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The Evergreen State College

2003 Internal Communications Audit

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*Student, staff and faculty views about
communication at Evergreen*

By Rachel Schleif, Communications Researcher

*Analysis and Recommendations by The Communications Committee of
The Evergreen State College*

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Methodology and Response Rates

Students

Spring quarter 2003, College Communications Director Jim Beaver and Research Intern Rachel Schleif presented the student survey to the Communications Committee and the Institutional Research Department for collaborative review of the test instrument and distribution. After revision, the survey was tested by a student review group. Lastly, Rachel conducted ten pilot surveys in the final test of the instrument. Surveys were administered by a single interviewer, Rachel, who approached students at random, at various locations, weekdays and Saturdays, during different times of day. To each student approached, the interviewer briefly explained the purpose of the audit and the anonymous, voluntary nature of the survey. At the end of each interview, if the student articulated a part of the student body with similar perspective, the student was invited to focus groups. Before each focus group, students were expected to RSVP, this way, each focus group could be hand picked for a representative cross-section of campus opinion.

In May, Jim and Rachel conducted three focus groups: the first consisted of seven students, four students attended the second and five students attended the third.

Students were of mixed academic pursuit and class standing. Each was paid \$15. Students were prompted to comment on preliminary findings of the interviews, and also asked their own perspective about campus communication. Each focus group was recorded with a palmcorder and transcribed.

Interviews continued into summer quarter, in order to meet the goal for 350 respondents. As shown in Table 1, the sample closely represented the student demographic, usually within 10 percentage points of the actual population.

Subgroups	Population (%)	Sample (%)
On campus	21	20.9
Off campus	80	79.1
Full time	81	78.5
Part time	12.7	21.4
First year	16.8	36.6
1+ years	76.7	63.4

Population N=4380, Sample N=350

Staff

In July, Jim Beaver and Rachel Schleif presented the staff survey to the Communications Committee for revision. Ten random staff members tested the pilot survey. In the interest of response rate and convenience to the participant, we decided to distribute the survey online. Jim sent an email to the all-staff distribution list. As an incentive to participate, the staff was offered a chance to win one of five \$25 gift certificates to Bon Appetit.

Of approximately 500 employees, 100 responded. Each division was equally represented at 28-32 respondents each, with exception of College Advancement, which was represented by three people. College Advancement was combined with Finance Administration for comparative statistical testing. Student employees were not included in the staff survey. Slightly more classified staff responded (54) than exempt staff (43). In addition to the online survey, 30 administrators and supervisors from all divisions were individually interviewed.

Faculty

In October, we consulted the agenda committee for feedback about survey distribution, format and content. Ten randomly selected faculty members completed pilot surveys. In December, an online survey was launched for faculty members. Jim Beaver sent an email notifying faculty of the survey. As an incentive, faculty participants were offered the chance to win one of five \$25 gift certificates to Bon Appetit. Due to low response, Academic Dean Tom Womeldorff sent the same email on behalf of College Relations with slightly better results. Considerable effort was made to ask permission of the Planning Unit Coordinators for a 20-minute focus group at the end of PUC meetings. Three responded, therefore we conducted three faculty focus groups. No faculty respondents considered themselves part of the staff.

Paper surveys (identical to the online version) were handed out at the faculty focus groups. Twenty faculty responded online, 26 responded with the paper version for a total sample of 46, approximately one-fourth of all faculty.

Statistical Analysis

The responses of each test group – students, staff and faculty – were tested for statistical significance at the 95% confidence level using non-parametric tests, including Chi-square, Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney. Each test group was tested as a whole, and then broken into subgroups in order to target specific problem areas. Student subgroups were decided by enrolment status, housing, time spent at Evergreen, and graduation class. Staff subgroups were decided by division, exempt/classified status and experience at Evergreen. Faculty was tested as a whole, then by planning unit and experience at Evergreen.

Executive Summary

Abstract

The communication process at the Evergreen State College needs work, according to the testimonies of Evergreen staff, students, and faculty. In the first ever Internal Communications audit of Evergreen, College Relations asked each group about their most preferred media, what content they want most, and what improvements would make the communication process run smoother. My research suggests a few important areas of concern (when discussion is determined).

Evergreen Student Body Report

Media Students Prefer

Students were asked what medium they turn to most often for useful information. As Table 2 indicates, students tend to turn to student-originated media, word of mouth first, followed by posters, CPJ and the Evergreen website. For the most part, students followed a similar pattern in media choice, whether on campus or off, first year student or experienced Greener, part time or full time student.

Current Media Source	Percent*
Word of mouth	28.6
Posters	21.4
Cooper Point Journal	14.6
Evergreen website	13.1
Evergreen Outlook email	5.4
KAOS	5.1
Faculty	2.9
Mailings	1.7
Other**	7.2

*N=350
 **Campus job, S&A, personal email, etc.

Often, students hesitated to name a source they turn to most, as many students use multiple sources depending on subject matter and convenience. As one student said in a focus group, “Can’t just say I use just one, each medium has its pros and cons.” In a survey, a student admitted, “There is no place [medium] that I have confidence in.”

Word of Mouth. Students cited word of mouth as a natural tool for communication among their peers, but also admitted the unreliability of it. One focus group student learned about campus issues, particularly food service issues, primarily through word of mouth and used hearsay

as a motivator for further research, “You learn to research by listening to people. Students find out about things because of rumors . . . [student] workers leaking, lots of leaking. Which is natural, if something sounds wrong, ask your friends about it.” One student used word of mouth as a way to edit out information she wasn’t interested in, “I can get information that I can relate to, from people I relate to.”

