

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Earlham College Mission Statement

The mission of Earlham College, an independent, residential college, is to provide the highest quality undergraduate education in the liberal arts, including the sciences, shaped by the distinctive perspectives of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). A basic faith of Friends is that all truth is God's truth; thus Earlham emphasizes: pursuit of truth, wherever that pursuit leads; lack of coercion, letting the evidence lead that search; respect for the consciences of others; openness to new truth and therefore the willingness to search; veracity, rigorous integrity in dealing with the facts; application of what is known to improving our world.

To provide education of the highest quality with these emphases, Earlham's mission requires selection of an outstanding and caring faculty committed to creating an open, cooperative, learning environment. The College provides for the continuous support and development of this faculty.

The teaching-learning process at Earlham is shaped by a view of education as a process of awakening the "teacher within," so that our students will become lifelong learners. Students at Earlham are encouraged to be active, involved learners. The College provides extensive opportunities for students and faculty to interact with each other as persons, to learn from each other in a cooperative community, an important aspect of which is collaborative student/faculty research.

At Earlham College this education is carried on with a concern for the world in which we live and for improving human society. The College strives to educate morally sensitive leaders for future generations. Therefore Earlham stresses global education, peaceful resolution of conflict, equality of persons, and high moral standards of personal conduct.

A Sketch of the College's History and Mission from 1847 to the Present

Earlham College is a private, residential, national liberal arts college located in Richmond, Indiana. The college was founded in 1847 as the Friends Boarding School. In the beginning, the principal task of the college was to train teachers for frontier Quaker schools. Coeducational from its inception, in 1862 the college awarded its first degrees to one man and one woman. Pre-college

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classes were discontinued in 1900, and since that time, Earlham has focused on offering its students a distinctive and challenging education in the liberal arts and sciences. To meet a growing demand for leadership in the Society of Friends, the Earlham School of Religion was created in 1960, and it is the first accredited Quaker theological seminary in the world. A few years later, Earlham acquired Conner Prairie, a living history museum near Indianapolis.

Earlham is a member of the consortium Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA). Its other members are Wabash, DePauw, Antioch, Ohio Wesleyan, Wooster, Kenyon, Denison, Oberlin, Albion, Kalamazoo, and Hope. Consortium membership confers these benefits: exchange of curricular ideas, exchange of administrative ideas and data, opportunities for faculty development, tuition exchange within the consortium and with Grinnell, and common programs for off-campus study (such as the Japan Program which Earlham administers for the consortium). We also collaborate with the sister consortium Associated Colleges of the Midwest, notably in off-campus programs.

The name “Earlham” reflects the college’s ties with the traditions of English Quakers. Earlham Hall, located near Norwich, England, was the home of Joseph John Gurney, a banker and Quaker leader, and it became a center of abolitionist efforts and other important social movements throughout Britain. The Quaker concern for social justice and human freedom continues as part of the living tradition of Earlham College.

Today, Earlham is among the nation’s strongest liberal arts colleges, offering unique and outstanding educational experiences to approximately 1,150 undergraduates. Earlham has a history of academic strength, particularly in the sciences, a longstanding commitment to innovative interdisciplinary programs, and libraries nationally recognized for bibliographic instruction. Earlham emphasizes the pursuit of truth, respect for the consciences of individuals, the development of moral standards of personal conduct, and social justice. It is the deep commitment to and the blending of these two traditions, academic excellence and values inspired by the founders’ Quaker beliefs, that makes the Earlham experience distinctive.

International education and the importance of “engaging the world” are also vital and distinctive aspects of the Earlham College experience. All Earlham students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in a second language, and we challenge all of our students to learn about other cultures. Over 80 international students are currently studying on the Earlham campus, and more than 70 percent of Earlham students participate in one of the college’s international and domestic programs. While international study is now common at colleges and universities across the country, Earlham has been taking students abroad since its faculty developed some of the first collegiate international study programs in the 1950s. Our highly regarded programs in Japan have been in place since the 1960s. Distinctive to international education at Earlham is the participation of 60 percent of its faculty as leaders on off-campus programs. With this breadth and depth of experience, Earlham offers a rich international education both on- and off-campus.

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Our graduates go forth to lead lives of uncommon accomplishment, and they credit the college with preparing them for lives of value. Recent data from the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium¹ for 1991-2000 show that Earlham ranks 26th among 1,302 institutions in graduating students who go on to receive doctoral degrees. In the life and biological sciences, our eighth-place ranking just behind such prestigious institutions as Reed, the California Institute of Technology, Swarthmore, the University of Chicago, and Johns Hopkins is even more remarkable. Nearly as impressive are Earlham's rankings in the number of graduates who pursue doctorates in earth sciences (14th), social sciences (17th), geosciences (20th), humanities (33rd), and psychology (45th).

Earlham alumni are recipients of national scholarships for continued study and of national awards recognizing prominence in their chosen professions. Given this record of accomplishment, it's no surprise that Earlham figures prominently in Loren Pope's widely read book, *Colleges that Changes Lives*, or that Earlham was mentioned 2nd most often by counselors and teachers who responded to Jay Mathew's call for identifying "colleges that deserve a second look" in his recent book, *Harvard Schmarvard: Getting Beyond the Ivy League to the College that Is Best for You* (25).

