

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE VISIT

TO

Earlham School of Religion

Richmond, IN

October-22-25, 2006

for

The Board of Commissioners of
The Commission on Accrediting of the
Association of Theological Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Chair: Scotty Gray, Vice President for Academic Affairs Emeritus, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Kathleen D. Billman, Dean of Academic Affairs, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Alva R. Caldwell, Librarian for Administrative Services, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Louis Charles Willard, Director, Accreditation and Institutional Evaluation, Association of Theological Schools

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Brief description of Earlham School of Religion

Earlham School of Religion (hereafter referred to as ESR), a Christian seminary in the Quaker tradition, was founded in 1960. Until that time the Religious Society of Friends provided no seminary education for persons called to the ministry. Earlham School of Religion now serves a broad range of Friends from various locations and traditions, programmed and unprogrammed Quakers, as well as numerous other faith traditions. One third of the student body claim affiliation with religious heritages other than Quaker.

The faculty of five men and four women hold degrees from a wide range of colleges, universities, and seminaries and employ a variety of educational pedagogies. The most recent Fact Sheet indicates a headcount of 93 and an FTE of 46; an endowment of \$32,658,637; revenues of \$1,791,676; and expenditures of 1,303,406.

Earlham School of Religion's approach is described as both formative and transformative, beginning with issues of basic spiritual formation and moving ultimately to what is described as "transformative as Christ works within this holistic approach to theological education." The institution offers two degrees MA in Religion and an M.Div which may bear the ATS-approved variant degree name of Master of Ministry degree.

2. Accreditation History (since last visit)

Earlham School of Religion has held continuous accreditation since its initial accreditation in 1973. The last comprehensive evaluation visit was in 1996. In 2001 the Commission approved two online courses. In 2002 the Commission received the required report regarding how evaluation had been built into the comprehensive institutional planning. In 2005 the Commission received the required report of how the online field education courses support the M. Div. requirement for supervised experiences in ministry.

II. GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

1. PURPOSE, PLANNING, AND EVALUATION

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1. Earlham School of Religion has a formally adopted statement of purpose that was initiated, developed, authorized, and regular reviewed by the Board of Trustees. The statement clearly articulates its confessional commitment and supports the purpose of Earlham College to which ESR is related.

1.1.2. The purpose statement of ESR clearly supports the purpose of Earlham College and the purpose statement has been developed in relationship to the college.

1.1.3. The statement is enabling, defining, realistic, and accurate and guides the institution in its comprehensive planning and decision making regarding programs, allocation of resources, constituencies served, relationships with ecclesiastical bodies, and global concerns.

1.2 Planning and evaluation

1.2.1 Earlham's purpose statement is foundational to the institution's comprehensive planning, evaluation, and decision making

1.2.2 Discussions with administrators and faculty and observations of documents indicate a culture of assessment. There are clear statements of expected outcomes for each degree program, an extensive list of "Acceptable Means of Assessment," the gathering of quantitative and qualitative information.

1.2.3 The full discussion of the committee's findings with respect to assessment appears where the report discusses Standard 3.1.4.

2. INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

2.1 There is at Earlham a demonstrable consistency of actions with their stated purpose and their educational programs and institutional activities are carried out according to the standards and procedures established by the Association of Theological Schools and its Commission on Accrediting.

2.1.2 The committee finds that the operations are in compliance applicable state, provincial, and federal laws and regulations.

2.1.3 Their published materials address the relevant matters and accurately represent the institution to its various constituencies.

2.1.4 Equitable policies address concerns of students, faculty, administrations and the committee finds that all constituencies are treated in ethical ways. Interviews showed that the ESR constituencies are uniformly satisfied with the ways they are treated.

2.1.5 The board, administration, and faculty of ESR are not yet racially diverse, though some other cultures represented in the student body.

2.1.6 Earlham School of Religion tracks their default rate on student loans and are well within the federal threshold.

2.1.7 Earlham School of Religion contributes to the overall goals of Earlham College of which it is a part and supports the college's policies and procedures.

3. LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH: THEOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP

3.1. Activities of Theological Scholarship: Learning, Teaching, Research

3.1.0. Conversations between the ATS visiting team and students, alumni, staff, and faculty confirm the portrait painted in the self-study of an active, engaged community of teaching and learning. The faculty appears to take seriously its self-description of being committed to a "philosophy and pedagogy suited for adult education, believing that optimal learning occurs when teacher and student are motivated by the subject matter and engaged in a dialogical process" (SS, 45). The classroom culture at ESR, as it was described in interviews with students

and alumni, leans heavily toward discussion-oriented pedagogies. Generally speaking, this style seems to be appreciated, although there was acknowledgement that students manifest a variety of learning styles and this approach does not suit every learner.

The ESR faculty is making a concerted effort to do effective assessment of how they are meeting their objectives for teaching and learning. The ongoing evaluation of the *ESR Access* program for distributed learning has yielded information as well as raised questions about effective pedagogies not only for online education, but for how teaching and learning occurs most effectively in the traditional classroom—learning to teach in a “virtual classroom” can evoke both questions and new insights about how effective teaching and learning takes place in the traditional classroom.

Students and alumni interviewed by the visiting team described their professors as being respectful of them as adult learners, while at the same time responsive to requests for help and willing to go out of their way to assist them. The emphasis on M.Div./M/Min. students’ active engagement in discernment of their call to ministry, as well as their skills and gifts for ministry, is apparent in the way their curriculum is structured, and both Quaker students and students from other faith traditions reported a deep appreciation for the central role spiritual formation plays at ESR. Several Quaker students reported that experiencing the process of engaging a “clearness committee,” an important feature of Quaker practice, was a new experience that deepened their appreciation for their own tradition; students and alumni of other denominations also reported it to be a helpful addition to their own spiritual and vocational practices.