“You learn to research by listening to people. Students find out about things because of rumors . . . which is natural, if something sounds wrong, ask your friends about it.”
5th year student
Focus groups

Posters. According to interviews, students look to the walls for events, housing, and sometimes job information. In focus groups and interviews, students shared an overwhelmingly negative response to the waste and cluttered look of the medium, “I hate posters. People don’t know how to design a poster that will attract. It wastes paper, and comes out of Evergreen computer budget. I’m surprised that Evergreen promotes sustainability, but continues to perpetuate wasteful behavior.” Students wanted to see more of the green felt bulletin board outside of the CAB and Library building, as it is economical and attention getting.

CPJ. Students recognized the student newspaper as a crucial communication tool, but were unsatisfied with content and the level of professionalism. As one focus group student put it, “The content is what’s dragging [the CPJ] down, not the fact that it’s a student newspaper. I’m confused, do they want to be an entertainment guide, news or out there for shock value? I don’t know where they’re going. I look at the calendar and put it down.” In interviews, CPJ readers cited the entertainment calendar and the open-forum format of the newspaper as their primary motivations for reading it.

The Evergreen Website. Students use the website primarily for academic logistics, such as Gateway registration, class information and library research. In focus groups and interviews, students expressed a significant dislike for heavy emphasis of recruitment in the content. One student said in an interview that she almost didn’t consider Evergreen as a prospect school because she couldn’t locate or print the pages she wanted.

Evergreen Outlook Email. The first focus group provided a very representative cross-section of feedback regarding the campus email system. Only one out of seven participants used email. The one enjoyed a lack of commercial spam. Three students were scared off by an overload of talk/crier, the other two students didn’t want to lose

their existing contacts during the switch to campus mail or after graduation. A few students in other focus groups admitted using campus email for large file sizes and work-study purposes only.

KAOS. Community and world news hook student listeners, especially off-campus students. Students who don't often listen to KAOS often cited bad reception.

Faculty. Although a few students expressed interest in pre-class announcements from faculty, most didn't assign their instructors with the responsibility of campus information.

Campus jobs. One of the most popular "other" media categories involved students working on campus. As an interviewed student commented, "If you don't work on campus, you don't know what's really going on. A student shouldn't feel that way. There is a lot of miscommunication between staff departments and with faculty." Students with campus jobs generally felt a responsibility to represent and defend the perspectives of staff and faculty to their peers.

"If you don't work on campus, you don't know what's really going on. A student shouldn't feel that way."

3rd year student, focus groups

Forums. An open-ended question of the student survey asked, "How would you improve communication at Evergreen?" "More forums" was the most common media-related suggestion. Students often followed up the suggestion with a statement that forums were inconveniently scheduled or shoddily advertised. "I'd wait for a forum" was one of the most common "other" responses regarding how students would give feedback to the administration.

Student Activities. Student who are involved with the third floor of the CAB often cite Student Activities as their information source and their loudspeaker. One student described the Student Activities area as a nucleus or hive of information exchange, "I spend a lot of time on the third floor of the cab and I know the greatest resources are coordinators, talking to a lot of students. When the biggest issues come up – police issues, tuition hikes – its students talking to other students [that get the word out]."

Preferred Media	Percent*
Cooper Point Journal	17.1
Word of mouth	16.6
Evergreen website	14.6
Posters	14.3
Evergreen Outlook email	9.7
KAOS	7.7
Faculty	4.6
Mailings	3.7
Other**	0.8
*N=350	
**Campus job, S&A, personal email, etc.	

After naming their most reliable medium, students were asked what form, what technology they enjoyed working with most. Their answers were based on convenience and media preference, not necessarily the quality of content provided currently. Most students preferred the technology of their most reliable medium, although there was a notable decline in posters as a preferred technology [see Table 3].

Information Students Want to Know

Using a scale from 0-4, students indicated their level of interest and their level of understanding regarding a list of campus issues. As Table 2 shows, students are most interested in areas that affected them academically and financially, specifically in the areas of:

1. Course offerings
2. Tuition issues
3. Financial aid

College social events ranked lower in interest:

4. Campus events
5. Olympia news
6. Campus safety

Campus Issues	Mean Interest	Mean Understanding	Difference (Info Gap)
Budget and policy	2.61	1.29	1.32
Financial aid	2.88	1.61	1.27
Tuition issues	2.92	1.68	1.24
Course offerings	3.7	2.94	0.76
Olympia news	2.77	2.19	0.58
Food service	1.96	1.61	0.35
Campus events	2.82	2.53	0.29
Evergreen sports	1.21	1.12	0.9
Campus safety	2.63	1.73	0.9

Students measured interest & understanding with a 0-4 scale.

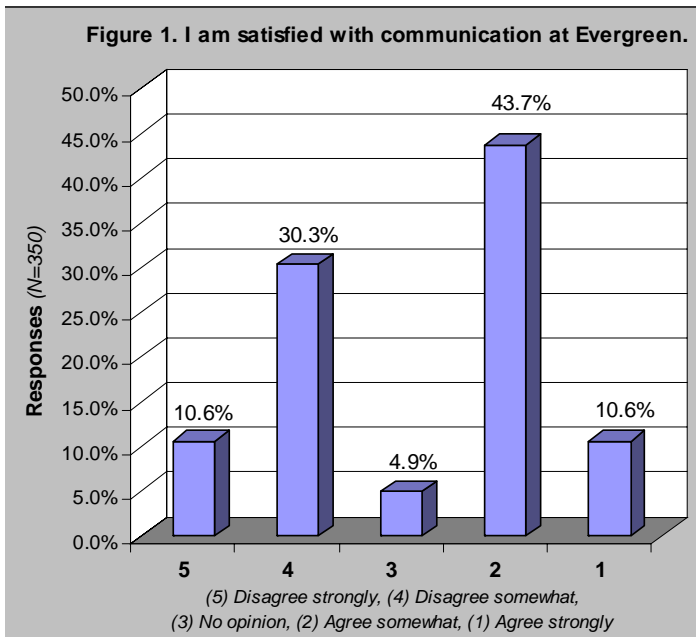
Information gaps were calculated by comparing their mean interest with mean understanding. If student mean interest and understanding matched, they were receiving a satisfactory amount of information about the subject. If their understanding level was higher than interest level, they received too much information (usually not the case). On most issues, students reported not receiving enough information, the largest gaps stemming from financial issues [see Table 3].

