

Chapter 7

SUMMARY AND REQUEST FOR CONTINUED ACCREDITATION

Earlham College fully satisfies all of the General Institutional Requirements. Specifically, Earlham grants the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in Teaching degrees. The college has a longstanding mission statement that is widely understood and informs the educational and co-curricular programs of the college. Earlham is authorized to grant degrees and the college meets all legal requirements to operate as a not-for-profit educational institution in the state of Indiana.

The college has a Board of Trustees with the authority to establish and review the college's mission and programs. The college also has an experienced and capable team of administrators that provides effective leadership.

Earlham employs a highly qualified faculty; the overwhelming majority of its faculty members are full-time and possess Ph.D.s from outstanding graduate institutions. The faculty understand the importance of assessment, and have long employed a variety of assessment techniques to assess the effectiveness of their teaching activities, the college's program of general education, and the majors and minors offered by the college's departments and interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs.

Earlham's degree programs are consistent with its mission, based on recognized fields of study, appropriately named, and they follow practices common to institutions of higher learning in terms of length and content. The college has recently adopted a new program of general education centered on "ways of knowing." The general education program has several explicitly articulated goals, and also aims to expose Earlham students to a broad array of disciplines and to develop an interest in and skills for serious intellectual inquiry.

The college seeks to admit students who appreciate and value the school's mission and are well prepared to take advantage of the college's educational and co-curricular programs. The college also provides all students with access to learning resources and support services.

The college operates from a position of financial strength and stability. It has a relatively large endowment; quite large in terms of the college's full-time student population. Though it has operated with small budget deficits in six of the last ten years, it is resolved to operate with balanced budgets in the coming years. Steady gains in enrollment toward our objective of 1,200 students will enhance the resources available in the college's annual operating budget. The college's financial statements are audited annually.

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The college's catalog, publications, recruiting materials, and web pages either include or reflect the institution's mission, and offer accurate descriptions of Earlham's educational and co-curricular programs, degree requirements, the academic calendars, learning resources, its admission policies and practices, its charges and refund policies, and the academic credentials of its faculty and administrators. These documents also include disclosure of Earlham's standing with its regional accrediting agency, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

As summarized below, Earlham also satisfies the Higher Learning Commission's five Criteria for Accreditation:

Criterion 1: The Institution Has Clear and Publicly Stated Purposes Consistent with Its Mission and Appropriate to an Institution of Higher Education

Chapter 1 summarized the college's mission and purposes. Other chapters described in detail the many ways our mission is communicated to Earlham's constituencies and the public. Since the college's last re-accreditation, our efforts to communicate our mission and purposes have been augmented by several initiatives:

First, the college has recently adopted a new Strategic Plan. The creation of this plan involved widespread consultation and discussion among members and constituencies of the Earlham College community. The planning effort helped us to clarify our mission, and develop a set of institutional commitments or priorities that are aimed at specific ways we can better serve our mission and enhance our educational and co-curricular programs over the next several years.

Second, an institutional website now contains thousands of pages of material publicizing all aspects of the college, including our mission statement, faculty, staff and student handbooks, governance documents, online tools, the *Curriculum Guide*, and planning and assessment documents. Some sections of the college's website require passwords, but most aspects of the college are transparent to the whole world (17).

Finally, in 1997, as an early component of the college's Repositioning Plan, we developed a new generation of recruiting materials and publications based on marketing studies completed by an outside firm, Kane & Krukowski. We will be preparing for another generation of admissions materials and publications during the 2004-2005 academic year. The aim of all of these recruiting materials and publications is to present as effectively as possible our mission and our educational and co-curricular programs.

Criterion 2: The Institution Has Effectively Organized the Human, Financial, and Physical Resources Necessary to Accomplish Its Purposes

As described in Chapters 4 and 5, the college has organized and devoted considerable human, financial, and physical resources to accomplish its educational mission and purposes. The college enrolls diverse and highly talented students from around the world. Earlham has a greater percentage of African-American students than any other college in the Great Lakes Colleges Association, and more than 80 international students are studying on the Earlham College campus. Earlham employs a highly qualified and appropriately credentialed faculty. The Senior Staff of the college consists of capable administrators, some of whom have served the college faithfully for many years and others who have come more recently and brought new ideas and perspectives to the institution.

Since the last accreditation visit in 1993, Earlham has conducted thorough reviews of all of its academic programs, and many of its administrative functions. The college has reconfigured reporting lines to increase administrative efficiency and improve communication across offices. We received grant funds to support a Science Technology Consultant to work with faculty to revise courses, particularly with regard to the use of technology, and we have also added a full-time Minority Affairs administrator.

The college is among the more highly endowed small private liberal arts colleges in the country. We have, however, operated with small budget deficits in six of the last ten years. We believe these budget deficits are primarily a function of enrolling fewer students than we would like, and the first commitment of the college's Strategic Plan is to consistently enroll 1,200 students.

