One of the purposes of listing characteristics of white supremacy culture is to point out how organizations which unconsciously use these characteristics as their norms and standards make it difficult, if not impossible, to open the door to other cultural norms and standards. As a result, many of our organizations, while saying we want to be multicultural, really only allow other people and cultures to come in if they adapt or conform to already existing cultural norms. Being able to identify and name the cultural norms and standards you want is a first step to making room for a truly multi-cultural organization.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| White Supremacy Culture | MES Strengths | MES Opportunities | MES Aspirations | MES Results |
| **Perfectionism** • little appreciation expressed among people for the work that others are doing; appreciation that is expressed usually directed to those who get most of the credit anyway • more common is to point out either how the person or work is inadequate • or even more common, to talk to others about the inadequacies of a person or their work without ever talking directly to them • mistakes are seen as personal, i.e. they reflect badly on the person making them as opposed to being seen for what they are ó mistakes • making a mistake is confused with being a mistake, doing wrong with being wrong • little time, energy, or money put into reflection or identifying lessons learned that can improve practice, in other words little or no learning from mistakes • tendency to identify what ís wrong; little ability to identify, name, and appreciate what ís right | Our Evergreen evaluation system places value on learning and growing in the student’s education. It encourages students to embrace being life-long learners. Students are provided with feedback which directly addresses their learning needs and allows students to positively move forward in their education experience. | Thesis students especially hold themselves to a high standard and have left when they saw their project as a failure when the process was really what was important. | MES can continue to foster a culture of practicing the art of science and effectively communicating to students the importance of the scientific method and the obstacles and imperfections inherent in research.Begin with positive feedback before providing feedback for areas of improvement. Recognize when students have attained milestones towards their larger goals. | MES will have fewer student attrition during the thesis process as they will experience stronger value towards the experience of research rather than a perfect final product. |
| **Sense of Urgency** • continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences • frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of communities of color in order to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community) • reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little | MES allows students the time needed to complete thesis work and continues to foster a culture of understanding when students need more time for research and writing. Our timeframe for thesis work in our program acts as a guide rather than a strict expectation. | MES is experiencing funding cuts and staff and faculty furloughs without a reduction in work loads or a clear plan for how to address the imbalance between workloads and furloughs. Everyone must operate with a sense of urgency under a high stress workload. | We work to handle concerns about workloads as a committee in the program and must continue to do so to evenly distribute the responsibilities. We continue to place value on focusing on supporting our students and understanding their needs despite financial and time constraints. |  |
| **Defensiveness** • the organizational structure is set up and much energy spent trying to prevent abuse and protect power as it exists rather than to facilitate the best out of each person or to clarify who has power and how they are expected to use it • because of either/or thinking (see below), criticism of those with power is viewed as threatening and inappropriate (or rude) • people respond to new or challenging ideas with defensiveness, making it very difficult to raise these ideas • a lot of energy in the organization is spent trying to make sure that peopleís feelings arenít getting hurt or working around defensive people • the defensiveness of people in power creates an oppressive culture | Evergreen is structured in such a way that power and privilege shouldn’t exist. Decisions should be made by committee at the college and traditional models which place teachers above students for example, are actively dismantled in the evaluation process. | MES does a great job of offering students positive reinforcement and feedback, however, hierarchies that shouldn’t exist, actually do at the college and the students can sense the dysfunction when present. | There is great potential for further collaboration at Evergreen between offices and to continue to prevent hoarding of power and position at Evergreen. | This would encourage cross-training and greater overall knowledge of processes at the college to better support student retention. Students would not feel the strain of hierarchy and would be actively able to provide feedback without fear of experiencing defensiveness or retaliation. |
| **Quantity Over Quality** • all resources of organization are directed toward producing measurable goals • things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict • little or no value attached to process; if it can't be measured, it has no value • discomfort with emotion and feelings • no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (peopleís need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail (for example, you may get through the agenda, but if you haven't paid attention to peopleís need to be heard, the decisions made at the meeting are undermined and/or disregarded) | Evergreen and MES as a whole does a great job in prioritizing people and ensuring that voices of students, staff and faculty are heard. That space is created with intentionality when individuals need to express their feelings and work is put into the process of acknowledging people’s needs beyond the original plan. Individual thoughts are often heard. | Although space is created for individual thoughts and emotions, due to time and financial constraints, they cannot be properly changed, addressed or acknowledged in the long-term.  | In the future, we will work to carry out the concerns of all who bring them to light and address them with long-term changes in policy and practice. We will continue to ensure that student voices are heard and that we maintain democratic decision making within the program. | This will continue to create a culture where individuals will feel heard and that their concerns would foster actionable results even if they were not a part of the original plan. |
