

**Betsy Diffendal**  
**Interviewed by Anthony Zaragoza**  
**The Evergreen State College oral history project**  
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**Zaragoza:** I'm back with Betsy Diffendal to talk about her teaching career at Evergreen. Betsy, would you tell us a little bit about your second year at Evergreen, and your work with Mary Ellen Hillaire.

**Diffendal:** Mary Ellen Hillaire was the first female Native American faculty hired at Evergreen during the initial group of faculty hires. When I arrived in 1975, she and three other Native American faculty – Darrell Phare, Mary Nelson and Cruz Esquivel had been working on ways to recruit Native American students to the college and to design programs that would engage them. A major part of Evergreen's mandate, as the first new state college in many years, was to attract non-traditional students who were being under-served by the existing colleges. Among that population were the 35,000 Native Americans living in Washington State.

During my first year at Evergreen Mary invited any faculty who were interested to meet with her over several weeks to share her ideas for working with Native students at Evergreen. In these talks she discussed the need to develop a "liberal arts" education based on the values, cultural traditions and contemporary needs of local tribal communities. I liked her ideas. I came to Evergreen interested in its mandate to attract non-traditional students including Native American, African American and Hispanic students and older women who needed degrees to advance in the workplace but who weren't enrolling or completing degrees at other colleges. During the protests at the University of Washington in the 60's, one major issue was that the curriculum wasn't hospitable to the cultural diversity of students who should be served by Washington's colleges.

After listening to her ideas, I asked Mary if I might join her in the next year's Native American Studies program. At that point, Evergreen's four Native American faculty had decided to work individually because they differed in their ideas about program design. Mary had chosen to take Individual Contracts with geographically dispersed Native students who she was recruiting from local reservations and cities. Tribal members were eligible for Bureau of Indian Affairs tuition subsidies so could afford to enroll. As her student numbers grew, the Deans became concerned that she had too many students on contract for one faculty to manage. She felt that she was able to handle it. I thought

if there were a second faculty who joined her, it might relieve some of the pressure as she worked out her curricular strategy. Mary agreed to let me join her in 1976-77.

A decade later, in the 1980s, I finished my PhD while I was an Academic Dean at Evergreen. My dissertation topic was assessing the impact of faculty women and people of color on the curriculum and the students in the first five years of Evergreen's history. I interviewed faculty and surveyed by mail the students who had attended the college during those first five years. Mary Hillaire was one of those faculty. I have here her own description of what she had in mind for Native American Studies:

"It is a program designed by Indians for Indians. This is a different approach to an ethnic studies program. The purpose of the program is to establish an educational service relevant to the needs of Indian people. The self-determination of Native Americans in their own education was essential. It is time for Indians to have an effect on their education, rather than education having an effect on Indians. The ultimate goal of the program is for Native Americans to establish a discipline in higher education designed from the values and established in the Native American proficiencies—music, art, talk and dance.

The specific aims of the program are to encourage and assist Native American people to translate life experiences into educational equivalencies, initiate community-based projects from which students can establish a career goal as a means of obtaining college credits, and provide college students with an appropriate model for understanding the Native American way of life, and establish a means for Indian people to perpetuate the values of their culture in the state and national public education systems. Essentially, the program is divided into two groups. One group centers its attention on campus, the other is community based. We are striving to develop the growth of personal consciousness of the individual student, and the development of communities. Faculty divide their time three ways: we spend a third of our time on campus with students, a third communicating with Native American communities, and a third on personal and professional growth. The program has two emphases for students. One is the traditional sense of Indian values, and the other is the transitional sense of the partnership of all people that is distinctive in a democracy. Democracy has not and will not work unless we all work together. Two or more people must work together in order for democracy to succeed, but Native Americans have not been actively involved in this process in America. We hope the Native American Studies program is a step in the right direction for true and working democracy."

Working from those concepts, Mary was very consistent in trying to develop this program. As she would say to me, "Western culture has had since the time of the Greeks to figure out what ought to be a 'liberal arts education' for Western people. I would like to have at least 20 years to figure out, with

local tribal communities, what is ‘higher education’ for Native Americans that is both traditional and will serve them well in a transitional way within this larger democracy?” I knew that such a program could be very important to Washington State’s under-served Native communities at a time when the Tribal Councils and the state were working through the implications of the 1974 Boldt Decision expanding Indian fishing rights in line with original treaty language and the 1975 federal Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

It is important to note here that in those early years, after the “founding fathers” were able to agree upon Evergreen’s various learning modes—Coordinated Studies, Group Contracts, Individual Contracts, Internships and credit for Prior Learning from Experience—most of the recruitment and reaching out to under-served communities, using those modes, was done by the faculty of color and women. They took advantage of Evergreen’s opportunities for curricular flexibility to reach those students and to develop programs to engage them..

Mary Hillaire had conversations with Maxine Mimms, an African American faculty who had, from the beginning of her tenure at Evergreen in 1972, thought about ways to get adult African American students engaged with the college. Maxine encouraged Mary to have an on-campus section of the program that would bring nearby Native American students to the campus, because much of Mary’s work in the early years of the program did not have a regular on-campus component. Due to the requirement, for example, for Veterans receiving tuition from the government to have a certain number of “seat-time” hours with the faculty present, a weekly on-campus face-to-face opportunity where students could get to know each other and expand their experiences with the College was valuable.

The year that I began teaching with her—the Fall of 1976—in a program called A Separate Reality, we had a long Monday morning class session each week to which she extended an invitation to elders from the various tribes around the state to come demonstrate traditional skills and to talk with the students about what they were doing in their communities; what the issues were. She invited tribal judges, traditional dancers, master basket-makers, activists, tribal council members and others. She encouraged the visitors to talk about the community’s values and what they saw as important work to be done.

My own role as a new faculty was challenging. I was, at that point, just shaping my own ideas about how I would teach at Evergreen. This year was quite different from my first year, so I primarily worked with the Individual Contract students who would come in or who we would meet with in local tribal communities. I also was the program’s main contact with the college’s administration and

Admissions Office, who often would challenge the strength of a Native American applicant's high school transcript for college-level work.

Several days a week, I would drive down from Tacoma to Mary's Olympia apartment; we would take her car and go to reservations around the state. One day we would go west to Quinault, another day we would go over to Colville in Eastern Washington, and another day up north to Lummi. We would meet with individual enrolled students about their projects and talk to the Tribal Chair and others about recruiting students to Evergreen.

Every experiment at the College had to have time to shake itself out. Each of the several years that I taught with Mary she was experimenting with her approach. We recognized the need to add faculty to the growing program and the college hired David Whitener, a Squaxin tribal member who had been a teacher at Neah Bay and was the Squaxin Tribal Chairman. Soon the college hired Lloyd Colfax who also was from a local tribe. One thing that Mary emphasized was that Native American faculty teaching in the program should be from Washington State tribal communities and share the cultural background of students from local groups.

By the second or third year I was in the program, Maxine Mimms joined us as did Lovern King, a Native American educator and filmmaker from Oregon who had run adult education programs at the Seattle Indian Center, and Russ Fox, an urban planner on the faculty. Our larger teams would work together on Mondays and work individually on other days of the week to meet the needs of the students enrolled. Many times Mary would come in on the weekends and sit in her office, because she knew that Native students would come and expect to find her there whenever they were able to come. Many of them were working so they came on weekends. "My job is to be available, to be here."



