

UNITED FACULTY OF EVERGREEN

COMMUNIQUE

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Working Conditions and Learning Conditions: A UFE Perspective on the Evergreen's Budget

If we, as faculty members, do not follow our words with action, then all of our talk to our students about "making the world a better place" for themselves and for others is cheapened.
-Robert P. Engvall, Roger Williams University¹

The economic meltdown has hit several segments of the Washington labor force in particularly brutal ways: cuts to basic health, for instance, affect both health care workers and the low-income residents who depend on such programs. Higher education has also been targeted in major ways. Because the legislature and the governor are unwilling to consider tax reform, the state budget is considered and approved in an environment of extreme scarcity.¹ In fact, Washington's cuts to higher education are far deeper than that of any other state except Nevada.¹ The result is that public colleges and universities across the state have been forced to make crippling cuts to their operating budgets: in Evergreen's case, these cuts amount to \$7 million per year in the next biennium. Our goal here is to alert the Evergreen community to some of the larger political forces operating on us as a public institution, and to explain how union organizing provides us with a crucial set of tools for resisting some of the most disconcerting trends in higher education nationwide.

The vice presidents, who have been tasked with sending budget recommendations to the president and the board of trustees, claim that the current round of proposed cuts seeks to preserve: "the fundamental structure of the curriculum, direct instruction, our ability to recruit and retain students, key elements of student life and student support, our ability to fundraise, and campus health and safety."¹ In fact, however, the Academics division received by far the largest reduction in terms of overall dollars:

Division	Percentage cut	Amount
Academics	6.9%	\$2,010,482
Finance and Administration	6.6%	\$922,020
Student Affairs	6.5%	\$413,542
College Advancement	5.3%	\$111,600
President's Office	8.6%	\$103,139

As Todd Sprague, Executive Director of College Relations, admits in a recent follow-up to the May 6 budget meeting, "the figure in Academics reflects larger cuts in the area of public service centers" thus preserving "direct instruction."¹ And, in fact, almost all of the centers have seen their budgets sliced in half—The Labor Center (49%), The Washington Center (34%), the Evergreen Center for Educational Improvement (81%), (continued on page 5)

Honoring Commitment and Service with Multi-Year Contracts

We end our year happy to announce that around 25 multiyear contracts, which start this fall, have been offered to long-term adjunct and visiting members of the faculty. There were nearly 60 eligible under the rules our bargaining team negotiated last fall. Despite a horrendous budget environment, the UFE was able to work with the administrative team to move this forward. It's an important gain in job security for many faculty at a time when other institutions are going in the opposite direction. Students will benefit as well as they will be able to engage in some longer-term planning. We expect that a new round will be offered next year. Congratulations to the faculty members who received these contracts and to everyone who made this happen.

About United Faculty of Evergreen

The purpose of the United Faculty of Evergreen is to represent all eligible faculty members in bargaining, grievances, and in all matters relating to terms and conditions of employment with The Evergreen State College, to protect and enhance Evergreen's unique traditions that have earned it prominence among the nation's public colleges and liberal arts colleges, to encourage mutual understanding and cooperation among union members, to engage in legislative, political, civic, welfare and other actions which further the interests of the membership, public education and the labor movement; and to bring about a world where justice and equality are a reality, not just empty words.

Affiliates: United Faculty of Washington State, The Washington Education Association, The National Education Association, AFT Washington, The American Federation of Teachers, The American Federation of Labor/Concress of Industrial Organizations and The Washington State Labor Council

<http://www.ufws.org/evergreen/index.html>

United Faculty of Evergreen Solidarity Committee Proposed actions of solidarity across campus under budget cut conditions

Stewards Council Solidarity Committee members Kathleen Eamon, Joe Tougas, Tony Zaragoza, Anita Lenges, and Stephanie Kozick compiled the following suggestions for how faculty could show solidarity with those impacted by budget cuts and increases in tuition. They presented this report at the June 1st Stewards Council meeting.

1. Faculty could choose to take leave without pay in order to increase the number of visitors employed to fill the curriculum.

