

EARLHAM

Office of the President

January 15, 2008

Dear Friends:

Earlham's home — past, present and future — is Richmond, Indiana. When prospective students come to visit, it is easy to see that they are sizing up the community around us as well as getting to know the College. And “How is Richmond doing?” is a frequent question I'm asked by alumni as I travel around the country. The fortunes of Richmond cannot help but affect us, and we feel an obligation to be constructively engaged with our neighbors.

The relationship is not always a comfortable one. In a lecture marking the 20th anniversary of Richmond last year, Earlham Archivist and Professor of History Tom Hamm surveyed the relationship, dividing it into three eras. The first, from the College's founding in 1847 until the early 1930s, he titled, “Earlham is afraid of Richmond.” The College had been founded to provide a guarded education for young Quakers, and through this period the College sought to keep its students away from the earthly temptations of Richmond.

The second era, from the early 1930s until the mid-1980s, he titled, “Richmond is afraid of Earlham.” Once students were freer to go into downtown Richmond, some sought to reform and improve the city. They brought concerns about war and racial inequality to the attention of their neighbors. A cultural divide grew up between the College and the city that lingers, in some ways, to this day.

The era from the mid-1980s until the present Hamm titled, “We're working on our relationship.” The College and the city have grown closer. We have become more inclined to seek ways to work together for mutual benefit in the arts, in social services, in education, in economic development and in a host of other areas.

For many years, the College has welcomed members of the local community to lectures and concerts on campus. Unless we are expecting a very large crowd, these events are free and open to everyone. At the same time, members of the Earlham community have been major participants in and supporters of area arts organizations such as the Richmond Symphony Orchestra, the Richmond Art Museum, Civic Theatre and the Wayne County Museum. Sometimes an invited speaker at the College troubles some Richmond residents, but, in the search for truth, a college should regularly invite speakers with fresh, surprising ideas. Without Earlham, Richmond would have a much poorer public culture.

Many of Richmond and Wayne County's not-for-profit agencies in social services rely year-in and year-out on voluntary service performed by Earlham students: thousands and thousands of hours. As valuable as these contributions are for Richmond, they also provide our students with educational experiences that deepen their classroom learning and provide a basis for thinking about their vocational futures and life commitments.

In recent years Earlham has especially focused on helping to improve education in Richmond and its environs. Five years ago, the College began a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program, which admits about 20 students each year. The MAT students take courses together beginning in June of one year and finishing the subsequent summer. During the academic year, the MAT students also complete practicums in local school classrooms. About a third of the students are graduates of Earlham; the others (some of whom have been out of college for several years) come from across the United States. Our MAT program has quickly established itself as a very high quality program, and many of its graduates are now regular teachers in Richmond and neighboring schools.

To give greater impetus and focus to our efforts to improve relations with the Richmond/Wayne County Community, in 2002 we named Avis Stewart ('74) as vice president of community relations. With Avis' leadership, we have a much improved relationship with our neighbors.

Avis began a Forum series, well-attended by community members, that meets one Thursday a month for breakfast. We invite speakers, some from the community and some from Earlham, to talk about issues of local importance. (It was at a Forum, for example, that Tom Hamm talked about the history of the Earlham-Richmond relationship.)

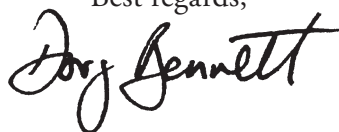
Increasingly we invite other organizations in our community to think of their relationship with us as a *partnership*. We want to actively seek ways that both parties can benefit from working more closely together. We especially seek educationally enriching opportunities for our students. Through a partnership with the Cope Environmental Center, for example, our students gain involvements in environmental education and sustainability projects. Through a partnership with the Richmond Art Museum, for another example, some Earlham students will have an opportunity to help plan and carry through a show at the museum this spring that will feature paintings from both the Earlham and RAM collections.

Knowing that we want our students, faculty and staff to experience the best that Richmond has to offer, we wrote an *Earlham Guide to Richmond*, a substantial guidebook that covers parks and recreational opportunities, museums, cultural opportunities, restaurants, and much, much more. We distribute copies for free to those on campus, and sell the guidebook at cost through area bookstores. (If you are interested, you can purchase a copy from the Earlham Bookstore.)

Probably few students choose Earlham because of its location in Richmond, Indiana, and no doubt we lose some prospective students who are determined to go to college in a large city. But many Earlham students come to appreciate Richmond. They get deeply engaged through service activities. They come to enjoy a variety of local restaurants, shops and events. They discover that they can have a substantial conversation with the city's mayor or become a respected participant in planning a community event.

In Tom Hamm's words, we are working on our relationship with Richmond, and both the College and the city are better off as a result.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Bennett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Doug Bennett