Miller Farm Program Proposal
Draft 4
Prepared by the Miller Farm Sub-Committee

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Executive Summary

We envision the Miller Farm program at Earlham as a unique, student-centered experiential opportunity that is challenging, inclusive, and focused on sustainable agriculture education. The vision for the program that has been collectively created is mission-centric to the liberal arts and will position the Miller Farm program as an enrollment driver for the college to attract and retain talented, academically strong students. We believe Miller Farm can become a space with great depth of connection between the co-curriculum and the curriculum, between the college and the community, and ultimately between students and their educational experiences.

To accomplish this vision, the Miller Farm Program must be:

Staffed adequately:
We recommend using existing grant funding in the Sustainability Office to hire a Farm Coordinator at 25 hours/week for two years. The Farm Coordinator will work with the Sustainability Coordinator and Integrated Program Director in Sustainability to reinvigorate the Miller Farm program. With a two-year lead time, we are confident that procuring funding for continued support after the current grant period ends is easily achieved. (See coordination section for details)

Situated in the Curriculum:
Miller Farm will become a sought-after outdoor teaching laboratory for existing courses as well as a new series of 1-credit Sustainability courses focused on skill-based aspects of food systems. The program will offer for-credit, residential internships at the Miller Farm site for intensive, experiential learning semesters focused on sustainable agriculture and food systems.

Managed with Proper Facilities:
The Farm Coordinator will manage communication, oversight of farm facilities and food production needed for educational programming. House, sheds, and gardens will remain, and other structures may be built with planning and facilities support over time.

Given Phases of Growth:
To create a thriving program, we propose planned phases of growth that will allow for progress checkpoints. The college may move from phase to phase as it deems appropriate.

The following sections are included in the proposal:
I. Small Scale Agriculture and the Mission of the College
II. Phased Approach to Program Development
III. Staffing
IV. Educational Programming
V. Facilities
VI. Coordination
Appendix: Committee Process, Programming In-depth Descriptions, Farm Coordinator Responsibilities, Residential Rationale, Financial Models
I. Small Scale Agriculture and the Mission of the College
(An expanded version of this statement is in the appendix)

The College’s recent focus on experiential education opportunities and tying liberal arts to reflective practice and skill transference aligns well with this proposal to renew the College’s sustainable agriculture education program.

Miller Farm has for nearly forty years provided a rich learning environment for students to engage collaboratively on real world projects. The farm cultivates practical experiential learning and creative problem solving in a space that was once unique to Earlham’s campus, but has been since emulated on many other campuses. The work of growing crops imbues students with a work ethic that prepares them to engage with high-responsibility environments post-college. Students self-report a high level of accountability to the program which they feel will translate to their presence in the world as future leaders and productive members of society. Alumni contacted to assist us in this proposal confirm that the wedding of practice with academics was an important part of their preparation for life.

Committing to a vibrant sustainable agriculture program at Earlham will invite students to engage in the important work of critical exploration of food systems- work that involves students as co-learners with faculty and community members and engages the college directly in improving our world. The revitalized Miller Farm program will provide immersion experiences, which are central to the Earlham strategic plan. The Sustainability Plan for the college, adopted in spring 2013 by the Sustainability Advisory Committee, urges the college to provide more structure and resources for the Miller Farm program as an experiential sustainability education endeavor. The proposal laid out here aligns well with the goals of the Sustainability Plan and is fully supported by the Sustainability Office as they strive to achieve campus sustainability goals.

Miller Farm was one of the first college-based, student-run farms in the nation. As other liberal arts colleges add similar components to their curriculum, it is fitting for Earlham to renew its commitment to a program that has inspired other schools and retain its leadership the community that Earlham fostered forty years ago.

