REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

Earlham College
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ADVANCEMENT SECTION

I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

Earlham College has a well-qualified faculty who are clearly knowledgeable about and committed to the mission of the college. Nearly all (over 90%) of the regular continuing faculty have the terminal degree in the discipline in which they are teaching. Essentially every faculty member with whom we talked discussed a love for teaching and mentoring Earlham College students and gave examples of the commitment to working with and nurturing students in and out of class. The students reinforced this commitment and believe that they are receiving an excellent education. The faculty are clearly committed to regular self-examination of their work and the academic program, as witnessed by recent substantial college-wide curricular changes.

Unlike many peer colleges, the College does not require that faculty members be productive scholars (the relevant criterion in faculty evaluation is quality of mind); however, a brief review of recent faculty publications indicates substantial productivity. We observe that this list is more heavily dominated by spectacular productivity of a few faculty members and quite modest or no productivity of others, compared to what we would expect at similar institutions.

The self-study and a number of faculty members referred to a “culture of busyness” as an important issue to be addressed in planning. Our team does not know of any campus where the faculty do not feel ‘too busy’ and where there are too many things to do for the time available. Part of this feeling is characteristic of current American society. Part is due to effective appointments and retention of faculty who are driven to achieve. It is true that Earlham College has a relatively large and broad curriculum for an institution of its size, and there is no doubt that this curriculum causes some stress. The College also puts a very strong emphasis on student-faculty interactions, which also contributes to time pressures. The pressure on faculty to be productive scholars is, however, lower than that at most peer institutions. The Earlham College governance structure is highly participatory and quite time-consuming, another stress on faculty time. Finally, Earlham College gives its faculty a high degree of freedom in individual decisions about curriculum, scholarship, and service. There will be no ‘magic bullet’ solution to the feeling of busyness. It will be up to the faculty to make decisions individually and collectively to reduce the number of tasks or the amount of time devoted to those tasks. This will be a process of prioritizing which time committed to good things will need to be reduced. All need to recognize that adding faculty and staff can help diminish the stress, but that those new individuals (if selected well) will likely bring to Earlham College more good ideas than one person can do, so increased staffing may actually intensify the problem. Earlham College has good company in its concerns about the ‘culture of busyness’. Earlham College offers a large number of majors and programs for an institution of its size. Many Earlham College students and faculty are involved in off-campus study programs. A relatively large fraction of the students are enrolled in programs run by Earlham College faculty. This approach delivers a sound educational experience to students and provides good faculty development, but creates substantial challenges when faculty in small departments are off campus one semester per year. These two factors (large number of programs and a large number of faculty directing off-campus programs) create problems in stretching faculty awfully thin in meeting curricular needs. Two obvious solutions would be to reduce programs or to increase the faculty FTE, but neither solution would come easily.
Earlham College has a well-developed and successful structure for shared governance. The administrative staff (overtime-exempt individuals) are designated as faculty and share much policy and decision-making with the teaching faculty. Students are fully involved in governance as well. The structure for decision-making is grounded in the religious traditions of the college, and committee (as well as full faculty) decisions and recommendations are derived from seeking consensus. Faculty members and students reported that this system works well but is time-consuming. The Board of Trustees seems to respect the campus-based process and to believe that it results in sound governance.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

A. Administration and Board
In general, the administrative structure of Earlham College is a conventional one, with divisions focused on academic affairs, student development, admissions and financial aid, financial affairs, and institutional advancement. An unusual, and unusually effective, feature is a relatively new, sixth senior staff position devoted to community relations. This position has been valuable in addressing the College’s desire to improve its image in the Richmond community and to be an effective community citizen; remarkable progress has been made in this area, in the eyes of the trustees. The senior staff of the College are all experienced professionals who work together effectively for the institution’s benefit. They acknowledge that the leanness of administrative staffing may affect their ability to meet all needs, and there is full support for the recent additions to staff in technology and the plan to add in development; there is also full agreement on the strategic need to focus on the priorities of enrollment and financial health.

