**Miller Farm for Sustainability Studies**

A Recommendation to the Faculty Curricular Policy Committee

In the discussion that follows, the *Miller Farm for Sustainability Studies* will be shortened to MFSS. All references to “the Proposal” refer to the *Miller Farm Program Proposal* (Appendix II), prepared by the Miller Farm Subcommittee of the Sustainability Advisory Committee in response to a presidential and senior staff charge requesting recommendations for the future of Miller Farm (Appendix I). References will be to page numbers of version 9 of the Proposal, unless otherwise specifically noted.

The Sustainability Committee and Sub-Committee have strongly recommended to Senior Staff that Miller Farm be firmly “situated in the academic realm of the College, as it is foremost an academic endeavor”(5), observing that it is a place where students “will be engaged in rigorous academic learning”(4) and will propose various courses and internships for college credit. Consequently, Senior Staff has recommended that the Academic Dean prepare a proposal to the Faculty for Miller Farm as an elaboration of existing academic programming in sustainability and environmental studies/science, with the assumption that more detailed components of this proposal (e.g. course proposals) will follow, in the future. This document contains that proposal.

**Guiding Concept:** *Miller Farm for Sustainability Studies* will be an academic and curricular program, grounded in Sustainability Studies, “focused on sustainable agriculture education,” and will offer “great depth of connection between the co-curriculum and the curriculum”(3). The program “will offer for-credit, residential internships at the Miller Farm site for intensive, experiential learning semesters focused on sustainable agriculture and food systems”(3). The Proposal notes that “pedagogically, Miller Farm must remain an educational space above all other purposes” (7). The Proposal submitted by the Miller Farm Sub-Committee suggested planned phases of growth of a Miller Farm “that will allow for progress checkpoints. Although all phases of growth outlined [in the Proposal] could be reached within a year, the College may move from phase to phase as it deems appropriate”(3).

**1. Location**

While the Proposal suggested four different alternative scenarios for locating the MFSS, Senior Staff believes the fourth option, which was the recommended option of the Proposal – building a new barn and relocating the MFSS to that portion of the Miller Farm property that is adjacent to the equestrian center – is the best (6, 15-18). The new MFSS will be located on the south campus, to the immediate south and west of the College equestrian center. This new location will permit safer access by students, greater facilities support by the College, and greater community visibility for Farm activities, as well as proximity for some students to College-owned housing that will be made available to those involved with MFSS as a residential option for the program. As the Proposal observes, this location option will “provide for more suitable land for a small production operation and would allow for the program facilities to be entirely purpose built” (7).
2. Barn

Pending Board of Trustees consideration and approval, that portion of the Miller Farm land and buildings to the east of Abingdon Pike that will no longer be used for the program once it is relocated will be sold, with proceeds of the sale to be directed as the Trustees designate. The Trustees may choose to use some of the proceeds from that sale to offset the costs of building a new barn on the new site of MFSS. The new barn facility will be constructed with multipurpose functionality, in case it is not fully utilized by MFSS.

The new barn should be built with the broader sustainability focus of MFSS in mind. While the focus of MFSS will be on small-scale agriculture and food systems, a newly-structured MFSS has the opportunity of allowing the College to entrench a solid dimension of sustainability-related studies and activities in the operations of MFSS. The design of the new barn facilities should be undertaken with the intent of supporting a wide range of sustainability-related activities, in addition to small-scale agriculture.

3a. Academics

Many academic components of the plan for the new MFSS will need to be approved by the appropriate College procedures for such plans. Specifically, all credit-bearing activity (all new courses for academic credit, or any new certificate programs) will need to be approved by the faculty upon recommendation from the Curricular Policy Committee (CPC).

As suggested in the Proposal, the focus of MFSS will be on small-scale agriculture and sustainability: “Revitalizing Earlham’s sustainable agriculture education program will support the College’s focus on experiential education through the Integrated Program in Sustainability... Students across the disciplines will be engaged in rigorous academic learning centered around sustainability and through the lens of food systems” (4). A “lens” of food systems should not constrain broader activities related to sustainability, however, and the College would look forward to a wide range of sustainability-related studies and activities to be based at MFSS.