2. Faculty should do what they can to keep enrollment up. Faculty should become well educated about campus services that support students, attend academic fairs, help advise students to connect to appropriate programs, etc.

3. UFE could create a scholarship fund: "UFE student solidarity scholarship." This scholarship would be designed to cover the gap between previous tuition rates and current tuition for students who may not be able to attend because of that difference. This would be spread among students rather than be full scholarships. We would like a ratcheting scheme for scholarship donations. People may choose to give more if they know that more people are giving. So the scheme would be something like: "I will give _% of my paycheck now, but if 20 other faculty do so, then I will ratchet up to 1%." Allow faculty to make a choice on the degree to which they will ratchet up their donations to share the pain.

4. UFE could help develop a multi-union coalition to have ongoing, regular contact among unions to work out solidarity strategies. Under this relationship, UFE might, for example, write a letter of support for the staff union as they negotiate the effects of the college not filling vacant positions. This part of the budget cutting process did not attend to where reduction of staff might make most sense – so it may be impacting particular areas

severely and disproportionately.

5. We could prepare for and anticipate similar financial challenges in the future. How could the process be navigated better and how can we prepare for it? For example, the website of ideas did not appear to lead to any actual deliberation. It is not clear what happened with those ideas, whether they were considered or whether they may be considered in the future. It offered false hope because of the lack of communication, transparency, and response.

Information about Scholarships:

Scholarships at Evergreen are either "endowed" or "annual" agreements. In either case criteria is established for student awards. Suggested criteria for the UFE scholarship might be the "gap filling" suggested above and/or Evergreen staff tuition. In the case of an endowed UFE student scholarship, an amount of money would be collected from faculty and the interest on the principal would be managed by the Evergreen Foundation and directed toward students who meet established criteria. Endowments require a large amount of money to generate income, so we do not think one will work for us in this case. For an annual UFE scholarship, money would be collected and Financial Aid would award it to students who meet the established criteria. We could arrange the collection of faculty contributions to a scholarship fund through payroll deduction by establishing an account with Evergreen Advancement.

Letter from United Faculty of Evergreen Chair Laurie Meeker to Evergreen President Les Purce providing feedback from the UFE on the proposed budget

May 22, 2009

Dear Les:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you with questions and comments about the proposed 09-11 biennial budget. A central concern of the faculty union, United Faculty of Evergreen, which I represent as Chair, is the significant, permanent reduction to faculty development and travel opportunities (25 percent cuts to faculty travel, sponsored research, and summer institutes). These provisions were an important part of our recently settled Collective Bargaining Agreement, and we are deeply concerned about the proposed reductions. We would like to see faculty travel, sponsored research, and summer institutes fully funded.

During the all-campus budget forum on May 6, Don Bantz noted Evergreen's commitment to improving faculty salaries in the Collective Bargaining Agreement that went into effect last November. He also noted that Evergreen faculty are still 20 percent behind our peers nationwide and receive the lowest pay compared with the other four-year institutions in the state. Still, both the union and the college negotiated and agreed that faculty salaries were a priority and I would like to acknowledge that we made good progress this year.

While faculty salaries were a priority, faculty development and travel were also important to us. The budgets for each of these provisions are relatively small, compared with the overall budget, but they are of critical importance to maintaining a vibrant, excellent, innovative faculty. Sponsored research provides faculty with five weeks of paid research time during the summer. At a teaching college like Evergreen, with significant faculty-student contact hours, the sponsored research program is essential to providing faculty with the time and funding they need to do their research. For some, low salaries mean that they have to teach during the summer, and the sponsored research grant allows them to do their research instead. Travel funds are also vitally important, enabling faculty to update their skills, share ideas with others in their fields, and keep current with shifting bodies of knowledge. Of particular importance are summer institutes. As you know, faculty at Evergreen continually reinvent the curriculum. During the regular, teaching-intensive academic year, faculty have little time to work on developing the following year's curriculum. Planning institutes and other summer institutes have provided some minimal pay (below scale on the faculty salary grid) for faculty to get together and plan their programs, develop new ideas, work on pedagogical issues, and invent innovative curriculum.

