

Alumni Survey – Class of 1996

Office of Institutional Research

Nelson Bingham, Mary Ann Weaver

November 2002

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2002, 185 graduates from the Earlham Class of 1996 were sent an alumni survey that was produced by the Higher Education Data Consortium. (See [Appendix A](#)). The names and addresses of these alumni were secured from the Institutional Advancement office. A cover letter was prepared by Nelson Bingham explaining the importance and uses of the survey. A follow-up letter was sent to those alumni who did not return their survey after a reasonable time. Email reminders were also sent to those who did not return their survey. Completed surveys were sent to Survey Resource Partners in Minnesota for scanning.

This survey was also utilized by some of our peer institutions to survey their graduates from the Class of 1996. HEDS prepared a report comparing Earlham to a Peer Group. (See [Appendix B](#) for a list of the institutions in the Peer Group.)

RESULTS

Links to tables

[Table 1](#) - Undergraduate Majors

[Table 2](#) - Evaluation of Undergraduate Education

[Table 3](#) - Satisfaction with College Experiences

[Table 4](#) - Expectations Fulfilled

[Table 5](#) - Contribution of Activities to their Development

[Table 6](#) - Level of Preparedness for Post-graduation Activities

[Table 7](#) - Involvement with Alma Mater

[Table 8](#) - Involvement in Organizations

[Table 9](#) - Effect of Undergraduate Loans

[Table 10](#) - Alumni Satisfaction

The survey was completed by 21 males and 67 females from the Earlham Class of 1996, which was a 48% response rate. This was a better rate of return than any of the other institutions included in the Peer Group. (See [Appendix B](#).) Ninety-one percent of the Earlham respondents were White, Non-Hispanic. Eight percent were Black, Non-

Hispanic. Most of them (58%) were married or living with a partner and most (85%) had no children. Table 1 shows the majors of the Earlham respondents.

Table 1

Undergraduate Majors

Arts and Music	3.4%
Business/Management	6.8%
Education	1.1%
Humanities	18.2%
Life Sciences	19.3%
Math/Computer Sciences	2.3%
Physical Sciences	4.5%
Psychology	10.2%
Social Sciences	28.4%
Other Non-Science Fields	12.5%

The majority (67%) of these alumni were employed full time immediately after graduation. This compares to 64% of the alumni from our peer institutions. The most popular occupation the year following graduation from Earlham was in some type of education (23%). This included teaching preschool, secondary school, research or teaching assistant, or other teacher or instructor positions. Another 10% were working in social work and 9% were working in sales. Currently (7 years after graduation) there remain 23% of the alumni of the Class of 1996 working in the field of education with 15% in managerial and management related occupations, 13% as scientists and mathematicians, and 11% in social work. The majority of the alumni (22%) from our peer institutions are currently working in management related occupations and 20% in educational occupations. Only 4% of alumni from peer institutions are currently employed in the social work field.

Eighty-nine percent of the Earlham respondents from the Class of 1996 indicated that their major was indirectly or directly related to their career. Eighty-four percent of the respondents from peer institutions indicated the same.

A small percentage (13%) of the Class of 1996 was in graduate school full time immediately after graduation compared to 25% of alumni from our peer institutions. However, 28% of the Earlham alumni are currently (7 years after graduation) full time graduate school students and 7% are part time graduate students. Seventeen percent of the alumni from our peer institutions are currently in graduate school full time and 10% are part time graduate students. Most of the Earlham Class of 1996 (67%) is currently employed full time while 15% are employed part time. A higher percentage (78%) of the

alumni from peer institutions are currently employed full time and 10% are employed part time.

Ultimately, 26% of the Earlham Class of 1996 would prefer to be educators compared to 22% of the alumni from our peer institutions. The second most popular occupation listed by 17% of Earlham graduates as the career they would ultimately like to have is in management related occupations. This compares to 22% of the alumni of peer institutions desiring careers in education and/or management related occupations. Other occupations listed as ultimate goals for the Earlham grads included legal related occupations (11%) and social, recreational or religious work (8%); whereas 12% of the alumni from peer institutions were interested in health related fields and 9% were interested in becoming writers, artists, entertainers or athletes.

