

NEWS

The Evergreen State College
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for further information
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They meet twice a month at the Tacoma Community Center on South M Street. Over the constant drone of a laboring heating system and the creaking of the old structure, 30 men and women, mostly non-white, all well over 21, question and cajole their instructors, eager to clarify any issues or expose any carelessly offered comments.

Representing professional backgrounds in politics, government service, business, health care and social service agencies, the men and women are all students at The Evergreen State College. But most of them never get to campus and they don't intend to.

Taught by Tacoman Maxine Mimms --- a full-time Evergreen faculty member, former public school teacher and social case worker --- the group was organized to "expand the students' occupational outlook," she says.

"These students are nearly all working in the real world," she comments. "Most have at least two years of college and are determined to earn a college degree. But, because of distance and the demands of their present occupations, they can't travel to Olympia for their education.

So, Mrs. Mimms explains, "we took Evergreen to them."

It all started two years ago when two Tacoma women, Pat Baines and Mary Harper, visited Evergreen to find out how they could earn their bachelor's degrees. Mrs. Mimms began working with the two women at her home in Tacoma. Word spread and soon she had a score of students interested in studying with her on their jobs or at her home, but not on campus.

She spent last summer coordinating a program in Community Organization, working with 23 black Tacomans charged with the task of pinpointing six placements each for Evergreen interns.

"We were working through the Evergreen Office of Cooperative Education to locate businesses, industries and public and private agencies willing to accept non-white student interns who could earn academic credit --- and a salary --- while working for them," she says. "The program was so successful it backfired. We ended up not only securing all the

internships we aimed for, but in recruiting additional students."

So, she designed another program for them --- this one called Life Styles and Occupations --- and created to serve the needs of three dozen non-white, mature students who wanted to look at alternative life styles and, as Mrs. Mimms says, "not just stick to occupations that are restricted to non-whites."

The program is "hard core academic," she adds. "It's strictly a lecture program with emphasis on writing, public speaking and facilitative listening. It offers those theories and skills which these students need to further their professional and personal development."

Mrs. Mimms recruited five other Evergreen instructors to offer their expertise to the program. On Tuesdays her group works with a journalist/educator on creative writing; Fridays they listen to lectures which span academic disciplines from public speaking to mathematics, earth science to literature; and Wednesdays they polish basic skills, aided by Mrs. Mimms and members of the Evergreen Learning Services Center staff.

"The structure of the program is definitely not give and take," she says. "It's organized for students to take from our faculty resources what they need. They listen. After all, you can't ask students to ask questions when they don't have the information to ask questions with."

But, she adds, just because it's not designed for a lot of student input doesn't mean it's a quiet class. Far from it. Mrs. Mimms says she and her Evergreen colleagues have found it to be "the liveliest class we've instructed for a long time."

"These students are motivated," she says. "They want to learn, to glean every bit of information they can from our faculty members. Sometimes," she adds with a grin, "they really intimidate our professors with all their questions and comments."

She says the program's been so successful that she's working with the Tacoma Urban League, examining the possibility of designing a future Evergreen off-campus program for its staff. In the meantime, she's continuing work on the Alternative Life Styles program, outlining topics and recruiting faculty for what promises to be a lively Winter and Spring at the Tacoma Community House.