

alternative “school” model (responding to 5/27 conceptual plan)

One big signal I got out of [the discussion with 24+ climate-focused colleagues](#) late last week was ongoing concern about the needlessly divisive character of the “schools” model: that this is an obstacle to the kinds of action-oriented interdisciplinary inquiry we'd like to be able to do.

One solution that emerged for me out of that discussion was to have 3 inquiry zones or nests or niches as it were: one that houses what Evergreen does well on a disciplinary and interdisciplinary level, one that focuses resolutely on "[wicked problems](#)" and "[resilient strategies](#)" (things that demand both interdisciplinary ingenuity and/or community-based action), one that was much more emergent and responsive (like "[Pandemic Academy](#)") that combines all of the above in relation to things that can't be avoided and need skillful response

Here is my latest version of this vision; names are placeholders, but also serve a purpose:

1. The College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences
2. The Institute of Climate Resilience and Transformative Justice [updated 5/27]
3. The Center for Urgent Studies (Pandemic Academy) [updated 5/27]

Each zone would partner with a public service center(s) and/or a grad program. Each would have a curriculum composed of constellations of courses and programs. Threaded across could be a meshwork of credentials and certificates. Students and faculty wouldn't "choose" which one to belong to because they serve different functions.

- **The College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences** would be "traditional" in 2 senses: "Evergreen Classic" but also recognizably disciplinary and interdisciplinary for students and parents doing "comparison shopping." Here lives everything that Evergreen does well at the level of coordinated studies programs and paths of study, where faculty, staff, and students work on "steady-state problems" that Evergreen has addressed since day one: problems that all schools under the sun try to prepare their students for, only we do it with a commitment to the intersection of disciplines, identities, and contexts. The College gives students tools to organize their studies, and provides students with the deep grounding in foregoing knowledge traditions that can inform, but not necessarily resolve, the wicked problems and urgent studies that the other 2 elements of this model focus on. This is where the Art Lecture Series lives. This is where cornerstones and paths and capstones are key ingredients. Cf. the "[signature programs](#)" Big Bets proposal. FYE is embedded here. MES could be here along with MPA. This zone has a crystal clear structure that holds the things Evergreen does really well and has done since day 1 and/or invented since:
 - Native Studies, M20, Mediaworks, Gateways, Forensics, Regional Ecology, Illustrations of Character, Political Economy, Literary Arts, the list goes on

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- **The School of Wicked Problems and Resilient Strategies** (or “The Institute of Climate Resilience and Transformative Justice” [updated 5/27]) will be focused on things that the traditional models of the College (both at Evergreen and in the world at large) have not been able to budge: climate, prisons, houselessness, etc. Systems Thinking, Critical Pedagogy, Popular Education are the name of the game here along with Transformative Justice, Trauma-Informed Teaching, and Social Epistemology. MiT and CCBLA and SPP. Native programs + Tacoma Campus. Longhouse + Climate-focused institute. [“Everybody’s Planet”](#) + [Living Lands](#) big bets + [Gateways expansion](#). Perduring topic areas (a.k.a. areas where the College needs to do a much better job coordinating effort and demonstrating commitment):
 - climate, prison, bioregional regeneration, lack of shelter, education, food, community health, borders, labor
- **The Center for Urgent Studies** -- is there when you least expect it to supply a just-in-time curriculum that pops up when the next big thing breaks in the world. It has the skills to create the PANDEMIC ACADEMY (proof of concept) in no time flat and is charged with coming up with "creative answers to difficult questions" (as Nick Straley put it at the week 8 PA panel), using the discipline and resilience and interdisciplinary ingenuity developed at the College and the School. Action Research lives here. If we already had such a thing in place we would be partnering with the UW School of Public Health and the WA Dept of Health to spearhead and coordinate [AmeriCorps-funded community-based contact tracing teams](#) and orchestrating a food sovereignty focused "Garden Corps" (basically GRuB scaled up). Stay on your toes tho, 'cause this school is so unpredictable it could even partner with the entrepreneurship enterprise that everybody is so enthusiastic about. An MFA in agripoetics could live here - just because.

The Center for Urgent Studies is named after the 1972 *Science* article, "[Councils for Urgent Studies](#)," in which our elder Richard Cellarius and his mentor John Platt call for "coordinating councils [that] could focus and legitimize research on solutions of our major crises" (as their subtitle puts it).

Now strikes me as a perfect time to revisit a few of their sentences as we ponder the prospect of big bets. Here below are a few snippets from their first page -- which I hope the College takes seriously as it contemplates these major wagers!

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- [T]he multitude of crises and their complexity and interactions so overburden the mechanisms that have been designed to handle them that there is a valid fear that these mechanisms will break down at the critical moment and make the disasters worse. (670)
- New mechanisms and perhaps new institutions are needed to cope with these crises. We need solutions that will substantially decrease the threat of nuclear war, that will lead us to ways of life in much greater harmony with our environment, and that will allow all members of the human race to progress toward realizing the potential which our genetic, cultural, and technological endowment makes possible. (670)
- This research effort will require interdisciplinary research teams and task forces able to deal not only with new scientific or technological solutions, but also with the social and political acceptability of these solutions and the methods of implementing them. (670)
- [W]e need a better mechanism, independent of existing agencies, for evaluating what is being done. We also need better mechanisms for handling several related problems: (i) identifying clearly the other areas and types of research that are still needed; (ii) encouraging well-qualified scientists to undertake that research; (iii) helping to assemble task forces with the right mix of different specialties to work together on the same problems; and (iv) helping those who may be interested in such research to locate appropriate funding sources in the government and elsewhere (670)

If all else fails, we go found our own school... Maybe that's the biggest bet...