3.1.1 Learning

3.1.1.1. ESR faculty members met together in retreat January 18-24, 2004, to revise the overall learning outcomes of the M.Div./M.Min. and M.A. programs, describe means of assessment, and identify outcomes by curricular areas.

3.1.1.2. The syllabi reviewed by the visiting team evidenced clear goals and standards appropriate for a masters-level program of study, with assignments designed to encourage research and critical thinking. The year-long supervised field education program is prefaced by required courses that place spiritual discernment of call and also of gifts for ministry at the heart of preparation for ministry.

3.1.1.3. ESR excels at fostering a deep and wide-ranging understanding of Quaker identity, theology, and spirituality. First-year ESR students are often surprised to discover the diversity of perspectives within the Quaker tradition that they find among peers, faculty members, and staff. Classroom and community experiences at ESR provide venues for deeper investigation of differences and the opportunity to build collegial relationships amidst those differences. In the world of the Religious Society of Friends, ESR provides a unique place for learning about the breadth of theological perspectives within the tradition.

3.1.2 Teaching

3.1.2 Students and faculty express appreciation for Lilly Library, which includes the Friends Collection, the third largest research collection for the Religious Society of Friends in North America. The theological librarian assists faculty with research agendas as well as classroom instruction. Students taking online courses are assisted by a research guide and encouraged to seek assistance via phone or email. Preliminary results of the Earlham Libraries’ 2005 LibQual

survey indicate that seminary students and faculty find the reference service helpful in facilitating their research.

3.1.2.2. The most significant change in instructional methods has been the creation of online sections of required courses (the *ESR Access* initiative). Developed in response to an identified need in the Society of Friends emerging from a national consultation, ESR invested funding, administrative support, and faculty time to launch this new project. At the culmination of its initial five-year “test run,” the faculty has identified some gifts and pleasant surprises of teaching online. At the same time, there are pedagogical challenges to confront, since different learning styles exist for students in cyberspace as they do for students in the traditional classroom. It is vital, in the estimation of this committee, for this program to remain adequately resourced, and that faculty members continue to be well compensated for their time investment and assisted to address new pedagogical questions and challenges, as well as to maximize the new opportunities created by this initiative.

3.1.2.3. Courses at ESR, as noted above, encourage theological conversation, since there is a strong focus on discussion and interaction. There is clear concern on the part of both faculty and students that teaching and learning reflect an awareness of the diversity of worldwide and local settings. Locally and nationally, an important feature of diversity at ESR is the diversity encountered in the Society of Friends itself, as well as students from other denominations who attend ESR. Yet beyond theological diversity, which is no small challenge, specific efforts at cross-cultural engagement have occurred in recent years, including a faculty cross-cultural immersion in Honduras in January 2006 (the theology professor and the Dean are working on future possibilities for the relationship between ESR and Honduran Friends), funding individual student and faculty cross-cultural exchanges, and exploring the impact of cross-cultural encounters on the teaching-learning process (e.g., the inclusion of cross-cultural texts and/or themes in courses). In the view of the visiting team, ESR’s teaching and learning environment would be strengthened by greater racial and cultural diversity in both the faculty and student body.

3.1.3. Research and 3.2. Characteristics of Theological Scholarship

3.1.3.1.-3.1.3.2. The ESR faculty is a strongly qualified group of scholars who evidence a commitment to research and publication. Distinctive Quaker theological commitments to spiritual formation, Quaker Studies, and Peace and Justice Studies receive strong attention and support. A change since the last self-study is the creative effort ESR has made to foster a stronger, mutually-enriching relationship with the Religious Society of Friends. One means of connection has been the “Traveling Ministries” Program, in which ESR faculty and students make themselves available to local meetings for teaching and learning initiatives.

3.1. 4. It is apparent that a great deal has been done since the previous self-study to ensure the quality of teaching, learning, and research. New governance documents, the strengthening of faculty salaries and sabbatical policies, the modification of committee workload, and the standardization of faculty review policies have been cited as strengthening faculty morale, which is so essential for enthusiastic teaching and research.

In addition, intentional efforts have been made to encourage a “culture of assessment” regarding teaching and learning. In the spring and fall semesters of 2003, the Dean sponsored a series of faculty lunches in which faculty members selected texts from an ATS list of resources

on assessment and facilitated conversation on the chosen texts. These conversations were described as “immediately applicable to syllabus design and classroom teaching,” in addition to fostering a deeper awareness of the assessment of learning outcomes. This was followed up by a four-day retreat in January 2004 to revise student learning outcomes and clarify means for assessment. A comprehensive review of the Christian Spirituality program took place in spring 2003. In 2005 the Field Education Committee began to explore how learning outcomes factored in assessing students’ readiness for field education. These reviews, together with the recent review of the *ESR Access* program are intended to provide a foundation for assessing the seminary’s other educational programs.

With much accomplished, there is still a ways to go in refining ESR’s assessment of student learning outcomes. Having identified learning outcomes and a number of means for assessing how they are being met, it remains to pull the data together in a more comprehensive way. For example, one potentially excellent instrument of assessment, the narrative reports professors provide regarding their students’ performance in class in lieu of letter grades, could attend in a more systematic way both to the identified goals of the course and the more general learning outcomes affirmed as important across the curriculum. Since the writing of the reports is so time-consuming, more work up front to help identify the rubrics for evaluation might eventually save time in crafting the reports. The ESR faculty expressed the awareness that further steps are needed to strengthen assessment of learning outcomes. However, in the estimation of the visiting team, what is of chief importance is that the commitment and processes are in place to nurture growth and development; that a “culture of assessment” has taken hold, though ESR will need to attend carefully to the growth of the good seeds that have been planted.