II. Phased Approach to Program Development

To build a well-supported and structured Miller Farm program, we envision the development of the Miller Farm program over several phases:

Phase 1 - Laying the Groundwork
Spring 2014
- Miller Farm Oversight Committee is formed
- Job Description is written for Miller Farm Coordinator
Sustainability Office works with Residence Life and interested students to craft Sustainable Ag Living and Learning Community structure, to be sited within a residence hall. Concurrently, upper class students craft and create a Sustainable Ag themed house proposal. The theme house replaces residence at the Miller Farm House until the for-credit internship program is in place (see below).

Phase 2- Cultivating the Program
Summer and Fall 2014

- Miller Farm Coordinator is hired
- Coordinator develops 1-3, 1-credit courses to be taught at Miller Farm (through AWPE, CIL, or Env. Colloquium course codes), courses may be taught by coordinator at outset and by student instructors in the future
- First cohort of Sustainable Ag Living and Learning Community and Theme House students enroll and commit to attending Farm Day each Saturday
- Deferred maintenance and repairs to farm house take place
- Coordinator works with Sustainable Ag Living Learning Hall students to design a semester-long, for-credit, residential farm internship program
- Fundraising campaign for Miller Farm capital projects and student internships takes place

Phase 3- Program Growth and Blossoming
Next 1-3 years (to be developed as college deems appropriate)

- First cohort of for-credit residential farm interns participate in semester-long programs at Miller Farm and live in the on-site farm house. This program replaces Sustainable Ag Theme House.
- Farm Coordinator works with teaching faculty to integrate food systems and sustainable agriculture experiences into existing courses.
- A Designation in Sustainable Agriculture is created.
- Possible CSA or farm-to-dining services program begins using land adjacent to Miller Farm. Starting a program like this would introduce a stronger revenue stream for the farm program.

III. Staffing

Primary responsibility for the Miller Farm Program will lie within the Center for Integrated Learning. The Farm Coordinator position will jumpstart the program for the first two years and will involve curriculum development, internship program development, farm production planning, systems training and safety protocol development, and manage the farm production model. After the grant-funded two years, the position could change to serve as a post-bac position, or could increase to be a full time position based on success of the program. In addition to the organizational hierarchy shown here, the coordinator will work closely with Facilities and Student Development offices to support programming at Miller Farm. The program is, however, situated in the academic realm of the college as it is foremost an academic endeavor.
IV. Educational Programming

Detailed explanations of educational programming opportunities are included in the Appendix of this proposal. The Miller Farm Program will involve two main curricular types of engagement in addition to many co-curricular engagement opportunities. All opportunities are contingent upon the phases of development of the program.

Curricular Engagement 1: Courses and Workshops

- Coordination of use of the Miller Farm property for course-based research, field trips, and connections to existing and developing parts of the curriculum
- 1-3 skill based, 1-credit courses per year in sustainable agriculture topics taught by the Farm Coordinator or Sustainability Coordinator
- Student led courses on sustainable agriculture topics and skills

Curricular Engagement 2: Residential Farm Internships

- Credit-based residential internships open to 3-10 students per semester and 2-4 students per summer, students will live at Miller Farm, program will qualify as an Immersion Experience
- Rigorous qualification and selection process, including required eligibility to live in college houses
- Seasonal foci of internships including crop planning, planting, farm education, harvesting, budgeting, and partnership building
- Programming includes readings, group discussions, intensive individual research and action project, reflection and assessment
- Students receive training on safety and equipment use and are supervised in their work by the Farm Coordinator

Co-curricular and Community Engagement Opportunities

- Farm Days will be community-wide work days at Miller Farm, planned and hosted by Farm Coordinator and Farm Interns
- Sustainable Ag Living and Learning Community will be established in a residence hall and will act as a feeder program for the residential internships
- A CSA and/or Farm-to-Dining Hall program will be established to offer fresh, healthy vegetables to the campus community
Community partnerships will be developed through local educational groups that can take field trips to Miller Farm and summer programs that can take place at Miller Farm.

Miller Farm is an excellent location and educational setting for sustainable energy projects. Connections to the Computer Science Department’s applied groups will be developed.