Comparing On Campus and Off Campus Students: Off campus students reported a high understanding level of tuition issues and Olympia news. They also reported a high interest level in financial aid, although their understanding level was the same as on campus students.

Understandably, on campus students indicated a higher level of interest in food services, but understanding levels remained similar to off-campus. On campus students indicated a higher interest and understanding level of Evergreen sports.

First Year at Evergreen Compared to Cultured Greeners: First year students bear the added stress of learning the resources and communication structure of the college. First year transfer sophomores and sophomores with prior experience at Evergreen were compared for differences in interest and understanding. The only significant difference was a lower understanding level in first year students regarding campus safety and food services.

Part Time Studies Compared to Full Time: Part time studies students followed the same trends in interest and understanding as full time students. In media preference, part time students tended to rely on CPJ and posters slightly more than full time students.



Student Suggestions for Improvement

Only about half of the students agreed that they were satisfied with communication at Evergreen, as shown in Figure 1. Students responded with extreme opinion 20%, equally distributed between negative and positive. Students living off campus were significantly less satisfied than students living on campus. Part time students and new students showed no difference from the general response.

In the last question of the survey, students were asked whether they were proud of being Greener. The response was overwhelmingly

positive, 75% agreed (N=350). Students were lacked Greener pride usually explained a frustration with Evergreen’s reputation. As one student admitted in a focus group, “I’m proud because I can get more experience on my resume here than a conventional school, but I still have to defend Evergreen because a lot of people don’t understand what’s going on here. Many people think you can just buy a degree at Evergreen.”

Table 5: Communication With Administration

How would you give feedback to the administration?	Percent N=349
Don't know	30.7
Schedule a one-on-one talk	28.9
Evergreen Outlook email	9.5
Personal email account	8.9
Written letter	5.7
Other*	5.7

*Personal email, S&A, etc.

Students were asked what medium they would use to give feedback to the administration [See Table 5]. The most common response was a simple, “I don’t know,” sometimes followed with a reassurance that the information about the grievance process was available somewhere. Second most common, students assumed an open door policy, many of which indicated that they were never specifically told about how to give feedback to the administration.

After 100 surveys, it seemed necessary to add the question, “Who’s responsibility is it to inform students?” Of 256 students, 72% believed communication was a cooperative effort, shared by administration, faculty and students. Eleven percent placed sole responsibility on themselves. Another 10% named only administration. Six percent thought faculty was not at all responsible for communication.

The last section of the survey asked students two open-ended narrative questions: what information they need more of, and how to improve communication issues at Evergreen. Without prompts or pressure, students answered regarding whatever issue seemed most pressing to them. Students usually combined their answers into one general rant, focusing on an average of 1-3 communication expectations that were not being met [see Table 6].

156 students mentioned media-based issues.

“It would save money and server space if you’d have to opt in to talk/crier. Lots of students have Evergreen addresses and don’t know it. Their box just keeps getting filled up.”

“I get notices in the mail that are [tiny] that get lost in the clutter of mail. It’s really important stuff and it comes along with [irrelevant] flyers. It all gets lost.”

“I was a lot more informed when I was [attending classes] on campus. I saw posters more regularly and heard faculty announcements. Word of mouth was easier. Now that I’m not around, I’m not plugged in.”

“On a pretty regular basis I comment on controversial issues, but with very little feedback, especially at public forums. People should feel safe to respond [to talk/crier] because it’s anonymous. No ever responded to my emails. Only once and that was someone saying, ‘good job.’”

“CPJ is not a reliable system. I’ve seen four editors, four reincarnations of the CPJ – sometimes it is news, other times a literary journal. It’s in more of a literary state right now. The CPJ has never been a hardcore news vehicle for Evergreen.”

102 people had issues with the administration.

“I want to see more information from administration about what’s going on. CPJ is a great medium for students to talk about campus issues. Administration and faculty

Media-based Issues	Response
Website hard to navigate, not updated	29
More campus forums	29
Flyers not timely, cluttered	22
CPJ not thorough, needs less fluff	13
Email overused, cluttered	12
Organization of, or new bulletin board	12
CPJ too opinionated, more diversity	10
More about news/events on web	8
Search on website not functional	6
CPJ needs administration column	6
More about budget information	5
Kaos need more TESC emphasis	4
Issues with Administration	Response
Needs more presence in student media	44
Miscommunication between offices	16
Doesn't include students	15
Unresponsive	14
Secretive, usually about investments	7
Mealy-mouthed, wishy-washy	6
Lack of Information	Response
Funding (legislative), investments	38
More /thorough info in catalogue	31
Guest lectures, events	30
Resources, facility use	30
Police info	18
Police info	18
Tuition issues	14
Career development, contracts, credits	11
Food service/Bon Apetit info	9
Hiring	5
Other Issues	Response
Student union	21
More involvement with community	13
Faculty info with student reviews incl.	8
More diversity (culture and opinion)	5
Outspoken & shy groups divide comm.	6
General information too scattered	6
Goals and future of Evergreen	5

have been pretty silent. I feel like students are the only ones making a communication effort. I'd like to see more articles written by administration and faculty. I'd be interested in what they have to say."

"Does the administration have a responsibility? It's telling that it's even a question. In any other business, it would be unfathomable to say that the customer is

"Information from offices like registration, student accounts and financial aid changes depending on who you talk to. Not everyone in the office is informed or knows how to work with computers. The information is generally very disorganized. The staff is trying, but the system is screwy."

2nd year student, *interview*

responsible to find out about the services or the product and the business shouldn't have to worry about advertising. If [the audience] not seeing it, screw them. This would never happen in business, it shouldn't happen here either."