Most of the Earlham alumni (43%) from the Class of 1996 estimated their current annual income to be between \$20,000 and \$40,000, whereas 40% of alumni from our peer institutions reported having an annual income of between \$40,000 and \$80,000. Four percent of the peer group alums are making more than \$120,000 annually compared to 1% of the Earlham alums.

The alumni were asked to evaluate their undergraduate education. They indicated the importance in their current activities of various abilities and types of knowledge that may be developed in a bachelor's degree program and then indicated the extent those abilities or types of knowledge were enhanced by their undergraduate experience. Table 2 shows the mean scores for Earlham and our peer group.

Table 2

Evaluation of Undergraduate Education

Ability/knowledge	Earlham		Peer Group
	Importance in current activities	Extent enhanced by undergraduate experience	Extent enhanced by undergraduate experience
CRITICAL THINKING	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Acquire new skills and knowledge	3.8	3.6	3.6
Think analytically and logically	3.8	3.7	3.5
Formulate creative/original ideas	3.6	3.4	3.3
Academic ability	3.4	3.6	3.5
SKILLS/LEARNING			
Write effectively	3.5	3.8	3.4
Use quantitative tools	3.1	2.9	2.9
Appreciate arts, literature, music, drama	2.9	3.2	3.2
Gain in-depth knowledge of a field	3.6	3.2	3.2
Read or speak a foreign language	2.3	2.5	2.2

SOCIAL/MORAL AWARENESS			
Develop awareness of societal problems	3.3	3.6	3.0
Place current problems in perspective	3.4	3.4	3.0
Understand moral/ethical issues	3.5	3.5	3.1
SELF DEVELOPMENT			
Understand myself	3.5	3.2	3.2
Function independently, w/o supervision	3.9	3.4	3.3
Develop self-esteem	3.5	3.1	3.1
Establish a course of action for goals	3.8	3.2	3.3
Intellectual self-confidence	3.6	3.5	3.3
Develop desire for continued learning	3.7	3.6	3.4
RELATIONSHIP SKILLS			
Lead /supervise tasks/groups of people	3.4	2.9	2.8
Relate well to people of dif. culture/races	3.6	3.4	2.8
Function effectively as member of team	3.7	3.4	3.1
Communicate well orally	3.8	3.4	3.2
Understand others	3.7	3.5	3.1
UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE/TECHNOLOGY			
Understanding the process of science	2.8	2.9	2.7
Use technology	3.1	2.6	2.7

Scale: 4=Greatly 3=Moderately 2= A Little 1=Not at All

Using the perspective gained since they graduated, the alumni from the Class of 1996 were asked how satisfied they are with various services or aspects of Earlham. Table 3 shows their degree of satisfaction compared with alumni from peer institutions.

Table 3

Satisfaction with College Experiences

College Experiences	Earlham	Peer Group
ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Academic advising	3.2	3.1
Contact with faculty	3.7	3.6
Quality of teaching	3.8	3.6
Courses in major field	3.6	3.5
Courses outside major field	3.4	3.4
Independent study/research	3.5	3.4
CAMPUS SERVICES AND FACILITIES		
Career services	2.6	2.6
Financial services	3.3	3.0
Library resources	3.6	3.3
Recreation/athletics	3.2	3.2
Residential life	3.3	3.2
CAMPUS CLIMATE		
Student voice in policies	3.2	2.8
Campus safety	3.6	3.4
Sense of belonging	3.5	3.3
Ethnic/racial diversity	3.0	2.6
Social life on campus	3.1	3.0

Scale: 4=Very Satisfied 3=Generally Satisfied 2=Generally Dissatisfied 1=Very Dissatisfied

Table 4 shows to what extent their undergraduate experience fulfilled their original expectations in various areas.

Table 4
Expectations

Expectations	Earlham	Peer Group
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Enhance your intellectual growth	3.8	3.7
Acquire in-depth knowledge in a particular field	3.4	3.3
Develop competence in career relevant skills	3.1	3.0
Foster your personal growth	3.7	3.5
Promote your ability to form relationships	3.4	3.2

Scale: 4=Greatly 3=Moderately 2=A Little 1=Not at All

Seventy-seven percent of the Class of 1996 was very satisfied with their overall undergraduate education compared to 61% of the alumni from our peer group. Seventy-three percent of the Earlham alumni respondents indicated that they definitely would encourage others to attend Earlham. Only 60% of our peer group alumni indicated the same.

