

# New Academic Directions (Big Bets) Update and Response to FAQs

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## Update

The Big Bets [Coordinating Group](#) received many supportive comments, additional ideas, and proposed amendments to the model presented at the May 27 faculty meeting. We want to start by expressing our profound appreciation for your continuing deep engagement in this process. We carefully reviewed these amendments, mapped out areas of alignment and contradiction with the proposed model (and with each other), and considered their possible inclusion. We have proposed one amendment connected to the proposed undergraduate Interdisciplinary Schools.

*Revised Language for Component 1: We change our name from The Evergreen State College to Evergreen State University to reflect the complexity of our institutional mission and structures. Evergreen State University will comprise an undergraduate college with Interdisciplinary Schools (built from existing and emergent Paths) and a School of Graduate and Professional Studies. We will launch these interdisciplinary schools in Fall 2021 and evaluate this structure at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 academic year.*

The Coordinating Group is not proposing any other amendments to the model presented at the May 27 faculty meeting. In many cases, our justification is that the amendments proposed over the past several days by faculty are additions or modifications at a different scale than the broad conceptual model that we plan to vote on. The ideas behind such amendments will be an important part of our summer work, so we encourage you to engage in this summer work and resurface these ideas. In other cases, we felt the existing proposal was stronger on its merits and/or represented collective work and support from the broad group of faculty, staff, and students who have worked on this model and provided feedback over the past year. Several of these proposals (e.g. Paths without Schools within one undergraduate college) were ideas that we carefully considered and debated within the Coordinating Group in the course of arriving at our proposed model.

## FAQ + Responses

In the following FAQ and responses, we have attempted to address some of the top areas of curiosity that arose over the past week.

### **1. Why did we propose “three” schools, and why are we proposing a more-open ended number in this proposal?**

Our original proposal for three Schools began with the same general approach as was done to form Curricular Area Teams (CATs): arrange Paths to find some deliberate and meaningful combinations in what seemed like compelling clusters. When we moved to three schools, we felt we had found a sensible set of schools that could be communicated clearly to the outside world, maintain interdisciplinarity as a core value, enable ongoing support of all elements of the curriculum, and respect many of the current connections between Paths in the CAT structure. In addition, the idea of three schools fits nicely with a long-time interest in creating the option for a specialized BA and a BFA to complement our current general BA and BS degrees, should we choose to pursue such options. Three schools bring all of the sciences together under one roof, which we think will support coherent planning and provide an outward facing storefront for sciences. Three is also a reasonable number of entities to manage administratively in terms of staffing.

We received a number of different proposals that suggested different configurations of schools, ranging from one interdisciplinary college to five, focusing on different curricular or divisional areas. After more deliberation among the Coordinating Group, we have proposed moving the school structure forward with an open-ended number of Schools. Our summer work will clarify the appropriate number and configuration of Schools. Given the recruitment and admissions timeline, we would need to begin marketing the schools concept to potential students starting in September 2020, and the schools would launch in Fall 2021.

## **2. Why drop the “The” in Evergreen State University?**

In addition to replacing “College” with “University” to clarify that we are one of Washington’s six public baccalaureate institutions (rather than a community college), and that we offer graduate degrees, we should also drop the “The” from our name. In everyday usage, many people do not use the “The” in the first place, so there is uneven usage of our name. More pragmatically, “The” creates recurring confusion about where we ought to be listed in any alphabetical sorting—a minor issue with potentially significant consequences for online college searches and college fairs table-arrangement.

## **3. How will the institution commit to preserving the integrity and mission of the long-evolving and carefully tended Evening & Weekend Studies (EWS) program? How will it address the inequities and impracticalities that have historically made planning across EWS and Day so difficult?**

We are excited to better blend full- and part-time offerings throughout Evergreen’s weekly schedule. We recognize this may cause deep concerns among EWS faculty about the direction and purpose of the curricular work occurring through the EWS CAT. Planning for this element of the new model would include a careful consideration of strength areas in our current EWS curriculum, and how to preserve and best feature them. We hope this restructuring addresses the marginalization of EWS, centering and more deeply supporting its mission, curriculum, and teaching modalities. Success will require addressing the issues that have attended previous attempts at integrated planning (inequity around 16/8 credit teaching partnerships, addressing the difference in workload depending on size and number of offerings). This change means that all faculty will be able to rotate around the schedule of the week, which offers faculty additional flexibility in their schedules. Additional benefits include expanded teaching partnerships, more cross-disciplinary work, new intellectual inquiries, professional development for faculty who want to serve schedule-bound students with complex lives, and so on. An essential component of Evergreen’s future sustainability will be to attract and serve students seeking evening, weekend, and low-residency options.

## **4. How will the new advising model get supported? Will this be new work for faculty?**

As we say in the rationale document, “Advising teams might consist of faculty, staff, and student peer advisors who will offer wrap-around advising. These teams will receive professional development on current best practices in advising and student success. (We are aware that this will require increased staffing in advising and bargaining with the UFE for any change in faculty advising responsibilities).” We know that increasing our advising capacities for career-connected learning—both curricular and co-curricular—will require resources to support additional academic and career advisors, professional development opportunities for staff, faculty, and student peer-advisors, and more. A workgroup will develop and propose a plan for wrap-around advising this summer and their recommendation will be folded into the larger budgetary planning for this model.