The commitment to address ecclesial concern for more access to theological education by persons not able to undertake the traditional form of seminary preparation led ESR to commit to a five-year pilot project in online theological education—*ESR Access*. Although the responsibility for evaluating this program lies elsewhere in this document, it is important to acknowledge here that this program constitutes a response to what participants in ESR’s ecclesial community indicated was a priority concern.

3.2 Characteristics of Theological Scholarship

3.2.1.1.-3.2.1.3. As noted above, the educational processes favored by ESR are dialogical and collaborative. Mutual respect—in field studies, classroom learning, Traveling Ministries, and regular community gatherings for “Common Meal” (a weekly gathering that includes community prayer, a meal, and a program initiated primarily by students) seems to characterize the ethos of the community. Historic Quaker concerns for peace and justice orient ESR students to the larger world of social and political processes. While there are other cultures represented in the student body, there is a lack of racial and cultural diversity on campus and the visiting team heard concerns expressed about the difficulty of deeply engaging racism and classism.

3.2.2. Freedom of Inquiry

3.2.2.0. ESR’s policy on academic freedom is found in the ESR governance document, which is grounded in the By-Laws of the Earlham Board of Trustees and in the *Faculty Handbook*. Since the last self-study, not only have policies regarding academic freedom been articulated, but a series of procedures for complaints and grievances also have been developed. Taken together, both these steps appear to have allayed faculty “insecurity” in the teaching and learning process reported at the last self-study and increased a sense of faculty freedom. One faculty member

spoke of how reassuring it was to have clear procedures in place for student complaints, and of a recent occurrence when those policies seemed to work very well.

3.2.3 Involvement with Diverse Publics

3.2.3.1.—3.2.3.4. ESR has become more intentional about its commitment to the Religious Society of Friends, locally, nationally, and internationally. At the same time, four of the nine members of the faculty are from other denominations (Baptist, Roman Catholic, United Methodist, Disciples of Christ) and ESR students come from a variety of faith traditions. Commitment to the “church Catholic” exists alongside institutional commitment to further the mission of Friends. Faculty members are involved in scholarly guilds. Historic commitments to peace and justice contribute to ESR’s outward-looking focus.

3.2.4. Globalization

3.2.4.1.-3.2.4.3. At every level of conversation at ESR, the visiting team heard commitment expressed to global education and global relationships. Two faculty travel seminars, the latter to Honduras in 2006, have nurtured the concern for global exchange and intercultural learning; the Dean is taking Spanish lessons from two ESR students, one of whom is a native of Bogota. When both students and alumni were asked how they would spend an imaginary \$10 million dollar bequest, there was widespread enthusiasm to fund international learning opportunities for U.S. students and scholarships to enable students from other countries (particularly Quakers) to study at ESR. One of the faculty members at ESR has published two books on African American religion and is under contract for a third volume.

A distinctive feature of the Quaker religious heritage is its witness for peace and social justice. The goal of a theological education that “awakens students’ awareness of and concern for these issues in daily life, both in our local communities and the global village of which we are a part” (*Catalog*, 41) is stated as a goal of the entire educational process, but the particular program in Peace and Justice Studies especially focuses on this theological and curricular goal. The curriculum does not require a course on world religions, but there are electives in world religions. One course in the Peace and Justice curriculum examines religious responses to war and violence among the major world religions.

The strategies the visiting team witnessed for promoting global awareness and interconnectedness appear, in essence, to be similar to the strategies reported by the last visiting team. The number of women on the teaching faculty has grown slightly since 1996 (from three to four) Members of different constituencies of the ESR community noted the lack of racial and cultural diversity in the ERS faculty, governing board, and student body. One alumnus, reflecting on how conflict is negotiated on the ESR campus, commented on the difficulty of addressing issues of race and class, especially in the absence of faculty of color. There is a lack of progress in this area of diversification.

4. THE THEOLOGICAL CURRICULUM

4.1. Goals of the Theological Curriculum

4.1.1.- 4.1.2. The overall educational goal of the ESR curriculum (“preparation for ministry”) is guided by the educational vision articulated in the seminary’s Credo: “We hold that Christ is present, guiding and directing our lives, and that we can know and obey Christ’s will.” This emphasis on spiritual discernment, a distinctive feature of Quaker theology, is structured into the M.Div./M.M. curriculum through required courses: Spiritual Preparation for Ministry, taken in the first year of studies, followed by Discernment of Call and Gifts (normally taken in the third semester of studies), which is completed prior to admittance to Field Education. These key elements of the curriculum are interwoven with a strong core of foundational courses in Bible, church history, theology, and applied theology. Quaker students are required to take a course in Quaker history, and students of other denominations are advised to complete a corresponding course (through a transfer course or independent study) focusing on their own denomination’s history and polity. The distinctive Quaker emphasis on peace and justice is conveyed via the required course, Introduction to Peace and Justice Studies, or an advanced course in peace and justice studies, as well as through weekly Peace Forum luncheons and other venues for reflection on peace and justice concerns. The M.A. curriculum, which is guided by the purpose of preparing students for ministries in teaching and research, includes attention to a breadth of core theological studies as well as specialization in one area of concentration. Upon completion of fifteen semester hours, the student petitions the faculty to appoint an M.A. Guidance Committee and presents a thesis project proposal in the chosen concentration.

