

# Shaping Our Future: Building on Our Past

**Strategic Plan 2015-2020**



**the evergreen  
state college**

## **About This Plan**

*This plan outlines six overarching goals intended to help the College achieve its mission, aspirations, and Core Themes. Each is described with related objectives and strategies. Much of the detail for these aspirations and their measures of success is contained within our [Year-Three Accreditation Report](#). Additional assessment intentions are described at the end of this plan.*

*The work required to achieve these goals will be pursued across the College, largely through existing teams and structures accountable for specific areas of work. Success will depend on the engagement and contributions of the entire Evergreen community.*

*Winter 2015*

# The Evergreen State College: Innovation in Action

**The Evergreen State College, one of six public baccalaureate institutions in Washington, was created with a mandate for innovation.**

*In helping to found the College, Governor Daniel Evans declared the need for a “flexible and sophisticated educational instrument,” that could “unshackle our educational thinking from traditional patterns.”*

**That spirit of innovation continues today.**

## Introduction: A Plan to Build on Our Strengths

While The Evergreen State College has helped create new possibilities for teaching and learning since its inception, it builds upon many of the foundations of a traditional liberal arts education:

- A curriculum that encompasses the social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, arts, and mathematics;
- Exceptional teaching and one-on-one engagement with students;
- An emphasis on developing writing, speaking, collaboration, and critical thinking skills;
- An emphasis on breadth and depth of knowledge; and
- A focus on civic engagement, social justice, service, and preparation for work and career.

### Our Mission

As an innovative public liberal arts college, Evergreen emphasizes collaborative, interdisciplinary learning across significant differences. Evergreen’s academic community engages students in defining and thinking critically about their learning. Evergreen supports and benefits from local and global commitment to social justice, diversity, environmental stewardship and service in the public interest.

In a spirit of innovation, Evergreen reaches beyond the traditional to serve students in ways that distinguish it from other liberal arts institutions.

Critically, Evergreen is public: one of just a handful of such liberal arts institutions in the country, providing access to a much broader range of students than its private counterparts and focused on serving the public good.

Our greatest distinction, however, is that **Evergreen approaches teaching and learning in a fundamentally different way than most colleges and universities**, offering students:

- Interdisciplinary, multi-quarter and team-taught programs;
- Engaging classroom and hands-on learning opportunities, anchored in a deep trust in the talents and creativity of faculty;
- Substantive narrative evaluations of their learning; and
- Freedom, and responsibility, to choose and help create academic work tailored to their personal, academic, and career goals.

These characteristics set Evergreen apart and provide students with learning opportunities not available elsewhere.

## Our Aspirations for 2020

**In 2020, we envision an Evergreen that:**

- Serves a student body of Washington residents that reflects the changing diversity of our state, in all its forms, enhanced by students from beyond the state and nation;
- Is a destination college of choice for students, faculty, and staff seeking a liberal arts experience;
- Has a vibrant sense of shared community, mutual respect, and common purpose with a continued commitment to social justice and sustainability;
- Provides a distinctive, innovative, and relevant educational experience—strongly grounded in the Five Foci and Six Expectations—that helps students graduate, achieve their personal, academic and careers goals, and become engaged global citizens;
- Is actively and strategically engaged with the community in mutually beneficial ways;
- Is an institution in which the community takes great pride;
- Is known locally, regionally, nationally, and globally as a model for teaching and learning and an example of the strengths and benefits of a liberal arts education; and
- Continues to transform student lives so that those students can transform the world.

## Five Foci

- **Interdisciplinary study** - Students learn to pull together ideas and concepts from many subject areas, which enables them to tackle real-world issues in all their complexity.
- **Collaborative learning** - Students develop knowledge and skills through shared learning, rather than learning in isolation and in competition with others.
- **Learning across significant differences** - Students learn to recognize, respect and bridge differences - critical skills in an increasingly diverse world.
- **Personal engagement** - Students develop their capacities to judge, speak and act on the basis of their own reasoned beliefs.
- **Linking theory to practice** - Students understand abstract theories by applying them to projects and activities and by putting them into practice in real-world situations.

## Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate

- **Articulate and assume responsibility for your own work.** A successful Evergreen graduate will know how to work well with others, not only in the workplace or social contexts, but as an active participant in the struggle for a more just world. You will assume responsibility for your actions as an individual and exercise power responsibly and effectively.
- **Participate collaboratively and responsibly in our diverse society.** A successful Evergreen graduate will understand that by giving of yourself you make the success of others possible. A thriving community is crucial to your own well-being. The study of diverse worldviews and experiences will help you to develop the skills to act effectively as a local citizen within a complex global framework.
- **Communicate creatively and effectively.** A successful Evergreen graduate will know how to listen objectively to others so as to understand and accept a wide variety of viewpoints. By developing a genuine interest in the experiences of others, you will learn to ask thoughtful questions, to communicate persuasively, and express yourself creatively.
- **Demonstrate integrative, independent, critical thinking.** A successful Evergreen graduate will have the ability to appreciate and critically evaluate a range of topics, across academic disciplines. As you explore these disciplines, you will develop a greater curiosity toward the world around you, and its interconnections, that will enhance your skills as an independent, critical thinker.
- **Apply qualitative, quantitative, and creative modes of inquiry appropriately to practical and theoretical problems across disciplines.** A successful Evergreen graduate will understand the importance of the relationship between analysis and synthesis. Through being exposed to the arts, sciences and humanities, and coming to your own critical understanding of their interconnectedness, you will learn to apply appropriate skills and creative ways of thinking to the major questions that confront you in your life.
- **Demonstrate depth, breadth, and synthesis of learning and the ability to reflect on the personal and social significance of that learning.** A successful Evergreen graduate will be able to apply the personal frame of reference you develop as a result of this unique education in order to make sense of the world. This understanding will allow you to act in a way that is both easily understood by and compassionate toward other individuals across personal differences.

## Core Themes

Evergreen's four Core Themes, intended to encompass the essential elements of the mission, were developed in the College's ongoing accreditation work and can be reviewed in detail in the [Year-Three Accreditation Report](#). **The Core Themes are:**

- **Integrated, interdisciplinary learning;**
- **Individuals engaged in community;**
- **Environmental stewardship and social justice; and**
- **Diversity and equity.**

These themes are deeply woven into this strategic plan. The plan also includes institutional aspirations, goals, objectives, and strategies to help focus our resources and achieve the outcomes articulated in the mission and Core Themes.

## Who We Serve

As a public institution, Evergreen serves both students and society.

## How We Serve Students

Evergreen provides an academic experience—characterized by the Five Foci and demonstrated in the Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate—that prepares students to successfully pursue their personal, academic, and career goals.

Evergreen aims to serve a student body comprised primarily of Washington residents representative of state demographics, enhanced by students from beyond the state and nation who contribute diversity of background and experience to our academic endeavors, and financial resources to support our mission as a public institution.

## How We Serve Society

Evergreen produces graduates who possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to engage in graduate studies and/or lifelong learning and contribute economically and socially to their communities. The College identifies, prioritizes, and pursues current and new strategic partnerships—across the spectrum of non-profit, government, tribal governments, and private enterprise on the local, national and global level—that are mutually beneficial and based on an exchange of knowledge, talent, and resources. In doing these things, Evergreen demonstrates the value of a liberal arts education.

## Our Commitments

**The Evergreen State College is committed to:**

- Strengthening and enhancing rigorous, well-taught undergraduate and graduate education, founded on the Five Foci, the Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate, and the acknowledgement of student goals and aspirations, including preparation for work and service.
- Hiring, developing, promoting, and retaining faculty members who are excellent teachers—as well as leaders in scholarship, the arts, and professional accomplishment—and actively contribute to the vitality and aspirations of Evergreen.
- Hiring, developing, promoting, and retaining staff members who excel in their areas of work and actively contribute to the vitality and aspirations of Evergreen.
- Working with student populations and communities—as we do with our Tacoma and tribal programs—to enhance educational opportunities aligned with Evergreen’s mission, aspirations, and goals.
- Promoting teaching, scholarship, and artistic opportunities within and across traditional disciplinary boundaries.



- Strengthening and expanding the College's local, regional, national, and global connections through academics and public service.
- Enhancing our residential campus and co-curricular experiences for our students.
- Working across divisions, disciplines, roles, and other boundaries to innovate and address challenges.
- Aligning our policies, processes, services, operations, and the development of our physical campus with our values as expressed in our mission, aspirations, and Core Themes.
- Supporting financially sustainable operating and capital budgets aligned with the values expressed in this strategic plan and built on a foundation of enrollment-based revenue, legislative funding, and fundraising.

## Goals, Objectives and Strategies

### Goals in Brief

1. Enhance Evergreen's distinctive educational experience.
2. Recruit, develop, and retain outstanding faculty and staff.
3. Effectively employ technology, facilities, and the natural attributes of our campus to enhance teaching, learning, and community.
4. Build and strengthen mutually beneficial internal and external partnerships.
5. Ensure enrollments and revenues sufficient to achieve the goals and aspirations outlined in the strategic plan.
6. Enhance recognition of Evergreen as an extraordinary institution locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

## **Goal 1**

### **Enhance Evergreen's distinctive educational experience to support learning, student success, and enrollment**

***Objective 1: Using the expertise of the faculty and staff, and building upon academic strengths, cultivate improvements and innovations in curriculum, teaching, and support beyond the classroom to further promote student success and enrollment***