In those early years, one of the issues that the Native American Studies program had was the requirement to relocate faculty offices annually. Evergreen had an initial policy that in order for everyone at Evergreen to get to know each other, and to be able to talk together in our teaching teams, we all needed to move our offices every year. Instead of being housed in disciplinary groups, as you would at a traditional college with departments, I might have an English faculty in the office next door

and a biologist on the other side because we were teaching together. Mary said, “That is not going to work. The Native students need to know where I am, and I will not move my office.” This was a big deal because everyone else had to move all of their books and belongings every year. When she refused to move her office, some faculty protested. Her recognition of Indian ways of coming together was not always accommodated easily. Eventually the whole faculty gave up on the annual move policy!

LLyn De Danaan, the first woman Academic Dean, was exceptionally creative and committed to experimentation. In her weekly Dean’s group meetings she would encourage us to have conversations about rich interdisciplinary topics or themes. She would put up a large paper in the hall of the Dean’s area that she called the “Trial Balloon.” Anybody who had an idea for a really generative interdisciplinary theme would write that theme up there and say, “This would be great with a biologist, an anthropologist and an artist. I’d be willing to be the anthropologist if someone would join me.” The trial balloons were always on the walls, and sometimes students would write “Ooh, I like this. I’d take this one.” It was a very open and encouraging planning process for faculty to get to know each other and to exchange ideas about how those disciplines could come together.

I became aware of something later, when I worked with Evergreen’s Washington Center for the Improvement of Higher Education, developed by Barbara Smith and Jean MacGregor. They were working with community college faculty around the state and country trying to help them get interested in interdisciplinary teaching. We all learned quickly that once someone had been trained in a discipline, they often had the sense that it must be delivered in full sequences, and there’s simply no way they could leave out this or that out. All of us teaching at Evergreen learned that when you’re teaching around a theme in an interdisciplinary way, you really have to rethink your discipline and figure out which parts of the field are informative and helpful to this particular problem to be solved, or this particular theme. Those issues were challenging for some Evergreen faculty as well, especially in the sciences e.g. “How could I possibly teach this if the students hadn’t had background in that first?” Faculty and the Deans were working hard at the beginning of the college to make opportunities for conversation about these interdisciplinary program concepts.

Working in the Native American Studies program removed me, to some degree, from the what was going on more broadly in the college. Mary developed what she called the “diagnostic interview” with each student each quarter as they put together their Individual Contracts. Those in-person interviews were often hours long. She would talk with them and help them think through or discover “what they did best”, and think about what opportunities they might take advantage of to develop those talents and interests further. Were there things in their community that they might be able to

work with during an Internship to learn more? Perhaps they were interested in the laws that impacted tribal communities. Could they work with a tribal judge and see what went on in tribal courts? Those diagnostic interviews were her main avenue into student interests and abilities. It set the stage for the quarter's work, and everything that followed was about shaping that particular learning opportunity. Their own Self-Evaluation was their opportunity for self-reflection on their learning at quarter's end.

**Zaragoza:** Betsy, one of the things that you mentioned in conversation was that this was very experimental, was within an experimental college, but there was a way in which that experimental college put constraints on the experiments. I want to be sure that we capture that. I thought that was a really important thing that you said yesterday, and I wanted to hear that again to make sure we have it.

**Diffendal:** In those early years, the idea of most of the planning faculty was that the coordinated studies and group contract learning modes would involve substantial contact with faculty or "seat time" every week if it was a full-time 16-credit program. How much time should be spent by students with faculty every week was a continuing question.

In addition to various internal pressures, the Legislature was interested in what was going on at Evergreen in those first years. They had agreed to fund this non-traditional college. Dan Evans, the Governor, was very supportive of Evergreen's development to serve the students in southwest Washington, especially. But the local community and the legislators working in Olympia wanted to be sure that "experimental" Evergreen was a legitimate endeavor. There were external pressures because we were a state-funded college and were experimenting with higher education models. There were a lot of people in the Legislature who weren't really sure about Evergreen. They would make proposals every year saying, "Let's shut this down and use the facility for a minimum-security prison" or some such.

There were also questions about Evergreen's transcripts. How were other colleges supposed to evaluate transcripts for students trying to get into their graduate programs or transfer to other schools when they had narrative evaluations and no grade point averages? How would they know whether students had the required courses to enter when the "course equivalencies" awarded by Evergreen faculty at the end of each quarter often had titles that were not comparable with traditional course titles, like Psych 101. Colleges didn't know what to do with our transcripts.

All of the unfamiliar externals that came from our experimentation raised questions. Graduate admissions committees would write to our faculty and say, "If you did give grade point averages, what grade point average would you give this person?" Faculty were challenged because we didn't have such

a system, and it seemed unethical to begin translating our multi-faceted narrative evaluations into letter-grades.

This led us to look harder at the question of how we might name our course equivalencies. How could we name courses so they'd be recognizable outside? Since every year we did something different with a different team and different disciplines, it wasn't an easy thing when you came to the end of the quarter to say, "Okay, what do we call this material that we just covered? If I were teaching it another format, what would this course be called?"

All of those issues, I would say, had a constraining effect. The external pressure on the college came quite early, because as soon as our transcripts began to get out, as soon as students would transfer to other schools or apply to graduate schools their Admissions Offices would see our lengthy narrative evaluations and not know how they should be assessed in their admissions process.

I would say that especially the Native American curriculum experiment under Mary Hillaire got a lot of scrutiny internally, and it made it very challenging. There were a lot of us—Lyn De Danaan, as a dean, was certainly one of them—who, from the earliest days, said, "If this is an experimental college, we have to be able to experiment, to fail or change or modify the experiments, but we do not need to immediately give in to what concerns are externally. We're going to have to get enough experience ourselves with alternative ways of organizing a college that we are able to be confident about what we're doing and then refine our processes, for example, the course descriptions."

Mary's approach to writing Faculty Evaluations of students was different from the emerging model. She would write one Faculty Evaluation, which was more of a Program Description, that was given to each student. Then, because each student was doing very different things, she viewed their own Student Self-Evaluations as more important reflections and assessments of their work than an individually focused faculty evaluation.

There was criticism about the Faculty Evaluations not being specific nor evaluative enough. So, we evolved a system in which the students would write and submit their self-evaluations before the faculty wrote their evaluations. Then we would look at how they described and assessed their own learning and would build that into the individual faculty evaluation for each student.

The narrative evaluation process for all of the college's faculty has never been an easy one. Writing lengthy evaluations for every student takes a lot of time at the end of each quarter, and there is usually just a week between one quarter and the next for which faculty need to be planning for the upcoming quarter. From the beginning, some of those technical parts of the way that we designed the college have been challenging.

**Zaragoza:** Quick follow-up connected to that. Why do you think Dan Evans was so supportive of Evergreen?

**Diffendal:** Dan Evans was a very visionary governor- the only three-term Governor of Washington State. Evergreen was proposed at the time when U C Berkeley student protests were ongoing, the University of Washington students had blocked the freeways with their protests and the population of Washington was growing. It was clear that there needed to be innovation in the state's higher education system. I think Governor Evans could see the challenge of getting the large land grant colleges—like WSU and UW—that were huge university systems with everything in place, to be nimble enough to make rapid curricular changes. When the proposal for a new and more experimental state college to serve the needs of southwest Washington was proposed he was fully supportive. He later showed that support by becoming the President of the college.