4.2. Degree Programs

4.2.0.1.-4.2.2.2. ESR’s two degree programs are both post-baccalaureate. The M.Div./M.M. is oriented primarily toward ministerial leadership and the M.A. in Religion is an academic degree that aims to prepare students for ministries in teaching and research, such as teaching in Friends secondary schools, or as preparation for Ph.D. study. The distinctions between the two degrees are clearly articulated, as well as the particular goals and objectives of each program, in accordance with ATS Standards. The enrollment in the M.Div./M.M. degree is sufficient to provide a community of learning in that degree program. Although the M.A. enrollment is much smaller, the courses that lead to the fulfillment of degree requirements are taken with M.Div./M.M. students. We concur with the 1996 visiting team that the dual nomenclature of the M.Div./M.M. degree should be retained, because ESR serves a primarily Quaker constituency where ordained professional ministry is less normative than in other churches and the “Master of Ministry” seems less presumptuous than “Master of Divinity” to many Quaker ears. Anecdotally, the Dean noted that an increasing number of students are choosing the M.Div. nomenclature out of the desire to choose the more commonly recognized degree title.

4.3 Degree Program Standards—M.Div./M.Min.

A.1.0.-A.3.—A. 5. Many items in this section of the ATS Standards have already been covered elsewhere in this report (see Standard Three). The goal of the ESR M.Div./M.M. degree is to prepare students for professional ministry or doctoral study. The theological curriculum has a strong core of Bible (12 semester hours), church, history (9 hours plus an additional course in Quaker Studies or, for students from other denominations, a history/polity course in their own

tradition), theology (9 hours), applied theology courses (21 hours), spirituality studies (3 hours), peace and justice studies (3 hours), comprehensive seminar (3 semester hours capstone course) and electives (21 hours) that fulfill the emphasis requirement as well as allow students to select courses of particular interest. The curriculum offers a broad exposure to the church catholic as well as the Quaker heritage. Its year-long field education program focuses especially on ministerial practice and competency and is strengthened by prior attention to spiritual preparation for ministry and discernment of call and gifts for ministry. The Quaker emphasis on peace and justice studies contributes to the school's mission of engaging the larger social and global context in which ministry takes place and ministry as public leadership. This 81-semester hour program meets standards for the M.Div. degree set forth in the ATS Standards.

The 1996 visiting team raised the question of whether the school had sufficient faculty resources to carry on so many special emphases, and whether requiring such a specialization even should be done, given the generalist nature of the M.Div. degree. The team was concerned that ESR's literature not convey that the "track system" be construed as "truly specialized ministry preparation."

ESR's 2006 self-study describes the expertise of the faculty members who exercise oversight over the curriculum, including six of its special emphases: Pastoral Care and Counseling, Pastoral Ministry, Spirituality, Teaching, and Ministry of Writing. Given cross-registration with Bethany Theological Seminary on a shared campus, it appears that a sufficient number of core and elective courses are offered to fulfill emphasis requirements. However, some students and faculty members with whom we spoke acknowledged that one of the impacts of the *ESR Access Program* is that offering one of the basic courses online cuts down slightly on the number of electives that each professor is able to offer. In some areas only one full time faculty member teaches in a given area for both schools, and there is no professor at ESR who directs the teaching emphasis (responsibilities are shared).

The appointment of a full-time professor of Christian Spirituality to the regular faculty following an evaluation of the spirituality emphasis has brought greater solidity to this aspect of ESR's spirituality emphasis. The newly-appointed professor of pastoral care and counseling offers a set of regular offerings for both ESR and Bethany. Taking the concern for not "over-promising" seriously, he is considering a recommendation that the word "counseling" be dropped from the "pastoral care and counseling" emphasis description, to further clarify that an emphasis on pastoral care and counseling in a generalist M.Div. program does not prepare graduates to be pastoral counselors. The ESR literature does not promise this, but some students hope nonetheless that they can gain credentials for counseling through this emphasis, and one student voiced the wish that the ESR program would lead to State licensure in counseling. Thus, there is no warrant for criticizing ESR of promising what it cannot deliver, but it is important to recognize that any mention of a specialization in and of itself can raise expectations regarding competencies that will be obtained in a given program of studies. ESR will need to continue to clarify and assess the relationship between the learning outcomes it can deliver in the respective emphases and those that are desired by students and also the ministry sites in which they will serve. The ESR faculty seems poised to undertake that very task, having named curriculum review as its next major focus of faculty attention.

A.3.2.-A.3.3.0. Residence requirements and the length of the M.Div./M.M. degree program meet ATS Standards for the M.Div. degree. The distributed learning program is evaluated elsewhere in this report.

A. 4.1.-A.4.1.3. The ESR M.Div./M.M. degree program meets ATS admissions standards for the

M.Div. program. It also meets standards for access to a regular worshipping community, a rich community life and several opportunities for learning outside the classroom (e.g., weekly Common Meal, Peace Forum, opportunity to participate in the “student meeting for business,” all-school worship, and the athletic, student services, and library resources of Earlham College). The faculty is widely reported to be attentive to students’ spiritual and vocational needs, as well as their academic growth and development. The field education program makes use of persons currently engaged in parish, congregational, and/or specialized ministries. As described elsewhere, ESR has made momentous efforts to develop a deeper and more positive relationship with the Religious Society of Friends. An area that needs strengthening, identified especially by students, is gaining help in ministry placement.

