

Interim Report to the Strategic Planning Coordinating Committee

SUSTAINABLE EVERGREEN **Prepared by the Sustainability Task Force** **April 2006**

Why “Sustainability?”

Every Evergreen community member can live and work, teach and learn with the shared purpose of substantially contributing to a healthier and intergenerationally just planet.

This is our Sustainability Values Statement, which the college will consider in all its decisions related to academic excellence and campus operations:

Evergreen’s Vision for a Sustainable Future:

“The Evergreen State College will be a laboratory for sustainability as demonstrated in its operations, curriculum, and quality of life for employees and students. We will nurture values and practical skills that motivate a lifetime commitment to a sustainable, intergenerationally just, way of living on a healthy planet.”

EVERGREEN: A PLACE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The world faces complex crises including overpopulation, exhaustion of resources, poverty, and stresses on the natural environment as it ceases to be able to absorb human impacts. The need for well-educated and motivated professionals who aspire to solve these complex problems is critical. By further developing a clear and strong focus in sustainability, we will be a premier college for educating such professionals.

Evergreen is already the premier national model for interdisciplinary learning communities. We will now develop a model curriculum in sustainability that uses as its core both whole systems thinking and “practical” liberal arts. We will connect student learning to operational practices that reflect our profound commitment to a sustainable future for all people and species. Our practices and purchases will stem from socially just, environmentally healthy, and fiscally responsible sources.

Evergreen can become a laboratory for sustainability as demonstrated in our operations, our curriculum, and in the quality of life for our employees and students. Ultimately, Evergreen will be nationally renowned for our work and educational opportunities providing needed leadership throughout the academic, public, non-profit, and business communities.

Key Strategies Leading Towards a Sustainable Future:

- Establish a curricular pathway in sustainability
- Increase opportunities for a practical education in sustainability
- Initiate a robust plan for the reduced and efficient use of resources
- Examine and implement best sustainable practices/purchases policies
- Increase communication and assemble the history behind Evergreen's sustainability goals, achievements, and indicators
- Manage Evergreen’s land endowment for increased biodiversity and maximum educational opportunities related to sustainable practices
- Strengthen bonds and relationships among all Evergreen’s programs
- Strengthen bonds & relationships with Evergreen's neighbors & greater community region
- Improve campus spirit and internal wellness and foster healthy relationships

Through implementing these strategies in all our actions, we will continue our national renown in environmental and social justice. We will attract greater numbers of students seeking a practical liberal arts education that provides them the tools to help create sustainable lives, communities, governments and businesses. We will also strengthen the communities we are a part of through our leadership and collaboration with our neighbors, state government, local municipalities, businesses, and non-profit organizations.

Health & Well-Being: Key to Sustainability

During extensive community engagement with the Sustainability Task Force, faculty, staff, and students expressed a pervasive sense of being overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated. We recognize that individual well-being and health is essential to an environment where professionals can actively engage in the work of sustainability. Evergreen will prioritize college objectives to reduce community overextension and improve how we value the work of our community members.

Our comprehensive strategies are discussed in both the attached spreadsheet, and in a more detailed appendix. The highlights of these include:

Key Objectives Leading Towards a Sustainable Future:

- Become carbon neutral by 2020;
- Become a zero waste college by 2020;
- Increase our locally produced food purchases to 40% by 2010;
- Reduce our energy consumption by 30%, on a per full time equivalent basis, by 2010;
- Reduce our paper consumption to 50% by 2010;
- Reduce the number of computers per capita by 15% by 2010;
- Reduce the number of individual desktop printers by 50% and photocopiers by 10% by 2010.

SUSTAINABILITY PAYS

Through collective commitment, shared responsibility, and determination these goals are entirely achievable. By carefully monitoring our purchases, streamlining our operations, efficiently using our resources, and by reducing consumption of material goods, Evergreen will significantly reduce our waste stream. Moreover, cost savings can be reallocated towards more valuable purposes--such as reinvestment in meeting other sustainability objectives. In addition to reapplying cost savings to new sustainability initiatives, we will apply a percentage of these savings to scholarships for students in need. To help seed and offset the costs associated with the start-up of many projects, we will establish a grant writing class aimed specifically at raising targeted funds for this important work.

SUSTAINABILITY WORK BUILDS COMMUNITY

Our engagements revealed across-the-board sentiment that Evergreen's philosophy and values are often at a disconnect with our practices. This is very disconcerting in our community and is incongruent with theories of sustainability taught in our classrooms. Students want to be part of creating a sustainable college community inclusive of such things as food production, food services, purchasing policies, energy use, and grounds and maintenance.

To achieve key goals, we will need to strengthen our collaborations both internally and externally. This will include greater opportunities for collaborative work among the Olympia day and evening/weekend programs; the Tacoma Program; and the Reservation-based program, as well as our learning centers. We will also encourage and support collaborative work among faculty, staff and

students. Finally, we will broaden our partnerships with those that share our larger ecological and social boundaries.

The first step in this process will be to gain the data needed to make even more significant progress. Good Company's analysis highlighted our lack of data in several areas, including waste and recycling, transportation, and resource use. Evergreen is taking a leadership role within the American Association for Sustainability in Higher Education to help build models for procuring this data so that all colleges and universities can engage in this work.

Why Evergreen can be a national leader in sustainability:

- Highly integrated programs;
- Education based on collaboration and cooperation;
- Through internships, individual learning contracts, and very active student groups Evergreen has a great basis to expand practical learning opportunities;
- Mission committed to sustainability;
- Location in state capital and residence in and near communities both practicing, and in need of, sustainability leadership;
- 1033 acres of beautiful land that provide clean air and water, ecological diversity, and wildlife habitat within an increasingly built environment.

Sustainability at Evergreen has come a long way and has involved the effort of many community members. It is important to emphasize that sustainability is an ongoing process that will continue to evolve over time. This will take tremendous leadership from the President and Vice Presidents to maintain the vision of sustainability and advance its efforts. Most importantly, the values inherent in the concept of sustainability will help determine the long-term viability of Evergreen.

Evergreen Sustainability Task Force and Engagements

The Task Force was primarily charged with establishing the Sustainability Section for the new five-year strategic plan. The core of our values and work has been to consult with members of our community in developing this draft vision and related strategies. We have met with over 380 colleagues including:

- 229 staff,
- 126 students,
- several faculty members, and
- several senior administrators.

Our committee is truly grateful for the time and willingness that our fellow community members gave to this project. These discussions provided directive and great insight. As a result, the very essence of this report is a product of the Evergreen community.

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Task Force Coordinator: John Pumilio,

Dedicated Members: Stephen Beck, Rob Cole, Richard Davis, Kathleen Haskett, Carolyn Johnson, John Lauer, Jean MacGregor, Claude Mahmood, and Martha Rosemeyer

For additional information visit the Sustainability Task Force webpage at:
www.evergreen.edu/committee/sustainability

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