjunct faculty, but they didn't survive the next Dean rotation and the pressures of high levels of faculty hiring that consumed time and workload. The Dean was also directly involved in the development and implementation of a multi-faceted initiative related to faculty advising and the Academic Statement, which required specific faculty development via the Mentor Council.

***Library/Dean Partnerships.*** Depending on who rotates in/out of the deanery, the nature and content of faculty development can change significantly. In a very recent example, the Library Dean has joined the Dean of Faculty Hiring and Development to create a suite of opportunities for practice-sharing (Friday lunchtime events) and to implement implicit bias training for faculty serving on hiring committees

***Changes in Structure and Leadership.*** Much changed structurally at Evergreen in this period. The College became more bureaucratic with decision making decentralized towards the faculty rather than the deans. Various formal faculty committees now address critical issues and screen the curriculum through the Standing Committee on the Curriculum. A faculty union was established. These moves were intended to increase faculty involvement, faculty control, and transparency.

In the meantime, some of the planning units dissolved with large number of faculty reorganizing into affinity groups. There have been five provosts (two interim and three continuing appointments) since Barbara retired and declining enrollment has severely limited college resources for faculty development. The relationship between the Academic Dean for Faculty Development and the Washington Center dissolved around 2005. Rebuilding the relationship between Washington Center and this critical position in the deanery over the ensuing years led to modest collaborative efforts.

Later one provost eliminated nearly all of the faculty development funds as well as the release time for planning unit conveners. Stipends for attending institutes were cut in half. The collective bargaining agreement now describes the College's faculty development commitments. The agreement currently states that ideas for summer institutes will be



defined by the deans and through proposals suggested by the faculty. The amount of financial support has varied, depending on the College's resources.

### **Since 2016**

When George Bridges became president in 2016 he hired a longtime colleague to interview faculty, staff and students and report on their perceptions of the college. These findings provided helpful advice on needed next steps at the college. Summer institute funding was partially restored (\$35K for 2017 and \$50K for 2018). Other smaller endowments also support faculty development, bringing the available funding to about \$100K. In 2017 the Deans offered 21 institutes and 3 fields of study planning institutes. The faculty development dean also sponsors a new faculty orientation workshop each year which is very important in introducing new faculty to the College's distinctive practices. Most of the original faculty have now retired, and the College is now in a critical transition period with a new generation of teachers.

In 2017-2018 efforts are underway to develop more stable curriculum pathways and enrollment recovery initiatives. This work was launched by the Standing Committee on the Curriculum in 2016-2017, and expedited by a grant from the Mellon Foundation.

***Oral History Project.*** An oral history project, currently underway to celebrate Evergreen's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is interviewing faculty and staff and capturing many of their ideas and their continuing passion for Evergreen. This project was funded by a prior Evergreen trustee and is being coordinated by Sam Schrage. Summer institutes were held in 2017 and 2018 to train faculty about the project and become interviewers.

***Title III Proposal to Strengthen First Year Program and Establish a Teaching & Learning Center.*** In 2015 Evergreen submitted a sophisticated proposal to the Department of Education Title III program to strengthen first year programs, a perennial concern at Evergreen. While the proposal received high scores, it was not funded. Title III has become a much smaller and highly competitive federal grant program. In 2017-18 a First-Year Workgroup had taken up this work using a Community of Practice mode. Another Title III proposal with similar aims but a different focus on the delivery system for strengthening first year programs with a new Teaching and Learning Center in the lead was prepared but not submitted in 2017 due to a technical failure. Plans are underway to submit a proposal in the next round in 2019. The activities have not yet been defined. The involvement of the academic deans in this work is important.

***The Washington Center's Ongoing Legacy and Future.*** Evergreen has well fulfilled the goal of spreading its innovation in terms of curriculum restructuring through learning communities, with more than 1000 colleges and universities adopting and adapting this innovation. The Washington Center has been the major vehicle for accomplishing and supporting this. The Washington Center's work is now focused on 1) national events (hosting three self supporting summer institutes, coaching six regional learning community networks, and managing the *Learning Communities Research and Practice* e-

journal), 2) supporting work in Washington state and 3) supporting work at Evergreen. Evergreen teams participate in all of these summer institutes with small support from the Deans Summer Institute funds for the registration fee. Balancing, funding, and defining these three arenas of Washington Center work is the current challenge for the future.