| **Worship of the Written Word** • if it ís not in a memo, it doesn't exist • the organization does not take into account or value other ways in which information gets shared • those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in organizations where ability to relate to others is key to the mission antidotes: take the time to analyze how people inside and outside the organization get and share information; figure out which things need to be written down and come up with alternative ways to document what is happening; work to recognize the contributions and skills that every person brings to the organization (for example, the ability to build relationships with those who are important to the organization’s mission) • only one right way the belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it • when they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them (the other, those not changing), not with us (those who ëknowí the right way) • similar to the missionary who does not see value in the culture of other communities, sees only value in their beliefs about what is good | MES places great value on the relationships we hold with our community partners for student internships, thesis support and collaborative environmental events. The evaluation conference emphasizes the importance of oral feedback in conjunction with written feedback and we encourage students to share their thoughts and ideas during seminar sessions which are evaluated as a critical component of student participation in our program and at Evergreen broadly.  | The thesis process and scientific writing process as a whole, places great value on the written word. Students are encouraged to deliver final projects in written format  | Continue to recognize the ways in which white, western scientific deduction and writing has historically undermined oral traditions of indigenous cultures as valuable means of information sharing and factual evidence for historical events and encourage students to understand the value of oral traditions and that TEK (traditional ecological knowledge) is in fact legitimate information. | Changing the collective consciousness and the larger scientific community perceptions regarding the pedestal that the scientific process and writing is placed on, allows for other modes of thinking, cataloging, and understanding to exist as valuable and legitimate in many spaces and environments. |
| **Paternalism** • decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it • those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power • those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions • those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does • those without power do not really know how decisions get made and who makes what decisions, and yet they are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them | MES works to include all faculty and staff in decision making processes and encourages compromise in decisions when a majority cannot be determined. | Because Evergreen does not have hierarchies, it can be challenging for students to understand who makes decisions and who to go to for their questions. | Continue to offer opportunities to provide course and program feedback throughout each quarter and course to continuously seek improvement and adaptation. | The courses and program as a whole continues to adapt to meet the needs of our students professionally so that they gain the skills that they need to be successful in their fields as they grow to adapt to an ever changing climate crisis. |
| **Either/Or Thinking** • things are either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us • closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from mistakes or accommodate conflict • no sense that things can be both/and • results in trying to simplify complex things, for example believing that poverty is simply a result of lack of education • creates conflict and increases sense of urgency, as people are felt they have to make decisions to do either this or that, with no time or encouragement to consider alternatives, particularly those which may require more time or resources | Evergreen and MES encourages multi-discipline and complex multifaceted thought. It also encourages students to learn from each other beyond the classroom and from faculty from multiple perspectives in all curriculum and projects students’ experience. |  |  |  |
| **Power Hoarding** • little, if any, value around sharing power • power seen as limited, only so much to go around • those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization, feel suggestions for change are a reflection on their leadership • those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened • those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed (stupid), emotional, inexperienced | Evergreen structures itself so that power should be shared and in MES, we work very hard to ensure that all voices are heard before decisions are made.  | At Evergreen as a whole, power dynamics are more complex because of the lack of institutional hierarchy and presents non-traditional challenges for access to resources, support, duties and implementation of action items to support students. | Create clearer guidelines and a culture of open information and power sharing so that more individuals understand the roles and responsibilities of each individual. We continue to work to understand the interests of our students and do not assume that we understand their needs or the needs of staff and faculty without asking first. | We would create a culture of information sharing and would create greater efficiency regarding the roles of staff and faculty in supporting students at Evergreen. |
| **Fear of Open Conflict** • people in power are scared of conflict and try to ignore it or run from it • when someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue rather than to look at the issue which is actually causing the problem • emphasis on being polite • equating the raising of difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line | MES does not fear open conflict and works to create structures which safely support challenges and conflict resolution. | Conflicts which impact our students, staff, faculty and community members are ever changing and MES needs to ensure it continues to address issues not just in words but also in actions and responses to global conflicts and interpersonal conflicts which arise. | We need to ensure that students understand they belong in the program and that a part of belonging is the ability to bring contentious topics, emotions and thoughts to the forefront and know that they won’t be dismissed. MES is steeped in a form of science community which perpetuates an assumption of a culture of civility and politeness. We can challenge conventional notions of scientific culture and information and experience sharing to work to emphasize the importance of challenging scientific systems despite the perception that it may be contentious in order to open the door for multicultural participation in STEM. | As a result of this inclusive attitude we can work to foster greater inclusion in STEM and perpetuate conversations outside of MES to challenge necessary conversations surrounding exclusionary practices in STEM. |
