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The
Evergreen
State
College

Standard 9
Institutional
Integrity

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Ethical Standards

The institution strives to meet its commitment to high ethical standards through a number of policies. Of fundamental importance to the institution is our "Social Contract" which sets out our expectations and aspirations about how we will function as a community of colleagues. Each year this document is distributed to incoming students and, at the direction of the Board of Trustees, to all staff and faculty to ensure that we reaffirm our commitment and understanding of these essential values (Exhibit Room, Exhibit 9-1).

Policy Development

Policies have been developed to provide avenues to address concerns raised by staff, faculty, and students. In the past couple of years we developed grievance procedures for the academic division, student employment grievance procedures, rewrote the student conduct code and grievance and appeals procedures, the affirmative action/equal employment opportunity policy, and sexual harassment policy. We developed student and staff access policies for individuals with disabilities. Clear policies were developed for students to appeal academic records. An on-campus mediation center has been established to provide early intervention and resolution for individuals or groups in conflict. Training is provided on ethical standards developed by the state's legislature, and policies were drafted to guide employee activities. (Exhibit Room, Exhibit 9-2).

Public Actions

There is a strongly held value at Evergreen that it is important to ensure that our commitment does not stop at simply having all of the required mechanisms in place. Frequently we find ourselves in the position of taking "unpopular" or perhaps "unorthodox" positions on issues of importance to the higher education community. And perhaps the most difficult ethical challenges we face are when important values conflict.

The key issues where the institution has stood apart from the other colleges in the state in recent years include local control of tuition, financial aid, and acceptance of uniform standards of performance for all the higher education institutions. In addition, the institution has faced difficult issues surrounding internal issues of free speech, academic freedom, and the institutional responsibility related to publications. Each of these issues presented a basic issue of institutional integrity for our leadership.

Local Control of Tuition

Three years ago, the other four-year institutions, some more forcefully than others, agreed that the setting of tuition rates should be a local decision. While there were good arguments for this position, Evergreen was concerned about what this would mean for equal access, quality, and affordability of higher education. Under the current system the legislature must make decisions about tuition increases and has set tuition levels at the research institutions and four-year institutions. It seemed that with the backing particularly of the two research institutions (University of Washington and Washington State University), the change was inevitable. Members of our institution who are responsible for our external voice on these types of issues were subjected to tremendous pressure from their colleagues to present a unified position to the Higher Education Coordinating Board and the legislature. Despite the

pressure, we held to our beliefs on this issue and continued to share those concerns in all appropriate forums. Ultimately, the idea was rejected for many of the same reasons we held.

Financial Aid

An issue that goes hand in hand with this has been financial aid. In this instance our firm belief has been that access should be provided to the broadest range of students possible. Many of our students are non-traditional: they are older or come from families where higher education was the exception rather than the rule, often because of financial considerations. While we may not be in direct disagreement with other institutions on this issue, we frequently find ourselves to be the only ones raising the issue about needing additional funding for financial aid during budget discussions where common themes among the institutions are advocated.

Not only are we concerned about the availability of financial aid, but also about the "mix" of aid. Many of our colleagues believe that a high tuition/high aid model would resolve some of higher education's funding dilemmas and ensure that access is not limited by financial considerations. Our difficulty with this theory has been the high volume of loans to grants in these financial aid models. For many low-income families and students the thought of graduating with several tens of thousands of dollars of debt is a very different prospect than it is for wealthier families used to dealing with large debt.

Performance Standards

Over the past five years or so the legislature and Higher Education Coordinating Board have been working to develop performance standards for higher education. While the institution takes some level of pride in discovering that on many of the proposed measures we are at or near the top among our colleagues, we have found ourselves in disagreement about whether some of the measures should be uniform standards and whether improvement should always be measured by increases in numbers. One key example is student contact hours. This is an area where our basic belief about teaching as the faculty priority has put us at the top of the chart. The external standards could only be met by increasing the student/faculty ratio. We are concerned that the quality of education would be adversely affected by such increases. This position has put us in some very difficult discussions with the external groups such as the Higher Education Coordinating Board and our colleagues at other institutions.