V. Facilities

The facilities needed for the Miller Farm program include the farmhouse, existing sheds, and the farmland that is part of the existing property. Other facilities needed include an on-campus office for the Farm Coordinator, and a section of a residence hall for the Sustainable Ag Living and Learning Community. In the later phases of program development outlined above, other facilities may need to be constructed to house the growing program, decisions about future facilities will be made carefully through the Miller Farm Oversight Committee. The Committee includes stakeholders from the facilities department and will ensure coordination will relevant parties on campus. Additionally, college-owned farm land that is not currently part of the Miller Farm program may be included in the expanded program in the future when more space or greater production requires it.

VI. Coordination

The Miller Farm Coordinator will be charged with coordinating the Miller Farm program and will work with relevant parties on campus to ensure the integrity of the program. Longer term planning will be the charge of the Miller Farm Oversight Committee. This group will be composed of the Farm Coordinator, facilities stakeholders, student development stakeholders, alumni representatives, and student representatives. They would meet periodically and be responsible for:

- Review and assessment of farm programming
- Long term planning and coordinating fundraising for farm program
- Coordination of offices connected to farm program
- Vetting of student project and course proposals
- Review of budget and financial tracking
Appendix

1. Committee Process

The Miller Farm Sub-Committee has met weekly for the duration of the fall 2013 semester. The committee consulted broadly with students, administrators, facilities staff, alums, and select faculty members about their thoughts and ideas for the Miller Farm program and sustainable agriculture programming at the college. That consultation has taken the form of in-person and telephone interviews, open student meetings, and student, alumni, and facilities staff online questionnaires. The committee also conducted phone interviews with campus farm advisors and managers nationwide, reviewed relevant planning documents (Strategic Plan, Sustainability Plan, 2011 Miller Farm Strategic Plan), and consulted historical/archival records of Miller Farm.

During our research process, several themes have emerged:

- Alums of the program are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences at Miller Farm, with both the agricultural component and the self-governing residential component emerging as positive aspects that equipped them for an engaged life after college.
- Among alums, the Ag Program and Miller Farm were often cited as a balancing influence in the context of a liberal arts curriculum.
- Both alums and current students believe the lack of a faculty member with dedicated time to serve as an advisor is the greatest deficit in the program up to this point.
- Members of the committee believe a faculty member with a dedicated time commitment is necessary to address the risk management issues that have brought us to the current crisis.
- Similar programs in other colleges have thrived when a staff member with a strong advisory role is involved.
- Addressing the past insular nature of the Ag Program is important and should be accomplished by creating opportunities for more diverse involvement among students.

2. Small Scale Agriculture and the Mission of the College

Miller Farm exists at a crossroads of experiences at Earlham. It is a gathering place for experiential education for students, faculty, alumni, and community members that has great historical significance and contributes in a strong positive way to the college’s identity and ethos of collaborative engagement. The Miller Farm program has important roles to play in furthering the mission of the College, the strategic plan of the College, and the Sustainability Plan of the College.

The recent refocusing of the college on experiential education opportunities and the tying of the liberal arts to reflective practice and skills transference aligns with the proposed adoption of a sustainable agriculture education program that has multiple, diverse points of engagement for students and serves as a living laboratory for enacting the liberal arts.
Earlham’s mission places value upon applying knowledge of what is known to improve our world as well as awakening the “teacher within” in our students. Creating a vibrant sustainable agriculture program at Earlham will invite students to engage in the important and applied work of critical exploration of food systems-work that involves students as co-learners with faculty and community members and engages the College directly in improving our world. The proposed Miller Farm program will provide immersion experiences, which are central to the Earlham strategic plan, and acknowledges the importance of interdisciplinary programs in recruitment efforts. Our sustainable agriculture proposal also meets resource allocation/utilization goals within the strategic plan by providing a better student-to-expense ratio (accomplished by increasing the number of students involved in the program).