Twenty-five percent reductions to sponsored research, faculty travel, and summer institutes cut deeply into the minimal support we have now in these areas. As mentioned above, the cuts are not very significant with respect to the overall budget, but go a long way in ensuring and retaining an innovative faculty. Cuts to Sponsored Research (18,707) Summer Institutes (31,400) and Faculty Travel (23,733) amount to just under \$75,000 (73,840). It is difficult to believe this amount cannot be found elsewhere in the college budget. We understand the current total funding for these areas of the budget is \$295,360 and request that this level of funding be maintained for the next biennium.

In a related matter, you mentioned at the all-campus forum that the college made sure to talk to the unions about proposed budget reductions. While this was true for UFE in many ways – we provided regular feedback about the importance of sabbaticals, for example – it was not true in other ways. UFE expected to be provided with an opportunity to “consult” with the college administration on proposed budget cuts to faculty development and travel. The union consistently communicated with academic administrators about our desire to see the whole budget, with all the divisional proposals, in order to be fully informed and craft alternatives during talks about these provisions of the CBA. When the final budget was released and we sat down at the UFE-Management meeting to propose talks (an opportunity for UFE to consult), academic administrators indicated there was nothing more to discuss and the budget proposal was final. As you know, this resulted in UFE filing a grievance on this issue, and I refer you to Walter Niemiec and Don Bantz for the details of the ongoing situation.

In addition, I would like to address other budget reductions that are a deep concern for UFE. As you know, Article 1 of the CBA states, “UFE is the exclusive bargaining representative regarding matters of wages, hours,

and terms and conditions of employment” and represents the faculty’s interest in these matters. Other budget reductions that may affect faculty working conditions significantly include: Program Budgets – 15 percent cut (51,531) and Equipment – 100 percent cut (248,000). Both the equipment budget and program budgets are essential to curriculum offerings and reductions in these areas may significantly impact faculty workload. While it remains to be seen how this plays out, many academic programs cannot function without adequate program budgets, or without equipment upgrades and replacement. It is difficult to see how using reserves for equipment will solve the problem in the long run. We request that you reconsider the elimination of the equipment budget and reverse the deep cuts to academic program budgets.

Finally, as we have repeatedly noted in our public statements and Evergreen community discussions, UFE is concerned about the deep cuts to Evergreen’s public service mission represented by the funding reductions proposed for the Public Service Centers. With respect to faculty at Evergreen, The Washington Center has contributed significantly to faculty development in a variety of ways with curriculum planning retreats and other opportunities to research and develop innovative pedagogy. In addition, The Washington Center provides a much needed opportunity to connect on a national scale with colleagues engaged in interdisciplinary pedagogy. The Labor Center has provided community service opportunities for students with bridges for student internships. The Center has also collaborated with getting the products of student work published and distributed and has provided credit-generated opportunities for students to work with labor unions and working class communities. Deep cuts to the Long House program and Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute affect student and faculty opportunities to engage with native art programs and limit important research initiatives that provide opportunities for cross-cultural engagement and learning.

In its negotiations with the college, the UFE placed great value on the college’s commitment to innovation, collaborative learning, and public service. In the Collective Bargaining Agreement’s Preamble, both signers (UFE and TESC) referenced Evergreen’s Mission Statement: “As one of the nation’s leading interdisciplinary liberal arts colleges, Evergreen’s mission is to sustain a vibrant academic community and offer students an education that will help them excel in their intellectual, creative, professional and community service goals.” While we understand the challenging fiscal environment we face at this time, we see no reason why the budget cannot sustain these values at the same time that it preserves programs that promote and retain an innovative, engaged faculty.

Sincerely,

Laurie Meeker, Chair
United Faculty of Evergreen



**It takes
a lot of people
to make
a union strong!**



How can you participate?

Contact your steward,

or Sarah Ryan

or Laurie Meeker

to find out.