"My experience with attending conferences is that students have no power. We can be on a board that can make a recommendation. Someone whom I've never met makes the decision. It's really depressing. I want students to have power. Maybe we would give a shit and participate if we could actually change something."

"The administration is distant and talks with flowery, scripted words rather than meaningful communication. I'm tired of it and frustrated. It makes them seem secretive and untrustworthy."

188 complained of a specific lack of information.

"I'd like to know all the student projects and contracts. That's the big thing about Evergreen, students have these projects that aren't effective because nobody knows about it. It gets lost, a year later another student does the same thing because nobody knows about it."

"A major focus of Evergreen is becoming sustainable. Sometimes sustainable practices cost more, so they're investing a little bit more of our money into it. They should really let us know what they're investing in. People could walk on this campus and not know that Evergreen is doing a single thing to be green because there are no signs anywhere. Self-explaining would be self-promotion. Most people don't know where the farm is or that they're eating food from it. I did a questionnaire about it, and one person even said that they thought they'd be arrested if they went to the farm without asking. That's how little communication is going on."

"Information is catered to certain groups a lot. You have to network. Often, I don't hear about events that aren't my style. Communication here is pretty isolated."

3rd year student, *interview*

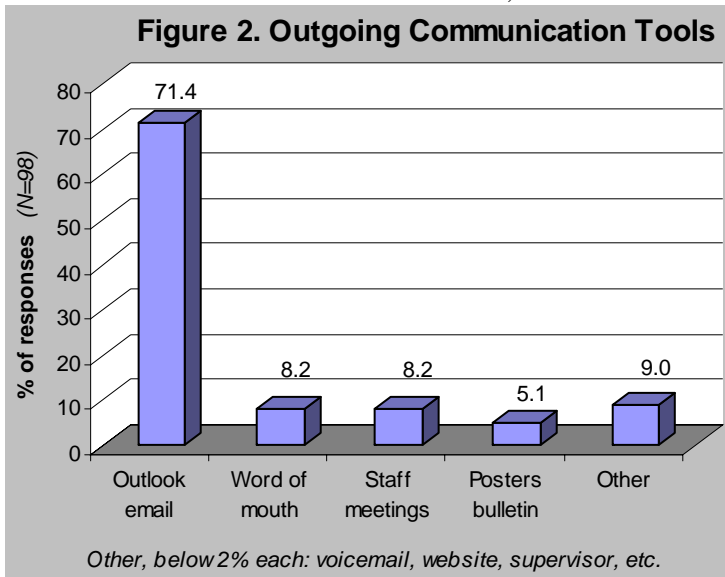
Evergreen Staff and Administration Report

Media Staff Prefer

Staff was asked about how they typically send information and also how they receive information. Email proved to be the media of choice for both sending and receiving. During interviews, administrators displayed some confusion about how much students really use their email, citing percentages between 5-50%.

When thinking about outgoing communication tools, consider that each division caters to different audiences.

Academics uses email the most, at 84.4% when sending out information. The other



categories closely follow the general trend in Figure 2.

Of all the divisions, Student Affairs ranked lowest in sending email (64%), and word of mouth information (3.7%). They have a greater reliance on staff meetings (11%) and posters (11.4%).

Finance and Advancement follows the general trend almost exactly, with slightly greater emphasis on word of mouth (9.7%).

Table 7. Media for Receiving Info

Current Media Source	(%)*
Evergreen Outlook email	76.8
Word of mouth	8.4
Supervisor	5.3
Staff meetings	4.2
Print materials, memos, etc.	3.1
Evergreen website	2.1

*N=95

In regards to receiving information, staff favored email at an even greater percentage. The use of posters and the “other” category dropped out of the list completely. Although email and word of mouth ranked first and second, supervisors became the third most popular source and printed materials became fourth.

Again, the divisions showed definite differences from one another. Academics rely on email slightly more (83.9%) than the general trend in Table 7. Word of

mouth and staff meetings ranked equally (6.5%). The use of supervisors to receive information ranked the least of any division (3.2%). No respondents from Academics chose print materials or the Evergreen website.

Student affairs also chose email as their primary receiving tool (80%) more often than the general trend. Student affairs ranked print materials higher in than any group on campus (8%) as an information source. They favored the website more than any other division (4%). Student affairs followed the general trend listed in Table 7.

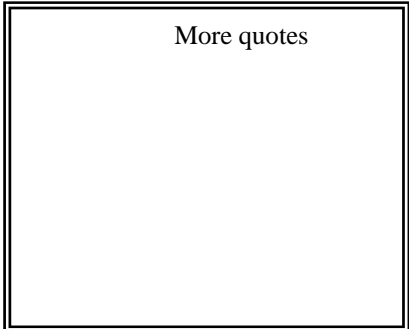
Finance and Advancement followed the general trend regarding the use of email and the website for receiving information. The categories of print materials, word of mouth and supervisor ranked equally (6.5).

Media	Mean Usefulness
Evergreen Outlook email	3.37
Supervisor	2.83
Staff meetings	2.81
Word of mouth	2.66
Print materials	2.54
Phone/Voicemail	2.43
Evergreen website	2.15
Posters	1.72
Campus forums	1.68
CPJ	1.66
KAOS	0.91

Staff members were asked to rate each medium for usefulness. The overall assessment of the staff almost mirrored their most used communication tools, with the exception of phone/voicemail, which was ranked as moderately useful. Most respondents judged the usefulness of media in terms of how well staff members receive information from the sources, not necessarily how well other groups on campus receive the messages sent through the mediums.

“I think email is most important to me. I think the only thing I would like is for people to distinguish the difference between email and crier. Some things should be moved to the crier for people to have

conversations about. I wish there’s a better way to screen that. I think there’s a need for it, but there’s also a place for it.”



Information the Staff Wants to Know

Staff and faculty were asked about a wider range of campus issues than students, mainly because the student survey was designed for a five-minute, interview-like delivery. As expected, the staff responded with very different information priorities than students.

