

# Center for Climate Action and Sustainability

## The Evergreen State College

April 2021

### Overview and Context

The Evergreen State College is launching a new Center for Climate Action and Sustainability, a synergistic hub to link students with opportunities in climate research and action as well as applied sustainability in the South Sound region and beyond. The Center aims to foster the training and field experience needed to create the climate leaders we need for a just and sustainable future. The Evergreen State College is located in Olympia, the capitol of Washington state, and home of many state and federal land agencies. City and Counties are collaborating on the [Thurston County Climate Mitigation Plan](#). And the area is rich with community climate organizations such as [Climate Solutions](#), Olympia Community Solar, the Olympia EcoDistrict and more. The Center for Climate Action and Sustainability will build on Evergreen's long history of commitment to environmental stewardship and social justice, and catalyze new growth and innovation.

### Mission Statement

The Center for Climate Action and Sustainability furthers Evergreen's mission by supporting students and the broader community in developing justice-oriented, science-based, and equitable solutions to the climate crisis. The Center contributes to understanding climate change causes and consequences along with building resilience in ecological, cultural, and energy systems. Inspired by youth leadership in global climate action, we emphasize collaborative, creative, and interdisciplinary teaching and learning, in partnership with community organizations and local, state, and tribal governments, that addresses transformative change to envision a future that is just and sustainable.

### Scope

The work of the Center for Climate Action and Sustainability will integrate with our interdisciplinary commitments across the natural and social sciences, humanities and arts. Because climate and sustainability affect every community and permeate so many areas of human experience, the center will offer a dynamic, flexible, and holistic approach to its work with students and the community through three broad lenses:

#### Science

- Interdisciplinary science education and undergraduate and graduate research
- Bridging theory with practice by leveraging scientific knowledge and experience to energy and climate solutions.
- Communicating scientific findings to the public

#### Society

- Understanding the political, social, and economic impacts of climate change
- Impacting policy, expanding public perceptions, and adapting behaviors
- Mitigating impacts, especially for those most vulnerable and least prepared

#### Work

- Strengthening partnerships for field-based learning and internships
- Delivering certificate programs to provide practical professional skills relevant to climate and sustainability.
- Fostering creative entrepreneurship for the green economy

For both undergraduate and graduate students, the center will bring under one umbrella Evergreen's rich classroom and field-based curriculum, expanded hands-on learning and internships, opportunities for additional credentials in key skill areas, and mentoring to help graduates launch their own businesses and organizations.

The college's proven interdisciplinary curriculum will ground the center's mission. Students will continue to learn to collaborate across differences, think beyond boundaries, and apply theory to practice. The center's work will be rooted in science and committed to undergraduate and graduate research. Students will learn how to identify and address the political, social, and economic implications of climate change and explore strategies to address the inequitable effects it has on many of the world's most vulnerable communities.

In addition to our talented regular faculty, practitioners from government agencies, non-profits, and industry will join the curriculum so students can learn from experts how to apply their knowledge in real-world settings.

The center will also be a laboratory for students to try on ideas. Through scholarships, paid employment, and assistantships, they will be able to work closely with faculty and their peers on independent and group research, initiate and lead advocacy and restoration projects, and link their learning to sustainability efforts on campus and in the community.

And the center will embody the entrepreneurial spirit that has been part of Evergreen since the beginning, a place where students can acquire the knowledge and encouragement they need to be informed and successful leaders of new businesses and organizations dedicated to sustainability. Partnership with our donor-funded new Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership and Transformational Change, launching now under the leadership of Director Tamsin Foucrier, will further support students in developing climate-focused business ideas.

#### **Certificates**

The Evergreen State College is launching an initiative to offer certificates to both matriculated and non-matriculated students in a wide variety of academic areas. This is an element of our New Directions renewal project for the College. The Center would be in an ideal position to offer for-credit and not-for-credit certificates on topics related to climate change, in partnership with Evergreen faculty and community practitioners.

#### **Internships and Capstone Experiences**

Evergreen has traditionally provided strong support to students seeking experiential learning opportunities such as internships. We envision the Center engaging with local climate nonprofits and businesses in renewable energy and related fields to identify possible internships for students, and helping Academic and Career Advising link students and faculty sponsors with these career-connected learning opportunities.

#### **Project Areas**

Disaster resiliency, Regenerative Farming, Energy, Legislation, Sea level rise, Water ecology, Clean Energy financing, conferences, climate cafes, video and podcast production, Olympia Ecodistrict, alternative transportation, media/arts, sustainable design workshops, communication.

#### **Green Jobs**

The demand for green jobs will grow at phenomenal rates in the coming decades. In a study of the market and the position of the college, Hanover Research has recommended that Evergreen capitalize on our reputation and student demand with renewed focus on career preparation in environmental jobs. The Center for Climate Action and Sustainability will help connect students to both internships and employment opportunities during and potentially after their time as students at the College.

#### **Timeline**

The Center Director, along with the Climate Advisory Board, will help focus the vision of the Center through workshops in the summer of 2021. The Center Director will begin full-time in September 2021, helping to launch the academic year.