

TO: Earlham College Community  
FROM: Doug Bennett and Deb McNish  
RE: Discussions of Residence Life Questions  
DATE: March 27, 2006

We would like to invite you to participate in a wide-ranging and important discussion of residential life at Earlham College. Over the next few weeks, we will provide a number of opportunities for students, faculty and staff to participate in these discussions. With this memo, we would like to give you some sense of the *purposes* for holding these discussions, and to frame the *questions* that will provide focus for them.

A few years ago we charged an Ad Hoc Committee on Residence Life to give some fresh thought to what we are doing in making residential life a central aspect of an Earlham education. That committee reported in the spring of 2003, and over the next year we implemented a number of its recommendations. In October 2003, drawing on the committee's work, we drafted and the Faculty approved a statement of "Basic Principles of Residence Life," which you can find in Community Documents on WebDB. [On the Earlham website, go to Information Services > WebDB (requires log-in) > Community Documents > Office of the President.]

This January, we invited to campus Jim Tederman, a former Dean of Students at Grinnell and at Reed. We arranged for Jim to speak with quite a large number of people over the three days of his visit. We asked him to look at issues involving (a) residence life, (b) student conduct (especially misconduct), and the relationship between the two. We asked him to tell us whether we are heading in the right direction and whether we are making progress. If you would like to read his report, you can also find in the same place in Community Documents on WebDB

We are already considering a number of recommendations he makes about organization and staffing, but he also raises some larger, deeper, chewier issues. Many of these were already being discussed on campus, but his report gives some crisper framing and additional urgency to the issues.

Below are some questions we think deserve careful attention from the whole Earlham community. We hope you will find an opportunity to participate in discussions of these questions. If you would like to put any thoughts in writing (and we welcome this), please send your comments to [DiscussResLife@earlham.edu](mailto:DiscussResLife@earlham.edu).

- (1) What do we hope and expect students to learn through living in residence on the Earlham College campus? How do we hope and expect students will learn these things? How do we expect students will integrate what they learn *outside* the classroom with what they learn *in* the classroom?

- (2) How should students share responsibility for life in the residence halls and houses? How should we organize the governance of the residence halls and houses so that students can most constructively participate in addressing any problems or opportunities that may arise in their living together?
- (3) How should we address student conduct in and around the residence halls and houses that falls short of our expectations? Do we have a clear, shared sense of what are minimum expectations for such conduct? Do we communicate these expectations effectively to students? To faculty and staff?
- (4) What should be the special or particular responsibilities of Resident Assistants (RAs) or Area Directors (ADs) in addressing difficult issues, especially conduct issues, that arise in residential life? How should the responsibilities of RAs, in particular, differ from or go beyond the responsibilities that all students should bear? How might RA responsibility for conduct issues influence, for good or ill, the fulfillment of other responsibilities of RAs? How might this affect the recruitment of experienced, excellent students to be RAs?