

TO: Earlham College Community
FROM: Doug Bennett
RE: Status of the Lacrosse Program
DATE: December 9, 2003

Acting on a recommendation of the Athletic Committee, I have decided that we should drop women's lacrosse as a varsity women's sport. In the future, women's lacrosse at Earlham will function as a club sport.

The committee's recommendation is grounded in concerns about the viability of the sport at Earlham. Over the past seven years, the team's record is 1-63, and 0-49 in NCAC competition. We have averaged 15 women on the roster. In a sport that requires 12 women on the field, this raises concerns about safety in games and practices. Rarely have more than a third of the team players previously played lacrosse in high school. We have not been successful, despite repeated efforts, in recruiting more women's lacrosse players.

This fall, members of the current lacrosse team rallied support for their sport and recruited a number of additional women committed to playing this spring. It is the judgment of the Athletic Committee, however, that we are very unlikely to be able to field teams that consistently have enough players, and players with enough experience, to expect to win even a modest percentage of our games. Before accepting the committee's recommendation, I met both with members of the team and then the Athletic Committee.

To facilitate the transition to being a club sport, we will provide \$5000 each of the next two years, and \$2500 in a third year to help with expenses of travel, hiring officials and the like. Thereafter, lacrosse will function in the same manner as other club sports.

I have also asked the Athletic Committee to undertake a review of policies and practices of club sports at Earlham to be sure they are a good complement to the opportunities we provide via intercollegiate sports.

In making its recommendation about dropping lacrosse, the Athletic Committee also recommended that we add a spring women's sport, either softball or golf, so that Earlham would continue having 17 intercollegiate sports teams, 9 women's and 8 men's teams.

At this time, however, I am not prepared to make the decision to replace lacrosse with another sport. I believe we need to take some time to consider how many intercollegiate sports Earlham should offer, and the criteria we should use in selecting a sport when we are considering adding one. The first is a question to pursue with the Budget Committee and the Athletic Committee; the second is a question for the Athletic Committee.