In those early years women faculty were especially sensitive to the opportunities that the college's flexible structure offered to engage non-traditional student groups. Maxine Mimms was teaching and working in the College's Learning Resource Center. She realized that there were a lot of staff at Evergreen who hadn't finished their degrees and thought there should be an opportunity for them take advantage of Evergreen's flexibility. She put together an academic program that met at lunchtime. She invited faculty from various disciplines to meet with them and present a diverse introduction to the liberal arts. She was able to get many staff enrolled who eventually completed their degrees at Evergreen by her initiation of this program.

In another instance, an older woman student, returning to school after many years, told the Deans that she thought there needed to be a program in the evenings or weekends for working women returning to school who may lack confidence and would value other women to talk with. Their lives were very full with work, children and so forth, yet they wanted to complete a degree. Several of Evergreen's women faculty, including Nancy Taylor, working with Academic Dean, Lynn De Danaan, created such a program that successfully addressed the needs and interests of working women returning to school in the evenings and on weekends. Eventually these women moved into other evening/weekend programs to complete their degrees.

Faculty Member Margaret Gribskov started an evening program for State workers. The program was built around the theme "management in the public interest". The College recruited state and city workers to attend the program in the evenings, supporting their work in public administration. That program kept going and continued to draw from State workers for many years. Those students also fed



into the regular evening-weekend offerings, until they completed their degrees. After a few years the college expanded its offerings to include a Master's level program, Management in the Public Interest.

The various programs designed for non-traditional students in the early years were initiated by Evergreen's faculty women. Margaret Gribskov, herself, returned to graduate school and completed her PhD after she had had a family, so she was very sensitive to the educational needs of working adults. Mary Hillaire came to the college with the goal of addressing the needs of Native students.

Maxine Mimms, who had been teaching on the Olympia campus but lived in Tacoma, was approached by African American women in Tacoma to offer something that would let them complete a four-year degree for a reasonable cost. In Tacoma at that time, there were community colleges, and then Pacific Lutheran University and the University of Puget Sound, which were private schools and very expensive. Many African American older students who had finished community college had nowhere else that they could go to as working adults because there was no convenient state college where they could finish the upper-division coursework. Maxine said, "Yes, I can do something here." She began taking students with two-year degrees on Individual Contracts. She would teach on the main campus during the day, and have students come to her house either very early in the morning before they went to work, or in the evenings, for their academic work.

This Tacoma upper division project began during that same early period, the mid 1970's. At that point, I, too, was living in Tacoma and Maxine and I were next door neighbors. As she got more



students, she convinced me that I might enjoy meeting those students. I would go join her in the evenings, with my son who was only 5 or 6 years old, after I had taught during the day in Olympia. Among those first students were women working in human service organizations, and men who were retired veterans, many working for the US Postal Service. Soon we

outgrew her living room. My living room was right next door, so we would divide into two smaller seminar groups, and work with those students in evening seminars.

It was a wonderful opportunity that soon outgrew our living rooms, and Maxine asked friends who directed community organizations if we could use some of their spaces for our seminars. Among the spaces we used in the evenings were those of the Tacoma Urban League, the Puyallup Tribe of

Indians, the Tacoma Colored Women's Club, and the former OEO Program-funded Opportunities and Industrialization Center. The Tacoma classes and seminars were not yet considered a formal off-campus extension requiring approval by the State's Higher Education Coordinating Board. This was another early experiment in line with the college's mission to serve non-traditional students. Maxine kept the deans apprised of the project and, as it grew, proposed making it a more formal part of the college's offerings that could receive budgetary support for a more permanent space. That was the beginning of what eventually has become the Tacoma Program.

In 1980 I applied for the position of Academic Dean and was appointed for an initial two-year term beginning in 1981, as the Dean responsible for developing Evening and Part Time Programs and Summer School. Given my experience in program evaluation, I could see that the rotating Dean's position was a particularly useful spot to get an overview of the experiments going on at the College.

At that point, all four Academic Deans were responsible for evaluating faculty for reappointment, so each of the four deans were responsible for a quarter of the faculty. Our job included visiting each faculty in their program to see how they were teaching, what they were doing, and then to have evaluation conferences with them about their teaching, pedagogy, ideas for their next teaching and so forth. We did this every year, and I found it very helpful when I was on the receiving end of that as a faculty, and I thought this would be a great opportunity to see the breadth of what was happening at Evergreen right then.

Meanwhile, Maxine was going forward with the Evergreen Tacoma Program in donated spaces. She had recruited from the main campus—I forget how early—Richard Brian, who taught math, and Joye Hardiman, who was in humanities, and Willie Parson, who was a microbiologist. They rotated to Tacoma to join her in various quarters to offer breadth. Eventually, those three became permanent faculty in the Tacoma Program.

The following quote is from an interview I had with Maxine in the middle-1980s when I was working on my PhD and serving as an Academic Dean. I asked her what her concept was for the development of the Tacoma Program. The quotation below is what Maxine had in mind for an upper-division program that would serve experienced, African American adults who were working in their communities. She was interested in students over 25. She wanted it to address the unmet needs of African American urban adults. She did not recruit direct from high school, young people who had other full-time options available. This was her conversation about what she had in mind for the experiment in Tacoma:

Most Black adults who are coming to school are already practicing paraprofessionals and parents, and they are in positions to affect the “group,” the Black community. They have the potential of having the greatest immediate impact on the community. My focus from the beginning has been on the education of the Black family. I’m including family members in special college events, inviting them to come to class, encouraging them to complete their education, talking about the family in class, and by having students write a mandatory autobiography, I try to keep the black family at the center of the educational experience.

The program, which is located in the community, is designed to teach a traditional, well-rounded liberal arts curriculum—humanities, natural and social sciences, and the arts. However, the pedagogy comes from a Black worldview. Everyone is born with the potential for genius. The individual has to be part of the group in order to succeed. Group and community involvement lets the individual emerge.

I don’t think that a person of color can afford to teach toward the goal of sending all students to graduate school. For minorities, the graduate school, the source of advanced study, is the community. The traditional education with an emphasis on advanced specialization, which leads to graduate school, is not the only appropriate outcome for the college experience. Students need to return their skills to the community.

That was her initial concept for the program. There are a lot of retired military living in Lakewood and Tacoma. There were at that point, too, a lot of African American women working in community organizations—in social work and other positions in the community—and few of them had been able to complete their four-year degree to move up in the State system.

The retired military men often spent time at the NCO Club talking to each other, but they had educational benefits that they weren’t using. The community colleges were asking them to come back and take another two-year degree in some other content area. When they did that, they would use their educational opportunities without getting a Bachelor’s degree. These were the people that she was especially interested in getting in Tacoma in the early years. She would go to the Black churches on the weekends. She would go to Fort Lewis to the NCO Club and talk to the guys about coming back to college. She would invite them in. She would see people anywhere in her community work in general and invite them in and recruit them to come and finish their degrees at Evergreen.

It was a wonderful group of students. The program grew steadily after the first few years. Again, this was before the University of Washington-Tacoma had even been thought of, so this was really the only State funded upper-division program in Pierce County. The program attracted many

African American adults and others, including Hispanic, Vietnamese, Native American and European Americans who learned of it through word of mouth from their friends.

While I was a Dean, the question arose about the need for a more permanent facility to house the program and a program budget. One of the challenges of the curricular experimentation at Evergreen was how and when you decide to make the experiment a permanent part of the college's offerings, especially when are added costs involved. That was always an issue. Faculty would propose a nursing program or a teacher education program. The founding faculty and administrators would say, "No, no, no. Don't tackle that yet. There is too much overhead to running a program like that."