(s.f.ryan@comcast.net)



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sketches by Ruth Hayes

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The Longhouse (49%), and the Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute (50%)—for a total savings of \$609,625. Although some of this money may be recouped through outside grants, Evergreen's ability to do outreach, particularly in underserved communities, will be dramatically reduced as a result of these cuts. Despite the administration's suggestion that the centers do not provide "direct instruction," they have been absolutely crucial in supporting the educational mission of the College. As the UFE stewards wrote in an open letter to the faculty and the provost on February 23, such losses "impoverish our academic program throughout, and irrevocably damage our reputation, both within the State and nationally."¹ Here, as in other divisions, the vice presidents have worked to avoid layoffs by cutting open positions.¹ The public service centers are one of the few places where we can see an actual loss of existing staff lines, five in all.

And what about faculty lines? According to the Draft Budget Recommendations (7 May 2009), no full-time lines have been cut, but the budget does have serious ramifications for faculty working conditions, and thus for student learning conditions. We lost four full positions due to a hiring freeze, which canceled searches in literature, experimental media, geology, and chemistry. We are also losing an academic dean's position and a half line of program secretary support, which will mean that all of the people who provide crucial support to curricular instruction will see an increase in their workload. On top of these cuts, program budgets will be reduced by 25%, making it harder to offer experiences such as field trips and labs. Professional travel and summer research funding have also been cut by 25%, along with funding for program planning and faculty development. This means that Evergreen faculty will find it harder to keep up with developments in their fields, and will spend less time together planning innovative curricula.

Perhaps the least visible set of cuts are those made to Evening and Weekend Studies (EWS) offerings. EWS 8-12 credit programs allow working students to experience the rich interdisciplinary study that is the heart of the college. For many local students, EWS is the gateway to the college, where their good experience with a half-time program or a course encourages them to continue their studies here; EWS programs and courses allow working adults in the community, who could not do so otherwise, to get a liberal arts education. EWS courses also address particular areas of student need and support programs from across the college. Our visiting colleagues who teach in EWS programs are, in practice, hired year after year. We rely on the adjunct faculty who teach courses in much the same

way. Without them, our students would have no access to continuing curricular areas. Visiting and adjunct faculty teaching in EWS have been a vital part of our curriculum, often for many years. Our relationship should go both ways; they have provided experience, expertise, and commitment to teaching. We can reciprocate by refusing to join the national trend, where contingent faculty make up nearly two-thirds of the growth in overall faculty positions.¹ The UFE is committed to improving working conditions for all its members, including contingent faculty, but they are still the most vulnerable to cuts. Next year, EWS offerings are being significantly reduced. For dozens of EWS faculty, this can mean taking as much as a 30% cut in pay. For students, this will mean less access to programs and few opportunities to supplement their studies in subjects like language, writing, math, art, and science.

The overall prognosis? Both faculty and staff within the Academics division are being squeezed, our relationships with the community have been strained, and over the next several years we will find it more and more difficult to fulfill our educational mission. We recognize that other divisions have been similarly affected; our point here is simply that the administration's claim that the "fundamental structure of the curriculum" can be maintained under the current fiscal scenario is not, in fact, true.

Faculty and staff working conditions are inevitably tied to students' learning conditions, and one of our greatest concerns is that students will be seeing an overall reduction in the quality of their education while paying huge tuition increases. The cuts, which will be spread out over the next several years, are landing disproportionately on the backs of in-state students (14% vs. 5% for non-residents), in part because out of state tuition is already so high. According to the most recent budget FAQ: "Resident undergraduate tuition and fees will go up by an average of about \$675 per year (\$22.40 per credit for part-time students), non-resident undergraduate by about \$783 (\$26.10 per credit), resident graduate by about \$329 (\$11 per credit) and non-resident graduate by about \$30 (no tuition increase, but some fees do rise)."¹

In the faculty meeting immediately following the budget announcement, Art Costantino was asked about the impact of these tuition raises on students, and especially on our commitment to making Evergreen welcoming to students who are underserved by traditional institutions. His statement at the time was that he believed that the College's commitment to putting 20% of its tuition revenues back into student aid, together with federal monies such as Pell grants, would continue to make Evergreen affordable for all students. Nevertheless, our attempts to lighten the tuition burden for some

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students while raising it for all students makes us complicit with the national trends identified in the recent report by the Lumina Foundation.