The alumni were asked to evaluate their level of involvement in various activities while an undergraduate and then evaluate the contribution of each activity to their personal or professional life after graduation. Table 5 shows the mean scores for Earlham and our peer group.

Table 5

Contribution of Activities to Development

Activities	Earlham		Peer Group
	Level of Involvement	Contribution to your development	Contribution to your development
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Student or campus government	1.5	1.7	1.6
Intercollegiate athletics	2.0	2.2	1.9
Intramural sports	1.7	1.8	1.9
Student publications	1.3	1.4	1.5
Performing arts/music	2.2	2.4	2.0
Political organization or club	1.9	2.2	1.7
Community service	2.4	2.6	2.5
Fraternity/sorority	1.0	1.0	1.8
Religious groups	1.5	1.8	1.8
ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES			
Internships	2.0	2.3	2.4
Study abroad	2.8	3.1	2.3
Work on faculty research	1.7	1.9	1.7
Independent study	2.3	2.4	2.4
EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES			
On-campus employment	2.7	2.4	2.3
Off-campus employment	1.5	1.6	2.1

Scale: 4=Extensive 3=Moderate 2=A Little 1=None

Table 6 shows to what extent these graduates felt their undergraduate experience prepared them for various post-graduation activities.

Table 6

Level of Preparedness for Post-graduation Activities

Activities	Earlham	Peer Group
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Post-baccalaureate education	3.3	3.2
Current career	3.1	3.1
Social and civic involvement	3.1	2.7
Interpersonal relationships	3.3	2.9

Scale: 4=Greatly 3=Moderately 2=A Little 1=Not at All

To determine the amount of involvement these graduates have had with their alma mater, they were asked how frequently they participated in various activities that were sponsored by their undergraduate alma mater. Table 7 shows the degree of involvement of Earlham alumni compared to that of the alumni from our peer institutions.

Table 7

Involvement with Alma Mater

Activity	Earlham	Peer Group
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Read campus publications	3.3	3.1
Visited the institution's Web site	2.6	2.4
Visited campus for any purpose	2.2	2.4
Attended alumni functions on campus	1.6	1.6
Attended alumni functions off campus	1.4	1.5
Attended alma mater sporting events	1.3	1.5
Served as an alumni admissions volunteer	1.3	1.2
Participated in a career advisory program	1.1	1.1
Participated in alumni continuing education prog.	1.0	1.0
Participated in an alumni community svc. program	1.2	1.0
Contributed to or solicited for the annual fund	2.4	2.2
Maintained contact with other alumni	3.6	3.3
Maintained contact with faculty members	2.4	2.1
Maintained contact with administrators	1.5	1.3

Scale: 4=Frequently 3=Occasionally 2=Briefly 1=Never

Seventy-six percent of the respondents from the Class of 1996 indicated that they strongly or very strongly identified with their alma mater compared to 60% of the alumni from our peer institutions.

To what extent have the alumni voluntarily participated in organizations since graduation? Table 8 gives this information.

Table 8

Involvement in Organizations

Organization	Earlham	Peer Group
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Civic/Community	2.3	2.1
Cultural/Arts	2.0	1.9
Educational Service (e.g., PTA)	1.5	1.5
Political	1.5	1.4
Professional	2.2	2.3
Recreational (e.g., sports club)	2.1	2.2
Religious	1.8	1.9
Service (e.g. Rotary, Kiwanis)	1.3	1.3
Youth (e.g. little league, scouting)	1.7	1.5

Scale: 4=A Lot 3=Moderately 2=A Little 1=Not at All

Of the 34 Earlham alumni from the Class of 1996 who are currently pursuing further education, 18% are working toward a doctoral degree in the life sciences. Another 12% are working toward master's degrees in Humanities or Arts and 12% are working on master's degrees in the Life Sciences. This varies significantly from alumni from our peer institutions where 18% of the 422 alumni are working toward master's degrees in business and 16% are working toward master's degrees in engineering. Of the 50 Earlham alumni who indicated they have plans in the future to obtain higher degrees, 12% indicated a desire for a master's degree in education and 12% have plans to pursue a doctoral degree in education. An additional 14% hope to attain a doctoral degree in the life sciences. Alumni from the peer group institutions are more interested in business with 25% indicating an interest in pursuing an MBA in the future. An additional 10% of these alumni hope to attain a master's degree in education and 10% a doctoral degree in education.

Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were recipients of financial aid while at Earlham. The majority of these alumni (79%) took out loans for their undergraduate study. Table 9 shows the effect of these educational loans

Table 9

Effect of Undergraduate Loans

Effect	Earlham	Peer Group
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Allowed me to get a degree at an otherwise unaffordable institution	2.3	2.4
Focused job search on higher paying fields	1.5	1.6
Postponed or canceled post-baccalaureate education	1.4	1.4

Scale: 3=To a great extent 2=Somewhat 1=Not at All

We chose to add supplemental questions to this survey. These questions are unique to Earlham and therefore we did not receive comparison results to other colleges.

The Class of 1996 was asked if they felt informed about Earlham College. Seventy percent of the respondents reported feeling either somewhat or well informed about the college. Eighty-one percent felt that the amount of mail they received was just about right, while 16% felt it was “a bit too much” or “too much” mail. There were actually 2.3% of the alums that felt they received a bit too little mail from Earlham.

Most (62%) of these alums normally give less than \$100 each year in charitable gifts to all purposes. Twenty-nine percent give \$101 to \$499 each year; 5% give \$500 to \$1,499; 2% give \$1,500 to \$4,999 and 1% give \$5,000 or more.

Twenty-two percent have never made a donation to Earlham. Forty-five percent have made a donation within the last 12 months. Twenty-nine percent donated one to five years ago and 4% gave six to ten years ago.

The 36 alumni who responded that they have not made a donation to Earlham within the last 12 months were asked why they do not give regularly to Earlham. Fifty-percent (18) responded that they couldn't afford to make a gift. Twenty-five percent (9) had an unpleasant experience at Earlham and 8.3% (3) are not pleased with Earlham today. Only one person indicated they did not make a donation because they were not pleased with their education. Five alumni have the perception that Earlham does not need the money.

If these alumni were to support the college, 70% of them would give donations to the endowment for scholarships or financial aid. Eighteen percent would support the Earlham Fund; 9% would support the endowment for faculty salaries and academic programs and 2.4% would give a donation toward library acquisitions and/or science equipment. There were no alumni from the Class of 1996 who indicated they would support building construction or renovation.

Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies would be most likely supported by 34% of these alums. Twenty-two percent would support the Natural Sciences, 19% Humanities, 15% Fine Arts, and 10% extra curricular activities or athletics.

All respondents felt that their general education experience at Earlham prepared them for their future life, but there were varying degrees of satisfaction. Most (63%) of the respondents feel that their general education experience at Earlham prepared them very well. Twenty-seven percent felt that their general education at Earlham moderately prepared them and 11% responded that their general education experience at Earlham prepared them for their future life somewhat or a little.

Forty-seven percent of the respondents from the Class of 1996 indicated that they were very satisfied with their current job. Another 37% are somewhat satisfied. Sixteen percent are somewhat unsatisfied, not satisfied, or very unsatisfied with their current job.

Alumni from the Class of 1996 were asked questions regarding their use of libraries and the quality of their library experience at Earlham. Below are highlights from their responses.

- 33% used the library at their place of work or study 21 times or more
- 23% used the library 1-5 times
- 11% used it 6-10 times
- 13% used it 11-20 times
- 19% did not use the library at work or school

When asked how often they used the library in their community for recreational or personal purposes in the past year, they responded as follows:

- 33% reported using it 1-5 times
- 19% used it 6-10 times
- 13% used it 11-20 times
- 13% used it 21 times or more
- 23% did not use the library for recreational purposes

The alumni of the Class of 1996 rated their satisfaction of their Earlham library experience. Table 10 shows the mean scores.