| **Individualism** • little experience or comfort working as part of a team • people in organization believe they are responsible for solving problems alone • accountability, if any, goes up and down, not sideways to peers or to those the organization is set up to serve • desire for individual recognition and credit • leads to isolation • competition more highly valued than cooperation and where cooperation is valued, little time or resources devoted to developing skills in how to cooperate • creates a lack of accountability, as the organization values those who can get things done on their own without needing supervision or guidance antidotes: include teamwork as an important value in your values statement; make sure the organization is working towards shared goals and people understand how working together will improve performance; evaluate people’s ability to work in a team as well as their ability to get the job done; make sure that credit is given to all those who participate in an effort, not just the leaders or most public person; make people accountable as a group rather than as individuals; create a culture where people bring problems to the group; use staff meetings as a place to solve problems, not just a place to report activities • I’m the only one • connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, “I” have to do it • little or no ability to delegate work to others | Evergreen and MES values a learning community and collaborative working and learning environments. We do not force students to compete against each other for grades or credits. We encourage students to hold each other accountable and for example, create structures to ensure that group project work is created and carried out equally among members with checks and balances. The thesis process may occur independently but students are evaluated independently from one another and their work is not measured against another student’s. | We can continue to work to encourage students to understand the importance of group work and foster a sense of accountability with group project work and student collaborations. Many of our students in MES, enter our program with resistance to group work because of a history of negative experiences and a cultural familiarity with completing work independently with the assumption that it is the only way to accomplish it successfully.  | Work to continue to include teamwork as an important value from student’s MES education. Encourage students to seek out collaborations in their thesis experience to prevent isolation and create pathways to accountability and multifaceted experience in the MES Program. | This will allow students to seek collaborations in their professional field after they graduate and explore the opportunities which may not be accomplished without collaborations. |
| **Progress is Bigger, More** • observed in systems of accountability and ways we determine success • progress is an organization which expands (adds staff, adds projects) or develops the ability to serve more people (regardless of how well they are serving them) • gives no value, not even negative value, to its cost, for example, increased accountability to funders as the budget grows, ways in which those we serve may be exploited, excluded, or underserved as we focus on how many we are serving instead of quality of service or values created by the ways in which we serve | We place value in the MES Program, on serving our students individually and creating personal connections through the thesis research process and the ways in which we are able to support student learning one-on-one through advising and support through the learning of the scientific method and research experience. | We expand the program to meet the demand of the program’s students and applicants not necessarily because we want to measure enrollment as a barometer for progress. We can continue to work to understand the capacity needs of staff and faculty to be able to continue to support students in the type of learning we want to encourage them to experience and the learning platform we want to be able to offer. |  |  |
| **Objectivity** • the belief that there is such a thing as being objective • the belief that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process • invalidating people who show emotion • requiring people to think in a linear fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways • impatience with any thinking that does not appear “logical” to those with power | MES encourages students to challenge the traditional scientific notion of objectivity by allowing complex, emotion conversations in the program and does not encourage invalidating practices which seek to silence those that show emotions without logic. | MES is steeped in STEM fields and therefore experiences, and must teach, writing and communication practices which seek to exclude emotion and only offer objectivity.  | As an interdisciplinary environmental studies program with an emphasis on the scientific research process in a student’s final year, we can work to develop a new identity for what we are and how we should operate and encourage our students to learn and understand about objectivity within science and within STEM fields. | Our students would be encouraged to be ambassadors for alternative ways of thinking in STEM fields after they graduate from our program. |
| **Right to Comfort** • the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort (another aspect of valuing “logic” over emotion) • scapegoating those who cause discomfort • equating individual acts of unfairness against white people with systemic racism which daily targets people of color | In MES we work to acknowledge whiteness and continue to educate ourselves and others on the self-work and reflection that should occur as MES leaders and participants in the MES community.  | Students, staff and faculty of color do not get the option to choose comfort and can experience racism and discrimination at all aspects of life. Acknowledging student needs during social and political upheaval is very important for ensuring that student, staff and faculty needs are being met and that students understand that their education is not unaffected by racism or discrimination even if their white experience is not directly affected.  | MES can continue to create spaces which do not encourage the right to comfort for white identifying community members which often comes at the expense of community members of color. Calling out instances of “protecting” the feelings of white identifying community members in order to avoid addressing issues of bias or racism from community members of color when they arise.Create greater awareness for the many experiences that individuals with intersecting identities may encounter in education and the workplace. | This will foster greater inclusion in the MES program because it creates a culture of checks and balances which address the needs of People of Color and won’t dismiss them out of fear of making white identifying individuals feel uncomfortable. Students will experience positive examples of avoiding such scapegoating and will feel equipped to handle issues of silenced discrimination when they see or experience it in the workplace in the future. |