

# The Expressions of Core Values in Wilmington College Community Life

## Introduction

This document is a way to begin addressing the questions: 1) What does it mean to be a Quaker college? 2) What does it mean to be a community? 3) What does it mean to live within a diverse community? 4) What does it mean to live with integrity? It is also designed to more fully explain the core values of the College. Those values include Community, Diversity, Excellence, Integrity, Peace and Social Justice, Respect for All Persons, and Service and Civic Engagement.

The core values discussed in this document are fundamental to the success of Wilmington College in realizing its mission and vision. These values come from many sources. They are rooted in the College's founding faith – The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). They reflect important traditions of American higher education and universally held beliefs that serve to guide the best in human thought and action.

Throughout this document the Quaker concept of the "Light" is used. Other descriptions of this concept are "The Light of God Within," "The Christ Within," "The Spirit Within," "The Inward Teacher," and "God's Voice Within." The "Light" can lead to the inner spirit of truth. Seeking truth is a personal, spiritual, and academic quest that can enrich a community.

The queries used throughout this document encourage thoughtful and conscientious reflection, which in turn may lead to positive actions that benefit individuals and the campus community. Queries take the form of questions that do not have simple or unambiguous answers. Following Quaker practice, queries are used as a means for self or group examination and inward reflection. This document is based on a similar one developed at Earlham College, and we wish to acknowledge the influence of their work.

## **I. Community**

*To work in partnership with one another, encouraging broad participation and active engagement of all who learn and work at Wilmington College. To provide a learning and working environment that encourages and supports openness, empowerment, and shared responsibility for decision-making, and a culture that emphasizes continuous improvement and growth. To build a sense of shared purpose about the importance and value of the College and to inform stakeholders regularly.*

Community, like the teaching/learning activity, is more a process than a product. Although we constantly strive to create community through various programs and activities aimed at reflecting the College's core values, we ultimately discover our own special sense of community through our everyday interactions. Friends have always emphasized the importance of 'meeting' -- being present to one another on the physical, emotional and spiritual levels -- whether in the classroom or in the office, in the dorm or on the athletic field, in the decision-making efforts of the student government, the faculty or the board of trustees.

It is through interacting with each other in these various arenas that our community takes shape. In our efforts to shape a consensus-oriented community reflecting our diverse backgrounds and perspectives, differences arise and disagreements emerge. How we keep differences from growing into oppositions and disagreements from turning into disputes stands as an ongoing indicator of our identity as a Friends-rooted institution.

Within this understanding of community, the College cultivates its academic vision. Our faculty and staff represent a wide range of academic disciplines and backgrounds, reflecting experiences at other colleges and universities that inform and enrich our distinctive career-oriented, liberal arts experience. Students bring to the College additional experiences and expectations which keep the community always looking toward the future while exploring academic insights of the past. The necessity of exploring the future and preserving the past makes for an engaging teaching/learning dynamic in a small, friendly academic setting.

### **Queries**

- ∞ Do we realize that this community was founded by a community, the Religious Society of Friends, whose vision of higher education still informs our experiences today?
- ∞ What are the sources for the idea of community you bring to campus with you? How do you share those ideas? How do you respond when those ideas are not always realized?
- ∞ How can we avoid the negative effects of the growing 'consumer' view of higher education?
- ∞ Do we recognize ourselves as members of a community, not just as students or employees of an institution?
- ∞ Do we feel some responsibility to contribute to the shaping of the Wilmington College community?
- ∞ Are we consciously aware of the problems and prospects for our community? Do we strive to build community through our daily interactions and special programs or activities designed to promote community building? Do we understand the challenges of continuous improvement and growth within our community?

## **II. Diversity and Respect for all Persons**

***To reflect the state and regional communities that the College serves and to enrich our understanding and appreciation of different people, cultures and ideas. To value the dignity and worth of all persons. To see that of God in every person.***

“Wilmington College is committed to achieving and sustaining diversity. It seeks to create a campus culture of inclusion and a learning environment that supports educating students who will work, live and serve in a diverse nation and world.” These words from the Wilmington College Diversity Statement represent the foundation for all diversity initiatives undertaken at the College. Moreover, the Statement defines diversity, delineates the College’s diversity goals and describes its benefits.