Table 10

Alumni Satisfaction

	Mean score
The ability of the libraries' collections to meet your academic needs	1.9
The ability of the libraries' collections to meet your general information needs	1.7
The help provided by individual staff members during your use of the library	1.5
The quality of formal instruction you received about using information resources	1.7
The quantity of formal instruction you received about using information resources	1.8
The formal instruction in your major you received about using information resources	2.0
The preparation the Earlham program provided for doing library research in graduate school	1.7
The preparation the Earlham program provided for the information gathering you do in your work	1.8

Scale: 1=very satisfied 2=satisfied 3=somewhat unsatisfied 4=not satisfied 5=very dissatisfied

DISCUSSION

It is interesting to note that the response rate for Earlham alumni in this survey is much higher than most other liberal arts colleges (indeed, the highest among our comparison group). This may represent one measure of the feelings of connection our graduates feel toward Earlham. It is striking, however, that 76% of our respondents were female. Although much has been written in psychology concerning the differential tendency of females to emphasize relationships and connectedness, it would be fascinating to examine whether such a tendency exists among alums generally or Earlham alums more specifically and, if so, what its implications might be. As a first step, we might look at sex differences in alumni survey data such as these. For example, is the distribution of undergraduate majors in these data reflective of the disproportionate number of female respondents?

The imbalance of males vs. females in these respondents might also affect our comparison with other institutions. If most other institutions, in fact, achieve a more equal gender representation in their survey responses, that might account for the fact that 34% of our alums are working in the (traditionally more female) occupations of education and social work versus only 24% in those jobs for grads of peer institutions.

Examining these alums' evaluation of their undergraduate education (an important question for our assessment of the outcomes of our Earlham education), reveals that Earlham compares equally well (or favorably) with its peer institutions with respect to virtually every category of skill or knowledge. Our alumni rate their Earlham education as especially strong in fostering writing ability, forms of social/moral awareness (such as awareness of societal problems, placing current problems in perspective, and understanding moral/ethical issues), relating well to people of different cultures or races, and understanding others. These areas seem to reflect well some of the goals Earlham sets for its educational program. It is, likewise, heartening to find that all respondents report (in some degree) that their Earlham general education helped prepare them for their future life (with 63% saying that it prepared them "very well").

Another possible measure of the success of our Earlham education is the percentage of our alums who say they would recommend Earlham to prospective students. Almost 3/4 of the respondents report that they would (but do they?) "encourage others to attend Earlham." This compares with a 60% rate for our peer institutions. These findings closely parallel the fact that similar percentages of both Earlham and peer group alumni indicate that they are "strongly or very strongly identified with their alma mater." This is good news, but we may need to find ways to improve upon the rate at which our alums actually act upon this feeling.

It is not surprising to find our alumni saying (more often than our peers' graduates) that they found participation in a "political organization or club" or a "study abroad" program to contribute to their development. Participation in intercollegiate athletics is also noted as a contributing factor in development by slightly more of our alumni than those of our peers.

The low level of reported giving to all charitable causes by our alumni is not really surprising. Our grads tend to spend the first few years beyond Earlham exploring various career options and/or moving into graduate study. Hence, their reported incomes tend to be much lower than that of graduates from peer institutions. This may be indicative of a lower earning trajectory throughout the lives of our alumni or it might simply represent a delay among this group in moving toward their full earning potential. We should examine this issue more extensively. Certainly, it has major implications for our fund-raising efforts. It is some comfort to see that about 88% of our alumni have given some financial gift at least to Earlham. If such a pattern of giving can be nurtured more effectively (creating a "culture of philanthropy"), we might somewhat make up in numbers of donors what we may lack in size of individual gifts (but, alas, this does not presently seem to be the case). It is noteworthy that about 70% of these alumni would be motivated to give support to the endowment for scholarships and/or financial aid since that is identified as a key priority in the recent strategic plan.

These alumni data represent only one view of Earlham's graduates, of Earlham's success, and of our relationship with those graduates. Nevertheless, some fascinating findings are captured here with real implications for our assessment of student outcomes and for our work with alumni in the future.

*Created by Mary Ann Weaver
weavema@earlham.edu
November, 2002*