Publications and Issues of Free Speech

The final example we present here is one where our basic values came into conflict over a publication. Recently we celebrated twenty-five years of teaching and learning at Evergreen. As a part of that celebration we developed a number of initiatives. One of those was a publication titled *The Voices of '71*. It was to be a compilation of retrospective writings of our students from the early years about their experiences at Evergreen. One of the submissions for the project was a fairly lengthy cartoon about one student's experiences at the college. When the work was originally published a number of advance copies were handed out at a "management breakfast" (a monthly meeting of deans, directors, and senior level staff). Objections were raised to some of the panels in the cartoon in the belief that they perpetuated racial stereotypes. A lengthy and exhaustive discourse about the appropriate action to take prior to general distribution ensued.

It became, fundamentally, a divergence of two principles: would reprinting of the publication without the panels be censorship and did the principle against censorship override this institution's commitment to refusing to perpetuate racial stereotypes? After much consultation and discussion, a decision was made to leave the panel in the original archival material for the library but not to include it in the printed version for general distribution.

Over the next several months the controversy and conversation over this issue grew and culminated in a seminar session at the summer reunion involving a number of alumni and senior staff at the college. After much painstaking consideration and soul searching, a decision was made to reverse the decision to remove the panels and a new printing was made available with the cartoon in its original form. However individuals may have stood on this issue, the important message was the extent to which individuals and groups were willing to openly discuss such a controversial issue and grapple with an issue where two such fundamental values conflicted. The process allowed divergent voices to be heard, and was not closed off by an earlier decision.

Communications With the Campus Community

During the past five years the president and vice presidents at Evergreen have communicated broadly with the entire campus community in response to activities that were in violation of the Social Contract. These activities included anonymous posters and defacing of campus buildings with language offensive to various groups. The president and vice presidents used these occasions to remind the campus community in general of the tenets of the Social Contract especially involving civility, individual responsibility, and respect. Exhibit Room, Exhibit 9-3 contains examples of these communications.

Regular Evaluation of Policies, Procedures, and Publications

During the past five years the institution has undertaken major efforts to thoroughly review and update its policies and procedures. This has culminated in a complete rewriting of the faculty handbook as discussed in Standard 6, and a major update of the Policy and Procedures Manual. Policies and procedures that are legally contained within the Washington Administrative Code have also undergone major review, rewriting, and repeal where appropriate. Along with these efforts two additional factors add to the institution's commitment to assure updated and accurate policies and procedures. First, a process for policy development was adopted to guide all areas of the college entering into policy-making efforts. Second, both the Faculty Handbook and Policy and Procedures Manual became parts of the college's web site. Previously, the Faculty Handbook was redrafted and distributed every few years and the Policy and Procedures Manual was restricted to thirty copies campus-wide that were often difficult to locate and unevenly maintained. Web site access has made them available to the entire campus community and ensured the updating process is timely and immediately disseminated. It has also provided an excellent mechanism for staff and faculty across campus to easily access policies that are under review and update so that they can have ready input to those processes.

Most official college publications are reproduced annually. Information in each is updated by the offices and individuals featured in those publications with the guidance of a professional editor. The results of evaluative feedback for each publication are incorporated into design and text. For major institutional publications, like the general Catalog and biennial Viewbook, a more formal consultative and evaluative process exists, to ensure the updated publications are as accurate and effective as possible. College Relations also tries to monitor all publications produced for an external audience to ensure that such publications meet a high standard of quality and accuracy.

Accurate Representation

In its official publications, particularly the general college catalog, Evergreen strives to represent itself to its constituencies, the public and prospective students, through careful processes that involve collaboration and evaluation to ensure accuracy and effectiveness in messages about the college.

The catalog has long served not only as a source document about the curriculum, but as a primary marketing tool for communicating with prospective students and other constituents. This dual function creates some interesting, sometimes challenging, dynamics surrounding its production and use. For example, in the early 1990s, the college was criticized by current students for misrepresenting the number of students of color enrolled at the college. Students felt the catalog gave the impression that more students of color attended than was actually the case. While catalog producers had been careful to be accurate and provide true representation, they were also striving to use the catalog as a recruitment tool, and were trying to illustrate an environment that was welcoming to all students. To insure that diversity was accurately described, demographics on the Tacoma campus are separated out from Olympia in the catalog statistical summary.