The Sustainability Plan for the college, adopted in spring 2013 by the Sustainability Advisory Committee, urges the college to provide more structure and resources for the Miller Farm program as an experiential sustainability education endeavor. The proposal laid out here aligns well with the goals of the Sustainability Plan and is fully supported by the Sustainability Office as they strive to achieve campus sustainability goals.

Earlham has historically been known as a leader in preparing students for social change. Alumni recognize the potential of sustainable agriculture to catalyze student engagement in food systems. Engagement in the local food movement is very popular, and our sustainable agriculture program will serve to attract thoughtful and self-motivated students who will be assets to the Earlham community. Local food production is also an important tool for creating more sustainable communities and ultimately, a more sustainable food economy.

While there are many Miller Farm alumni who have become farmers, even more report that Miller Farm developed many other skills that serve them today. Leadership, problem solving, personal responsibility, and confidence to explore opportunities that connected academic experiences to the world beyond Earlham were common themes in alumni responses.

Miller Farm allows students to engage with their food at every step of the process and gives students experience balancing a liberal arts education with practical production. Miller Farm was one of the first college-based, student-run farms in the nation. In continuing this legacy, Earlham College demonstrates its commitment to sustainability and establishes itself as a competitor among an ever-growing community of liberal arts schools with sustainable agriculture programs.

There are many examples of sister schools who have recently started or are continuing to invest in sustainable agriculture programs:

Oberlin College
3. Programming In-Depth Descriptions
Courses and Workshops

The Miller Farm Coordinator will develop and teach 1-3 low-credit courses per semester, including homesteading skills, farm planning, leadership and management skills, gardening skills, farm marketing skills, composting, Permaculture, etc. Some of these courses will always be open to any student regardless of experience. Some may require prerequisites and greater commitment levels to learning about farming and food systems. All will be highly experiential and taught in a co-learning, facilitative format.

Students may also propose courses to be taught at Miller Farm. The Miller Farm Coordinator will work with students to design and develop courses they wish to teach at the farm. Additionally, the Miller Farm Coordinator will develop relationships with teaching faculty members and encourage the use of the Farm as a learning laboratory for courses, projects, and other connections to the curriculum.

Courses with Potential Connections to Miller Farm
Course connections will need to be developed in close partnership with teaching faculty and with coordination from the Farm Coordinator. The following list was developed from reading course descriptions in the online course catalog:

- GEOS 431 SOILS (4 credits)
- *BIOL 111 ECOLOGICAL BIOLOGY (4 credits)
- BIOL 350 FIELD BOTANY (4 credits)
- BIOL 362 BIOLOGY OF INSECTS (4 credits)
- CHEM 371 ENVIRONMENTAL CHEMISTRY AND TOXICOLOGY (4 credits)
- CS 281 APPLIED GROUPS (0-1 credit)
- MGMT 200 FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING (3 credits)
- MGMT 203 INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN ORGANIZATIONS (3 credits)
- *MGMT 322 GLOBAL CHANGE I: CLIMATE POLICY (3 credits)
- *MGMT 343 CONFLICT RESOLUTION (3 credits)
- ECON 342 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (4 credits)
- *ECON 345 URBAN POLITICAL ECONOMY (4 credits)
Residential Farm Internships

As a key element of the experiential farming program, students will be eligible for this leadership intensive internship program after they express commitment to learning about sustainable agriculture through participating in the Sustainable Ag Living and Learning Community and taking a set of courses (2 or more Miller Farm based courses, 2-3 other courses selected from existing courses at the college related to food systems, soils, agriculture, and organizations). Students participating in the residential farm internships will be required to live in the Miller Farm House, and must be eligible to live in college houses (as determined by the Residence Life Office). The students participating in the for-credit internship program will be the only students allowed to live in the Miller Farm House.