#### **Strategies**

1. Use the Five Foci, Six Expectations, and Core Themes as primary lenses for individual and collective academic planning.
2. Prioritize and implement initiatives to enhance first-year experiences and provide meaningful capstone experiences for all students.
3. Provide clearer and consistently available academic opportunities at the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels in fields of study prominently promoted to prospective students to facilitate student agency and help students achieve their personal and career goals.
4. Take advantage of Evergreen's curricular flexibility to provide programs and classes that attract and engage students to deepen their learning, support strong enrollment and retention, and support their success after graduation.
5. Increase theory to practice opportunities.
6. Assess and address student preparation for college-level academic work by enhancing faculty knowledge in this area and recognizing the skills and talents students bring to their studies.
7. Increase opportunities for Evergreen faculty and staff to share exemplary practices with each other to further promote the development of high quality programs, contracts and educational experiences.
8. Strengthen programs and resources beyond the classroom that contribute to teaching, learning, and student retention.

***Objective 2: Enhance faculty and staff capacity for mentoring students and involving them in scholarly and artistic activities***

#### **Strategies**

1. Encourage and support collaborative/team teaching—especially across academic divisions.
2. Provide faculty and staff with regular and ongoing opportunities to hone their skills in working with a diverse student body.
3. Stimulate opportunities for collaborative faculty-student scholarship and artistic work.
4. Facilitate opportunities for faculty and staff to engage in discussions with peers and each other to share successful pedagogical and professional practices.
5. Provide additional support for faculty mentoring to facilitate student success inside and outside the classroom.



## Goal 2

### **Recruit, develop, and retain outstanding faculty and staff to support student success and achieve the College's aspirations for diversity**

*Objective 1: Improve the College's competitive position in terms of total compensation, working environment, development opportunities, and visibility*

#### **Strategies**

1. Develop and implement competitive, equitable, and sustainable compensation and employee development plans.
2. Develop and implement efforts to attract and retain faculty and staff who reflect, and are capable of supporting, Evergreen's diverse and changing student body.
3. Enhance hiring practices to more clearly articulate expectations and skills required for teaching in Evergreen's distinctive model.
4. Cultivate a welcoming and supportive campus environment.

## Goal 3

### **Effectively employ technology, facilities, and the natural attributes of our campus to create and sustain an inclusive, accessible, and safe environment that will attract and serve students, inspire and support teaching and learning, build community, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of College operations.**

*Objective 1: Develop, renovate, and maintain campus facilities*

#### **Strategies**

1. Pursue and secure legislative authorization and funding for projects and facilities included in the 2015 to 2020 elements of the Campus Master Plan, including renovation and maintenance of existing buildings and infrastructure.
2. Collaborate with students to explore, promote, fund, and implement improvements to facilities that support student life and well-being—as well as recruitment and retention—including improvements and/or expansion of campus housing and student service facilities using traditional and innovative funding options (including exploration of public/private partnerships).

*Objective 2: Provide technology and support to promote learning and improve efficiency and effectiveness of campus operations*

#### **Strategies**

1. Identify and implement solutions that enhance access to information and functionality for students, faculty, and staff, regardless of location or device.
2. Continue efforts to maintain and improve data security.
3. Identify, prioritize, and address barriers to access, and opportunities to enhance learning, for students, faculty, and staff (e.g. technology, training, support, organization, physical access, and ease of use).

***Objective 3: Develop and implement an improved plan, grounded in environmental stewardship and social justice, to help the College clarify and achieve its sustainability goals***

**Strategies**

1. Actively engage students, faculty, and staff in an update of the Climate Action Plan, including review and recommendations related to carbon and waste reduction goals and timelines.
2. Review and, as necessary revise, roles and structures to achieve the goals of an updated Climate Action Plan.
3. Emphasize the continued integration of social justice and sustainability into the curriculum.
4. Provide additional theory to practice opportunities for students and a model for sustainability that contributes to student recruitment, learning, and retention.

**Goal 4**

**Build and strengthen mutually beneficial internal and external partnerships**

***Objective 1: Build, strengthen, and maintain strategic internal and external partnerships that enhance student success and contribute to the long term ability of the College to fulfill its mission***

**Strategies**

1. Identify and support current and new partnerships—across the spectrum of non-profit, government, tribal governments, and private enterprise on the local, national and global level, including our current Public Services Centers—that align with College goals and priorities and are mutually beneficial, based on an exchange of knowledge, talent, and resources. These may include opportunities to expand experiential, theory to practice opportunities that enhance student engagement, learning, career readiness, and connections to campus and community; and/or opportunities to contribute to sustainability, social justice, and quality of life in the community and beyond.
2. Identify and implement clear and effective means for external stakeholders to connect with Evergreen to explore opportunities for strategic partnerships.
3. Develop methods to build internal awareness of existing partnerships, opportunities, and needs, improve coordination, and increase synergy.