We have been working very intentionally to strengthen our admissions and enrollment efforts to meet our enrollment goal of 1,200 students, and these efforts appear to be working. We have also made great strides in improving student retention in only a very short time. Specific activities to improve our financial resource situation since the last accreditation review include:

- We have implemented a Repositioning Plan to address the college's enrollment challenges.
- We have conducted an external review of our admissions and financial aid offices and policies.
- We have conducted an external audit and review of our advancement and institutional development offices and activities.
- We have created a new administrative faculty position in Student Development to bolster retention efforts.

The arrival on campus this fall of the largest entering class in Earlham's history is an indication that these efforts appear to be achieving the desired results, and we expect that the additional revenue provided by more students –

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when combined with rigorous control of expenses – will provide Earlham with balanced budgets and financial stability in the years ahead.

The Earlham libraries are widely recognized as among the best undergraduate libraries in the nation. Our information technology resources are very good and improving, and since 1993, the libraries, Instructional Technology and Media Resources, and Computing Services have been joined under one umbrella to improve coordination. We have increased budgets to insure better access to library materials, information technology, and to fund ongoing replacement of computer hardware and software. We have increased staffing for better and more coordinated training and support for computer technology, and we are now using information technology to manage a wide range of internal administrative functions.

We have also made great strides in improving campus learning facilities. Most of our academic buildings and facilities are in very good shape and we are moving deliberately to insure that all of our academic programs share the same level of quality as those departments and programs now housed in the new Bolling Center. The college funds depreciation expenses, and uses this cash flow to finance maintenance and improvements in information technology. Since the last re-accreditation cycle, Earlham has:

- Completed construction of the \$13 million Landrum Bolling Center in 2002 to provide new accommodations for faculty and staff previously housed in Tyler Hall.
- Enhanced its science facilities with major renovations of Dennis and Stanley Halls in 2000 and 2001.
- Completed a \$13 million Athletics and Wellness Center in 1999.
- Renovated Goddard Auditorium (1997).
- Constructed a new Equestrian Center in 1997 and an Indoor Riding Arena in 2003.
- Completely renovated Bundy Hall (1996).

Overall, the processes by which the college allocates and organizes resources are effective, and we are well prepared to offer our students outstanding educational experiences. A new master planning process is now underway, and we are expecting that this process will help us understand more clearly how we prioritize space and facilities needs for our academic and co-curricular programs, especially in the fine arts. The new master plan will also help to improve facilities for or relocate some administrative units.

Criterion 3: The Institution Is Accomplishing Its Educational and Other Purposes

Throughout this self-study document, we have shown evidence of Earlham's success at enrolling, retaining, and graduating students whose achievements in college and whose lives beyond college demonstrate that the college's mission and purposes are being met. Of all of the many accomplishments of our graduates, we are probably most gratified by the large numbers of our students who go on to pursue graduate degrees, because this indicates we have succeeded in developing in our students a lifelong interest in creative and intellectual endeavors.

As noted elsewhere in this self-study document, recent data from the Baccalaureate Origins Study (22) prepared by Franklin and Marshall College shows that Earlham ranks 26th among all institutions in graduating students who go on to receive doctoral degrees. Our eighth-place ranking in the life and biological sciences, just behind such prestigious institutions as Reed, the California Institute of Technology, Swarthmore, the University of Chicago, and Johns Hopkins is even more remarkable. Our success at motivating students to pursue graduate study runs across the curriculum, however, and Earlham ranks 17th among colleges and universities in the number of students who pursue doctoral degrees in the social sciences and we rank 33rd in the number of students who pursue doctoral degrees in the humanities. The top five graduate programs attended by our students are found on the campuses of the Indiana University, the University of Illinois, the various University of California campuses, Columbia University, and Harvard University.

In the last 15 years, Earlham students have also been the recipients of 13 Thomas J. Watson Fellowships, ten National Science Foundation Fellowships, six Fulbright awards, five Barry M. Goldwater Scholarships, one Carnegie Foundation for International Peace Award, and one Harry S. Truman Scholarship.

As described in several earlier chapters, the college collects a rich array of data to document and assess student and alumni achievements. After its visit in 1993, the NCA team complimented Earlham for the quality and thoroughness of our assessment efforts. Those efforts have now been in place for ten more years, and during this time we have continued to augment our assessment activities in many ways, of which four are most noteworthy:

- We have created an Assessment Committee, and charged that committee with overall responsibility for assessing all aspects of Earlham's educational and co-curricular programs and added the position of Associate in Assessment, an administrative position charged with overseeing the organization and publication of campus-wide assessment practices.
- We have added a full-time Associate Director of Institutional Research who works with our Director of Institutional Research to conduct ongoing assessment and studies of our educational and co-curricular programs as well as many other college activities and operations.