A.5 Educational Evaluation

There are clear statements of expected outcomes for each degree program, an extensive list of “Acceptable Means of Assessment,” and the gathering of quantitative and qualitative information. There is a healthy “culture of evaluation,” but it is currently not carefully defined. ESR is beginning to develop a systematic, coordinated, and ongoing plan for evaluating the extent to which students have met the various goals of the degree programs.

Master of Arts in Religion

E.1-E.3. The goals of ESR’s Master of Arts degree are clearly distinguished from the goals of the M.Div./M.M. degree. It is an academic degree, which aims to prepare students for secondary level teaching in Quaker or parochial schools; students called to serve Peace and Justice ministries or other ministries for which the study and research skills of the degree are enabling; and students who desire to prepare for a doctoral program (although the *Catalog* states that the M.Div./M.M. degree is also an appropriate choice for students considering doctoral work). The program is described as a two-year program, in which students must demonstrate competency in theology and Bible before taking the advanced courses required for the M.A. degree. Students may transfer credit from another graduate school or seminary, take ESR prerequisite courses, or pass a proficiency exam to satisfy these prerequisites. Areas allowed for concentration in the M.A. program include biblical studies, Christian theology, Quaker studies, or peace and justice studies. The M.A. degree requirements culminate in a thesis project (nine hours). Theoretically, if the prerequisite knowledge is there and the thesis project moves quickly along, it is possible to complete the degree in less than two years. The *Catalog* states that it is “difficult to predict when the M.A. will be completed, as this depends not on whether a set number of courses is finished but when the student produces a thesis project of sufficient quality to warrant awarding the degree” (28), although the degree must be completed within five years from the time of the student’s first ESR course.

E.4-E.4.2. The ESR *Catalog* sets out standards for admission that conform to ATS Standards. Entrance into the M.A. program requires basic competency in Bible and theology, which students may demonstrate through ESR courses (without receiving academic credit toward the degree). The collaborative strength of ESR and Bethany faculty teaching in the specializations offered in the M.A., the quality and resources of the Lilly Library, and the support services offered through ESR and Earlham College assist in aiding the M.A. to meet ATS Standards.

E.5. Description of ESR’s assessment process for degree programs is set forth in Standard Three.

5. LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

The Lilly Library of Earlham College is attractive, well designed, and provides generous space for its users. The building also provides a home for the Earlham Computing Service and the Instructional Technology and Media program. The library is located in the heart of the college campus just a ten-minute walk from the seminaries of Earlham School of Religion and Bethany Theological Seminary.

5.1 Library Collections

The Earlham College library collection totals 405,000 volumes, 980 print periodicals, 1,233 individual electronic periodicals and about 17,000 serial titles in various databases. The collection is strong in areas of philosophy, eastern religions, and peace studies all of which serve the seminary very well. It houses the third largest research collection for the Religious Society of Friends in North America. In addition the library houses the Brethren Collection of over 15,000 volumes.

The Library Agreement signed into effect in 1994 when Bethany arrived on the campus regulates the way in which costs are shared among the college, ESR and Bethany. All seminary acquisitions are assessed a surcharge of 100 %. A book purchased by ERS for \$80 has a surcharge of \$80; if the book is particular to ESR, they pay the full \$160; if the book is a general theological book serving ESR and Bethany, then the \$160 is shared \$80 each. The self-study reports that in Fiscal 04/05 ESR spent about \$12,000 on serials and \$12,000 on books for a total of \$24,000. A 100% surcharge means that ESR contributed an additional \$24,000 to the library for fiscal 04/05. In addition Bethany and ESR each contribute 17% of the salary and benefits of the theological librarian. This means that 34% of her time is given to to the two seminaries and 66% of her time is given in service to the College Library. ESR is being served very well by this arrangement.

It is not clear how many ESR faculty and students take advantage of this fine facility. Computer labs in the ESR buildings provide excellent equipment and space for students to do their electronic library searching. ESR faculty and students heaped lots of praise on the library for its delivery services. Students were delighted. Commuting students were able to have documents and books delivered to them either electronically or by mail. Faculty who need to use Interlibrary loan were very satisfied with the service provided by the library. It would be important in the future to conduct a survey to see how many ESR patrons actually make use of the Lilly Library Building and its many resources that are located there.

The electronic resources are particularly strong. The library subscribes to ATLAS, and a variety of full text journal collections such as JSTOR, Project Muse, PsycArticle, and Lexis-Nexis. Nearly 5,000 Net Library electronic books are also available. Students and faculty reported deep levels of satisfaction in the training provided by the library staff and in their experience of retrieving materials from these sources.

5.2 Contribution to Teaching, Learning, and Research

Though the ESR faculty and students heaped lots of praise on the library for its delivery services, it is not clear to what extent the ESR faculty and students take advantage of the fine

library facility. Faculty who need to use Interlibrary loan were very satisfied with the service provided by the library. It would be important in the future to conduct a survey to see how many ESR patrons actually make use of the Lilly Library Building and its many resources that are located there.

5.3 Partnership in Curriculum Development

The librarian is appropriately involved in ESR retreats, meetings, and decision making arenas where the library and curriculum is concerned.

5.4 Administration and Leadership

The Theological Librarian is a spirited, energetic, pleasant woman who has served the seminary communities for several years. She is an Administrative Faculty member at the college who is provided sabbatical and other faculty type benefits. The ESR community is very pleased with the way in which she provides services for them from the library. She holds a professional library degree and a B.A. in Religion. She participates in the Joint Faculty meetings of Bethany/ESR and serves as chairperson of the Joint Library Committee. At present the Joint Library Committee meets somewhat infrequently. It is important that the Joint Library Committee establish a more regular schedule and that the committee gives the Theological Librarian additional guidance in book selection.