So, when the Tacoma program needed a permanent space; when it had outgrown its volunteer spaces, Byron Youtz—who was the Provost at that time agreed to approach the Higher Education Coordinating Board and to build into the budget some rental space in Tacoma. That finally did happen in 1982 when it became a formal off-campus college program. It wasn't named or wasn't thought of at that point as a "campus". It was considered a program that needed physical space. That formal change happened during the time that I was an Academic Dean and I was active in supporting the change.

**Zaragoza:** Betsy, you mentioned that before you became a dean, you taught in the Tacoma program for a year. Can you talk about that year of teaching—what it was like, what experiences you had, what kinds of things you were teaching, what it was like to work in the early days of Tacoma?

**Diffendal:** When I got out of my second term in the deanship in 1985, I taught in Tacoma pretty regularly through 1995, so I'm having a little trouble remembering the first year, other than Maxine had successfully recruited a lot of African American retired military men. It's a long time ago and I can't remember the first year I taught there after it moved from our homes, to be honest with you. It was a relatively small program still in 1980, so I think probably I'm remembering better the period right after I was an Academic Dean in 1985, when we had a campus that was large enough on 10<sup>th</sup> and Pacific and had a good number of students there. From the beginning, the program was designed so that it would be accessible to working adults. There was a daytime thread...three afternoons a week, which those folks who worked evenings or nights or did not have a job, attended. Then, there was an evening thread...three evenings a week, which met the needs of those adults with daytime jobs or other responsibilities during the day. We full time faculty taught in both threads. We would teach in the afternoons and teach another group of students in the evening.

Among the most moving things that I experienced there were the African American men—many of whom had been educated in the South, had served in the military and who were such gentlemen.

They were so thoughtful, they were so disciplined, they were so glad to have an opportunity to do the work, to have someone interested in their lives.

Maxine and Joye Hardiman were insightful in having all the adult students write their autobiographies as a part of their academic work. I would say that some of the most interesting things that came out of those early programs were these autobiographies, especially of military men. I remember several from the early years. The African American men at the end of World War II—some of these men were considerably older—had been part of transportation units in Europe and were some of the first to go to the concentration camps and had to deal with what they found there.

**Zaragoza:** My grandpa also. Once as a kid, I found a stack of pictures, and in the middle of those pictures were emaciated bodies. It helped make sense of my grandfather in an incredible way.

**Diffendal:** Absolutely. We would read these autobiographies and there was suddenly a huge time gap in the story. I remember one man especially, Mr. Roosevelt Mercer. I remember asking him, “Roosevelt, tell me what happened here between this time you were doing military work here, and then you move to a much later time in your story.” He said, “I can’t bring that back. I can’t talk about that.” I said, “Where were you?” He said, “I was in Germany at the end of the war. We had to go to the camps, and I can’t do that. I can’t bring that back.” There were other men who had had that experience and were unable to talk about it.

The autobiographies were so powerful because they would talk about how much they learned coming out of the South, being able to get into the military, having that training, getting to see other parts of the world. Some of them got to go to Italy, others went to other parts of Europe and so forth. And then there would be a part, for many of them, that just stopped. They were out of the military and not much more was described in such detail.

I remember that it was so engaging for everyone. We would talk about those autobiographies. We would talk about their lives and what they had learned. What we were trying to do was to let them understand how much they already knew. These were not people who needed to be taught as if they had no skills or a knowledge base. They had been writing reports, they’d been organizing things, they’d been in command of various groups, they’d been responsible for all kinds of things. These autobiographies were a way for them to see themselves as experienced and smart students.

They really were the center. We talk about student-centered programs—I would say that the early Tacoma program was totally student centered. Faculty would consider the experiences in the lives of the students who were there and build upon those experiences with a variety of subject matter that offered both content and points of view from the sciences, social sciences and humanities.

I remember Benny Tate, another African American man who had retired from the Army. He was in a segregated barracks in an Army base in Texas the year that Truman integrated the armed forces. He remembers being awakened in the middle of the night. They said, “Get all your stuff. Pick all your stuff up and carry it to this other barracks, because we’re integrating the barracks tonight because Truman is coming tomorrow for an inspection.” Benny Tate moved all his things, and suddenly was in the midst of a mixed barrack—which they had never had before—and he remembered acutely the integration of the Army.

Hearing about experiences like these, especially those of us who were women and had not been to war - we may have had fathers who had been in World War II - reading about these men’s lives was a profound experience. It was a look at men, many of whom had had very difficult lives—many of them beginning in the South— who were discriminated against, had grown up very poor and had seen a way out of that circumstance by joining the Army, having a steady job, receiving training, gaining status through their rank, and having new opportunities. That experience had a profound effect on their lives and worldview. I think the women students in the program, as well as the women faculty, were profoundly moved by these men’s stories. It’s a kind of experience that women in the U.S. rarely have. At least at that point, there were fewer women in the military with those stories to tell.

Maxine would bring in various people from the community to give guest lectures, to talk about various issues and how city and county government or non-profit organizations worked. They stimulated students’ interest in the larger community. Richard Brian, a full time Evergreen faculty who was recruited early to Tacoma to teach math had a wonderful approach. He did what he called “kitchen table math.” He’d have them do things like take walks around the neighborhood to get a sense for the geometry of city planning or have them measure various parts of their homes. If you were going to renovate something, how would you do the measurements for those kinds of things? Willie Parson, a microbiologist, would assign students to test the water in their toilets at home, then they would do studies of bacteria in class. Both of them got students engaged with very practical, hands-on assignments. Richard and Willie would work together on developing skills that were functional, but also got all the math and all the science involved integrated in a very practical way.

Willie would also talk about the experiences of African Americans in the Tuskegee experiment, for example, and other biological experiments that doctors had done upon African Americans during the Jim Crow and other periods of American history. There were things there that people had never heard. None of us had read about that because it wasn’t part of any of our history books at that point. It was an important introduction to the many omitted stories in African American history.

In my teaching there I tried to pick themes that provided different historical or cultural perspectives on the human experience than students might have been exposed to. One class that was engaging I called “Human Relationships with the Unknown” and looked at the many ways that human groups have found to explain and understand things like where we humans came from, twin or triplet births, where we go when we die, disabilities, mental illness. We looked at various indigenous beliefs, world religions and cultural practices from around the world that answered these universal questions. Another class I named, “Hidden Histories”. Each student had to research something they were curious about in their own cultural history but hadn’t been taught in school. This was a rich topic in the 1980’s because so much of the currently available Black and Native American history wasn’t as easily accessible. Evergreen’s main campus librarians took turns coming to Tacoma to teach library reference and research skills with us.

Dr. Mimms had known Martin Luther King. She herself was from Virginia, and she had gone to school in Virginia and had lots of stories about the segregation—not being able to go into shoe stores and try on shoes and having to have pictures drawn of their feet and take them into the shoe store. For the students who were not African American, who hadn’t grown up in the South, or those even from the North who may not have experienced that, it was very eye-opening. I would say, again, as the European American students enrolled in the Native American Studies program found, those white students who enrolled in the Evergreen Tacoma program learned so much from being the minority in a predominantly African American student group and with predominantly African American faculty. Their eyes were opened in a profound way to understanding the impact on real people—sitting with them as classmates—of racial segregation and systemic racism.

After I was a Dean and returned to the Tacoma Program, I got some students there to do a project with me - a mailed survey of the African American graduates from the Tacoma program since its beginning. We sent it out to more than two hundred graduates after about five years of the program and asked them what difference the program had made in their lives. Nearly all of them said it gave

them more self-confidence; a broader understanding of American history and African American history; meaningful experiences getting to know colleagues from different cultural and racial backgrounds and the experience of seeing culturally diverse faculty teach together; a chance for their families to come to campus and experience what “college” was like. Both the Native American Studies students on the main campus and the African American students in the Tacoma survey often commented on the impact of their experiencing multicultural teaching teams.

