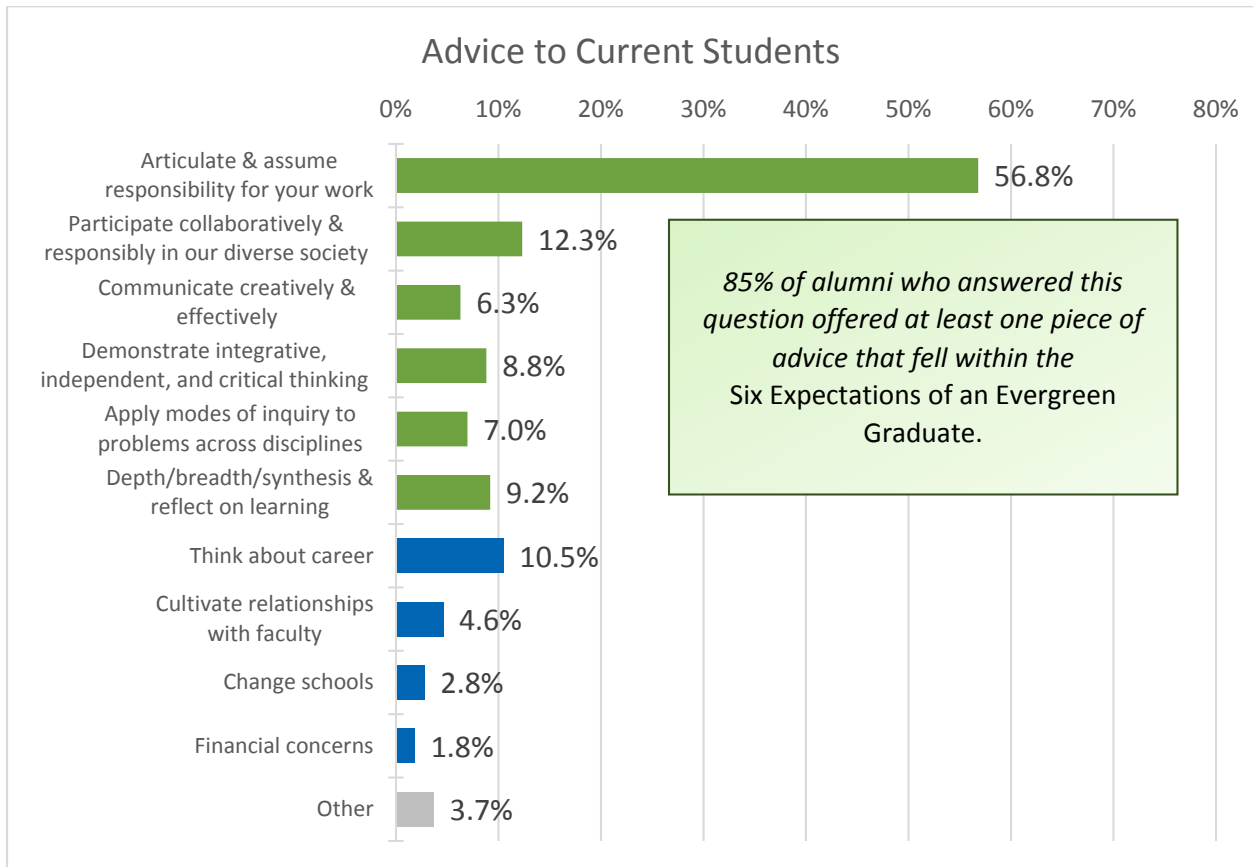


If you could give one piece of advice to current Evergreen students for how to make the most of their education, what would it be?

544 Alumni respondents offered at least one piece of advice to current students for making the most of their education (82% of respondents). This varied a bit by graduation year, 80% of the 15-year group offered advice, 81% of the 10-year group, and 84% of the 5-year group.<sup>1</sup> Comments were categorized within the *Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate* (appearing in light green) and in five additional categories. Comments are duplicated if they reference more than one category, percentages will not sum to 100%.

