

File: Academic Program Planning, General

THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

September 11, 1970

MEMORANDUM

To: Dean Mervyn Cadwallader
From: Joseph Shoben
Subject: Our planned curriculum

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SEP 21 1970
THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR BUSINESS
Blair

Much impressed by your presentation of our curricular plans at the Trustees' retreat, I've been dying to talk with you about the program. I'm dying even more, however, to get away on a bit of a holiday; and my typewriter seems more agreeable to late-hour times of communion than do people with lives of their own to lead. As a result, I'm setting down these reflections, hoping that they will serve as a basis for a discussion that is only deferred, not lost. (Besides, we're overdue for that session of twisting the cosmos's tail: I want to sound you out on Hardy as a novelist of ecological themes. He and Paul Ehrlich would have adored each other!)

As for the curricular structure that you laid out for us in Tacoma, I find it exciting, possessed of great intellectual appeal, and wonderfully free of the dominance of the disciplines. In many ways, it is precisely the kind of thing that I, socialized as I have been, would thoroughly enjoy, either as a student or as a faculty member. The model is, of course, Joe Tussman's; and you may be interested to know that a year ago, just before coming to Olympia and just after reading Experiment at Berkeley, I wrote to Charles, urging that this academic option be seriously considered as one of the alternative programs of study available at Evergreen.

Having made this point with enthusiasm and in all sincerity, let me get on to some concerns.

First the program as you outlined it is indeed a Tussman derivative -- if not pure and undefiled, then modified by only some interesting but minor impurities and defilements. It is worth noting that the dropout rate in Tussman's own program at Berkeley runs about 55 percent from a highly self-selected population. True, the pressures and the sources of erosion at the University of California are considerable and almost surely more than they are likely to be around Evergreen. Still, this fact, taken together with some of Tussman's own objective worries about his enterprise, should give us a bit of pause. As deeply attractive as this option is, it is very probable that it is suitable for only a fraction -- perhaps a large one but still a fraction -- of the undergraduates whom we must serve. Does our proposed arrangement give us the scope and diversity necessary to permit our accomplishing our mission? Does it define the only way in which we are going to help students learn how to learn?