Campus Issues	Mean Interest	Mean Understanding	Difference (Info Gap)
Staff concerns	3.33	1.81	1.52
Projects of faculty	2.96	1.72	1.24
Student concerns	3.19	1.96	1.23
Projects of staff	3.05	1.99	1.06
Faculty concerns	2.82	1.78	1.04
Projects of students	2.88	1.91	0.97
Steps toward goals of college	3.14	2.18	0.96
Policy and procedure	2.99	2.17	0.82
College goals	3.19	2.43	0.76
Campus safety	3.28	2.54	0.74
Budget and revenue	3.16	2.59	0.57
Job opportunities/ benefits	3.03	2.60	0.43
Construction/remodel	2.95	2.53	0.42
Campus events	2.98	2.59	0.39

Staff measured interest & understanding with a 0-4 scale.

The staff's top ten interests were as follows:

1. Staff concerns
2. Campus safety
3. Student concerns
4. College goals
5. Budget and revenue
6. Steps toward meeting the goals of the college
7. Policy and procedure
8. Campus events
9. Projects of faculty
10. Construction/Remodel

I'm finding the perfect quote.

I'm finding the perfect quote.

As Table 9 shows, the staff's major information deficits were about other groups on campus, including other staff departments. A few staff felt very removed from decisions that come from other staff divisions, such as this survey participant, "I've been here for twenty years, and I still don't know what the latest procedures and policies are."

Departmental Differences

The staff survey was designed to "take a picture" of how well communication moves in general, and so vertically and laterally. Between divisions, a few stand-out differences must be noted about interest and understanding levels. Between departments, satisfaction levels with communication did not differ. College Advancement was combined with Finance and Administration for this report, due to a very low response rate. Student affairs had considerably more experience on staff, although new staff at Evergreen (up to three years) follow the same trends as staff who have worked at Evergreen for years.

"I think that there is very good communication in my division, but I cannot vouch for other areas. It's really hard to get an idea of what goes on in other areas, and communicate what's going on in our area."

*Student Affairs employee,
interview*

Finance/Administration/Advancement indicated a significantly lower understanding level than other divisions regarding student concerns, projects of students, faculty concerns, and projects of faculty.

Student Affairs indicated a significantly lower understanding level in faculty concerns and projects of faculty.

Academics reported significantly lower understanding levels in student concerns. The divisions differed in interest level regarding events and construction/remodel, in which Academics was significantly less interested.

Exempt and Classified: Two Different Views

Exempt employees are generally defined as salary workers and classified staff as hourly, although there are a few exceptions. Local 443, whom a few staff named as their main source for job-related information, represents mainly classified workers.

“I’m not on senior staff which is sometimes a disadvantage. I know what they’re talking about but I don’t know the discussion or reason they move in a certain direction. The president’s staff is trying bring 3-4 of us who are not on senior staff and include us in the process to keep us a little more informed.”

Classified employee, interview

Exempt employees tended to agree less often with the statement, “I am proud to be an employee of Evergreen,” compared classified workers. They also tended to agree less often with the statement, “The administration listens to the staff’s ideas.”

When compared to exempt workers, the classified staff indicated a significantly lower interest and understanding level of the goals of the college and how to meet them. They also indicated a lack of interest in the projects and concerns of staff, faculty

and students. Classified staff also indicated a lower understanding of budget issues than exempt workers.

Staff and Administrative Suggestions for Improvement

Most staff members reported confidence in the open door policy, and secondly, staff indicated that they would send feedback through the chain of command [see Table 10]. Student Affairs was the only division to stray from the norm. Going through a supervisor was more popular (34.6%) than talking to senior staff directly (23%). Student Affairs indicated a higher percentage of not knowing how to communicate with senior staff (19%) and the only division inclined to write a formal letter (3.8%). These results might be explained by a higher percent of student workers mistakenly submitting a staff survey, despite the many warnings against it. Classified and exempt staff did not indicate any major differences in giving feedback.

Feedback Medium	Percent*
Direct one-on-one	34.7
Through my supervisor	28.4
I don't know	13.7
Evergreen Outlook email	9.5
Staff meetings	8.4
Forums	4.2

*N=95

Forty-five percent of staff

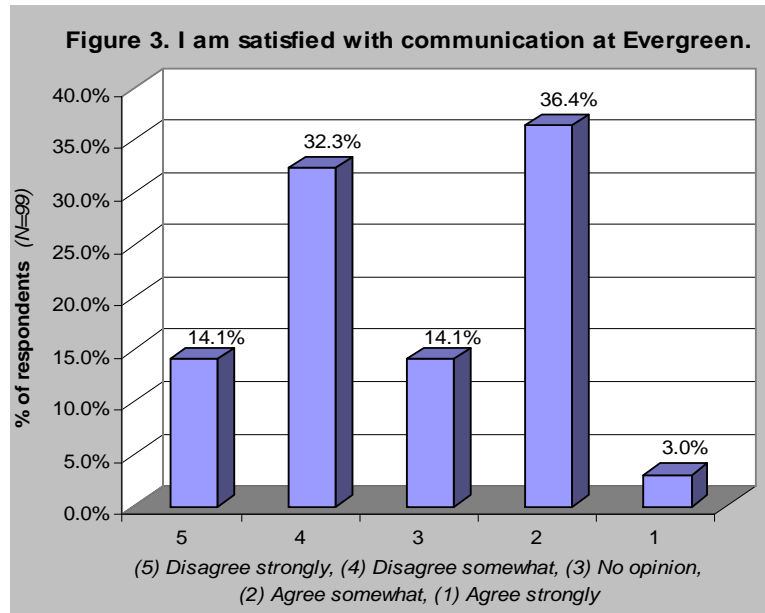
members agreed that the administration listens to the staff’s ideas. The 15% who do not think they’re being heard is most extremely negative response out of any statement presented to students, staff or faculty.