According to this report, education is becoming increasingly stratified, with enrollment increasing among institutions with the fewest resources, such as community colleges. Public four-year institutions, for their part, are increasingly relying on tuition raises and research grants to make up for the decline in state funding. As the authors of the report point out: "The primary cause of tuition increases in public institutions is not increased spending, but rather cost shifting to replace losses in state appropriations and other revenues." Evergreen also seems to be part of another trend identified in the report, in which "[d]irect instruction expenses have consistently declined as a proportion of education and related spending, relative to spending increases in student services, academic support, administration and maintenance."¹

One of the reasons Evergreen faculty decided to unionize was to become a part of the Washington Education Association and American Federation of Teachers' statewide lobbying efforts to resist the trends outlined in the Lumina report. Yes, Evergreen faculty received raises as part of our collective bargaining agreement, which for the first time in decades begin to address increases in the cost of living in Olympia.¹ But this is only the most basic way in which union membership benefits faculty, and the institution as a whole. We believe that all employees should have the right to bargain collectively for similar benefits, and we believe that it is only through such collective action that we will be able to help our administration make smart, forward-looking decisions on behalf of faculty, staff, and students during these increasingly difficult times.

As part of the collective bargaining process, the union has already taken significant steps to address the impact of the budget on all our members, and on the campus as a whole. The recent contract raises the wages of contingent faculty by more than 24% , and despite the budget crisis, we have successfully lobbied for multiyear contracts for all qualified contingent faculty, as well as the conversion to regular status for several of our long-time visitors. We are also pleased to announce that we will be raising funds from our members for a student scholarship fund that can be

used to cover the cost of tuition increases for students who would not otherwise be able to continue their Evergreen education. Together with our colleagues in Local 443, the staff union on campus, we will be continuing to push for greater transparency and accountability from the administration as the process of responding to legislative cuts continues.

*Elizabeth Williamson,
for the UFE Stewards*

¹ "Book Review - *Will Teach for Food* edited by Cary Nelson," *Harvard Educational Review* (Fall 1998). <http://www.hepg.org/her/abstract/186>

² http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/politics/2008932445_budget27m.html

³ "How proposed budget cuts and tuition increases for the UW affect the citizens of Washington."

<http://www.washington.edu/about/staterel/publications/2009%20documents/completembudgettuition040209v3.pdf>

⁴ "Budget Recommendation – May 2009 – Questions and Answers."

<http://www.evergreen.edu/budget/>

⁵ "Budget Update May 20, 2009."

<http://www.evergreen.edu/budget/budgetupdate5-20-09.htm>

⁶ *United Faculty of Evergreen Communiqué*, vol. 2, issue 3 (April 8, 2009).

⁷ The administration's policy of only eliminating open staff positions, without first seeking efficiency plans from individual departments, has meant that the cuts have been distributed at random and disproportionately.

⁸ "American Academic: The State of The Higher Education Workforce 1997-2007" (2008).

www.aftface.org/storage/face/documents/ameracad_report_97-07for_web.pdf

⁹ "Budget Recommendation – May 2009 – Questions and Answers."

<http://www.evergreen.edu/budget/>

¹⁰ "Trends in College Spending" (2009). www.deltacostproject.org/resources/pdf/trends_in_spending-report.pdf

¹¹ As Provost Don Bantz pointed out at the all-campus budget forum on May 6, Evergreen faculty are still 20% behind our peer institutions nationwide and receive the lowest pay of all the four year institutions in the state.

Join the UFE!



Contact Sarah Ryan: s.f.ryan@comcast.net

**or go to <http://www.ufws.org/evergreen/index.html>
for more information**