

TO: The Earlham College Community

FROM: Doug Bennett

RE: Changes in Counseling Services

DATE: July 11, 2008

I want to give you an overview of some important steps we are taking with regard to the college's Counseling Services beginning this fall. Briefly, we are taking three steps:

- (1) We are hiring an additional half-time counselor. This will give us one full time counselor and two half-time counselors, in addition to a visiting psychiatrist and several counseling and psychiatric interns who staff our counseling center.
- (2) With the increased staffing in Counseling, we are asking Holly Woodruff, Director of Counseling, to develop and implement a program of community mental health awareness and education.
- (3) We will conduct a comprehensive assessment of our approach to counseling and mental health education in the Fall of 2008. This assessment will be conducted by an external professional in the area of higher education mental health services.

Expenses for these changes will be paid for out the President's Discretionary Fund over the next two years. If the additional staffing and community mental health education appear to be things we want to sustain beyond the next two years (based on the assessment and our consideration of it), we will ask the Budget Committee to consider adding the needed financial resources to the regular budget for Counseling Services.

These changes have grown out of discussions this past spring in which members of the campus community (especially a number of students) expressed concern about the adequacy of Earlham's support system for mental health.

All of us at Earlham share a commitment to providing effective mental health support for students who need it. But what are the most effective and appropriate ways for the college to meet those needs? Our own internal discussions have led us to the conclusion that we need increased community awareness of and education about mental health support. And they have led us, as well, to the conclusion that we should give a fresh, external, professional look at how we are approaching Counseling Services and whether we are providing adequate staffing for the work. Hence the assessment we are about to undertake.

As we undertake this assessment, it is important to remind ourselves of the mission of Earlham's Counseling Services. A number of students come to Earlham with a history of utilizing various forms of psychological support – regular counseling and therapy, family support, prescribed medications, therapeutic educational programs, and peer support networks. The mission of our Counseling Services is a developmental one: to meet our

students where they are and to help them to make a transition to responsibly managing their mental health needs by engaging with resources available in their life situation as adults after college.

In keeping with this approach, Counseling Services is not intended to provide long-term intensive psychotherapy for individuals who require this kind of support. Rather, Counseling Services offers brief, solution-focused counseling services that support students' academic and personal lives. Students who need long term or intensive services and/or medications are referred to resources beyond the campus.