In addition, ESR is encouraged to follow the suggestion in the self-study that the Joint Library Committee “will include a review of the collection development policy”(p. 40). The present policy was written in 1997 and needs to be updated to address the growing issues related to foreign language materials for faculty research, and those of electronic resources.

6. FACULTY

6.1 Faculty Qualifications, Responsibilities, Development, and Employment

Since the last ATS visit in 1996, there has been a large number of faculty retirements. Only two faculty who were present in 1996 are still on the faculty today. In developing the faculty, ESR has paid close attention to its mission statement and has sought out persons who are excellent teachers as well as researchers. Faculty are also deeply involved in the lives of the local churches and Quaker meetings. The present teaching faculty includes four women and five men; five of these persons are members of the Society of Friends, and also hold masters degrees from ESR. Three of these hold Ph.D's and one is completing a Doctor of Ministry degree. The other four faculty come from Baptist, Catholic, Disciples of Christ and United Methodist traditions.

The Faculty Vitae were inspected and the Team has concluded that the faculty members possess the appropriate credentials for graduate theological education. (Standard 6.1.1) The Faculty Handbook is a hefty tome numbering over 100 pages with Faculty, Academic, and Administrative policies and procedures carefully spelled out. Faculty are classified as either Teaching Faculty or Administrative Faculty.

ESR does not follow the practice of academic tenure; instead, the faculty are reviewed regularly through a processes which includes peer review and review by the Dean. According to the Faculty Handbook, “All full time teaching faculty are evaluated informally each year by the Dean. Formal reviews by the Faculty Review Committee occur after the second year, fifth year,

and every five years for the length of employment”(page 9). The Dean presents the recommendation to the Earlham President, and the final decision rests with the President and the Board of Trustees. The Team recognized a deep sense of trust as the faculty and Dean work together in formulating these faculty recommendations, and therefore the Team found ESR to be in compliance with standard 6.1.6 which calls for “effective procedures for the retention of a qualified community of scholars, through tenure or some other appropriate procedure.”

The Team saw evidence of positive faculty morale. The Team had the privilege of experiencing a Common Meal where several faculty shared their passions for teaching, research, and ministry. . The Team did not hear many complaints. There is a good spirit among the faculty. The self-study identifies several reasons for this: faculty governance is done by the “sense of the meeting”; the process of faculty review is firmly in place; the Dean’s leadership is confident, engaged, and competent; there is a high level of collegial support and encouragement; and recent travel grants have provided rich cross-cultural opportunities. (page 28)

The one area where the Team recommends further attention to faculty development is in racial and ethnic diversity. At present there is a nice balance of gender and a rich diversity of denominations represented on the faculty; but all of the current faculty are Caucasian. We strongly recommend that as other openings occur in the faculty careful attention be given to the concern for racial and ethnic diversity.

6.2 – 6.4 Faculty Role in Teaching, Learning, Theological Research

The ATS Team met the faculty in individual interviews and also met with the faculty in a joint session. It is clear to the Team that the faculty are characterized by a deep commitment to study, research, teaching, prayer, student advising, and student learning. The Team experienced the faculty as persons of deep integrity who enjoy working together. They express a true sense of camaraderie and a shared vision for ESR.

7. STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSION, SERVICES, AND PLACEMENT

Earlham School of Religion has shown a growing enrollment in headcount over the last ten years growing from 57 in 1995 to 93 in 2005; but the FTE has remained the same: 47 FTE in 1995 and 46 FTE in 2005. Of the 93 students, 65 are in the M.Div/M.Min, program; 4 are in the MA program, and 23 are special students. The ATS Team interviewed students in all of the degree programs and also interviewed a dozen recent alumni. The students and alumni all express deep appreciation for the work of the faculty and staff and administration.

The students and alumni are bright, articulate, and eager to be life-long learners. They all expressed appreciation for the wide range of diversity within the student body and for the care with which students are nurtured. The students all spoke highly of the curricular process of the Clearance Committee. The students are well represented in the governance of the school. The presiding clerk of the Student Meeting for Business is invited to all regular meetings of the faculty; students are also well represented in the life of the school through the Nominating Committee, the Community Life Committee, the Student Pastoral Care Committee, the Spring Banquet Committee, the Common Meal Committee and the Worship Committee.

7.1 Recruitment

Earlham School of Religion has shown a growing enrollment in headcount over the last ten years, but the FTE has remained the same. The demographics of the student constituency should be carefully studied.

7.2 Admission

The Admission process of the seminary is administered through a three member admissions committee made up of one faculty member, the Dean, and the Director of Admissions. Review of the files indicate that ESR is in compliance with the standards for operating at a post-baccalaureate level. The student admission files are kept in the office of the Director of Admissions and when the students are admitted, the files are forwarded to the Secretary for Academic Services where the permanent folders are kept in fireproof file cabinets which are secure.

7.3 Student Services

The 1996 ATS Report indicated that the process for handling student complaints needed to be addressed. The ATS Team was delighted to see a very thorough Student Handbook which now spells out in great detail the various policies and procedures students are to follow in matters of complaints. In addition the Student Handbook has a wealth of information to guide the students through seminar processes.

Student Financial Aid is distributed in a fair and equitable manner as the ATS Standards require. The Cooper Scholarships are available through three programs: The Cooper Scholar Program, the International Student Cooper Scholarship, and the Minority Student Cooper Scholarship. Federal Student Aid is administered in cooperation with Earlham College.