Three residential farm internship programs will be offered each year, each with a slightly different focus:

- Spring Semester-Crop planning, planting, preparing for growing season
- Summer- Growing time, farm and food education
- Fall Semester-Harvesting, farm planning, budgeting for the next year

Students may apply to participate in one, two, or all three internships during their time at Earlham. Spring and Fall internships will be for-credit and will be unpaid. Summer internships will be paid positions with the option of seeking credit as determined by the student.

As part of a residential farm internship in the spring or fall, students would collaboratively plan and host Farm Day’s each Saturday as facilitated experiential farming engagement opportunities for the whole community. In the summers, farm interns would plan and carry out farm and food educational programs for area youth. All three internship programs would include common course materials, group discussions, individual learning projects, reflection, and assessment.

In cooperation with each other and their adviser for the internship (the Miller Farm Coordinator), interns will each take on a significant individual learning project at Miller Farm that would involve research, self-motivated learning, specific learning outcomes, hands-on work, and a presentation of their learning at the end of the internship. In designing the internship, the Coordinator will develop specific criteria upon which student interns will be graded. The criteria may include the individual learning project, participation in farm operations, and community contributions.
As resident farm interns, students would also improve upon the Miller Farm student manual each term, set chores for themselves, be trained in farm safety and equipment usage by the Miller Farm coordinator, and take on a variety of tasks to run the farm as students. The internship program would be designed as an intensive, community experience. Students would meet regularly with the Miller Farm coordinator, would reflect often on their learning, and would be required to live together at Miller Farm during their internship.

**Sustainable Ag Living and Learning Community**

Many students at Earlham are interested in Sustainable Agriculture and are seeking ways to engage with sustainable food systems in the co-curriculum. Students who live on the Sustainable Ag Living and Learning Community will agree to commit to participating in Farm Day at Miller Farm every Saturday. The Community will be governed by the students and will be advised and facilitated by the Miller Farm Coordinator. The Community will be a space for students who share interests in sustainable agriculture to live together in community. Communal living practices, such as shared meals, chores, community meetings, hall workshops and events will be key aspects of the program.

Additionally, in the year between rebuilding the program and starting the residential internship program at Miller Farm, upper class students may choose to propose a Sustainable Ag themed house. Students in the house would be mentored by the Farm Coordinator and would be strongly involved in the design of the residential internship program.

**CSA or Farm-to-Dining Services Program**

Having a small production farm model as part of the sustainable agriculture program would provide a meaningful learning experience as well as an asset of food production for the college and community. Though the main goal of the enterprise would be education in farming practices and production, the by-products of the program would be high quality food, as well as having the financial costs of running the operation covered by food production.

Implementing a CSA or Farm-to-Dining Services program integrates well into the phased growth of the Miller Farm program and requires a farm coordinator, 3 student interns, as well as many students volunteers who engage with the program through practical sustainable agriculture courses and volunteer participation in Farm Days.

Beginning implementation would require a modest start up fund for tools and supplies as detailed in the appendix. The program would begin as a 2-acre diversified vegetable operation, that would slowly increase to an 8-acre operation over 10 years. The income and expenses associated with this program and its growth are detailed in the appendix. The financial projections assume higher than likely costs, and lower than probable sales. The goals of the program would be education, food for the dining hall, income through CSA sales to the community, and an important example of sustainable growing practices.

**Designation in Sustainable Agriculture**
There has been a recent increase in designation programs at Earlham as a way to highlight a collection of experiences that relate to a specific outcome or professional field. Once much of the architecture of the sustainable agriculture program has been developed, creating a designation in Sustainable Agriculture may be a useful way to provide students with a way to portray their engagement with the program to future employers in food systems and farming realms. The designation would likely include multiple practical courses, a few theory based courses related to food systems, and the residential internship. The exact structure of the designation would be created after the first 1-2 years of rebuilding the program.

Community Engagement Opportunities
Past engagement with the Richmond community has included working with Green Eaters, a special program offered through the local Boys and Girls Club, to coordinate field trips to and educational, hands-on programming at Miller Farm. There are additional opportunities for community engagement with Girls, Inc. as well as Backpack Blessings, a local organization that works through Richmond schools to provide food insecure children with bags packed with food before the weekend. Miller Farm could also be a great site of educational engagement with local 4-H chapters.