3b. Curricular Initiatives

The Proposal calls for “two main curricular types of engagement in addition to many co-curricular engagement opportunities,” including courses and workshops on one hand, and residential farm internships on the other. The suggestion is that one to three skills-based, 1-credit courses per year would be offered at MFSS (6). These would need to be approved by appropriate College curricular procedures. The Proposal calls for courses in “homesteading skills, farm planning, leadership and management skills, gardening skills, farm marketing skills, composting, Permaculture, etc.” (10), with some courses having prerequisites and others being open to any student interested. The Proposal also calls for students to be able to propose other courses to be taught at Miller Farm. All of these courses would need to be approved by CPC through its approved procedures.
We endorse the desire indicated by the Proposal to make connections with a wide range of teaching faculty and to have extant courses use MFSS as a resource for students’ educational experiences. The Proposal indicates nine faculty members whose courses have used Miller Farm in the past and whose responses indicated that they might directly engage with MFSS in the future, including faculty from the natural sciences, the visual and performing arts, and the social sciences.

In addition to the new one-credit courses, and interaction with already-extant courses, a significant component of MFSS academic activity would involve residential internships open to a relatively small number of students (the Proposal suggests 3-10 students per semester, and 2-4 students per summer) (6). Students would live near MFSS in College-provided housing, and the MFSS program could apply for qualification as an Immersion Experience (4, 6). “Students participating in the residential farm internships will be required to live in Miller Farm housing, and must be eligible to live in college houses (as determined by the Residence Life Office, in consultation with the Campus Life Advisory Committee)” (12). The Proposal suggests that students could “be eligible for this leadership intensive internship program after they express commitment to learning about sustainable agriculture through participating in the Sustainable Ag Living and Learning Community and taking a set of courses (2 or more Miller Farm-based courses, 2-3 other courses selected from existing courses at the College) related to food systems, soils, agriculture, and organizations” (12). “In cooperation with each other and their adviser for the internship (the Miller Farm Coordinator), interns will each take on a significant individual learning project at Miller Farm that would involve research, self-motivated learning, specific learning outcomes, hands-on work, and a presentation of their learning at the end of the internship” (12).

The Proposal also suggested the establishment of a “Designation in Sustainable Agriculture” (13), noting that “there has been a recent increase in designation programs at Earlham as a way to highlight a collection of experiences that relate to a specific outcome or professional field. Once much of the architecture of the sustainable agriculture program has been developed, creating a designation in Sustainable Agriculture may be a useful way to provide students with a way to portray their engagement with the program to future employers in food systems and farming realms. The designation would likely include multiple practical courses, a few theory-based courses related to food systems, and the residential internship. The exact structure of the designation would be created after the first 1-2 years of rebuilding the program.”

4. Student Residence

One or more College apartments near the program site will be designated as a MFSS “living-learning community” for student interns, once the internship program has been established and approved through processes used by the Center for Integrated Learning. Only students involved in internship roles will be eligible for such housing (12). Any alternative student housing facilities would need to be provided by fundraising by MFSS supporters, consistent with the College’s residential standards, including academic and other.
The Proposal suggests that “in the year between rebuilding the program and starting the residential internship program at Miller Farm, upper class students may choose to propose a Sustainable Ag themed house” (13). The current “Miller Farm” residents are located in a College-owned house, and have been renewed for the 2014-2015 year as an established theme. However, a new proposal for a different facility location may be submitted and would need to be approved by the usual Residence Life processes and standards.

5. Oversight

A key role in the MFSS will be played by the Farm Coordinator, whose position is described in the Proposal as a paid position that involves work for 25 hours a week. The Farm Coordinator “will manage communication, oversight of farm facilities and food production needed for educational programming” (3). The vision suggested by the Proposal is that “the Farm Coordinator position will jumpstart the program for the first two years and will involve curriculum development, farm production planning, systems training and safety protocol development, and management for the farm production model” (5). In a number of places throughout the Proposal, it is suggested that the Farm Coordinator will be an educator, supervisor and recognized agent of the College.

Curricular oversight will be through the CPC, and administrative oversight will be through the Academic Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs, through the Director of the Center for Integrated Learning (CIL). Appropriate personnel in the Center for Integrated Learning (specifically, the Director of the Integrated Program in Sustainability) will directly supervise the Farm Coordinator; any student-based committee at MFSS will be advisory to the CIL Director. While barn activity can be set up as a student-run endeavor, the Farm Coordinator will not report to students or to a committee, but to the Director of the IP for Sustainability.

6. Phased Development

The Proposal suggests the development of the MFSS program over multiple phases. This seems to be a good approach in order to be confident that the College does not prematurely commit to providing more programming than student interest can support. Phases suggested in the Proposal include starting with more detailed planning, moving to commitment of resources and physical development, and finally seeing higher levels of student activity (pp. 4-5). The Proposal suggests that it could take up to three years to reach the final phase of development, “as the College deems appropriate.”