The alumni in Tacoma had never had a college program led by a person of color, nor had they seen faculty teach together in multicultural teams.



That survey demonstrated the power of putting the students at the center of the program and drawing the curriculum out, if you

would, from their lives. The autobiographical assignments and collaborative projects were very powerful ways for students to get to know each other in ways that you sometimes don't share with a peer unless you are given an opportunity to do that. The same was true with the diverse faculty teams who would often have different perspectives and emphases based on our life experiences.

Other Olympia faculty would be invited to teach in Tacoma and add their disciplines to the students' education. Charlie Teske came and taught about the history of jazz. He was a jazz musician himself. The students loved it! At the end of every quarter, Maxine would invite families and spouses to come, and we would have a party to celebrate completing the quarter.



One of the students would coordinate cassette tapes for music if we didn't have live music. Trumpeter Charlie Teske's jazz band came in in the quarter he taught.



The retired military men never let a woman sit on the side unasked to dance. It was a memorable event when these older men, who were excellent dancers, got everybody going on the floor, and were wonderful escorts for dancing through the evening. A lot of those men would go to the PX and get hams, wonderful salads, and all kinds of good desserts. We would eat and dance and celebrate the end of the quarter. They would bring their children, they would bring their spouses. Sometimes the spouses would enroll after coming and seeing the welcoming campus.



It was a very happy, a very safe place for everyone to be. The curriculum wasn't radical for the times. There wasn't so much talking about social justice as performing it: listening to each other, caring about what the stories were, thinking about what else was going on in our lives that might be impinging on other people's lives.

In many ways, it was very traditional because Maxine wanted them to get the most from the experience—they worked on writing, they worked on math, they were doing science experiments and exploring history and the social sciences. But the curriculum wasn't separated from their lives, so it was very meaningful. And yet, they were getting a traditional—in many respects—college education in terms of the disciplinary competences that they were developing. Teaching in Tacoma was one of my most enjoyable teaching experiences because it was so totally student centered and community based. It was an outstanding educational design.

In 1986-87, when I was teaching in Tacoma, there were students from the community who wanted to enter the program, but had not completed their 90 lower division credits required to transfer in. Margaret Gribskov had been teaching in Tacoma for a quarter or two and Maxine asked her to approach Tacoma Community College to see if they would be interested in forming a "Bridge Program" with Evergreen in which one or two of their regular faculty would come to our campus to teach with one of our Tacoma faculty in a program for lower division students with fewer than 90 credits. The students would enroll at TCC and get TCC credits, but attend classes on our Tacoma Campus taught by a team of combined faculty. When they completed their credits they could transfer into the upper division program at Evergreen.

I was the first Evergreen faculty to teach in the Bridge program with two TCC faculty, an historian and an English faculty. We had a good enrollment and the program worked perfectly as a pipeline into Evergreen's upper-division. The next year I taught in the growing Bridge Program with three TCC faculty, an artist, a psychologist and an English faculty.



One of the dilemmas that the flexible rotation of faculty and administrators at Evergreen has created from the start is how to sustain good ideas and keep them going from one generation of faculty to the next. Those who were inspired to create these programs in the early years weren't always sure how to transfer that institutional culture to new faculty who came in at a different point in the history of the college.

Many years ago Burton Clark wrote a book about what he called "the organizational saga" of experimental colleges – he argued that these colleges had a somewhat romanticized version of the concept that its founders had for the college in its early years. He queried whether it is possible to keep that going when you bring on new people. At Evergreen the early faculty wrote extensive program descriptions, program histories, took pictures, made videos, kept program and project assignments and, of course, had all of the faculty evaluations of students and each other on the team and student self-evaluations reflecting on the program's impact.

When I was a Dean I worked with Steve Hunter in Institutional Research to make video of various seminars, lectures, projects and the weekly pattern of one interdisciplinary, team-taught CORE program called "Ways Of Knowing" taught by an experienced Evergreen faculty team designed for students new to the college. We showed this video and the program materials to an incoming group of new faculty and met with them in small seminars to discuss it and to answer questions about various strategies used in the program.

The experience of teaching in teams, as we did, meant planning together, talking together about what resources to use, being in the room with each other as we each taught, giving each other

feedback in weekly faculty seminars. It takes a lot of time, but doing that kind of teaching, I think, really enlivens your pedagogy, keeps you engaged with the enterprise of teaching, as well as keeps you exploring your own field in new ways because a particular question or theme requires you to do some new thinking about the potential of your own field. I think that teaching alone, while it may be easier interpersonally—as we all discovered, it can be a challenge to teach with varied personalities who bring different approaches to teaching—I think in the end it is a better experience for students and helps faculty development. If we continue to do on-site, in-person teaching—whether it's in Tacoma or in Olympia—I think it is valuable to keep that theme-based, team model; important to encourage new faculty to do this kind of intensive and creative team teaching. It is a major part of what has made Evergreen a rewarding experience for students and faculty.

Maxine realized that at some point she was going to be retiring, so she sought out younger African American faculty who might be interested to teach there and eventually take over the program. Joye Hardiman had been working with her from very early and was interested to continue teaching in the Tacoma Program so Maxine acted as her mentor who taught Joye about budgeting and other administrative skills needed to run the program. This was a very effective strategy for assuring the continuation of the program's philosophical and community-based approach even when new faculty join the team.

**Zaragoza:** Let me tell you where we're at in Tacoma now in terms of team teaching, the economic situation with all the cuts that we've had. Our team teaching predominantly now is lyceum that we all work together on, we all figure out. When I got to Tacoma 10 years ago, all the courses were team taught in pairs, so we would have four, sometimes more, different courses that were all team taught. Now, Betsy, because we're so low in terms of the number of faculty—we have six faculty members now, that's what they've cut us to, that's three courses in pairs—our students have to choose two of those three, and we're finding that there's not enough selection, so we've had to split apart. This coming fall, of the courses, only one is team taught, so there are four other courses, so students have some variety. We've just been cut so much that we, by necessity—it's not just that interpersonal, it's all just in terms of having more selection.

**Diffendal:** Yes, that's a practical thing that has to be worked out every biennium with the State budget. Evergreen now has those constraints due to fluctuation in student numbers. I'm not saying that it's a bad thing to abandon larger teams teaching together, but it is important, I think, to recognize the value to students and faculty of thematically integrated explorations, using interdisciplinary approaches, with as much joint planning and assessment as possible.

**Zaragoza:** I just wanted to give you a sense about where we were and how deeply these cuts are impacting us.

**Diffendal:** Even when we were there, there were often only three or four faculty in Tacoma, and we had at that point maybe 100-and-some students. We would often teach a little section by ourselves, but we would then break up for seminars and have seminars together, or do other kinds of larger thematic pieces, like your lyceum. I would say that there was always a great diversity of students and there were lots of different interests. The relatively small Tacoma program can never deliver the range of “emphasis areas” or “majors” that a full college faculty can, but it can teach vital intellectual and practical skills in problem solving, research and broad literacy that a solid liberal arts curriculum should.

