Evergreen gets A for academia
College is top rated in national survey

THE OLYMPIAN

The National Survey of Student Engagement has given The Evergreen State College high marks for being academically challenging.

The survey, based on what students say about the academic life at their schools, involved 212 students at Evergreen. It compares how effectively colleges are contributing to learning in the areas of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences and supportive campus environment.

Those areas are at the heart of what The Evergreen State College tries to impart to its students, said Laura Coghlan, Evergreen's director of Institutional Research and Assessment.

"This one really gets at things that matter to us," she said, citing the school's emphasis on getting students involved in the community.

The campus uses the survey to analyze how to make improvements at the school, Coghlan said. While the college did well in many categories, the scores were not as high as hoped this year in providing students with a supportive campus environment. That will lead to discussions about how to improve in those areas, Coghlan said.

"We're doing OK on this measure," she said. "I still think we can do a bit better."

The report doesn't make rankings of the schools available, but informs colleges of areas where they are doing well and where they can improve.

The Evergreen State College is marked in the top 10 percent of schools surveyed in the level of academic challenge as well as the level of active and collaborative learning among first-year students, according to the school. Evergreen also scored well among senior students in the same categories.

The study showed that students at Evergreen spend significantly more time working in peer groups during class to complete projects. Evergreen students are engaged in their learning and frequently discuss ideas from class work beyond the walls of the classroom, the study indicates.

The study notes that Evergreen freshmen and seniors in particular spend more time preparing for class, read more textbooks and have a high level of coursework participation that involves analyzing basic elements of an idea, and synthesizing and organizing ideas into more complex interpretation and relationships.

"This survey highlights Evergreen's high academic standards and the remarkable depth of engagement that our students experience," said Les Purce, president of The Evergreen State College.

Saint Martin's University is not among the 528 schools that participate in the survey.

While Evergreen has been among the leaders in the survey in previous years, this year's...
results were particularly strong, Coghlan said.

Evergreen senior Osha Semple agreed with the survey's results, saying the school is challenging, and her educational program requires her to work extremely hard.

"I feel good about Evergreen and what I'm leaving with," said Semple, 22.

She said she based a lot of her study on eventually getting into graduate school, earning most of her college credits in psychology and sociology. Eventually, she would like to get a master's degree in social work, she said.

The level of interaction between students and faculty also has prepared her well for graduate school, Semple said.