7.4 Student Placement

Concerns that were expressed by the students included: a desire for more electives in ethics, desire to have greater ethnic and racial diversity within the student body and faculty, a somewhat inadequate school health insurance program, and placement services. The ATS Team heard quite often from students and alumni about the difficulty in getting placements following graduation. The Team is aware that placement cannot be coordinated in the Quaker tradition in the same way that it is structurally built into other denominational systems, but the strong word the Team continued to hear from students and alumni was a plea to seek out additional avenues for help in placement. The Team is therefore recommending that ESR explore additional ways to deal with the process of placement.

8. AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

The various roles of the Board of Trustees, the administrative leadership, and the faculty are clearly articulated. There is a fine working relationship between the dean of ESR and the faculty and between the dean and the president.

8.1 Authority

The governing documents of the institute make clear the lines of authority and all evidence points to a following of and respect for those lines of authority. ESR establishes educational programs, confers

degrees, and assures institutional quality and integrity based on the governing documents.

8.2 Governance

The dean has earned the respect of the faculty and there is a wholesome working relationship among the faculty under his leadership. The committee structure and its operation in ESR seem to function well. There is a collegial nature among governing board, faculty, administrators, and students.

8.3 The Roles of the Governing Board, Administration, faculty, and Students in Governance Processes

Interview with members of the Board of Trustees show that the Board understands and implements its role in establishing policies and exercises proper fiduciary responsibility, adequate financial oversight, proper delegation of authority to the institutions administrative officers and faculty. There is a good diversity of gender, but at the present time no diversity of race or ethnicity in either the board or the faculty. The Board is structured to conduct their work effectively.

The President serves in that office for both Earlham College and Earlham School of Religion. There is a good working relationship among the Board, the President, and the Dean. There is consistent affirmation of the Dean from students, alumni, faculty, staff, and the President.

The faculty functions effectively in developing academic policy, oversight of academic and curricular programs and decisions, establishment of admissions criteria, and recommendation of candidates for graduation. The faculty participates in the process of appointment and retention of faculty members, though final decisions rest with the Dean, President, and Board.

The students do sit in on meetings of the faculty and board (except for executive sessions). Their roles and responsibilities in the formal structures of governance are clearly delineated and the students are confident that their voice seems to be respected in both venues.

9. INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

9.1 Human Resources

Generally, the number and quality of human resources of ESR are currently adequate for achieving their purposes. Conversations with individuals and groups of students, faculty, administrators, support personnel, and trustees give every indication that appropriate policies are in place and followed to assure procedural fairness and avoid discrimination, and sexual harassment. Appropriate grievance procedures are provided.

9.2 Financial Resources

The financial resources of Earlham School of Religion are, at the present, adequate to support the purposes of the institution. Income from a \$32,000,000 endowment provides 70% of the institutions revenue. The 4.5% endowment spending rate was temporarily increased 1% to offset the stock market decline and this also facilitated the inauguration of programs such as the academically and financially successful "Access" program, a distributed education program. Tuition and Annual gifts each provide 15% of the revenues.

ESR, as part of Earlham College, has clearly defined management responsibilities and organization of business affairs and operates on a balanced budget. The use of a surplus over expenditures is carefully managed. Internal and external audits are conducted by the institution, are in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, and indicate proper financial management. The system of reporting,

coordinated with that of College and following systems generally used in North American higher Education, provides information and reports to the Dean, President, and Board of Trustees and chief administrator so the sound making of decisions. ESR continues to explore appropriate and creative approaches to development and this will be increasingly important in light of the diversity and decline in the Religious Society of Friends.

9.3 Physical Resources

Trustees and administrators are aware of future needs in capital improvements regarding space for possible faculty additions and what will be increasing building maintenance. The physical resources appear to be safe, accessible, and free of known hazards and the facilities are used in ways that respect the natural environment. The current buildings are well maintained, but in order to continue to provide the needed facilities, Earlham School of Religions must give attention to their physical resources and stay alert to the external economic, social, legal, and religious changes.

9.4 Institutional Data Resources

The institution's use and approach to Information Technology is more than adequate both for providing data for sound decision making and for supporting the innovative approaches to distributed education. Personnel in the department are greatly used and highly praised for the prompt and efficient attention to the administrative and educational needs of the community.

9.5 Institutional Environment

The institutional environment contributes positively to the institution's maximizing the various strengths of its human, financial, physical, and information resources.

9.6-7 Cooperative Use of Resources and Cluster

An appropriate and strong relationship exists between Bethany Theological Seminary, a Church of the Brethren seminary housed on Earlham's campus, and ESR. The two institutions cross register, share teaching faculty, building, and library resources. In partnership with Bethany, ESR provides full-time technical support for the development and management of the online courses.

10. Multiple Locations and Distance Education

10.1 (Purpose) ESR offers courses and degree programs, to the full extent provided in the relevant degree program standards, in a distance education format (*ESR Access*). It does not have extension sites and does not offer ongoing or occasional courses for credit although it has begun to offer workshops by its faculty to Friends meetings and churches at venues away from Richmond in its Traveling Ministries program. ESR developed *ESR Access* as a response to a national consultation in 1998 (*Among Friends*), flowing directly from its mission as "a Christian graduate theological school in the Quaker tradition ... [preparing] women and men for leadership that empowers and ministry that serves."

10.2 (Multiple Locations [Extension Sites]): Not applicable.