## **5. Will capstones be required, or can they be well-supported and expected but not required?**

A required capstone is not built into the language of the proposal on which we are voting. The concept of “requirement” is kept alive in the discussion in order to compel us to consider capstone opportunities through an equity lens; our current system relies heavily on student-faculty relationships to create such opportunities, privileging some students above others. Capstone experiences are an important way for students to prepare for graduate school and the world of work, and our National Survey of Student

Engagement data indicates that we are behind our peer institutions in the number of students who complete what that this study calls a “culminating senior experience.” Although we offer many opportunities for such experiences, we don’t currently have clear mechanisms to ensure that all students have the “opportunity” to complete a capstone. We are likely to land on a model that supports capstone opportunities for all students or a requirement that will include a simple waiver. It’s our hope that, in addition to offering internships and Individual Learning Contracts, Paths and schools will be able to plan and communicate capstone (or culminating senior experience) opportunities, whether they are guided or more student generated. Our students complete far more projects and have more experiences that ought to qualify as culminating senior experiences or capstones than we currently track or are recognized.

#### **6. Will e-portfolios replace academic statements? Will they add to transcript bloat?**

E-portfolios will not replace the academic statement. E-portfolios might be thought of as a way to beautifully display the transcript. They are a platform for students to feature their accomplishments such as certificates, capstone experiences, major projects, internships, and so on. The e-portfolio is meant to directly link into platforms like LinkedIn, making it immediately useable for students’ professional paths beyond Evergreen. This is increasingly common in higher education. Many technology providers now offer user-friendly platforms for students and advisors. The e-portfolios are something we will explore for future implementation; they are not likely to be put into place within the next year or so.

#### **7. Does New Academic Directions (Big Bets) support the Performing Arts as an area of expansion?**

Unfortunately, the data do not show the same growing interest in this area as in other areas. While we do hope that we expand in this area in the future, for now, we are focusing on supporting arts-related growth in Media Arts, Visual Arts, Digital Media, and Design, and maintaining our strength in Literary Arts.

#### **8. Under this new model, can science classes, for example (including labs and field trips) be offered in late-afternoon/evening/weekend time slots?**

Yes! This is exactly the hope. By spreading part-time studies across the curriculum, and opening up any time of day to any sort of offering, we hope to reach a wider range of current and potential students.

#### **9. What about the idea of developing a new interdisciplinary Center of Excellence?**

Centers are a key component of the proposed model. We see them as vital structures for developing and supporting curricula that spans multiple Schools and/or Paths and supporting capstone experiences. We see existing public service centers, science and media support centers, as well as new centers of excellence as critically important structures for advancing student work. For example, we highlight the value of something like a Center for Climate Justice and Resilience to support this work in the supporting document (quoted below). For the purposes of a comprehensive conceptual model for the entire university, we don’t think it makes sense to include in the vote this level of detail about one of multiple proposed centers at our institution.

The language in the New Academic Directions model states:

Centers on campus would be instrumental in designing and supporting potential capstones. Existing centers (e.g. Science Support Center, Center for Community-Based Learning and Action) currently play a major role in supporting capstone work and other centers could expand their existing connection to capstone work. Pending external funding, new centers (e.g. the new Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership and Transformational Change [CELTC], or a possible Center for Climate and Resilience) could support similar work. These centers would also, as appropriate, promote broad collaboration across the college through conferences, lecture series, or other events (e.g. Pandemic Academy, Anthropocene Lecture Series, Art Lecture Series, Indigenous Climate Justice Symposium) and create greater visibility for thematic areas that cut across Paths and Schools.

#### **10. How does the roll-out plan fit in with the new undergraduate recruitment cycle?**

Decisions in the weeks ahead will be important for 2021-22 Admissions and Marketing recruitment timelines. Below is the recruitment timeline for traditional high school students (high school directs, also known as first time first year students). While it is true we currently recruit other populations, and the New Academic Directions proposes to expand appeal to adults and other new majority students, the first-time-first-year timeline is the one that begins up to 20 months in advance of any given first day of Fall Quarter, and therefore sets the timeline overall.

#### **First Time First Year Recruitment Timeline**

**September (early) 2020** – Undergraduate admission staff begin the primary recruiting activities, high school visits and college fairs, for Fall 2021. We presume these activities will be altered this fall due to COVID-19 but we must assume the student mind-set will be unchanged.

**October (mid to late) 2020** – Prospective student open house.

**December 2020** – First decisions on FALL 2022 undergraduate recruitment, i.e. student search (purchasing names).

**January or February 2021** – Outreach by email and snail mail to high school juniors for Fall 2022 recruitment.

**March – May 2021** – Dual focus in new- student recruitment: some activities are focused on Fall 21 yield, others focused on fall 22 application generation.

**March – June 2021** – Prime season to influence yield, i.e. helping those offered admission choose Evergreen over other colleges or universities they've been admitted.

**September (early) 2021** – Undergraduate admission staff begin the primary recruiting activities, high school visits and college fairs, for FALL 2022. We presume these activities will be altered this fall due to COVID-19 but we must assume the student mind-set will be unchanged.

**September 2021** – Last applications for admission, orientation and the start of the school year.