Such outcomes emerge from a learning community in which we accord each another an uncommon degree of respect. We seek to learn from one another in and out of the classroom. Working closely with faculty members and their peers, Earlham students form meaningful and enduring personal relationships. We value spiritual or personal seeking as well as intellectual inquiry. Broad consultation and consensus seeking characterize our decision-making processes. We insist that students consider the values that guide their actions, and we place unusual responsibility upon students and set high expectations for personal conduct.

Though grounded in the college's Quaker roots, the distinctive character of the Earlham learning community is widely embraced, and all constituencies of Earlham – students, faculty, staff, alumni, and board members – affirm these aspects of the college's culture as our strengths. We are a college with a highly congruent understanding of our purposes and practices.

A Period of Self-Examination from 1993 to the Present

Since the last NCA self-study in 1993, the college has undergone an extended period of self-examination, of both its educational programming and its organizational underpinnings, that has resulted in a number of significant changes and enhancements. A concerted focus on our academic program began with the assessment plan put into place as part of our 1993 self-study. It grew to include a consideration of our academic calendar and a move to the semester system in the fall of 1996. Most recently, it has included a broad review of our general education curriculum, and a complete revision of the college's general education program is being implemented in the 2003-2004 academic year.

¹ Sources for specific data will be referenced with a number that refers to the list of internet resources in Appendix B (page 122). The HEDS data is reference 22.

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The examination of the organizational underpinnings of the college began in 1998 with the arrival of current President Doug Bennett. In his inaugural address, President Bennett challenged the Earlham community with a set of aspirations for the future: strengthening our educational programs, striving for a more diverse campus, enhancing teaching and learning through technology, improving our ties to the Richmond community, and strengthening our ties with the college's Quaker roots. Task forces set to work appraising our existing foundations for these aspirations and we have initiated a number of programs that have fostered further development of these areas. In addition, President Bennett began a systematic review of the work of the administrative units of the college, and moved to more fully codify our administrative practices into coherent sets of policies and procedures.

Strategic Planning

Our self-examination gained additional momentum when, in the fall of 2001, the college began a new cycle of strategic planning. This process culminated in a new Strategic Plan (29), which was approved by faculty in the fall of 2002 and by the Earlham Board of Trustees in the spring of 2003. This plan now frames the work of the college by identifying important items for our agenda and by establishing key priorities for the college's operating budget and future fundraising efforts.

The strategic planning process identified the college's strengths and weaknesses, and outlined a plan by which we could address the weaknesses that most challenge our current operations. We documented that our most significant and distinctive strengths have to do with clarity of mission and vitality of program and community life. Our most serious weaknesses, on the other hand, revolve around an interconnected set of enrollment, resource, and financial issues. We concluded that the college's single most important strategic challenge is to sustain a level of enrollment that provides a stable financial foundation for the exceptional educational experiences we are committed to providing. Thus, the main thrust of the strategic planning process and of the Strategic Plan itself is to show the way to stabilize enrollment at 1,200 students and enhance the college's finances.

At the same time, we are a community eager to take on new challenges. We want to make the college even more diverse in race, religion, sexual orientation, personal backgrounds, and political perspectives. We are eager to explore the potential of new technologies. We see new possibilities for the curriculum. We want to make sure that Earlham's important and distinctive messages reach a wider national audience. Sustaining the vitality of our learning community means never being satisfied with the quality of the relationships and programs we have at present. Working on these new and exciting challenges, too, is an important part of the strategic plan.

Self-Study for the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Re-Accreditation Self-Study and Organization of this Self-Study Report

Earlham College's re-accreditation self-study process has seen the continuation of what is now a decade of intense self-examination and assessment. Our self-study effort has pulled together the many strands of institutional assessment and self-examination that have been underway for many years, focusing primarily on assessment of and changes in our educational programming. We have also taken a hard look at Earlham administration and governance and the challenges before us. We document our successes, and we assess our resources and the institution's resolve to take on new challenges in the years ahead.

This self-study document continues with Chapter 2, describing the college's many, ongoing approaches to assessment and self-evaluation. These include assessment practices growing out of our 1993 NCA self-study process and team visit, institutional research, and our strategic planning efforts. The chapter concludes with a description of the self-study processes that were employed to prepare this document. Chapter 3 responds to three specific concerns identified in the report of the last NCA visiting team, and describes changes at the college since that team's visit in 1993.

Throughout the rest of the report, we describe how Earlham College conducts its business, and we demonstrate our effectiveness in meeting our mission and goals. In Chapter 4, we focus on our administration, which has seen many changes since our last self-study for re-accreditation. Chapter 5 is built around the college's educational mission. We have organized our discussion of Earlham's distinctive approach to education around key elements of our mission. We point to our successes, but also note where we aim to make improvements. Finally in Chapter 6, we look toward the future, and in particular the next six to eight years, as we more fully describe the college's recent strategic planning efforts and the institutional commitments we have made.

In Chapter 7, we conclude by summarizing the evidence that demonstrates our fulfillment of the Higher Learning Commission's "Criteria for Accreditation."