When I was teaching there in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s, let’s say that Richard Brian was teaching math. Maybe the larger concept or exploration in the program was the development of cities. Richard might talk about architecture. Students would have to go out and photograph the architecture in the city and study its geometry. I might be talking about the history of cities and the culture change required by population growth over time as human groups moved from small village farming or herding to larger groups in cities. The librarian would help the students understand what library resources were available to students to research their individual topics related to urban development. There was always a theme running through the individual strands that made the exploration interdisciplinary in terms of the conceptual welding together of the program, so that the students had a sense of the integration of subject matter—it wasn’t just a course in anthropology, a course in writing, a course in math—they were all taught around a theme. That’s really where Evergreen started: thematic courses that would not leave students just taking stand-alone classes unrelated to each other or any larger theme or problem.

I do wonder—I retired more than 10 years so I have no idea how well faculty know each other - how much faculty still explore ideas together. I do know that in this period coming up, liberal arts colleges are going to have to stay innovative to survive. I remember when we were thinking long ago about doing online classes, nobody wanted to do it. Faculty thought it was a bad idea for Evergreen. **Jose Gomez**, faculty with a background in law who had worked with Caesar Chavez in the 1960’s, was willing to try it. He did a great on-line program on the American legal system that students loved and thrived in. I think that Evergreen at this moment really has to take a look at its experimental roots and figure out, what is going to keep students coming to this college. Aside from the COVID isolation and increase in on-line communication, people are spread out and have competing responsibilities. They can’t all come full time, daytime, and even attending a campus class several evenings a week or weekends can be difficult.

I taught in the Masters of Teaching program in my last few years and we had student seminars online because often, during the quarters when they're student teaching, they're spread out all over Western Washington. They could come together online with faculty, they could come together in small clusters, so that program has been experimenting with various parts online over the years. I think there needs to be a real reimaging of what experimentation could look like at Evergreen now that will keep the diversity of students coming, that will engage faculty, and that will remain a creative endeavor for faculty and students.

In the early years, those of us who had children brought our kids with us sometimes when we taught in the evenings. We allowed our students to bring their kids with them. At the Tacoma campus, there was one young African American boy who came with both parents for the two years they were there, and sat in the classroom and heard every single thing that his parents heard, and he was 10 years old. I don't have any doubt that he went on to college and was delighted.

**Zaragoza:** He might have gone to Evergreen in Tacoma, as a matter of fact!

**Diffendal:** Yes he might. It was fabulous!

Before we end, I want to talk about a few things while I was the Academic Dean. The idea of the founding faculty was that it would be better for Evergreen not to hire permanent Academic Deans and other higher administration positions who were no longer in the classroom, but that the faculty should rotate into these positions and get an overview of the college and an understanding of the range of ideas that their colleagues were exploring.

While it required a quick learning curve, I will say, to step into that position if you hadn't been in college administration, it was the most interesting job that I think I've ever had. Because I was responsible for evaluating one-fourth of the faculty for every year, I had the opportunity to observe those faculty teach—some in the arts, some in the sciences, some social sciences, some with studios, some in the lab or field. I observed the kinds of student projects they were doing, the kinds of assignments they were doing. It was a wonderful opportunity to see all sorts of pedagogical approaches and to add to my own repertoire when I returned to the classroom.

I remember Stephanie Kozik was collecting assignments that people had given in various programs over the years. There have been some of the most interesting, creative projects designed for students, thought up by their teaching teams. Most of these assignments just disappeared into the end-of-quarter paper shuffle and the program was never repeated again. Stephanie has a wonderful collection—which I hope is in the Archives—of the kinds of projects that some of these interdisciplinary programs assigned to students.

While I was a Dean observing programs, it gave me a chance to have great conversations with faculty about their teaching. In my own experience, after faculty were given tenure – rather than renewable three year contracts - by some requirement of the State higher education system, the deans were no longer responsible for faculty evaluation or renewal of contracts. As a result, I think the faculty has had fewer conversations about their own teaching, about they feel about it, and about what other colleagues are doing—what I would call informal faculty development opportunities—than we ever had in the beginning of the college. We talked about teaching all the time. We shared with each other what we were doing. If we had a dilemma, we would talk to our colleagues.

As a Dean, it was so satisfying to be able to talk with faculty about their teaching. I might say, “I was watching you teaching about such-and-such and I noticed that in your seminar .....” They’d say, “You know, I’ve never been good at doing seminars.” And I’d say, “Have you ever talked to David Marr? He has a really interesting approach to doing successful seminars. Why don’t you go talk to David and maybe go sit in on one of his seminars to see what that looks like?” I would have a sense of what various people were good at, or they might come up with something spontaneously that worked well with a group of students, and I could suggest they have lunch with a colleague who might like to try something like it.

Barbara Smith, as both the Curriculum Dean and Provost really made faculty development a priority. She worked hard to get to know the faculty. She’d send us articles about something that she knew we were interested in. Her attention to the faculty, who were putting so much energy and long hours into our teaching, but were in some ways isolated from what others were doing was really important. Over the years after Barbara’s work, there were fewer systematic conversations about pedagogy, and about developing our teaching. Barbara would set up lunch conversations about ways to run seminars. **Susan Fiksdal** got very interested in that when she was a Dean, studied seminar behavior and identified strategies that worked well.

I was the Dean of Part-time Studies and Summer School when I first began in the position. The programs were small in 1981 but some adjunct faculty/part time faculty taught regularly. Barbara Smith didn’t feel that it was right that they had no benefits attached to their regular quarter or half time work. This was the common situation for so many community college teachers. As a result, she set up a system of benefits for adjuncts who taught regularly at Evergreen. I noticed that they also had no office or single place they could go to receive college mail, meet students or other colleagues. I set up a shared Adjunct Faculty Office in the Library Building so that there was a place where they could work while on campus. I would invite them into my office for conversations about teaching, about what they

were concerned about. This was something that I was never sure was continued after I rotated out of the position because the incoming deans didn't have a detailed description of everything they might do. This is an issue...the institutionalization of good practices...that can arise with a constantly rotating group of administrators.

The same thing with Evergreen Tacoma and the Native American Studies program. Who's paying attention now to the fact that the faculty are aging both at the Tacoma Campus and Olympia, and who is going to come behind?

This challenge of cultural transmission from one generation to another of Evergreen faculty is something that I could see from my perch as a dean. As we would hire new faculty, where do you put first-year faculty? What would be a program that would give them a really good picture of what's possible at Evergreen in an interdisciplinary program, for example? Who are faculty that you might like them to have a conversation with? So, in addition to having a new faculty retreat, there's ongoing work that needs to help new faculty see the college and its potential if they've come from more traditional programs or just arrived from graduate school.

With a rotating administration, and with faculty given the opportunity to rotate into different academic programs in the college and other roles in and outside of the college, it can be difficult to sustain a particular curricular thread that students may be very interested in. I was an Academic Dean for four years, worked in the college's Library for a quarter, spent a year working in Academic Advising, and had a six-month faculty exchange at The University of Hawaii, Hilo. It is a complicated thing to manage this rotation and flexibility, and to make sure that everything is paid attention to. It is especially important that faculty, who work so hard, are seen, thought about and given meaningful feedback.

This idea of faculty team seminars, where you are honest with each other about your teaching, was taken seriously in the early years. We would all make suggestions to our colleagues about things



that they might try. "I noticed in this project, they had trouble understanding. I wonder if you did x,y or z if that would help?" I don't know to the degree to which people do that anymore, or take that seriously, but it is useful when you're experimenting with teaching modes to have somebody who is there and seeing it give you some feedback. At the Tacoma Campus we debriefed

weekly with our team over coffee at Browne's Star Grill down the street.