Earlham is blessed with a thoughtful and dedicated Board of Trustees. Average attendance at meetings is high, at 85 to 90 percent. They are particularly to be commended for the integrity demonstrated in the recent issues surrounding the management and finances of Conner Prairie. The leadership of the Board acknowledges the challenges posed by the Board’s structure and composition. The requirement that half of the Board be Quaker puts some limit on the diversity of the Board, and any requirements for diversity on the Board might create challenges for fund raising. There was considerable discussion in 1994 of enlarging the “at-large” segment of the Board, but this has not been further discussed for five years and has not been acted on. The upcoming campaign has not been used as a reason for enlarging the Board, and Board members point out that the current honorary lifetime trustees have been major donors. Nevertheless, the Board is small for a college of Earlham’s size and expressed financial needs, and the membership requirements create special challenges on fund-raising.

In addition to the executive committee, there are three major Board committees dealing with education, property and finance, and development (nominations). There is also an investment committee that serves under the auspices of the Earlham Foundation. One wonders whether there might be value on a larger number of Board committees. For example, given the concern over enrollment, the Board might consider establishing an admissions committee. Likewise, given the Quaker heritage, would there be value in a committee dealing with the religious dimension of the College?

The development (nominations) committee of the Board has been effective in suggesting names of prospective members to the alumni and to the Indiana and Western Yearly Meetings of Quakers. This
has produced effective trustees, although not necessarily wealthy ones. The local trustees are acknowledged as interacting particularly effectively with students.

There may be room for increased Board-faculty interaction. The fall meeting of the Board does focus on the College (as opposed to later meetings, which focus on the School of Religion and Connor Prairie); there is a Board dinner with faculty; and faculty members are observers at Board meetings. However, faculty members are not specifically assigned as observers at Board committee meetings, which are open, and the investment committee meets separately as a foundation committee.

1. **Admission**

The Board has rightfully taken strong interest in admissions because of its relation to deficit finances in six out of ten years. They have been pro-active in encouraging the president to focus on this issue since his arrival and wisely agreed to provide funds to invest in activities and projects to reposition the college with a special 1% endowment draw to make up for lower enrollment while a repositioning plan was implemented.

The admissions office has made great strides in stabilizing and enhancing enrollment at Earlham. The office's current location is rather peripheral, and the College should look at ways to bring the office more into the heart of Earlham's campus.

2. **Budget and Finance**

The overall strategy and size of the Earlham College budget is quite similar to colleges of similar mission, size, and location. The mix of net tuition revenue, endowment income, and gift income is reasonable for an institution of Earlham's type. The institution would like (as would most peer institutions) to increase both net student revenue and gift income. As part of Earlham's overall strategy for increasing enrollment to the institutional target of 1200, very modest use of small merit-based scholarships has been employed as a defense to financial aid leveraging used by many of Earlham's overlap colleges.

The process for establishing the budget at Earlham College is a highly participatory one, with a Budget Committee including teaching faculty, administrative faculty, and students. The Budget Committee tends to focus on major budget parameters and allocation of funds between functional areas, rather than micro-managing budgets of individual cost centers. There appears to be widespread satisfaction with the budget process, though nearly all would like to see more income to allocate.

Earlham College faces the challenge of needing to define its future goals. The College has used increasing enrollments to generate more student income, believing that the College has the physical plant and human resources to effectively enroll 1200 students. However, teaching faculty and student life staff report that their ability to deliver a high quality academic and student life program is compromised by the increased enrollments. It would appear that the College has developed a rather broad curriculum (for an institution of its size) and an emphasis on a lot of student-faculty contact in both the academic and student life programs. It will be important for Earlham College to review the scope of its programs, student enrollment, the trade-offs between providing student access, improving the net revenues per student, and the courses and support that it can provide with the staffing level that it can afford, as it charts the course for its future.
The self-study reports that Earlham College has run modest budget deficits in six of the past ten years. We learned, however, that nearly all of these ‘deficits’ were planned and a part of the budget approved by the Board of Trustees. In a number of years the actual ‘deficit’ was below that planned in the approved budget. These ‘deficits’ were also additional draws on endowment. If Earlham College included these additional draws on endowment as its regular spending policy, it would still have a relatively conservative endowment spending policy.