10.3 Distance Education

Planning and Evaluation: The self-study provides a detailed outline of the planning processes that preceded the implementation of *ESR Access*, notes that assessment has been a continuing part of the ongoing process, and points to some specific revisions in the program resulting from the assessment program, e.g., the move from an annual pattern of four intensives and two online courses to three each.

The report states that the course section of the assessment program gathers data from both students and faculty, but the report does not describe the results of these data collection activities.

Educational Qualities: The faculty has crafted the courses offered in the ESR Access program with the same learning outcomes as the parallel residential courses and applies assessment measures to ensure that students are achieving these outcomes.

Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum: The self-study describes the process and results by which the faculty undertook to refashion the two degree programs and appropriate courses for delivery in formats that enable ESR to reach students who are unable or unwilling to move to Richmond for either degree program. The faculty has concluded, though it continues to monitor the programs, that ESR Access delivers degrees that are qualitatively equivalent to the traditional residential format, in the words of the self-study, "The faculty has succeeded in breaking the mold that defined ESR course delivery for over forty years." This quote is slightly imprecise, inasmuch as ESR continues to deliver courses in the "old" mold although the self-witness of the faculty suggests that pedagogical insights and observations from framing courses for the distance education program have impacted the structure and delivery of traditional courses.

Library and Information Resources: Students enrolling in ESR Access program normally complete the non-distance course through intensives offered at the Earlham campus. Early in the program, the faculty thought that it would be appropriate and feasible to offer some of the intensive courses at other locations; however, evaluations of the effectiveness of delivering the intensive courses at distant sites led the faculty to conclude that it was preferable to offer all of the intensive courses at ESR. The program includes an introductory course in the fall slot for intensive courses. This is the preferred point of entrance although students enter the ESR Access program at different points throughout the year. This introductory course provides students with information about the Lilly Library, including both its onsite and online information resources. These online resources include the extensive collection of digitized primary literature for Quaker studies that ESR created. The course also introduces students to the access to other libraries that ESR has secured.

The visiting committee believes that ESR has done a very commendable job in identifying the different types of information resources that students in the ESR Access program will require and has provided the means whereby the students will be able to secure access to those resources. The committee suggests that the planning and evaluation conversations with respect to this program include consideration of ways that the faculty will be able to gauge the degree to which students in each of the courses have (or have not) taken advantage of the variety of resources and to share both the means that different faculty members have employed to ensure that their students are actually exploiting all of these resources to the fullest extent feasible and the means whereby different faculty members have measured the effectiveness of the means. In addition, it would be of great assistance to the future iterations of courses in this program as well as to external evaluators for some record to be maintained of these activities and conclusions.

Technological and Support Services: At the outset of the program, ESR had brought to School full-time person to provide faculty-wide as well as one-on-one support for the evolution to intensive or Internet-mediated courses whose origin was in the residential program. The School also provided course-load reductions at the points that faculty members were engaged in overhauling a course in preparation for offering it as an intensive or as an online course the following semester. In partnership with Bethany, the School has also provided full-time technical support for the development and management of the online courses. The outreach of the technical support staff includes students using the Internet-mediated resources of the School.

Faculty: Every member of the faculty offers courses in the non-traditional formats. Avoiding the common mistake of assuming that the required adjustments were modest and only cosmetic, the School added two positions and provided the course reduction noted in the previous paragraph. The assessment model the School uses provides the faculty with useful student feedback on the courses.

Admissions and Student Services: ESR provides the same admissions standards and services to students in the ESR Access program, and the students in the program interviewed as a part of the evaluation review offered glowing and appreciative comments about the theological education that ESR Access has made available to them, which would have been available in no other way, insofar as they

were aware.

Administration, Governance, and Finance: ESR carefully assessed the likely costs of offering this program, once the implications of the national consultation pointed to such a program as an important response the School could make. The resulting program, developed and implemented through the characteristic consensus-building model of decision-making at ESR, reflects careful planning and ongoing revision. As noted earlier in this section, during the first years of implementation, the faculty shifted the normal mix of online and intensive courses for the program. The School funded the start-up costs of the program through a 1% increase in the draw against the endowment, and the School's financial records and estimates show the program in the black last year and providing significant income in the current year.

III. DEGREE PROGRAM STANDARDS

The relationship of the M.Div./M.Min. and the MA in Religion degrees to the degree program standards is discussed under section 4.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that the Board of Commissioners take the following actions:

- 1) To reaffirm accreditation of Earlham School of Religion for a period of ten years (fall 2016).

- 2) To approve the following programs:

Master of Divinity (MDiv) / Master of Ministry (MMin)*

Master of Arts (Religion) (MA [Religion])

To continue preliminary approval of the School's distance education program.

*Note: The MMin is approved as non-standard, alternative nomenclature for the MDiv degree.

- 3) To encourage that attention be given to maintaining and enhancing the following distinctive strengths:

Intentional engagement by ESR with the Religious Society of Friends, as a responding community, reflected, for example, in the interaction and mutual respect among the faculty members and in the consistent student witness to these characteristics of the faculty.

The ESR Access program, as a response to the engagement with issues emerging from the national consultation, albeit at some cost, e.g., faculty time and energy as well as endowment funds and which will continue to require attention and nourishment.

Wholesome emphasis on spiritual life and formation

The ESR Dean, a visionary architect, who is consistently affirmed

The nascent culture of assessment that ESR evidences, with the thought that ongoing care and attention be lavished on this work yet in process

- 4) To encourage that attention be given to the following areas of needed growth during the next period of accreditation:

The lack of racial/ethnic diversity in the faculty.

The process of placement.