

TO: The Earlham Community

FROM: Doug Bennett

RE: Process Issues Regarding Tobacco Smoking at Earlham

DATE: August 25, 2006

Several students, including the leadership of Earlham Student Government, have asked about the process I followed (or didn't) in making a change last week in our smoking policy. Let me try to address these.

I acted out of a concern for the health and safety of the Earlham community. There has long been substantial evidence that secondhand smoke is harmful. This summer, the Surgeon General released a comprehensive report detailing the health consequences of involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke. With the release of this report, there is no longer a shred of doubt that secondhand smoke is a serious health risk.

In the spring of 2005, the Committee on Campus Life finished work on a revised smoking policy. Under our governance arrangements "Non-Academic Affairs of the community have been delegated by the faculty, with the concurrence of the Board, to the Committee on Campus Life, which is composed of students, faculty, staff and administrators. Actions of the Committee on Campus Life are subject directly to review and approval by the President of the College." After receiving CCL's new draft policy, I asked the Faculty to discuss the policy, to hear their thoughts before I approved (or didn't) the policy.

During that discussion, several members of the faculty expressed misgivings that we were not moving more forcefully to curtail smoking. I also had serious misgivings about the new policy because it continued to allow smoking in Tazza and on porches adjacent to buildings (and their windows), but I approved the new policy nevertheless because CCL had given the matter careful attention. Subsequent to this approval, we tried to improve the ventilation of Tazza, but we have found it impossible to prevent some circulation of secondhand smoke from Tazza into the rest of Runyan. The Surgeon General's report confirms that it is not possible to isolate or ventilate an indoor space sufficiently to prevent involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke. And since the approval of the new policy, many members of the community have spoken with me about their discomfort at having to encounter secondhand smoke on the porches of buildings (those porches are for everyone).

With the release of the Surgeon General's report, I came to the conclusion that it was no longer responsible for Earlham to allow some members of the community to put others at risk by smoking in their vicinity. I moved quickly to provide greater assurance that everyone in the community can avoid exposure.

I respect the work of the Committee on Campus Life, and I will meet with CCL as soon as possible. CCL may want to make further recommendations about smoking on campus. But with the Surgeon General's report now in hand, I cannot imagine the

circumstances under which I would approve a smoking policy that allowed smoking within or adjacent to buildings that put others at risk.