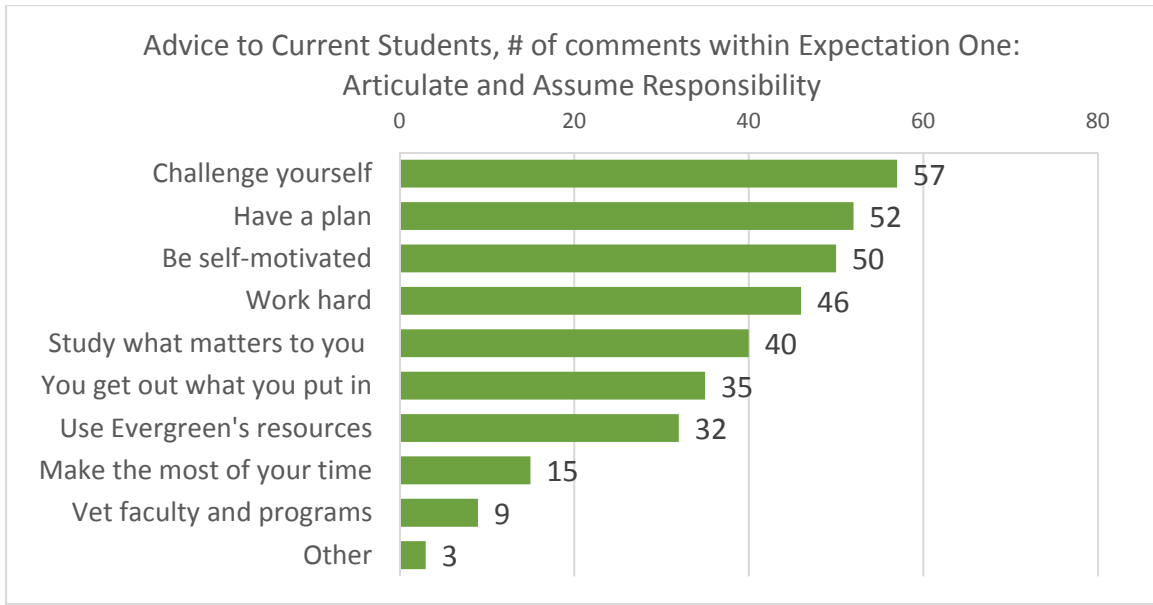


### Expectation One: Articulate & assume responsibility for your work (309 comments, 57% of commenters)

A majority of alumni give advice to students about being responsible for their own work. Since this category is so large, it is broken into subcategories for this analysis, the largest subcategories are challenging yourself, having a plan, motivating yourself, working hard, and studying what matters to you.

*Ask questions about how the Evergreen system works, especially if you enter as a transfer student. It took me more than a year to truly figure out where to get the help I needed.*

<sup>1</sup> 15-year group is the Class of 2002 (147 answers out of 184 respondents), 10-year group is the Class of 2007 (181 out of 223), 5-year group is Class of 2012 (216 out of 258)



- Challenge yourself (57 comments)

Alumni advise students to take risks and get outside their comfort zone by trying new things, like a course they're not familiar with, something they're afraid of, or an experience they don't think is possible for them to do. Students should register for hard classes, hold themselves to high academic standards, take programs that push their intellectual limits, demand rigor, and work harder than they think they need to. Students should challenge themselves and reach for the stars – because "it's a good thing if their boundaries are being stretched."

*"Go beyond what you think your capacity is."*

- Have a plan (52 comments)

Many alumni suggest that current students make a plan – comments ranged from "find a focus and follow it" to "use the formal guidelines from another college to construct your degree." Alumni recommend using the Academic Advising Office, along with other resources on campus, in order to create this plan.