Those were useful insights that I carried into the deanship. Also useful were the inter-institutional collaborations that we arranged. Barbara Smith developed a relationship with the University of Washington School for International Studies that allowed our students to go there and take advanced coursework if they were interested. I was able to set up something with South Puget Sound Community College to let our students take some of their language courses when we couldn't offer stand-alone language courses in evenings and weekends in several languages. I worked with the dean there to put things together so that our students, if there was space in the classes, could take a series of their language courses. Some of the classes weren't being filled, so they were glad for the arrangement.

Those kinds of inter-institutional arrangements like the Tacoma Community College Bridge Program, the South Puget Sound course-sharing, and the University of Washington partnership let Evergreen students have expanded opportunities. All of those agreements and those opportunities had to be set up and communication sustained over time. This can be challenging when there are rotating deanships and those relationships must be maintained.

Evergreen has now been operating for 50 years and should celebrate, while it considers what is coming in higher education in the next 50 years. What does Evergreen need to do to be prepared for that? I hope that conversation is robust at the college at this point.

**Zaragoza:** It definitely is, and it really is for us at Tacoma. During this period of remote learning in the COVID pandemic, one of the things that we're seeing at Tacoma, we developed a daytime curriculum and an evening curriculum. We're starting to see that when we come back onto campus, we're going to need a third track. We should have a remote learning track that is available to students.

**Diffendal:** Yes.

**Zaragoza:** So many students have commented that it makes it so much easier for them. Like evening once made it easier for a group of students, we need a remote track also that will make it easier for them. I do think that that is going to happen for us at Tacoma.

**Diffendal:** I will say one more note from my work as a Dean, and then I'll stop. I learned a lot from my responsibility for creating a self-supporting summer school at the college. Because so many students look at the college year as from September to June, the campus tended to be fairly empty in the summer. Not surprising since there is no State funding for faculty salaries to teach summer school. The Provost and the administration were trying to get a robust summer school going that would make use of the dorms and the campus in the summer. I thought that was very interesting project. They gave me the responsibility to develop a self-supporting summer school.



I found ways to encourage faculty to think about teaching something in the summers that they most loved to teach or were most interested in or thought Evergreen students or the community would benefit from. I was able to bring Elderhostel to the campus and the enrollees were able to stay in the dorms and use food service facilities. I got Evergreen faculty to teach them about mushrooms of the Northwest. There were all kinds of offerings in the visual arts and Northwest natural history that appealed to community members as well as students at Evergreen.

What I've thought about more recently is the value that high school students are finding now in Running Start programs, where they're able to get college credits for taking courses at the local community colleges. It made me wonder—as we're trying to find ways to get pipelines improved for Evergreen, not so much Tacoma but the main campus, which has younger students—if there would be a way to create something like Running Start programs that run in the summer for high school students so that they could earn first- and second-year college level credits as a part of their high school experience by setting up some arrangements with the high schools to let that be a part of Running Start.

They could have a college campus experience in the summer that would be more active than is possible during the school year. There might be a field biology program, an organic farming program, all kinds of things that that are harder for kids to do during the school year when they're just stepping into a community college class for an hour. They could do interesting, engaged programs for Running Start in the summer at Evergreen. It also would get them acquainted with college and acquainted with the campus.

While I was a Dean, I went to the Pacific Lutheran University campus for a meeting in the summer. The campus was alive with students -they had several school band camps going there with the kids staying in the dorms. Students were playing their instruments all over campus and taking different specializations in music preparation. I think Evergreen has really not thought carefully enough about ways that they could engage more students in the summer—in that down quarter—that would get them prepared for the upcoming programs or introduce them to Evergreen. I'm sure Tacoma as well could think of some way to engage particular groups of students to come to the Tacoma Campus for summer that would feed them into the pipeline for continued enrollment.

The summer school at Evergreen was flourishing when I left the deanship. Summer was a good time for certain occupational groups to be able to come for continuing education. I set up an arrangement with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to offer continuing education courses of types required for teacher recertification. Lovern King, faculty in Native American Studies, taught a summer program for teachers called "Travel as Education," so when teachers would be traveling, they

would be developing curriculum for their upcoming elementary or middle or high school classes that had something to do with where they were traveling. If they were going to the East Coast and the historic sites there, they would do reading, they would develop curriculum, and they'd have lessons ready for their own curriculum in the fall.

They were always looking for continuing ed opportunities for public school teachers. For example, a very diverse campus like Tacoma might be able to provide some interesting, culturally diverse continuing education in the summer that they work out with the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**Zaragoza:** It's interesting that you say that. In Tacoma, we now have a Dean of the Tacoma Program as opposed to a "Director" Marcia Tate Arunga is doing exactly this this summer. She's got five guest lecture series that she's using to do exactly what you're talking about.

**Diffendal:** Great.

**Zaragoza:** The funny thing is I've also been working with Upward Bound this summer. You're helping me see that I need to invite those Upward Bound students to the lecture series, so I appreciate you connecting those dots for me.

**Diffendal:** Yes, they could surely do that. I think using opportunities when the campus isn't full of regularly enrolled students to find interesting things to bring people in to discover the campus is so important.

That's my thought. It's been a wonderful 33 years. I taught for 30 years and then did a post-retirement contract, which is another good thing, because it's hard to just stop after you've been working so hard for so long. I would never have stayed at a traditional college for all that time. I would never have felt the satisfaction that I feel for having found a way to be creative, exploratory, to use my experience as well as my discipline.

The generalist nature of who I am and what I like to do worked perfectly for me there, and it was always interesting no matter what path I took. I am very grateful for the existence of Evergreen, and I think the students are as well. I just wish it the very best.

**Zaragoza:** I have a question for you that I've been wondering about since we were talking yesterday. Betsy, what was your experience as a woman throughout, but especially in the early days of the college? I'm very curious about your experience as a woman faculty member.

**Diffendal:** I would say that from the beginning, women faculty and staff were very powerful. Although we were fewer in number, we were hired in a few clusters at about the same time. We were very supportive of each other and, I must say, both smart and fairly fearless. The fact that there was no

rank or tenure at the college mattered—if you were a woman a few years out of graduate school you didn't come in as an Associate Professor—we were equivalent peers to the older men who had taught for years, and may have had full Professor status at another institution.

I think that made a difference, for one thing, in the beginning because we all came in essentially equivalent. So, while men that were teaching with us would get reputations for being particularly bossy, particularly disregarding, particularly whatever, I would say that the women found a lot of support in each other and would laugh, like you might, over the puffery and arrogance.

I think that relative to what it might feel like going into a department in a big university, the fact that we were all hired at the same time, that we were all equally engaged with everybody else in the college with these experiments, that none of us, including the experienced guys, had taught these things before—we weren't just teaching a discipline—made it a more equivalent feel than I imagine it would feel in a more traditional college.

I know that the men and women of color had an enormous burden. There was an attempt early to recruit more men and women of color. When there was, for example, just Rudy Martin at the beginning as the only African American male, they said, "We've got to have an ethnic studies program and you've got to do it and find people."

Well, that's asking a lot. They had to recruit students in and around predominantly white southwest Washington and find other faculty interested, as well. The same with Native American faculty. Also, the faculty from other Evergreen programs would invite the faculty of color to come lecture in their programs. I remember Joye Hardiman and Maxine saying, "Every time it's Black History Month, you've got to get 15 guest lectures because everybody wants you to come in and talk about something Black, or talk about something whatever." Joye said, "At some point, I wish that someone would remember what my field is, which is medieval literature. No one has ever invited me to talk about my field. They just invite me to talk about from the Black side."