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- Earlham has begun participating in more national surveys, including the Higher Education Data Sharing consortium (23) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (24), so that we have comparable data from peer institutions by which to measure our achievements. We have also begun using the Your First College Year (YFCY) (32) survey administered by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) and given to freshman at the end of their first year of college. Responses from this survey can be compared to the CIRP survey given to freshman during New Student Week (9).
- A leader in assessing educational outcomes, Earlham is becoming even more astute and diligent in our assessment efforts and the college will continue to make extensive use of its ongoing assessment efforts in program development and revision, in institutional planning, and in strategic decision-making.

Specific initiatives and programs that have enhanced our educational mission and purposes since 1993 include:

- We have recently revised the college's general education program to emphasize "ways of knowing" through a highly consultative process that involved nearly every teaching faculty member in departmental and divisional planning meetings.
- Earlham, along with Goshen and Manchester Colleges, was a recipient of \$14 million Plowshares grant from the Lilly Endowment to establish a comprehensive, collaborative Peaces Studies program.
- We have increased support for faculty development and research, both to encourage collaborative research between students and faculty members and to encourage individual faculty members to remain active scholars in their disciplines.
- We now have a math department with three full-time faculty members.
- In its 1993 review, the visiting NCA team recommended that we consider eliminating a struggling Computer Science major. Instead, we added staff to bolster the major's viability and to relieve pressure on the Mathematics and Physics Departments to staff Computer Science courses.
- Earlham is an initiating partner in the Collaborative Education in Study Abroad program, which brings Japanese students to American colleges for a year of English language and cultural study. The presence of these Japanese students on the Earlham campus further enriches a student body that already has more than 80 full-time international students, and is a logical extension of Earlham's longstanding commitment to international education.

Criterion 4: The Institution Can Continue to Accomplish Its Purposes and Strengthen Its Educational Effectiveness

After its visit in 1993, the NCA team noted that the Earlham community needed to pull together to work toward improving morale under difficult financial conditions. The team's report also suggested that faculty be involved in the college's next capital campaign. In just the last few years, we have written and adopted a comprehensive Strategic Plan. We have now established a Master Planning Committee to provide further guidance on campus physical space needs and future building priorities. The Strategic Plan and the work of the Master Planning Committee will provide a solid basis for further campus discussions about and input into plans for our next major capital campaign, which should get underway within the next two years.

Earlham's ability to carry out its educational mission and purposes is enhanced by its considerable human, physical, and financial resources. As we note above, we have very talented students, a highly motivated faculty that demonstrates an unusually high degree of commitment, and a far richer financial resource base than many of our peers.

At the same time, our assessment and strategic planning efforts have identified a number of institutional weaknesses. If being cognizant of these weaknesses and knowing that we must soon address them are necessary conditions for improving the college, then we are making good progress. In many areas of weakness that were identified by our strategic planning efforts, we are already aggressively moving forward:

- The number one commitment of our recently adopted Strategic Plan is to increase our enrollment to the college's capacity of 1,200 students, while maintaining or even lowering our current financial aid discount rate. Our recent enrollment successes are most encouraging.
- Even though we have begun raising significantly more money each year than in the past, we know that we must improve both our ability to raise major gifts and to increase our participation in and funds raised through annual giving by alumni and friends. To these ends, we have had an external audit and review of our institutional advancement efforts and recently hired a new Vice President for Institutional Advancement.
- We know we must improve our Fine Arts facilities, and planning within our Fine Arts departments and the work of the Master Planning Committee should provide direction about the ways we will need to improve existing facilities as well as the new spaces and facilities we will need to construct.
- We are moving forward with ambitious plans for complete renovations of three of our oldest residence halls – Barrett, Earlham, and Olvey-Andis – and the planning for the construction of a new residence hall is now well underway.

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Because we are not only willing but eager to address these areas of weakness, we have every reason to believe that Earlham will be a stronger educational institution ten years from now than it is today.

Criterion 5: The Institution Demonstrates Integrity in its Practices and Relationships

The emphasis on values in Earlham College's mission is an indication that we seek to act with integrity as we work with each other and with individuals and institutions outside the Earlham community. Past NCA visiting teams have commended Earlham in this regard. We have remained vigilant in our efforts to act with integrity. For example, over the last ten years, our efforts to insure that we act with integrity have led us to:

- Revise the faculty and staff handbooks.
- Focus on the need to develop a campus-wide governance manual.
- Revise the college's Sexual Assault Policy.
- Extend the college's employee benefits to same-sex partners.
- Re-institute the "F" grade in the interest of more accurate transcripts.
- Develop a Vendor Relations Policy.
- Reassert the college's commitment to diversity by creating a Diversity Working Group and charging it with developing and implementing a coordinated plan of action, and by creating a new Minority Affairs administrative position.

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Earlham College requests that the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools continue the college's accreditation.