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	No opinion	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
15.2%	22.2%	17.2%	37.4%	8.1%

Does the college do a good job keeping staff updated and informed? The response was generally positive with 76% of staff members agreeing, 16% agreeing strongly. Of staff members who do not think they’re updated or informed (23%), only 6% felt strongly.

Does the staff receive timely information? Staff responded similarly with 69% in agreement, 17% agreeing strongly. Staff members disagreed only somewhat (25%), with 5% disagreeing strongly.

QUOTE COMING SOON ABOUT COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION.



Most staff members agree strongly that they're proud to be Evergreen employees (65%), with 20% agreeing somewhat. Only 5% are not proud to be part of the college.

On the other hand, staff members were more dissatisfied with communication (56%) than satisfied (39%) as seen in Figure 3.

Comments Regarding Staff Communication

"I would like to be able to participate more. When I work with other people on campus I feel more connected to Evergreen." I feel so isolated, communication is at a minimum."

NO DIVERSITY > JUDGED BY CHARACTER < NOT JOB (I'll get the exact quote later.) "When I first came to this campus, simply not acceptable. Well that's not represented in either KAOS or. We had a long conversation about it, he's gotten over it, and I've gotten over it, we've grown up. Don't want to speak to them. This is one of the most highbrow conservative places I've ever worked at."

"I have to shuffle a bit through the clutter. There are a lot of emails that have small amounts of information that go out, it might be a good process to send one or two emails out with many pieces of information. I know that the Connections website is one way that they're working on, but I will admit, I don't read it every day. I think it might be important to navigate to it from homepage or a few clicks down. Not everyone remembers that you have to actually type in the url to access the page."

"The Evergreen way is a plethora of ways, it's a myth, but it is somewhat based in reality. Orientation of staff is decentralized, and in my view, it becomes critical that we adhere to our own social contract about hospitality and openness and being supportive of one another."

Comments Regarding Students

“In order to solicit input [at a forum] from students about certain issues we literally have to go door to door. That has gotten the best response by far. We’d have a forum and no one would come. And these were very well advertised. Students are extremely busy, many thing to occupy their time between work and school. Its very hard to reach them, and then get their interest.”

“We should keep communications open with students now, which are the next alumni to donate. They need to communicate how important alumni are to keeping this college running so that they’ll have an understanding when they leave.”

“What’s the incentive for the student to want to listen to all that stuff? Things happen so quickly here, I am not opposed to requiring to students to check their email and to accept that important stuff coming via email.”

About declaring a primary way of communicating official communication: “Its always hard for Evergreen to mandate or declare anything one way. It’s counter to the model that we use – there are many ways of knowing and learning. My observation is, out of three different universities I’ve worked at, Evergreen puts in more effort into delivering information in a variety of ways that isn’t anywhere close to any other institution.”

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“My impression is too much is made of campus forums. It’s in TESC culture that we have to have those. I think they’re made to be one sided because the only people who show up are the people who have a vested interest in something. If you have 9 people show up out of 4100, it is because those are the hotheads of the subject, not necessarily representative of the campus. It’s not a cross section.”

“We hire a hell of a lot of students in this division. On purpose. The student workers do a double service to us, they get the word out about what’s going on and what the administration is like, and they help ease staff workload. It’s a small means of communication to students, but its very real.”

“It would be good to hear student voices about a variety of issues, more organization among students and more active use of email and CPJ.”

“The CPJ would be a lot better if it were tied to a program. The coverage is not consistent. In thirty years from now, if someone wants to know what was happening on campus, they ought to know. There ought to be an historical record of these things.”

Comments Regarding Faculty

“The role in communication of faculty is very broad, it depends what the learning community decides.”

“It is necessary that we work with faculty, I’d like to see more faculty interest. The faculty are strapped as everyone else as far as their time. Part of their contract is governance issues. They serve on committees and often don’t come. They’re very busy, they’re preparing for class but at the same time, that’s the interaction [staff members] are missing.”

MORE QUOTES ABOUT FACULTY LATER

Comments Regarding the Evergreen Community

“I think social events is a great communication tool. It’s a catalyst to build community.”

“More active real communication happens at the coffee carts and in the Cab on this campus than most of the official committee work. When folks sit around to share informal gathering, ideas, insights and stories get shared. That’s when you have something in common, and you discover that with someone. That’s usually the foundation for cross communication. Somehow bonds get built around social occasions. I think ceremony is important. We should be having more of those.”

“Social events are for community vitality, not for communication. [Student Affairs] almost shies away from using that time to make announcements because they’re strictly social activities.”

“There really are a bunch of little communities at Evergreen but the question is, is there an Evergreen community? And what is that all about? We have no student government. There are faculty meetings, not a faculty governance. I mean really, what is this thing? I know folks talk about ways to bring the community together, for example convocations at the beginning of the year, graduation, potlucks, but what are the big things that make us Evergreen? Evergreen in my view is a caught between this community of cats. People come to Evergreen because they’re individual, critical thinkers they don’t want to be labeled as this so they don’t join groups. There is a rampant distrust of any big organization, it stood in the way of us having a student counsel for a long time. I think there is an evergreen community – I don’t think it has a lot of the normal structures. I think the campus can achieve a community by organizing more campus wide events. The only thing you have to do is leave campus to realize how much of a community we are. Everyone else thinks we’re community, to the point where they like to label us when its not appropriate. Whether we like it or not we are a community.”

Evergreen Faculty Report

Media Faculty Prefer

Faculty was asked how they send and receive information. Several faculty refused to answer the questions or wrote in multiple responses in the “other” box. It can be concluded that for faculty email is the primary way to send and receive general

information, but their media choices are mainly situational. For the most part, media choices stayed consistent between planning units.

“If I have a task to do and I need to communicate some pieces then I use email. If there’s a qualitative component, I generally use phone or in person. There are times when I want to make certain that there’s a documented record of

what I’m saying, so I use email for that purpose as well.”