*"Focus on an area of study and plan ahead –  
but do not become myopic or rigid in the pursuit."*

*"Be intentional about the classes you take while at Evergreen, what you learn will  
have a great impact on your life, career, and the trajectory of your life."*

- Be self-motivated (50 comments)

Students must take control of their own educational destiny and be a self-starter. Alumni also commented that students must be assertive, 'learn' the system 'own' their education, and ask for help/advocate for their education. One alum said "Nobody else is going to do things for you," and another said, "Students should take advantage of all the opportunities that Evergreen offers."

*“Do not expect Evergreen to push an education onto you in a formal, structured manner the way another typical college might. At Evergreen you must take initiative for your own education, both pursuing that which you want to learn and also remaining open to new ideas. It may be possible to do the minimum and passively slip through your courses but it would be a waste of your time and money and you would deprive your peers of your contributions to the learning experience.”*

- Work hard (46 comments)

Alumni direct students to show up, work hard, take their studies seriously, and engage with peers, faculty, and the curriculum. Other advice includes committing themselves 100% to their Evergreen education.

*“Go to all the classes in your program, do not miss them; and do all the work no matter what. It may be tough but the benefits are far-reaching. You will be glad you put your full time and effort into your Evergreen education.”*

Some alumni in this category also suggested that students stop shutting down campus.

*“Go to class, talk to people different from you, be uncomfortable, work toward common goals, and for god sakes, stop shutting the campus down and acting silly.”*

- Study what matters to you/Follow your passion (40 comments)

Following passions is very important to alumni; they suggest that students get involved in what interests them. Following their heart does not have to be limited to curriculum available at Evergreen; students should carve out their own path inside or outside the classroom, become an expert, join student groups, or create something.

*“Focus on doing what you love, be sure to cater your education to best help you get there”*

- You get out what you put in (35 comments)

Alumni declare that students will get out of Evergreen what they put into it.

*“You get out of it what you put into it. You are the driver of your own education, and that is a benefit, a blessing, and a real responsibility.”*

- Use Evergreen's resources (32 comments)

Alumni suggest that students use resources like the counseling center, academic advising, writing center, career development center, studios, equipment, and workshops. They also advise that students take advantage of the close relationships they can have with faculty.

*“Take advantage of the resources at your disposal. The sciences at Evergreen in particular have a vast array of equipment and facilities that one can utilize rather easily.”*

- Make the most of your time at Evergreen (16 comments)

The alumni in this category view students' time at Evergreen as a unique experience that students should embrace. Alumni call Evergreen an incredible academic community and note that there is no need for students to rush through their studies. Alumni recommend enjoying every moment and making the most of the opportunity to learn.

*“Enjoy your time while you are there. It is a special place, nothing like the real world. Use [your time at Evergreen] as an incubation period to really figure out who you are and how you want to be in the world.”*

- Vet faculty and programs (9 comments)  
Student ought to choose professors carefully - alumni suggest meeting with faculty from prospective programs, talking with other students about their experiences, and going to academic advising.

*“The instructor makes just as big a difference on the quality of your learning as the subject itself”*

- Other (3 comments)  
Three comments within Expectation One are very general and thus have not been categorized. They are, “Try to learn from everything, including negative situations,” “Ambivalence be damned!” and “Try and take the information out of the programs that mostly pertains to what your goals in life are. I did a lot of work at Evergreen that didn't teach me anything.”

### Expectation Two: Participate collaboratively & responsibly (67 comments, 12% of commenters)

Nearly half of the alumni who gave advice to students that fell within Expectation Two advocate for students pushing themselves to get involved while at Evergreen. This advice ranges from having fun and getting involved with the Evergreen and Olympia communities to specific suggestions like joining student radio. Alumni frequently mention creating community, making friends, and sharing the journey. Sixteen alumni recommend that students study abroad or travel.