Sustainable Energy Laboratory
The student/faculty groups working on monitoring energy usage and generating energy in sustainable ways (the Hardware Interfacing Project and Green Science applied CS groups) would like to work with Miller Farm to set up small scale projects that could serve both as integral parts of the educational experience and useful additions to the community engagement piece.

4. Miller Farm Coordinator Responsibilities
The Miller Farm Coordinator would be responsible for the following aspects of the program in the first two years:

- Developing the residential farm internship structure, curriculum, and selection process
- Serving as Director of the residential farm internship program once it is in place
- Working with students to plan and coordinate all farming and educational activities associated with the program
- Advising the Sustainable Agriculture Living and Learning Community on campus
- Advising the Sustainable Agriculture Theme House prior to the start of the residential farm internship program, should such a house be proposed and created
- Working closely with the Director of the Integrated Program in Sustainability and the Sustainability Coordinator to promote use of the farm property across the curriculum and the matching of courses to farm programming
- Working with the Sustainability Coordinator to design and teach 1-3 applied sustainable agriculture, skill-based courses per year
→ Assisting students in developing community partnerships, collaborating with Director of Civic Engagement on community partnerships related to Miller Farm
→ Creating and maintaining best-practices based safety protocols for all tools and equipment associated with the program. Training students in proper equipment use
→ Working with students to develop a CSA and/or Farm to Dining Hall program
→ Serving on the Miller Farm Oversight Committee

5. Residential Rationale
The sub-committee discussed the question of whether a residential aspect to the farm program provides benefit (and benefit to whom) at great length. We have proposed a program that includes a residential aspect for students engaged in the rigorous farm internship program and feel that having a residence on the farm property is essential to the success of the internship program. The residential nature of the program is important for the following reasons:

- Students participating in the internship will be expected to immerse themselves in the experience of food production, food systems, and the impacts of those processes. This immersion will be much fuller when student interns are able to live at the farm and engage reflectively together on their learning in a group living setting.
- A major learning outcome of the farm program is the development of leadership skills. These skills are developed through the internship program more fully when students have a sense of responsibility and accountability to the space, which is accomplished when the live and learn together.
- When inhabited, the property is perceived as safer and reduces the likelihood of improper use of the space
- The farmhouse itself acts as the hub of activity at the farm and is a valuable place for organizing, record keeping, meeting, cooking, and planning for the farm

We recognize that the Miller Farm house was recently located in the upper quartile for expenses needed related to deferred maintenance of campus owned houses. However, the value of the programming that will be provided in conjunction with maintaining the Miller Farm house, we feel, far exceeds the value derived from the minimal programming occurring at other campus houses that are perhaps less costly in their deferred maintenance. For that reason, we feel the cost of returning the house to well maintained condition will lead to a better long term return on investment for the college in terms of enrollment and retention than eliminating it simply for deferred maintenance costs.

6. Financial Models
Pedagogically, Miller Farm must remain an educational space above all other purposes. We have envisioned a food production element of that educational mission, however, the production element should never be called to account for all the expenses associated with running an educational farm program. In the appendix, we have outlined a financial model for food production that will generate ample
income to cover the materials and supplies expenses associated with that production.

We propose that the Farm Coordinator salary and the summer internship salaries will be paid from Cargill grant funds currently identified for a Sustainability Program Associate and for summer internships for the next two years. During that time, we propose that the Miller Farm Oversight committee continue to work with the college to secure longer term funding for the Farm Coordinator position. Funding options include the college’s operating budget, restricted funds, additional grant opportunities, and dedicated fundraising. We are confident that the Miller Farm program will continue to serve as an enrollment driver and thus in addition to outside sources, should be considered for operational funding as it grows and takes root.