Something about media rank.

“I feel like there is a lot of information, but it’s in a monotone form. The information has equal weight and value. It’s flat and effortless and I spend so much time staring at my computer that it’s the last place I want to go.”

“I’ve been told to delete email from anyone I don’t know.”

“This isn’t whether or not we have the right channels or amount of information, but maybe some of the problems are some disconnects between perceptions fo what the various roles are of the various entities of the college and the interaction between those entities.”

“I always read the current news on the webpage, whatever the current news stories are just to see what’s up. I don’t go there for any other reason. There needs to be push system rather than a pull system.”

Information Faculty Want to Know

The faculty indicated similar top ten interests as staff, but ordered the topics differently:

The faculty top ten interests were as follows:

1. Faculty concerns
2. College goals
3. Steps toward goals of college

Table 12. Outgoing Information

Prefered Media Tool	(%)*
Evergreen Outlook email	78.1
Governance meetings	6.3
Evergreen website	6.3
Posters bulletin	3.1
	3.1
Phone/voicemail	
Posters	3.1
*N=32	

Table 13. Media for Receiving Info

Current Media Source	(%)*
Evergreen Outlook email	77.5
Governance meetings	10.0
Evergreen website	5.0
Word of mouth	2.5
	2.5
Phone/voicemail	
CPJ	2.5
*N=40	

Table 14. Media Ranked by Usefulness

Media	Mean Usefulness
Evergreen Outlook email	2.96
Word of mouth	2.75
Puc/Deans	2.62
Phone/Voicemail	2.43
Print materials	2.22
Governance meetings	2.1
Agenda Committee	1.98
Evergreen website	1.72
Posters	1.7
Campus forums	1.39
CPJ	1.18
KAOS	0.76

4. Student concerns
5. Budget and revenues
6. Staff concerns
7. Projects of students
8. Projects of faculty
9. Projects of staff
10. Campus safety

The biggest information gaps of faculty regarded the other two groups on campus, a pattern resembling staff information gaps. Faculty was the only group to indicate knowing more information than they're interested in, specifically in the areas of construction/remodel and campus events.

“I think that one area I don't get very much information about is the life of students in the dorms and incidents that arise in the dorms. The lives of the student really matter in their academic lives.”

I'd like to know more about the Tacoma campus and the other outreach programs, like the reservation-based programs. So the years go by and you don't necessarily hear too much.”

The most fascinating things he hears about facilities is hearsay.

“I think it's a very good thing to have more information about student projects and achievements, for the whole campus to know. It's important to read it. Same thing with staff, or even faculty. Mostly when I know about awards and projects, it is through the grapevine.”

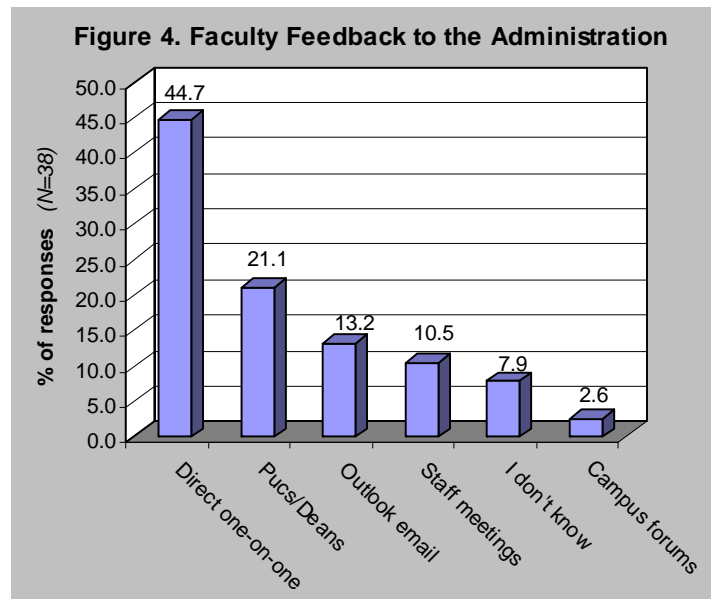
“I appreciate the commitment to communication and informing us. There are certain things we shouldn't be informed about – like if I need to be informed about the overall goals of Evergreen and the steps to achieve those goals, there's something wrong here. The faculty should be an intricate part of the process, not just somebody who's told about what's going on.”

“In a film at convocation, every person interviewed talked about working too hard. Students, faculty and staff. It's fascinating how we all share that. That's the sort of stuff we need to know about each other. About our work and how work is constructed. The staff doesn't see how we do our work because we don't do it here in an office, in one place. We do it in a million places.”

Faculty: Years at Evergreen Make a Difference

Faculty at Evergreen 3 years or less reported more interest in the safety and steps toward the college's goals, but shared a similar understanding level as their senior colleagues. Faculty with more than 3 years reported more understanding of staff projects, staff concerns, faculty projects, faculty concerns and budget/revenue information.

Statistically, the planning units did not show a difference between one another.



Faculty Suggestions for Improvement

Faculty preferred to give feedback to administration one-on-one, even at an even greater rate of staff. They also had the same problem with multiple answers, often adding deans and email.

Compared to students and staff, faculty reported the greatest amount of dissatisfaction, 52%, with communication at Evergreen. In they agreed with the statements regarding timeliness and updates from the administration, but still had more weight on the disagree side than staff. On a lighter note, they were very proud of being a part of Evergreen.

One survey participant commented that “the office of Advancement is a mystery. Decisions by the vice presidents/upper administration are often not communicated to faculty.

“The experience that I’ve had most recently, via email,

“There’s a real problem when there’s a disconnect. The faculty defines governance in a way the administration doesn’t. The administration is offering a consultative (decisions are made by one group, with recommendations from another) and a distributive model (decisions are delegated). The faculty are operating form a participatory level

(everyone participates). In a consultative and distributive model, things get framed s a communication issue, in a participative model things get framed as a participation issue.”