## **Goal 5**

### **Ensure enrollments and revenue sufficient to achieve the goals and aspirations outlined in the strategic plan**

***Objective 1: Attract students who will benefit from and contribute to the Evergreen learning community***

#### **Strategies**

1. Increase the size of the undergraduate applicant pool through: additional targeted outreach that reflects the demographics of the state, enhanced by students from beyond the state and nation; technology updates to optimize recruitment and admissions processes; and improved communication and collaboration between Admissions and Academics to inform curricular development.
2. Refine marketing messages to increase the continuity and effectiveness of communication.
3. Bolster promotional efforts to further showcase Evergreen's distinctions and successes.
4. Sustain support for graduate programs and explore opportunities for growth and/or diversification of graduate offerings in alignment with the mission, aspirations and goals.
5. Enlist students, faculty, staff, and alumni in supporting recruitment and messaging efforts.
6. Expand financial aid to increase affordability and support student recruitment.

***Objective 2: Retain and graduate a higher percentage of students***

#### **Strategies**

1. Engage with students and focus institutional energy to assess, prioritize and, as necessary, enhance academic, social, recreational, wellness, and health-related services, activities and facilities that support student well-being and success.
2. Identify, prioritize, fund, and spread effective retention practices already in use at Evergreen to additional student populations and implement best practices not yet in use at the college as well.
3. Critically review practices currently funded based on assumed retention benefits to confirm that linkage and modify, enhance, discontinue, or revisit rationale for these investments based on their results.

***Objective 3: Generate a sustainable balance of tuition-based, legislative, and private funding to support current programming, financial aid, and aspirations for new initiatives articulated in the aspirations and Core Themes***

#### **Strategies**

1. Clarify institutional fundraising priorities and expand fundraising activities to support student access and success.
2. Enhance legislative outreach and advocacy activities, engaging a wider range of stakeholders in these efforts.

3. Increase enrollment-related revenue while maintaining our commitments to serving a resident student population representative of Washington's changing diversity as well as students from beyond the state and nation.

## **Goal 6**

### **Enhance recognition of Evergreen as an extraordinary institution locally, regionally, nationally, and globally**

#### ***Objective 1: Make accomplishments of students, faculty, staff, and alumni more widely known***

##### **Strategies**

1. Showcase more student, faculty, staff, institutional, and alumni accomplishments for internal and external audiences.
2. Support publication efforts, conference presentations, and other opportunities to help shape national and international conversations about educational practices by highlighting Evergreen's unique pedagogy, faculty innovations, and student successes.
3. Provide more support for student presentations and posters at professional meetings.
4. Enhance the visibility of the public service centers and their work and integrate them more with academic programs and courses.
5. Develop ways for students, faculty and staff to better understand, fully articulate, and broadly share the goals, values and benefits of our innovative liberal arts education.

#### ***Objective 2: Strengthen lifelong alumni engagement***

##### **Strategies**

1. Bring alumni back to campus by creating engaging special events and nurturing their ties to faculty.
2. Develop in-person activities and digital tools to promote continued social interaction and ongoing learning.
3. Expand connections between students and alumni for mutual benefit.
4. Expand opportunities for alumni engagement and advocacy on behalf of the college.
5. Increase participation in alumni giving.

#### ***Objective 3: Demonstrate the value of a liberal arts education***

##### **Strategies**

1. Refine and demonstrate the strengths of Evergreen's interdisciplinary model in supporting student success.
2. Widely communicate Evergreen's successes (through student, faculty, staff, and alumni stories) and their linkage to the College's distinctive liberal arts model.
3. Lead and/or actively participate in regional and national engagements with key stakeholders on the value and relevance of a liberal arts education.

## Assessment

Most of the goals and objectives included in this plan reflect and/or integrate the Core Themes articulated in Evergreen's Year-Three Accreditation Report. That report includes specific indicators and targets for a wide range of activities, initiatives, and outcomes. The College will use those indicators and targets to assess progress toward goals related directly to the Core Themes.

For goals and/or objectives in this plan that are not specifically included in the accreditation framework, the College will document current status, compare that status to our future aspirations, set specific targets and milestones, and monitor over time to assess progress and/or determine changes necessary to achieve those goals.

## Process

In winter 2014, the Board of Trustees charged a Strategic Planning Steering Committee to conduct a process that would yield an updated strategic plan for 2015-2020. As it gathered information and began drafting language, the Committee sought input and feedback from students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community members in spring, summer, and fall 2014. Grounding its work in the College's mission and the Core Themes developed in Evergreen's ongoing [accreditation process](#), drawing on insights and recommendations from additional past work (including the Curricular Visions DTF, Re-modeling Teaching and Learning at Evergreen DTF, the Long Range Curriculum DTF, and the Campus Master Plan, among others), and responding to the wide range of feedback, the Committee developed aspirations and a strategic plan to guide the institution over the next five years.