

# PRESS RELEASE

## EVERGREEN PRESIDENT STEPPING DOWN IN 2015



(Olympia, Wash.) Dr. Thomas L. (Les) Purce announced today he will step down at the end of August 2015 from his position as president of The Evergreen State College, where he has served since July 1, 2000. He is the longest serving president among Washington's public baccalaureate institutions.

"Serving as Evergreen's president continues to be one of the great joys of my life," said Dr. Purce. "The college is fortunate to have extraordinary faculty, staff and students. We have accomplished much together."

"Les has made an enormous contribution not just to The Evergreen State College, but to higher education in this state and across the nation," said Keith Kessler, chair of Evergreen's board of trustees. "Under his leadership, Evergreen has updated and enhanced its buildings and technology, sustained the vitality of its distinctive interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning, continued its service to students from a wide range of economic and social backgrounds, and adapted to drastic changes in state funding for higher education. Les has been an effective leader, ambassador and champion for the college and its students."

Evergreen's board of trustees will begin a nationwide search process in May 2014.

Since opening its doors in 1971, the college has become nationally recognized for its innovative academic programs that combine subjects that are traditionally taught separately. America's top college guides regularly rank Evergreen as one of the nation's best institutions for its strong academics, nurturing community and reasonable cost.

Evergreen serves more than 4000 students at its main campus in Olympia, through its Tacoma program, and through a unique reservation-based program for Native American students at several locations around the Puget Sound.

Prior to accepting the presidency at The Evergreen State College, Dr. Purce served as vice-president of extended university affairs and dean of extended academic programs at Washington State University in Pullman, Wash. Between 1989 and 1995, Dr. Purce served in several roles at Evergreen, including vice president for college advancement, interim president and executive vice president.

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Continued next page

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Before coming to Evergreen, Dr. Purce was at Idaho State University as special assistant to the president and director of the Research Park and economic development. Dr. Purce, an Idaho native, was the first black elected official in the state, serving as city councilman and then mayor of Pocatello. He later served as director of Idaho's Departments of Administration and Health and Welfare. In the private sector, he served as partner and chief operating officer of Power Engineering Inc., one of the fastest growing electrical engineering firms in the Northwest.

Dr. Purce holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, a Master of Arts degree in Education, and a Doctor of Counselor Education from Idaho State University. He also attended Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management. In May 2009, he received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from the University of North Carolina, Asheville recognizing his national work promoting public liberal arts. He will receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the State University of New York at Geneseo on May 17, 2014.

Dr. Purce served on the board of directors for the Association of American Colleges and Universities for two terms and is a past president of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges board of directors. He currently serves as a board member for the Community Foundation of South Puget Sound, the Northwest African American Museum, and Washington Campus Compact. In addition, he is currently chair of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Council of Presidents.

*Photo credit: Photo courtesy of The Evergreen State College*