7. Funding

Capital expenditures

The College is prepared to construct a new barn and make shared apartment housing available for program-approved interns, or as a regular College theme house, subject to College standards. Fundraising will be required for any desired expansion of student housing at MFSS.
Operational budget

Initial funding of operations is made possible by currently-existing funding that has been received through a grant from the Cargill Foundation. Continued funding for the Farm Coordinator position after the expiration of the grant will require successful fundraising.

NOTE: If the faculty does not decide to approve MFSS as an academic and curricular program, Miller Farm will continue as a non-curricular, student-run, and financially self-supporting organization on the new site, following the model of the equestrian program, insofar as student interest and commitment, with the required faculty advisor support, allow. If established as an official student organization, Miller Farm would be eligible for student fee allocations through the established procedures of the Student Organizations Council (SOC) and/or could engage in self-funding through gifts and sales of farm-produced items. All fundraising activities must be coordinated with the Office of Institutional Advancement.

8. Anticipated Timeline

April 2014: Senior staff recommendation to CPC with copies to CIL, SAC
May 2014 Board Meeting: Board approval requested for sale of former Miller Farm site
Summer 2014: Preparation of student residence; site preparation at new Miller Farm site
Fall 2014: Miller Farm for Sustainability Studies opens as student organization
Late Fall, 2014: Possible approval by CPC and Faculty on academic/curricular components of MFSS

Concluding Comments

The mission of Earlham College “is to provide the highest quality undergraduate education in the liberal arts, including the sciences, shaped by the distinctive perspectives of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)... The teaching-learning process at Earlham is shaped by a view of education as a process of awakening the ‘teacher within,’ so that our students will become lifelong learners. Students at Earlham are encouraged to be active, involved learners.” ¹ This mission requires that we offer our students a wide range of opportunities, with a wide range of challenges, to permit them to grow as individuals, as scholars, and as citizens of an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

In “The Captive,” in the fifth volume of his Remembrance of Things Past, Marcel Proust wrote that

¹ Earlham College, Mission Statement.
The only true voyage of discovery... would be not to visit strange lands, but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds, that each of them is.  

Earlham’s attempt to offer our students a wide range of opportunities includes the opportunity to meet the challenges of sustainability in a “hands-on” way. Students who meet issues related to sustainability, to environmental issues, and to small-scale agriculture will, indeed, have the opportunity to “possess other eyes” as they look at the world around themselves. MFSS will give our students opportunities to see the world of the present and the world of the future through other eyes.

Greg Mahler, Vice-President and Academic Dean

Appendix I

Charge to the Sustainability Advisory Committee regarding the future of Miller Farm
(September 3, 2013)

Major structural integrity issues recently discovered in the buildings at Miller Farm, as well as continuing lack of clarity about the Farm’s educational aims as part of the College’s overall mission, provide an opportunity to make fresh assessments and determinations regarding the programs and facilities that should define Miller Farm moving forward.

I therefore charge the Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) to organize a sub-committee (Miller Farm Sub-committee) to conduct a review and evaluation that will lead to a recommendation to Senior Staff concerning the future of Miller Farm programming and facilities.

In particular, I ask that SAC, through its sub-committee, address the following questions:

1. How does small-scale agriculture as an experiential-learning opportunity fit into the larger sustainability goals, as well as the overall mission, of the College?

2. Given the current necessity to work within existing staffing levels, what specific educational programs should take place at Miller Farm, and what on-site facilities and/or capabilities would be required to carry out those programs?

3. Which office and which office holders at the College will oversee the programming and facilities of Miller Farm, i.e., be responsible for mounting and insuring the integrity of educational programming at the Farm and providing all appropriate care and oversight of the physical site and its facilities?

The Miller Farm Sub-Committee of SAC should include the following membership:

*3-4 members of SAC (Sustainability Advisory Committee)
*1 representative from facilities
*1 representative from student development
*2 student representatives
*2 alumni representatives

In formulating its recommendation, the SAC sub-committee will be expected to consult broadly with Miller Farm stakeholders and gather as much information as is useful in addressing the preceding questions. The sub-committee is expected to keep in close communication with both SAC and Senior Staff throughout this process.

SAC is expected to present its final recommendation in writing to Senior Staff by December 17, 2013. [This deadline was later extended to the end of the Spring semester].

David Dawson and Senior Staff