

Aidan Williamson Work Proposal

Rough Outline

11/9/2012

Dates: From around 12/20/2012 until I can no longer afford to stay.

Position: Workshop Apprentice

Personal Goals: Returning to Factor E Farm would mean a return to the immersive, tangibly productive educational landscape that the Farm represents. As an individual frustrated with the disconnected world of ivory towers and disinterested in a lifestyle that leaves little time for responsible living and a pervasive contemplative experience, I wish to re-motivate myself to live, grow, learn, and reciprocate in an environment that I am proud of. More specifically, I return to Factor E Farm in order to take part in the *most important social experiment in the world*¹ and learn more about what it takes to approach radical independence via radical simplicity, collaborative production, and open knowledge.

Projects: Possible projects brainstormed with Parker² include CEB press testing and building, general construction work, and participation in production runs. There is also much still to do from my previous work plan³. I am also excited about the possibility of future work on the backhoe attachment for LifeTrac, the Gasifier Burner, and the MicroTrac. The immediate goals still seem to be establishing secure infrastructure, building a microhouse, finishing 2012 construction, and testing the new CEB press.

Side Note: I know from experience that living at Factor E Farm can require an ability to be dynamic and to take on projects and responsibilities outside of my perceived skillset and comfort zone. Yet these experiences serve to educate and shape a person. Indeed, most of the things I did over the summer were entirely new to me. I am prepared to return to this immersive approach to education – I call it apprenticeship – and to step out of my comfort zone in order to learn and grow effectively.

¹ <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/marcin-jakubowskis-open-farm-the-most-important-social-experiment-in-the-world/2008/01/22>

² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c02RWQkuB0c&feature=youtu.be>

³ http://opensourceecology.org/w/images/3/31/ADW_Revised_Workplan.pdf

Excerpts regarding academia from an email conversation with a professor. Generally reflective of my disinterest in private (and public) post-secondary education.

On Fri, Jul 20, 2012 at 9:09 AM, Aidan Williamson <adwillia@owu.edu> wrote:

Dear [Name Withheld],

I hope this email finds you well rested, mentally replenished, and emotionally fulfilled doing whatever it is that professors do during their summers.

I'm writing you from a hut in the middle of Missouri. I've been living on a "farm" out here for the past month and a half with [these people](#). The "farm" (not really a farm yet) is a 30 acre plot of land where open source hardware (tractors, brick presses, saw mills, etc...) is created, documented, and sent out through the internet in an effort to increase access to appropriate technology - although I'm still trying to reconcile the "appropriate" part with the tech here - and lower start-up costs for farmers and other enterprises. The eventual goal here is to meddle in some intentional community building and create a post-scarcity village that is fully self-sufficient with all the amenities of contemporary American life by relying on the machines that are designed and built on site. Currently we live in huts and have a couple of working prototypes (5 out of 50). There is a long way to go!

Anyway, it's a very interesting project and it's given me the chance to get a taste of the lifestyle that I dreamt of on so many of those winter days that I spent cooped up in a cinder block cell eating dorm food. I even became so enchanted by this taste of freedom, innocence, and responsible living that I dared to dream a little and considered staying here indefinitely. Surrounded by interesting people, stimulated intellectually and physically by the work and conversation, challenged by the task at hand, I thought that it would be a remarkably suitable alternative to the disconnected academic world at OWU. My parents have other thoughts. And though it's not their decision, I have chosen to place trust in their opinions on this occasion much as it breaks my heart to do so. Apparently there is some introspective maturation that only a college environment can provide, or so I am told. Me, I think it's a matter of how you interact with your surroundings wherever you are. But this is not why I am writing you this email.

Looking on the positive side, I remember that I will get the chance to sit in your office this fall and think together with you about something useful! So I'm writing you to establish a conversation that I hope will eventually lead to an outline or a conceptual framework for our study. We discussed it briefly in the spring but that was a hectic time and I'm sure you remember even less than me. In the meantime, I've dug up the preliminary list of reading suggestions from an old email and will begin with Dussel this week.

I'm sorry I didn't find you before leaving Delaware. I had one of those stomach-sinking feelings in the car going home when it occurred to me that I had forgotten.

All the best,
Aidan

On 7/20/2012 11:20 AM, [Name Withheld] wrote:

Dear Aidan,

It sounds like you're having an extremely interesting summer. I admire your adventurous spirit and search for a lifestyle that is more sustainable and meaningful than what has become the norm in American life and, too often, in academia. **(I agree that academia can often become "disconnected" and esoteric, driven by things that have little to do with education. When I get depressed about academia, it's young people like you who help to keep me going, here!)**

I'm currently visiting my family in Colorado (and am a bit out of sorts from the altitude here). But I will look forward to discussing the independent study with you. I'm thinking that the environmental theorists on the list (e.g., perhaps Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*) might be more directly relevant to you than the Dussel. But I'd be happy to discuss your interests with you further and think about good readings.

I'm off to an appt. with my parents but will be happy to have further conversation with you on the phone or email.

-[Name Withheld]