



GREENER'S FOR STUDENT GOVERNMENT  
STUDENT ACTIVITIES OFFICE - CAB 320  
2700 EVERGREEN PARKWAY  
OLYMPIA, WA 98505  
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Chairman Charles Miller  
Secretary's Commission on the Future of Higher Education  
U.S. Department of Education, Room 5E313  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Brad Bishop  
Greener's For Student Government  
Student Activities Office – CAB 320  
2700 Evergreen Parkway  
Olympia, WA 98505

Dear Commissioner Miller,

In the past few years, affordability has become an issue of concern for many institutions of higher education, including Evergreen State College. Evergreen strives to keep its doors open to anyone who wants to participate in our unique style of interdisciplinary learning. As a liberal arts institution, Evergreen strongly emphasizes social change and many graduates work in the civil and non-profit sectors. With Evergreen, as with many other colleges and universities in America, a lack of federal and state funding has begun to impact not only who is attending school but the paths available after graduation.

We know that the price of a college degree and the opportunity costs of ever-increasing tuition are of concern to the Commission. With that in mind, we formed a task force at Evergreen State College to examine the state of financial aid at this institution and issue a set of recommendations based on the data.

The state of Washington has an obligation to fund elementary and secondary education but not higher education. So, when state departments require more money, colleges are one of the places where funding is cut because such institutions are able to generate their own revenue. These cuts allow the state to balance its budget on the backs of students and negatively impact the quality of education at Evergreen and other Washington universities. Consider the following facts:

- ⌘ Over the past few years, Evergreen has switched from offering aid packages comprised of 60% grant money and 40% loan money to packages of 60% loan money and 40% grant money.
- ⌘ Evergreen used to be competitive for out-of-state students; yet, as tuition

increases, out-of-state enrollment decreases. These students are slowly being priced out of an Evergreen education.

↳ Enrollment is decreasing across the state of Washington. The number of students graduating from high school in the state is expected to peak in 2008; however, state enrollment is down across the board. While there is not enough data to determine precisely why enrollment is down, it is difficult to believe that cost is not playing a role.

Please take the time to review our profile and recommendations and consider the voices of students when making your final recommendations. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brad Bishop  
Co-coordinator, Greeners For Student Government

### **The Evergreen State College Task Force Members;**

Our taskforce was made up of a mix a students and administrators. The report below is a product of the task force committee, research on the state of financial aid at Evergreen State College and Washington and general as well as additional consultation with individuals unable to attend the task force meeting. Primary discussion occurred with the following people:

Art Costantino – Vice President of Student Affairs  
John Hurley – Vice President of Finance and Administration  
Tom Mercado – Director of Student Activities  
Jessica Tweedy – Student Senior  
Ben Hart – Student, Legislative Liaison  
Brad Bishop – Student, Senior, Meeting Facilitator  
Blair Anundson – WashPIRG Campus Organizer  
Jayne Kaszynski – Student Trustee

### **The Evergreen State College Campus Profile:**

- 51% of Evergreen Students graduate with debt.
- The average student graduating with loans carries \$10,486 in student loan debt.
- Current debt based on dependent family income bracket:

Less than \$30,000:	\$6,091			
Between	\$30	-	\$60,000:	\$5,345
Above \$60,000:	\$4,294			
- Family Income of Dependent Students Applying for Federal Aid at Evergreen:

% of aid applicants with family incomes less than \$30,000:	12%
% of aid applicants with family incomes between. \$30 - \$60,000:	17%
% of aid applicants with family incomes above \$60,000:	29%
- A low to middle income family must spend an average of 18% of their household income to cover tuition and fees at Evergreen State College.

### **Federal Policies to Consider:**

1. Reduce the amount students have to borrow by increasing need-based grants.
  - Increase the size of the Pell Grant and/or expand eligibility requirements. (Currently, most Pell grants go to students with family incomes below \$40,000, and the maximum grant is \$4,050.)
  - This could be paid for by cutting excessive subsidies to private lenders.
2. Make repayment fair and affordable: student loan payments should be manageable, and debt should not grow unchecked or last indefinitely.
  - Link loan repayment amounts to how much borrowers earn to help keep payments affordable. Experts say that spending more than 8% of your income on debt payments constitutes an “unmanageable” debt burden. Today almost 40% of recent graduates with student loans spend more 8% of their monthly income on loan payments.
  - Limit the accumulation of interest, fees, and penalties. Borrowers can end up owing two, three, or four times the amount of their original loan, due to predatory interest rate changes, fees, and penalties. There ought to be limits on how many times over people have to pay for their loans.

### **State Policies to Consider:**

1. The State of Washington should pass legislation that would limit cuts to the higher education budget. The State has a mandate to fund K-12 and at same time is increasing funding for DSHS and the Department of Corrections. We must stop balancing the cost of new prisons on the backs of college students.
2. Secondary schools need programs that help low income students know that higher education is possible. Programs that help show the value of College as well as tools for understanding financial aid will encourage enrollment.

### **Campus Policies to Consider:**

1. Implement a fundraising strategy that will provide for more scholarships on campus
2. Increase stipend pay for students coordinating student activities so that low income students can be involved and so that events don't just reflect the needs of higher income students who can afford to volunteer.
3. Create more on-campus employment opportunities for students.