To help solve the problem of representation, the number of student narrators (students featured prominently to help tell the college's story) was increased to fourteen, allowing for a broader range of student images and voices. This allowed us to represent students of each of the protected classes, while trying to ensure we did not overrepresent racial diversity on campus. The expanded number also allowed us to select a representative range of students based on age, gender, year of study, geographic location of their home, and their area of academic emphasis.

In developing the catalog text, College Relations works closely with the curriculum dean, admissions and other enrollment services staff, and Academic Planning and Experiential Learning (APEL) staff. In addition, the college's Enrollment Coordinating Committee evaluates the catalog and viewbook after each is produced. APEL and admissions staff have been very effective in relaying how students perceive the information presented, and College Relations staff consistently uses feedback from them and others to modify approaches to explaining Evergreen's unusual curriculum. The curriculum dean ensures the text is accurate in terms of program/course offerings and consistent with faculty perceptions of the college. The catalog includes descriptions of each academic program. Each is provided by the head of the faculty team teaching the program and reviewed by the deans. In addition, text is circulated for updates to each administrative student affairs office that is featured. The result of this process is that the catalog accurately reflects a general, overall picture of the college while also presenting crucial information needed by students and prospective students.

The college viewbook, currently produced every two years, is developed through a similar process.

Another catalog of courses is The Evergreen Times, which is sent to 190,000 post office boxes in five surrounding counties to promote the Part-Time Studies program. This publication also serves a dual role. It not only provides a listing of the next quarter's curriculum of (primarily) evening and weekend programs, but also informs local communities about Evergreen through carefully developed news stories with photos that are featured on the first three pages of the newsprint-magazine-style publication. The publication is produced by the College Relations staff, but developed by a coordinating group that includes the Part-Time Studies Dean, the Part-Time Studies Coordinator, the admissions coordinator responsible for recruitment in part-time studies, and by several other individuals responsible for advising students.

Evergreen also produces two graduate catalogs: one for the Master of Public Administration and Master of Environmental Studies programs, and one for the Master in Teaching Program. Another catalog is specifically aimed at students of color.

In all, Evergreen produces hundreds of publications annually, including brochures for TRIO programs, a student handbook, material for prospective Housing residents, materials for donors to the college, and event promotional materials. A team of professional designers and editor/writers works to ensure information is updated and accurate, as well as easily understood.

Catalogs and other publications are used to communicate with potential students. Other college offices, such as Admissions, Registration and Records, and Housing also communicate with potential students. The offices work together to ensure information is coordinated, produced in ways that are cost-effective, and timely. These offices also hold a high value for accuracy, in part because each is directly accountable for the information they provide.

The processes used in producing publications have guided the relatively recent development of an institutional web site, that features most college publications, a community calendar, and much more, including college policies and procedures. The same collaborative processes and evaluative techniques are used to ensure the web site meets college objectives.

Evergreen is also very careful and collaborative in making public statements. College Relations is set up as a central clearinghouse for information requested from the media. College Relations staff work with college administrators to ensure that when official statements are called for from the media, they are accurate and coordinated among those who are contacted. When possible, the college takes a proactive approach to preparing a response to media. If there is a question about information or policy regarding a statement—if the college has not already developed some statements that have been collaboratively reviewed for accuracy—the staff work to find answers and provide timely statements. Evergreen's administration has always been supportive of efforts to be accessible to the news media.

This value for accuracy is also reflected in administrative statements made specifically to the college community. Foremost among these are the annual dissemination of the Social Contract and information regarding public safety issues. Both are distributed in written memoranda as well as through the student newspaper, in keeping with the Board of Trustees' directive to increase visibility of the Social Contract to all members of the college community, and legal requirements for disseminating safety information to all students and their families. On other issues, senior administrators frequently provide information about critical issues or take the opportunity to express the college's values through distribution of memoranda, posters, or letters to the editor of the student newspaper.