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*Participate, collaborate, and engage with fellow students, faculty, and staff. Anyone who has a dream, idea, or motivation will find support from the larger community at Evergreen.*

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Alumni also offer advice about living in a diverse society; they suggest that students reach out to people whose beliefs are different from their own, stand up to bullies, and be understanding and tolerant of others. Alumni want students to stop being bullies, shutting the school down, and being destructive. One alumni points out “People with different political, religious, philosophical viewpoints are opportunities to learn and grow – not a challenge to your self-identity.” Another decreed, “Don’t form lynch mob of little Maoist agitators... and don’t get caught on camera...” Alumni also talk about the importance of listening, being humble, and practicing humility.

### Expectation Three: Communicate creatively & effectively (34 comments, 6% of commenters)

Four areas contained most of the advice within Expectation Three: Listening, being open-minded, developing writing skills, and developing speaking skills. However, the theme of respecting others runs through all of these areas. Listening is the largest of area with thirteen alumni suggesting that students listen respectfully, actively, and with objectivity. Eight alumni recommend that students have an open mind and come into each interaction with respect for others. Seven alumni encourage students to develop speaking skills – both speaking in front of large groups and talking during seminar. Alumni stress

the importance of speaking up, especially when students' beliefs are in the minority. Six alumni advise students to develop writing skills, take writing classes, or visit the writing center.

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*Challenge yourself to listen to opposing viewpoints. I have found that people get angry in an argument/debate, not because you are disagreeing with them, but rather it is because they are feeling like they are not being heard and respected enough to be listened to.*

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#### Expectation Four: Demonstrate integrative, independent, critical thinking (48 comments, 9% commenters)

Nearly half of the alumni comments in this expectation suggest that students complete an Individual Learning Contract while at Evergreen. The reasons they suggest contracts is that students will learn the following skills: Persuasive writing, negotiation, independence, and the ability to be their own teacher. Alumni said that contracts life-changing experiences, were more meaningful than their classes, and that they gained many real-world skills.

The other overarching themes within this expectation are asking questions and holding true to students' own values. Alumni want students to examine information and think for themselves by asking questions of everything and everyone (including their professors). One alum specified, "Because that's the way we've always done it is rarely a good enough reason." Another alum cautioned that there is often not a definitive answer and that students should explore what they are learning, rather than just absorbing the information.

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*Take advantage of internships and individual contract opportunities. These could serve you well after graduation. Gaining practical experience while going to school is the best gift you could give yourself.*

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#### Expectation Five: Apply qualitative, quantitative, and creative modes of inquiry appropriately to practical and theoretical problems across disciplines (38 comments, 7% of commenters)

Nearly all the alumni who made comments about applying modes of inquiry to practical and theoretical programs mentioned getting hands-on work experience outside of the Evergreen classroom. Most students suggest doing an internship, while a handful suggest getting a job or doing work-study. Internships and jobs help students:

- Find a job quicker after graduation
- Provide real-world life experience
- Set themselves apart from other graduates
- Create connections to the community and opens doors
- Acquire networking skills
- Apply what they learn in the classroom
- Learn practical and specific skills that employers want

Alumni also advise students to concentrate on the quantitative skills that can be learned at Evergreen, not just the qualitative work that they are doing.

**Expectation Six: Demonstrate depth, breadth, and synthesis of learning and the ability reflect on the personal and social significance of that learning (50 comments, 9% of commenters)**

- Breadth and Depth (31 comments)

Alumni direct students to study specific subjects including Computer Science and Information Technology, Sciences, Mathematics, and Sustainable Business (alumni note that employers are looking for tech experience). Many alumni recommend interdivisional, full-time programs, and advise students to “Dig as deep as you can.” Some alumni suggest students focus deeply on one subject while others tell students to venture out intentionally into different fields.

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*Do not pursue a liberal arts major.*

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*Get a liberal arts education!*

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- Synthesis, and Personal and social significance of learning (19 comments)

Students need figure out who they are, who they are trying to become, and what they want to pursue. Students must be honest with themselves. Self-evaluations play into students’ reflection on their own learning; alumni recommend that writing self-evaluations help students have clear goals coming out of college. Students should integrate self-evaluations into their personal and academic growth, complete self-evaluations on time for each course, and should make sure those evaluations appeal to employers.