The following goals are designed to foster diversity and realize more fully the benefits of diversity at Wilmington College:

- ∞ To create a supportive environment for all who work and learn at Wilmington College and build a campus community that respects the inherent dignity of all persons, discourages bigotry and strives to learn from differences in people, ideas and opinions.
- ∞ To recruit and retain individuals who will contribute to making Wilmington College a diverse community.
- ∞ To include within the curriculum and co-curriculum programs of study and activities that explore the experiences, perspectives and contributions of various cultures, groups and individuals, and prepare students to work, live and learn in a multicultural world.

### **Queries**

- ∞ Do I try to understand other peoples’ viewpoints and perspectives with empathy even when they disagree with my own?
- ∞ Do I treat all persons, regardless of position, with respect?
- ∞ Are the activities that I am involved in consistent with the College’s Diversity Statement?
- ∞ In our efforts to achieve diversity are we representative of the communities that we serve?
- ∞ Do our efforts to achieve diversity help strengthen and enrich our community?
- ∞ Are our efforts to create diversity fair and effective? And do they enhance the learning experience at Wilmington College?
- ∞ Are all activities, classes, sports, extracurricular events and service opportunities open to and supportive of the Wilmington College Diversity Statement?

### **III. Excellence**

*To foster a commitment to the highest standards in all areas of the College’s mission.*

Standards originate inside and outside of the college community. Some standards are set by accreditation agencies or governmental departments or best business practices. Others are established by academic traditions, by championship performance in athletics or by levels of student performance reflecting standardized test scores. Through its

involvement in these various arenas, our college recognizes and accepts such external standards as part of our striving toward excellence.

At the same time, Wilmington emphasizes the significance of internal standards that define our sense of community and our goals for individual achievement. Fulfilling potential, taking risks, exploring unclear paths, serving others, seeking consensus -- such efforts may not always lead to levels of achievement set by external standards, but they reflect our commitment to excellence in our own terms as well as to those defined by external sources.

### **Queries**

- ∞ Is excellence defined strictly in terms of achievement?
- ∞ Are we aware of our sources for defining excellence at the College?
- ∞ How do we demonstrate our commitment to excellence at the College?
- ∞ Is there a difference between standards of excellence for the community and those for individuals in it?
- ∞ How do we recognize and acknowledge examples of excellence in our community?

## **IV. Integrity**

*To be fair, honest and ethical and assume responsibility for one's actions.*

Integrity is an important Quaker testimony that commits us to honesty in our interactions with others. This understanding builds trust among community members. It means being fair and honest in our dealings with one another as students, faculty, and staff. In short, it means doing what we say.

In any college community, academic integrity has special meaning. An educational community depends on the mutual assumption that its members are pursuing truth. Beyond the academic domain, however, the testimony requires that we strive to maintain the integrity of our inner and outer lives in endeavoring to bring community members to awareness of the “inward teacher” in themselves and others.

Integrity also implies a willingness to assume responsibility for one's actions. Consequently, the testimony of integrity extends to our interactions with others in all areas of endeavor, whether they occur in the classroom, on the playing field, in the residence halls, at public gatherings, or in the committee meeting. To practice integrity means to be transparent and truthful in our dealings with each other in a way that is respectful of all individuals and their unique contributions to the college community. The practice of academic integrity makes it necessary for us to always credit others for their work. Similarly, it requires us to be sensitive and honest in our evaluations of others' work, including that of students, teachers, and colleagues.

## Queries

- ∞ Do I speak the truth even when it is difficult and not in my interest to do so?
- ∞ Do I confront lapses in integrity in myself and others?
- ∞ Do I seek ways to be open to opinions and ideas, thereby strengthening my commitment to critical thinking, intellectual rigor, and truth-seeking?
- ∞ Am I careful to credit others, rather than taking credit for works and ideas not my own? Do I make sure that those who deserve credit for works and ideas receive it?
- ∞ Am I aware that cheating in classes, in games, or in sports is inconsistent with the testimony of integrity? Do I try to eliminate the practice of plagiarism, borrowing another's work, lying, deceit, excuse making, and infidelity or disloyalty in personal relationships?
- ∞ Do I avoid the illegal and/or harmful use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco? Do I treat students, teachers, colleagues, employees, and co-workers honestly and fairly?
- ∞ Do I conduct college business in good faith and in a way that reflects the Quaker testimony of integrity?
- ∞ Do I manage my commitments so that over-commitment, worry, and stress do not diminish my integrity?