In the production of all of these types of materials, including the catalog, newsletters, the college magazine, and any other publication or printed material that officially "tells the college's story," journalistic principles are carefully adhered to in developing text. Accuracy of information prepared for both internal and external audiences is a high priority. Administrative statements regarding policy are also very carefully crafted, sometimes with support from College Relations staff. At Evergreen, if materials representing the college are not perceived as accurate by the college community, we will hear from our internal constituents. The entire college community values a high standard of honesty and accuracy in materials that represent the institution.

Conflict of Interest Policy

Since 1990, when a "whistle blower" complaint brought attention to the college's conflict of interest policy, the institution has seen a number of significant efforts to both develop and disseminate our policies in this area. While the college at that time had a policy which imple-

mented state law in this area, development of the policy apparently had not included broad input, was not well disseminated, and was little understood by college employees, especially faculty. Major concerns were raised over whether the policy as written interfered with academic freedom because of language related to intellectual property and the college's interest in work developed with state resources.

Additional impetus was added in 1994, when the state legislature, in the midst of a media blitz on ethical violations in the legislature and among public servants in general, significantly strengthened and expanded the state's executive ethics laws. The new statute set up both an executive and legislative ethics board and required agencies and institutions to develop their own rules and provide training and education for employees. A DTF on conflict of interest spent nearly four years developing a policy that would recognize both our obligations as keepers of the public's trust and at the same time make due consideration of issues of academic freedom.

During the past year extensive efforts were undertaken to provide educational programs in ethics. Most units of the college have attended two- to three-hour sessions while senior-level managers received a half-day session at their annual management retreat last fall. Separate training was also provided for the Board of Trustees. Faculty received a written briefing on the subject at a faculty meeting last spring. These sessions included direct exploration of current statutes related to ethics but also included broader discussion of the types of "ethical" issues faced by higher education. In the student affairs divisions, case studies were used to examine a number of "ethical" dilemmas faced by professionals in the student development field. A copy of the college's Ethics Policy is included in Exhibit Room, Exhibit 9-2.

Commitment to the Free Pursuit of Knowledge

The following section from the Faculty Handbook is the clearest evidence of our commitment to these principles.

4.300 Faculty Reappointment

(1) Preamble.

(a) Collaborative, interdisciplinary teaching and learning constitutes the center of each faculty member's work at Evergreen. The evaluation process, through which reappointment decisions are made, has at its heart a concern for excellence in all aspects of the academic enterprise. Excellence in the faculty depends in part on faculty development efforts, and both deans and faculty colleagues provide development advice as needed as part of the evaluation process. The evaluation process also provides a time to praise the excellent work of our colleagues. Thus maintenance of excellence through collegial evaluation focusing on collaborative, interdisciplinary teaching and learning is the central feature of our reappointment policy. Great care is taken before initially hiring regular faculty and thus nonreappointment of a regular faculty member will be uncommon.

(b) No faculty member will be dismissed from the college because of any written or spoken views protected by the guarantees of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The college also subscribes to the American Association of University Professors' statement of principles on academic freedom.

Social Contract

As stated at the outset of this section, the Social Contract sets out our expectations and aspirations about how we will function as a community of colleagues. The Social Contract illustrates Evergreen's commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and serves as a guide for pedagogy and administration (Exhibit Room, Exhibit 9-1).

Summary of Recommendations and Findings

- From its earliest years the institution has operated on fundamental principles of integrity in its teaching, scholarship, and service, and remains committed to those values.

- We fully recognize the important role of leadership in setting the tone and example in terms of institutional integrity. The presidents and vice presidents have repeatedly taken public positions on important campus and statewide issues.

- The institution has a program to provide education and training for faculty, staff, and board members in state ethics law and has updated and accessible policies and procedures related to ethics, academic freedom, and student conduct.

- The institution models its values not only internally, but externally as well. This sometimes creates situations where the institution takes a position that is unpopular or sensitive with external communities. One of our continuing challenges is to maintain a balance that allows us to be a voice for the highest ethical standards without unnecessarily harming the institution's relationships with the broader community.

- The institution encourages public discourse on tough issues of ethics and integrity and remains open to careful examination, and when warranted, re-examination, of decisions based on those values.