Over the past several years, the Board has approved a modest additional endowment draw to cover the costs of a repositioning of the College. Even with this additional draw, the spending rate from endowment is modest compared to peer institutions.

3. Development
The Vice President for Institutional Advancement is the newest member of the senior staff and is an alumnus. He is enthusiastic and optimistic about the upcoming campaign, which is two years away. The campaign will be able to take advantage of the completed strategic plan and of a campus master facilities plan that is underway. The target for the new campaign will be somewhere between $60 and $100 million, an appropriate figure given the success of the 1993-98 campaign which raised $35 million.

However, there are challenges to face in the upcoming campaign. One challenge will be in the area of major gifts, with only the Lilly Endowment seen as capable of gifts of the size of $5 million or more and given that half of the trustees are locally and regionally nominated Quakers. There is also legitimate concern that recent alumni are not giving in the amounts desired or expected, and the number of these donors is falling. Reunion giving has not been strong, and the organization and expectation of alumni giving is low. The College is recovering from neglect in this area, and work is needed on reestablishing a culture of philanthropy. The alumni council is strong, but in general work is needed on the structure of volunteers; volunteers from the previous campaign have been allowed to “drift away.” Nevertheless, the advancement staff is well organized and is eager to overcome these challenges.

4. Strategic Plan
The strategic plan adopted by the faculty in 2002 and the Board in 2003 is the result of a broad and carefully planned campus process. As a result, it is a thoughtful and well-constructed document that provided a sound basis for the accreditation self-study and will give direction for priorities throughout the upcoming campaign period and beyond. The president is justifiably proud that the plan is not a “shopping list” but instead has taken the College to important decisions for the future. The plan identifies ten essential commitments designed to strengthen the College in the areas of enrollment, academic programs, facilities, community life, financial health, and community relations. It addition to providing priorities for future fund-raising, it also provides direction on the expenditure of current resources.

B. Faculty
It was reported to us that Earlham College has been about 30-40% successful in appointing its top choice candidates to the faculty. This success rate appears somewhat low to us. Numerous Earlham individuals suggested that the main reason for this low success rate is the location of the college. Those of us on the team from rural Midwestern locations with similar issues understand this problem,
and we encourage Earlham College to examine strategies to improve the success rate in appointing new faculty, for assembling the best faculty is one of the most crucial factors in the long-term success of Earlham College.

Earlham College has a good process in place for regular review of faculty members. Pre-tenured faculty are reviewed in their second and fourth years, and in the sixth year for tenure. The review process is conducted simultaneously by the faculty and student committees that work toward consensus individually and then together. Once they do this they pass on their recommendation and evidence to the President. It is clear that this review process emphasizes the values of Earlham College, and all untenured faculty members with whom we talked indicated that they received good and effective feedback.

It is the responsibility of the faculty member being reviewed to assemble materials and to submit them to the review committees. They are expected to submit letters from their departmental and other colleagues and from students, and to submit curricular, scholarly, and other materials as they deem fit. The department has no official role in reappointment and tenure other than submitting a department consensus letter or, less commonly, individual departmental faculty members submitting letters. All these materials then go to the student and faculty committees for review. The faculty committee feels crushed by the volume of materials and some untenured faculty members believe that the process of assembling materials is daunting and time-consuming. We suggest that Earlham College review this process to see if it can be streamlined without loss of quality. The current system puts a strong incentive on the faculty member being reviewed to submit a high volume of material. For instance, if the department were to submit a consensus recommendation, time might be saved in preparing individual letters. The department could solicit letters from outside the department, limiting solicitation to only those letters which will likely have a material effect upon the outcome of the review. The department could solicit from the faculty member being reviewed only those curricular and scholarly materials it needs to conduct the review. These materials could be reviewed and an appropriate digest and analysis made, but they would not be required reading for the student and faculty personnel committees. Such a system could dramatically reduce the size of the review dossiers and decrease the workload, not only for the faculty member under review and the committees, but for all those who are writing letters and preparing other materials.

The current Faculty Handbook, page F-1, indicates that in the case of a negative decision, the faculty member will be provided with a written statement of the reasons. This policy is in violation of AAUP guidelines, which recommend that such a statement be prepared upon request, but that a faculty member be warned of the possible adverse consequences of such a written statement before the statement is prepared (AAUP Policy Documents and Reports, 1995 ed., p. 18.)