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*The team-taught, full-time learning program is likewise special—for the way it connects students with big questions from multiple perspectives, and for the way it affords tight-knit learning communities. Most students at other schools have to split their attention between multiple classes at once. Get as involved in your learning programs as possible. They may very well transform you.*

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## Advice not contained within the Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate

122 Alumni (22%) had advice for students that did not fit within the Six Expectations. Alumni advice that fell outside of the expectations mostly involved students’ futures, either careers, graduate school, or financial independence post-graduation. A few comments are about the social climate at Evergreen, or general comments about Evergreen or life.

Think about career/future (57 comments, 11% of commenters)

Alumni comment that students are on their own when thinking about employment post-Evergreen. Students should ask for help and take advantage of the career center. It is important that students do their own research on what employers want and what skillsets are needed in the careers students are interested in. One alum said, “Think realistically about what you want to do [after graduation]. Research job positions and see what employers are looking for. Learning for the fun of it is great and very rewarding but it's also very expensive and you need to think about where you are trying to get to.”

Alumni insisted that planning for a career should start far before students graduate, and that students

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*Think outside the box. How can you apply your acquired skills to a diverse array of occupations and activities? If you are creative and artistic, also create a good, solid business plan. That is how you become a professional artist instead of just another person with a hobby.*

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should actually have a “clear education path that leads to a career.” Alumni in this category who do not want students to create a specific plan said that students should take “classes that can actually be used in a career in the real world” – the alumni who define what classes offer practical experience suggested computer and organizational skills, tech experience, internships, and getting a Bachelor of Science.

Cultivate relationships w/Faculty (26 comments, 5% of commenters)

Alumni advise students to make the most of the relationships they can have with faculty. Professors who students ‘click with’ can change their lives. Faculty can provide references, connections, opportunities for research projects, independent contracts, and advice.

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*It is worth building strong relationships with your professors, engaging with them and letting them get to know you. This link can help you get more out of your program and help you in the future as well.*

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Financial concerns (10 comments, 2% of commenters)

Alumni suggest avoiding student loans, getting in-state status, and having a clear path for how to repay debt. Many alumni mention regretting the financial situation they were in when they graduated.

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*Be careful about getting student loans. They are simple to sign up for, but I wish I would have... understood the consequences of significant debt.*

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Change schools/don't go here (15 comments, 3% of commenters)

Some alumni tell students to transfer away from Evergreen. For some this is a broad, sweeping statement, “transfer immediately,” for others there are caveats, “transfer out until the school recognizes it caters to anarchists,” or “Go to another school that offers more guidance and support... the exception would be students who have an extremely clear, mature, and informed idea of what they want out of their education.” Some alumni suggest that coming to Evergreen directly from high school is a bad idea and they suggest taking a gap-year.

### Other (19 comments, 4% of commenters)

There are comments from 19 students that do not seem to fit into categories above. Practical advice from alumni that does not fit in other categories:

- Live off campus. The social aspects of living on campus can dampen the experience. I found that being a visitor made the experience more enhancing to my academic career.
- Some people will think that your transcript is bogus and try to disregard it. Identify this issue early and leverage the registrar's office to help them interpret it.
- I would advise the students to pressure Evergreen administration to figure out how to remedy declining enrollment so that the college can better serve students and survive for years to come. This is a different world than when the college was founded; more and more students are looking for career/workforce skills from their college experience.

Alumni also offer comments about the social climate at Evergreen. One alum says, "Stay away from the crazies," another advises "keep your beliefs to yourself, you will be looked down upon," a third states, "don't hold the president hostage." Examples of other alumni comments include avoiding specific programs or faculty, and self-care.

One alum said:

*"I am not sure that I would have listened to any advice as a student, so I will refrain from giving any. I learned the most through my life experiences before, during, and after Evergreen."*