## V. Peace and Social Justice

*To seek non-violent resolution of conflict and just treatment of the world's resources, both human and physical.*

The value of Peace and Social Justice reminds us of the need each day to seek a peaceful resolution to conflict after it arises and to take away the causes of conflict before it starts. We strive for peace whenever we remind each other to uphold values such as simplicity, integrity, social justice, humanitarian service and respect for all persons.

Peace and Social Justice are related goals as expressed by the statement, "you can't have peace without justice." Injustices arise from losing sight of our values. Misuse of resources, loss of integrity, disregard for serving others, and disrespect for some persons lead to conflict among us and work against the prospect of living in a community of peace. In contrast, our efforts to overcome discrimination against individuals and groups, to promote high standards of personal morality and community involvement, and to develop a place and space for being present to each other's needs and concerns aim at a vision of social justice. Social justice is not only a result of a peaceful community, but also the means to it.

The Friends Peace Testimony, reaffirmed in multiple statements historically, finds expression in various programs of the College as well as through our efforts on a daily basis to be peacemakers. With regard to programs, we appreciate the opportunities for reflecting on peace promoted by the annual Westheimer Peace Symposium, the important materials for studying about peace and peacemaking collected in the Peace Resource Center, the numerous occasions for discussing issues of peace and conflict in the Global Issues courses and many other courses across campus, the offering of specific courses on

mediation and conflict resolution along with training opportunities in peer mediation, and the option of choosing a minor in Peace Studies to complement other majors at the College. In addition to these opportunities focusing on peace, other occasions to study social injustice across our curriculum keep us mindful and aware of the vigilance required by all in working for peace and social justice on a daily basis.

### **Queries**

- ∞ Do I seek win/win solutions to the resolution of conflict?
- ∞ Do I work to take away the causes of conflict?
- ∞ Am I aware and concerned about issues of social injustice in our community?
- ∞ Do I work to take away the causes of social injustice?

## **VI. Service and Civic Engagement**

*To serve others and to accept individual responsibility for being an effective citizen.*

Honesty requires a high level of civility and respect in our behavior. To maintain such behavior, we must regard serving others as primary. Serving others is a means of creating and enriching community. Promoting high standards in individual and community conduct; encouraging involvement in the activities of the community; recognizing that justice is not only a result of a peaceful community, but also the means to it -- all such efforts ultimately help to determine whether we as a community successfully serve one another. Within a community, we aim to resolve conflict. Within this community, we aim to reach consensus. Within our campus community, we recognize that some decisions are made using a combination of consensus and executive processes and some committees are advisory while others are decision-making bodies. In this community, the use of consensus comes as close as we can to reach the Quaker practice of the "sense of the Meeting."

### **Queries**

- ∞ Do I recognize that, along with the college community, there are many communities within which we participate, individually and as a college? Do I recognize, in turn, that the College ought to exercise its role as one community amongst many?
- ∞ Do I recognize the universal nature of the College's mission?
- ∞ In a public gathering, do I represent the College's standards of behavior?
- ∞ Do I avoid personal attacks?
- ∞ Do I, under all circumstances, speak the truth?
- ∞ Do I seek to be open to a variety of opinions and ideas?
- ∞ In seeking to resolve conflict, do I attempt to ensure all discussants are heard, understood, and sense that they have been treated honestly and fairly?
- ∞ Do I accept and support the work of committees? Do I accept and support the appropriate use of executive decision-making?
- ∞ Do I invest myself in consensus? Do I value consensus decision-making as a vital

practice in our community? Do I encourage other communities to consider the value of such a practice?

- ∞ Do I question my priorities? Do I attempt to be a responsible steward of my time and talents? Do I consider the needs of a variety of communities?
- ∞ Do I listen for and search out the inner light in all people?

Approved by the  
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