Earlham College has a policy of a five-year cycle of post-tenure reviews. These reviews involve self-report and reflection as well as feedback from a committee of peers. This process appears to be well-respected and to be effective.

The faculty review process provides good feedback to faculty members on their performance. Both untenured and tenured faculty members complimented the process and effect. Earlham College provides a modest budget of $70,000 to support travel to professional meetings and for support for travel and materials for scholarly projects. In addition to this support, Earlham College has received grant funds from several sources to supplement and complement these funds for support of curricular
and pedagogical development, student-faculty research, and other development activities. The Associate Dean coordinates much of this funding and the activities it supports. In addition, there is a faculty position of Teaching Consultant, who works with faculty members on a confidential basis with issues regarding teaching and learning. This structure appears to be very successful.

C. Curriculum

1. Science

Earlham College has an unusually committed and cohesive group of science faculty members. They have a tradition of meeting weekly to discuss issues relevant to the sciences and issues that the College as a whole is facing. They see themselves as a part of a coherent whole as opposed to a group tussling with one another over students and other resources. Several departments in the division feel short staffed with respect to faculty positions. We did not review enrollment data, but the number of science graduates is sound, but modest (in most areas) for colleges of Earlham’s type. However, at Earlham’s size it is very hard to cover the array of curriculum with the number of faculty positions allocated. The ratio of numbers of majors to the number of faculty positions in computer science is very impressive. The staffing there is not yet regularized, but Earlham College should think about how to regularize that situation. There appears to be institutional interest in developing a major in environmental sciences and this would appear to fit within the context of Earlham’s mission. It is difficult to maintain disciplinary coverage in Geology with only two faculty positions. The number of majors graduated is also quite small. With a looming retirement, and a geochemist in the remaining faculty position, it might make sense to look at shifting this major to one more focused upon the environment and to bring in biology, chemistry, and mathematics to create a program in earth and environmental sciences and not try to offer a full major in geology.

The science faculty have embraced a model of excellent science education involving student-faculty research. This is to be commended and we encourage the College to continue to provide support as best it can. The faculty seem to have been successful in getting equipment and institutional grants, but there appear to be few grants awarded for particular research projects. We encourage the faculty to continue to seek research grants to support their work with students. Several science faculty members have very high rates of publication, while the number of publications for many is modest. We encourage the institution to encourage the science faculty to be more aggressive and increase the number of publications, as that will bring them and their students professional recognition.

2. Social Sciences

The regular social science faculty number approximately twenty and thus constitute approximately one quarter of the regular full-time faculty. This appears appropriate, given that over six years approximately one quarter of the students have majored in one of the social sciences (economics, education, history, politics, psychology, and sociology/anthropology, along with numerous interdisciplinary programs). A concern of the 1993 evaluation was the need for facilities for the social sciences, and an issue expressed in the current self-study was concern over regular meetings of the social scientists. The recent (2002) construction of the Landrum Bolling Center appears in fact to have addressed both issues. The social science chairs express real satisfaction with the new building and observe that they have met at least every other week since 2002 to deal with pedagogical issues, to fine-tune the facility for optimal assignment of large classrooms, to adapt to the new facility in other ways, and deal with other cross-cutting issues. New reasons to work together include new general
education offerings, enrollment trends and how to deal with them, and methodological questions. The social science chairs do not appear worried about the loss of divisional identity. The social scientists have abundant other interaction, such as with job candidates, visiting speakers, off-campus study, and interdisciplinary programs. They believe that the social sciences may be a more coherent division now, at least in part because psychology is now located with the rest of the division. They also appreciate the fact that the location of the international programs office in the building allows them a closer link and a “merging of the world.”

Concerns that may benefit from future attention include (i) some tension between economics and the program in business and non-profit management, and (ii) the perception that, when and if faculty staffing increases, the social sciences need special consideration.

3. MAT Program
The Master programs offered by the College are meeting a definite need of the community and appear to be serving the College well.