Table 15. Staff Interest and Information Gaps

Campus Issues	Mean Interest	Mean Understanding	Difference (Info gap)
Staff concerns	3.09	1.63	1.46
Student concerns	3.3	1.96	1.34
Projects of students	2.98	1.72	1.26
Projects of staff	2.67	1.62	1.05
Steps toward goals of college	3.33	2.28	1.05
Projects of faculty	2.89	1.96	0.93
Faculty concerns	3.59	2.71	0.88
Budget and revenue	2.7	2.04	0.66
College goals	3.51	2.93	0.58
Campus safety	2.60	2.13	0.47
Policy and procedure	2.38	2.07	0.31
Construction/remodel	2.28	2.37	-0.09
Campus events	2.38	2.52	-0.14

Staff measured interest & understanding with a 0-4 scale.

“Part of the challenge of communication is not necessarily the structure but that so many people are swamped. They don’t have the space to look around and see what’s going on. That’s the other side of communications, is that people’s hands are so full, they’ don’t have the space to listen to the other information that’s out there.”

“The problem is that the faculty are not as included in the decision making about what’s going to be communicated. If that is the issue, then that’s hard.”

“I know from the students I worked with last year that the students of color’s perception is that faculty and staff do not have a clear understanding of the amount of racism that exists on this campus. That is not being effectively or broadly communicated, though the faculty are beginning to address it.”

Analysis

Suggested solutions (to be moved to discussion/solutions).

All students in the focus groups were in favor of the intranet.

A few mentioned an electronic screen, relaying messages.

They want to sign up for topics on the crier.

How to be a greener class- some sort of resource education.

“Have an independent contract fair. Everyone doing contracts to shows their work and presents it as part of their contract. Made a movie? Show it. It’s a way for students to show that they actually learned something.”

“Regular use of Evergreen email in programs would help. Teachers should send regular [information] to my Evergreen account instead of hotmail, as it if were part of class work. One of the biggest reasons that I don’t use is because I don’t feel like it’s a necessity.”

Staff solutions (to be included in final discussion).

“Publish a weekly or monthly Evergreen Bulletin on campus wide email and CPJ.

“A round kiosk in the library with wheels for events.

“I would like to see at least one major kiosk in the middle of the main entrance of the library, and then I’d like to have small pockets related to the various activities that go on. Since we do speeches in there it has to have wheels on it so that we can jack it up and move it. Other colleges have that, we don’t.”

MORE ADDED ON LATER

Faculty solutions

“The only thing I can think of is in the school’s own corridor, the high school walls tell something about what people are doing. In some ways its kind of perfunctory. The hallways will tell the town gossip. I wouldn’t want somebody to stop putting up flyers, but there must be a way that our hallways can tell some of the stories about what’s going on on campus. Its just one idea bout finding what projects people are working on.”

An optional discussion room instead of crier.

Instead of an email newsletter “I always read the alumni publication which is just gorgeous and wonderful, compelling. I always read the Washington center bulletin. I always read performing arts, at least I look at it. So there are certain thing there might be media you could use to capture. I know what I’ve done with the electronic newsletter is bury it in the email box. I don’t look at it because it takes me another . . . life is ridiculous that we have to live this way, but we do.”

Electronic screen, “Perhaps there are some places where we can post and stand around. Where we can post ongoing information blurbs that are televised. I have no problem glancing at a screen for 20 seconds and get information. I simply have to be present for it and I can reject it or I can accept it.”

Notes from Portia Sabin’s 2002 article, “Campus Culture, Social Life and Student Retention at The Evergreen State College.”

“My research suggests that Evergreen currently possesses a culture which emphasizes one particular option for social interaction over others: the small group. . . These factors can be summarizes as: physical structures which promote small groups and discourage large ones, locked doors which discourage inter-dorm interaction, policed public areas which discourage “partying” and reinforce students staying in their rooms or apartments, a single class per quarter which limits opportunities to meet people, and a lack of information about the student groups and activities that do exist” (Sabin 1).

“ . . . The other 23 people on the floor could usually be found on the floor on any given night. Very few students whom I knew joined groups. The ones who did reported joining groups as a social maneuver, in order to meet people who shared something in common, like being Jewish or gay.” (Sabin 5).

“Because I lived with first year students and had no prior knowledge of Evergreen I was, in effect a first year student myself and had to learned the culture as they did. For example, the existence of a student activities board was unknown both to me and to the students I knew for most of the school year” (Sabin 6).

“Students reported that events on campus were sparsely attended. I found this to be true of most of the events that I attended myself, with two exceptions: a basketball game and a talk by Michael Moore. Both events took place in the CRC, and both drew large numbers of students, faculty, staff and townspeople.” (Sabin 6)

“I heard the sentence “there’s nothing to do here” many times over the school year. In addition to this complaint, some students added that they felt that there is no community at Evergreen. Because students are encouraged to be self-sufficient and start their own groups when they want to do something, students who complain of having “nothing to do” are themselves at fault for not

creating something to do. . . I frequently heard from staff and faculty that those who complain of “nothing to do” are either lying or somehow poorly informed about the many available activities. My observations on campus, over suggest an explanation rooted more in the campus culture than in individual choices. . . The evergreen Catch-22 seems to me to ignore the reality of life on campus as I experienced it: if the nature of the campus is isolating, it seems misguided to blame the students for behaving like they are isolated.” (Sabin 7).

“Having nothing to do and having no sense of community are two major themes I heard from students in the past eight months. I feel that they are related and can ultimately be easily addressed, either by an improvement in communication about on-campus activities, the creation of a large social space with regular events, or both. Adding more options for social interaction might also change the culture in a way that affects student retention. Some students reported not knowing “how” to meet people at Evergreen, and feeling “stuck with” the friends they made immediately at the beginning of the year as opposed to people they really “connected with.” (Sabin 7).

Recommendations

Writing this at the end.

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