I know Darrell Phare was a Native American faculty early. He said, "Stop inviting me in to talk about what 'Indians' think about this. I am one man from one tribe in one place, and I cannot tell you what all the Native Americans in the world think about this thing, or how they do this thing."

I would say that the greatest burden probably was on the women and men of color in terms of the expectations that they would fulfill this role, which is true for every college, every school really, when there's a minority of minority faculty. They've got an extra burden.

I would say that LLyn De Danaan was an early very risky, very smart women dean. She was the first woman dean. She was very young and made an enormous difference in the recruitment of women,

in the support of women. When Mary Hillaire and Maxine had their ideas for Native American Studies and the Tacoma program she was very supportive, and also supportive when women students wanted to have a program for women returning to school. She supported that. People felt that they could come to her and talk about those issues.

While the men were, I would say, more traditional academics in many cases, their expectations were reading 15 books a quarter and such. When I would have conversations with some of the older men on the faculty—one guy was teaching American literature and there was not one book by a woman in the entire syllabus—we had a long conversation about surely, out of all American literature, there are some women that you could find for this list. What about people of color who were writers at the time?

It was good that women were always in the conversation and often on the faculty teaching teams. I would say that women of color especially were particularly strong, and they were in those conversations with those old guys that started the college, with the founding fathers. They were used to older white men being bossy, and they got in there, I would say better than some of the younger white women.

As I was doing research for my PhD on women and people of color, there were a lot of comments in the literature in the early '80s about the lack of a feminist spirit among a lot of faculty women. They went through all the PhD rigamarole and were thoroughly indoctrinated in academia. They tended to be more conservative than you might think they would be. They were just glad to have a piece of the pie.

There were some women who, I would say, were more traditional in that they were not really outspoken feminists, but there were other very active women who were thinking actively about women's roles, women in the curriculum, all of those things. Because we were teaching in teams, and they were often male-female teams, there was often more of a women's voice in a particular program than you might get if you were taking a curriculum in another college. The fact that the number of women who stayed at Evergreen, and who became deans, became Provost, were hired as President, became leaders in various programs that they were creating and supporting, I think, speaks very well for the college – and for the women we hired.

As for faculty of color, there were certainly more Black faculty in the earlier years than there have been of late on the main campus. I think that Evergreen has always been viewed as “alternative” and in early years, hippie-ish. There weren't a lot of African American young students or families who were particularly interested to have their kids go to Evergreen. In part, I think it was that if their kids were going to go somewhere, it would be University of Washington or WSU. But Evergreen was a little

too hippie, a little too weird in some ways, so to recruit younger students to the main campus was very hard in the early years, and the fact that Olympia was, at that point, a very white community, to get local students of color was very hard.

Overall, though, I think that women saw the opportunity at Evergreen to be creative, use the structural flexibility, and to create programs—they were courageous—they tried things. There were all kinds of amazing programs in the early years that were women-initiated. We got together regularly. We had women's faculty and staff softball games. We went on trips together, down the Rogue River in rubber boats. We went horseback riding over in Cle Elum. It was a very nice group of women who were from different fields and were very close to the women on the staff. I would say, over the years, we have stayed in touch with each other.

While I was still a dean, people were thinking about retiring—some of the older ones—and I was looking into—they kept saying, “Don't we need some kind of retirement group?” So, I called the University of Washington and talked to them about what they do with retirees. Do they have a group together? They do, but they have a much larger group of faculty retirees. Some Evergreen faculty wanted to take over the Evergreen Childcare center and make it a place where retirees could meet and have coffee. In the end, what I've learned myself after retiring, is that when you've worked somewhere for 30-some years, you don't really necessarily hang together with everybody that you did before, unless they were real good friends that you've stayed in touch with. In the end, our faculty was so small and the number of retirees per year relative to the University of Washington, that it wasn't likely to be very well sustained. I floated the possibility out there and everybody decided, well, maybe it's not feasible.

I think in more recent years, when Evergreen began fielding student sports teams, there have been more athletes of color on the main campus. Some of the issues on the main campus with race and gender have been raised more often than in the early years. There was a DTF—Disappearing Task Force—of faculty of color in the early years trying to figure out what would make their teaching life better there.

I would say, in general, women have distributed ourselves pretty well across the curriculum in all the areas, have participated in all the programs, have started most of the creative things with nontraditional populations, and have fared very well. They have been deans, have been Provosts, have been at all layers. I think that there have been—as there are nearly everywhere—fewer women of color in the top of the administration than there should be. But there have certainly been women distributed across the college over the years. I do think that it's a very exciting place for women to teach, especially if you've got ideas about how to better serve underserved communities. It's great.

**Zaragoza:** Was there hostility or resistance from some of the white men to the efforts of women and faculty of color early on?

**Diffendal:** I'm sure there was. I think that there were some pretty strong women who came in at various points and had strong opinions—social justice opinions and feminist opinions—and they had clashes, as people did in all kinds of ways.

The Native American Studies program, for example, I would say the more traditional men would discount it as not being an academically solid program because they didn't really understand it, they didn't understand what Mary was really trying to do, they didn't understand the geographic spread at that time of the state's Native American community. To simply engage and interest non-traditional students to come to college and to create a place that would be appealing was a huge challenge that many colleges were trying to address at that point. UPS was trying hard to do that with Native American students, and UW was trying to do that.

The fact that Evergreen faculty women were trying to do much of this experimentation, I think, probably did lead to critique from white males. Certainly, in faculty meetings, there was plenty of bluster. That was the white males' arena for talking about the great ideas that they had. The women often would roll our eyes and occasionally get a word in.

But I would say that women—as women often have done—would be nonplussed by that and would go ahead and do pretty much what we were going to do anyway. [laughing] But I don't know that any woman has ever walked out of the college, was shooed out of the college, was threatened out of the college, or made so uncomfortable that she resigned. There was a lot of support by other Evergreen women in those early years.

By the fifth year of the college, I think about 25 percent of the faculty were women. In most colleges at that time, it was something like 13 percent. So, there was a greater number of women on the faculty from the start. There was a cohort of faculty, and a lot of the staff were women at that point, and we were really close to, for example, the Program Secretaries because we were all working out processes for getting narrative evaluations done. We needed to know how to set this internship up and could they make a call?

We were real close to each other, and a lot of us had children at that point, so we were all figuring out what to do about that. We were including the kids in our programs. We were all very engaged with our teaching. The things that men presented were things that they'd pretty much present wherever we might work. It wasn't a hard place, in my view, for women.

**Zaragoza:** Betsy, as we wrap up, are there any final words, or things that we didn't cover that you'd like to discuss?

**Diffendal:** I can't think at this point what it would be. You choose a thing at some point in your life that is what you tend to spend a lot of time on, and I at this point—at 77—am so delighted it was Evergreen, because I really can't think of another thing I might have done that would have given me more joy, more stimulation, and very little day to day repetition.

I learned more from the students, of course, than they learned from me, I'm sure. I'm still in touch with so many of them online. They've gone on to work for the United Nations and have taught in all kinds of situations or have worked thoughtfully in their communities. It's been very gratifying, and I would be willing to do whatever I might in the few years I have left to help Evergreen keep on going, because it really needs to be an opportunity for students in this state.

**Zaragoza:** Thanks so much, Betsy. We especially appreciate all the wisdom, knowledge and experience that you shared that may help us in those endeavors. Thank you for talking to us.

**Diffendal:** Thank you for talking and listening. I appreciate it.