D. Academic Support

1. Library
The Library is directed by the very able Tom Kirk, who also is responsible for computer services and instructional technology. This structure provides leadership and coordination for efforts which all are the foundations of information technology. At the time of the last reaccreditation review, the library book acquisition budget had been reduced substantially, in part to cover a budget overage in another part of the College’s budget. Since that time, the College has worked to restore that budget reduction and has accomplished that goal. The library is known as a national leader in information literacy. The library has also been aggressive in acquiring access to a variety of electronic collections and resources such as JStor. This is a sound way for a small library to expand access without incurring unreasonable expense. Physically the library is a welcoming place, but looks a bit tired and dated. It would be helpful to update it somewhat, particularly in making various access points and study spaces more technology-friendly. The library is fast running out of shelf space but has a plan to install some compact shelving and to remove some periodicals which are now accessible through JStor and other electronic means. Enlarging and renovating the library should be a part of the campus master plan now being developed.

2. Diversity and Women’s Issues
The College’s long history and commitment to diversity is evident. Current efforts, such as the Gospel Choir, need to be maintained and enhanced to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse campus. This task might require that the Multicultural Student Life office be increased in both space and personnel.

3. Student Life
Earlham has a very active campus life. The College has done a good job of integrating athletics, campus activities, outdoor recreation, and community service into the fabric of the Earlham experience. The Student Life division of the College is well organized and has very good leadership and direction. There does need to be some immediate attention paid to facilities as they relate to
campus life. The Student Center, Student Life office, football field, and some residence halls are in need of immediate attention.

4. Athletics
The athletic department at Earlham works very well to integrate its presence and function into the entire campus and mission of the College. Athletics plays a key role in recruiting students to Earlham. The facilities for the most part are very good; the new fitness center and basketball areas are of the highest quality. The football facility, however, is in really bad repair, and needs to be refurbished. A healthy mix of varsity and intra-mural athletic opportunities is offered at Earlham.

E. Facilities
The evaluation team concurs with the College’s recognition of the need for improved facilities; this is particularly true for the fine arts but is also true for science, student residential living, and football competition. Two recent major additions to Earlham’s facilities—Landrum Bolling Center and the Wellness Center—are serving the College well, and the success of these projects is giving confidence for the campus master planning study underway and for the new projects that will emerge from it. Continuous improvement in facilities is one of the primary goals of the new strategic plan, and there have been recent renovations also to the natural science facilities. Among the recognized major needs are a fine and performing arts facility—a need held over from the last evaluation—and a new residence hall, the latter now under construction. Also recognized is the need for regular improvements to existing residence halls, the student center, the libraries, and admissions spaces, and also for upgrading of the football stadium. The success of the involvement by social scientists in the design of the Bolling Center suggests that each new facility by accompanied by planning involvement of the primary users.

Conner Prairie
Roughly forty years ago, Eli Lilly deeded to Earlham College a house and land to be used as a living history museum. Some time later, Lilly gave Earlham a substantial gift to be used to support both the Conner Prairie and Earlham College. The gift agreement indicated that Conner Prairie should get the funds from endowment income needed to support its operations and the remaining funds should be used to support the college. The Board of Trustees of the College was to determine the needs of the Conner Prairie. The Trustees observed an awkward situation and proposed to Eli Lilly that the income from the endowment established by his gift be split half to the Conner Prairie and half to the College. Lilly agreed, but this agreement was apparently never formalized. In recent years, Conner Prairie has run more and more of a deficit. The Board and President of Earlham College have attempted to reach an agreement with Conner Prairie, but without success. In the summer of 2003 the Board removed the President of Conner Prairie and all ‘outside’ directors (four directors are also directors of Earlham College). The removed directors brought suit against the Board of Earlham College and that suit was dismissed with prejudice. The Attorney General of the State of Indiana is currently investigating the situation. We believe that the Board and President have handled the situation with integrity and the best interests of Earlham as a whole in view.
III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

A. Earlham has demonstrated that college decision-making by consensus at several levels is not only possible, but also effective and satisfying.

B. Earlham has been remarkable by accomplishing, within a short period of its recent history, both a change in its academic calendar (1996) and a new General Education program (2003).

C. Earlham’s Self-Study is exemplary and should be used as a model for other institutions.