There is interest now in establishing a Teaching and Learning Center (perhaps called a Commons) at Evergreen. One suggestion is to put this in the Washington Center. The issue is whether the Washington Center is the right location for this, what the focus of the work should be, how this would coordinate with the Academic Deans (crucial in my opinion), and what additional staffing and funding would be required. Many creative possibilities are in the air.

### **My Overall Reflections**

(Note: This section switches back to a first person set of my reflections.)

It's important to recognize that over the years, much has changed at Evergreen in terms of its structures, size, resources, and overall approach to some issues. As the attached description of critical tensions in the 1998 self study indicates, all institutions must continue to review and balance these forces which often change over time. At the same time, much has not changed. The College remains firmly committed to its educational approach and distinctive structures and practices. Teaching remains the central commitment of faculty.

The faculty portfolio and self evaluation process for students and faculty is a key element of Evergreen's goal of being a reflective, learning centered institution. The faculty evaluation process has changed substantially over the years. Eliminating the annual faculty evaluation process was a necessary change. There is no way annual evaluations of all faculty could have been maintained with the small number of deans (4) and the growth in the number of faculty (now 250) and programs (now more than 200). Changing the faculty evaluation system was done in steps: first the third year evaluation was eliminated and then Evergreen adopted a tenure policy which diminished the role of the deans and made faculty evaluations much less frequent.

One of the negatives, in my opinion, has been the distancing of the deans from the faculty which can be especially destructive in curriculum development since the deans often mentored faculty through this process and transmitted important information about overall college needs in the curriculum. Deans have a unique and important eagle-eye overview of the entire college.

The faculty passed a resolution in spring 2016 (resulting from many years of work by the former Diversity and Equity Standing Committee) to engage in continued professional development about equity, integrate that learning in their teaching, and reflect on that work in their annual self-evaluations. How well the current portfolio system and much less frequent faculty evaluation system supports this kind of emphasis in faculty development, I

do not know. I highly value the portfolio system and hope that it is still in place along with the annual conferences and exchange of portfolios with teaching colleagues.

Some ongoing needs to support writing across the curriculum and increase quantitative reasoning have been partially addressed by establishing the Writing Center and the Quantitative Reasoning (former Math Lab) Center. It is not clear from the list of recent summer institutes that this is sufficiently reaching the faculty.

The instability of the planning units and the changing function of deans groups (never very effective in my opinion) has also altered the landscape in terms of potential sites for faculty development. The new emphasis on guided pathways and enrollment recovery initiatives may be a timely way forward to create a more coherent curriculum for students and to revitalize faculty development opportunities. Students need to see pathways through the curriculum and this is not conveyed adequately at the present time. This debate over repeating programs and how to do advanced work goes back to the very beginning of the institution and it was something I struggled with for my entire time as an administrator at Evergreen.

Grant funding has always been an important part of gathering resources for faculty development. Now, foundations are less apt to fund faculty development than they were in past decades. At the same time, Evergreen has not been as active in recent years writing grants and approaching foundations as it once was to support faculty development except for specific initiatives (very successful) such as Native American education, sustainability work, and the Longhouse and arts initiatives. Support for faculty development from the Advancement Office at Evergreen is critical. This is a gap that needs to be filled with the ongoing decrease in state support for college budgets. Scholarship funding is also very important since the cost of college is out of reach to many people.

I believe there is an untapped potential to more firmly build a connection between Institutional Research and faculty development planning. The College has a clear educational philosophy on which to build. The alignment of our teaching practices with the five foci and our educational aspirations is always something that needs to be explored and updated. Adding Institutional Research to the Washington Center Advisory Board would be a good first step.

It is important also to recognize that much of what happens at Evergreen boils down to individual people and the roles they choose to play. Self determined job descriptions with little accountability have always been an issue. When Peter Tommerup wrote a dissertation about Evergreen he said "reinvention" was the core value. As indicated in the Critical Tensions at Evergreen concluding section of the 1998 Self Study in the appendix, there is a tension between the emphasis on community and autonomy. Too much of a commitment to autonomy can lead to sometimes overlooking our community responsibilities to students, colleagues and the college.

Transitions and the impulse to reinvent everything are ongoing issues at Evergreen. There is very little, if any, communication between current and past occupants of key faculty development positions and between academic programs past and present. Much can be lost in the transition process. I think many retired faculty would be happy to be part of some of the faculty development work at Evergreen on a part time basis. This is an untapped resource.

Right now Evergreen is in the middle of an important turning point with nearly all newer faculty and a large number of one person programs. I believe it is critically important to pay considerable attention to community building, teaching-team formation, and faculty development. Declining enrollment and limited resources have exacerbated the problem.

The most fundamentally important ongoing faculty development strategies are, in my opinion, 1) team teaching, 2) a strong new faculty orientation process that lasts all year with end-of-year appraisal and fine tuning of the effort, 3) summer institutes that directly support Evergreen's pedagogical aspirations and strategies and program planning, and 4) targeted research and faculty development at "trouble spots" in the curriculum where we are losing large numbers of students (such as the Title III grant).

In preparing this paper I have learned a lot about how broadly distributed faculty development is at Evergreen. Given the broad and dispersed nature and siting of faculty development work at Evergreen, I think it would be helpful to develop a cross unit, written two year faculty development plan and evaluation process. Another learning for me was how much, important work the Washington Center staff has generated in the last 15 years. Information about this work needs to be much more broadly distributed.

I believe the Washington Center is an ideal place to situate some of the faculty development work to give the effort more sustained focus IF the staffing is appropriately increased by at least 2 FTE, and IF it is strongly connected with the Academic Deans. The only other way to get the needed staff capacity would be to cut back on the national work of the Washington Center which seems undesirable to me. More Evergreen faculty involvement in current Washington Center conferences is desirable. Just shipping faculty development to the Washington Center without close coordination with the deans would lead to neglect from the academic administration. Some parts of the faculty development effort should remain in other offices such as international exchanges, and workshops through other units of the College such as Institutional Research and the Computer Center. External funding also needs more attention.

Finding the right balance in terms of the Washington Center's work between national, state, and internal Evergreen work is important and will need to be a continuing issue. I believe the substantial work with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges has been very important and needs to be retained for the good of higher education in the State of Washington. Washington has a two tiered education system with about half of the students

starting their college education in a two year institution. Evergreen has always had a substantial transfer student population and high retention rates of these students.

I support national searches for open positions and believe there is a large pool of potential applicants for the director positions in the Washington Center. The Professional Organizational Development Organization (POD) is an ideal place to reach potential applicants. This is the organization for people who run teaching and learning centers. I believe the positions of Washington Center Director and Teaching and Learning Center Director need to be defined as Administrative Faculty to be congruent with the way other similar positions (Writing Center and QR Center) are defined. This was a serious sore point with the previous directors. Teaching experience is also important and having the director(s) occasionally teach part time is a good idea.

Evergreen now faces important questions about what's doable with limited resources and what should be sustained in terms of promising practices and the kinds of values to coming back to. The five foci are an important guidepost for thinking about these big questions.

### **Appendix:**

Evergreen Faculty Development Resources.

Critical Tensions from the 1998 Evergreen Reaccreditation Self Study

# Historical Documents

No academic departments. No academic requirements. No faculty rank. No grades.

The Evergreen State College is often noted for what it isn't, perhaps most famously by the "Four Nos" first articulated over 40 years ago by founding president Charlie McCann. Before Evergreen opened its doors, direction for the new college was as much about what it shouldn't be as what it should. State Senator Gordon Sandison said the Legislature did not want "just another four year college" bound by rigid structures of tradition, and Governor Dan Evans expressed the need to "unshackle our educational thinking from traditional patterns" to create a "flexible and sophisticated educational instrument" ([Clabaugh 1970](#)).

Knowing what we aren't helps define us, but it doesn't tell the fuller story of what we are. The documents listed below are some of the college's primary texts and key secondary sources. We hope they shed light on how Evergreen became the college it did and how it continues to define and redefine itself.

If you don't see something that you think should be here, contact [John McLain](#), ext. 6045. To learn more about Evergreen's history, visit the [Archives](#) in Library 0426 or contact Archivist [Randy Stilson](#), ext. 6126.

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