

STATUS OF ACCREDITATION REVIEW

I. Overview and Update

In the fall of 2002 a group of between 8 and 13 external consultant-evaluators (higher education experts, faculty, and administrators), will read documentation and evidentiary information compiled by Antioch campuses and the university as a whole, and visit all campus sites. They will be considering 1) the integrity of each campus as an academic unit, and 2) how the university holds together and functions as a single university. Antioch, with physical presences in four regions, is singularly accredited in one region (the North Central – NCA - region). The burden to make the case for singular accreditation is on Antioch, not the accreditor.

Through this process of peer review the review team will render a judgment concerning Antioch University's continued accreditation status. Review teams can recommend reaccreditation for up to 10 years, they can request subsequent specialized visits if they believe those are necessary, they can recommend that an institution be placed on probation, and/or they can recommend an institution have its accreditation be taken away.

Through a process of self-study and examination all five campuses and the university administration are expected to address the following five accreditation criteria:

1. Consistency and appropriateness of mission;
2. Effective organization of human, financial, and physical resources;
3. Accomplishment of educational purpose;
4. Ability to continue to accomplish purpose, and
5. Institutional integrity.

Status: Antioch's self-study is on schedule. The four nonresidential campuses have at this writing completed second drafts of their self-studies and had them reviewed for comment and criticism by a university-wide steering group (membership below). Rewrites are now underway with expectation for completion in May. Antioch College submitted a full first draft in December and a rewrite is now underway. Each of the self-studies demonstrates clear strengths on the respective campuses. For all self-studies, the University-wide steering committee still has some concerns around criteria 2, 3, and 4, that vary in degree and by campus.

In addition to responding to the standard criteria for the university as a whole, the Antioch University-wide self-study is expected to respond to concerns expressed by the review team in 1993. Those concerns were:

1. University governance: NCA noted that the structural administrative decisions made by the BOT to separate the chancellor and college presidency requires careful monitoring.
2. NCA noted that University finances are a serious concern.
3. Campus plans for the assessment of student outcomes needs further development.

4. The need for a comprehensive enrollment management plan at the College.
5. NCA raised questions about the effectiveness of decentralization of university administrative functions.

Status: The bulk of the work on the university self-study is scheduled for this spring with completion to coincide with the campus self-studies in May. Preliminary writing around known entities (history, background, basic data) has begun. However, substantive writing addressing NCA's concerns, especially 1, 2, and 5, is at a standstill. In some cases, the University-wide steering committee does not have the required information, or access to it, necessary to proceed at this time. Around other concerns, it is simply not clear to us what the BOT's response would be. Failure to respond effectively to these items in the next three months carry potentially serious and lasting consequences to Antioch University's accreditation status.

University Steering Group

Paul Ewald, Associate to the Chancellor

Jim Craighow, President, ANE

Laurien Alexandre, Dean of University-wide Programs and Director, Ph.D. in Leadership and Change

Steve Schwerner, Antioch College, Professor

Below is one example of the "standstill":

II. Example: Antioch University Governance (Concern #1)

Background: The concern around the governance structure identified in 1993 derives from the examination of Antioch's presentation of evidence and planning (in '93) to the reviewers concerning Criterion Two, which states that:

"The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes."(p. 35, NCA Handbook, 2nd Ed.)

The NCA Handbook further states that

"Determining whether an institution has the "necessary" resources and whether they are "effectively organized"...involves more than counting resources and finding the charters, by-laws, and manuals that outline governing structures; it also involves determining whether the decision-making, administrative, and communications structures and processes are well-understood and appropriately used by the institutions constituencies." (p. 38)

NCA stresses the need for sufficient breadth of evidence and provides examples including:

- **"Effective administration through well-defined and understood organizational structures, policies, and procedures;**
- **Qualified and experienced administrative personnel who oversee institutional activities and exercise appropriate responsibility for them;**
- **Systems of governance that provide dependable information to the institutions constituencies and, as appropriate, involve them in the decision-making process." (p. 39)**

The commission recognizes variation among institutions. Different kinds of evidence are appropriate to different circumstances. ("The stated purposes of the institution and the present opportunities and challenges facing it will determine not only the types of evidence provided but also the relative importance assigned to each by the Evaluation Team." p. 40).

Among examples of possible circumstance-appropriate evidence are:

- **An institution has experienced rifts among the trustees, the President, and faculty. Institutional efforts to develop new avenues for intra-institutional communication might be important evidence that the institution is committed to fostering more effective organizational communication structures.**
- **An institution has revised its decision-making and administrative structures and processes as a result of the self-study process. Evidence that the institution has become more aware of the importance of participatory governance or more effective administration, or has recognized ways it could**

make its present organization and processes more effective might be important.” (pp. 39-40)

In discussing how the University should respond to Criterion Two, given NCAs stated concern about the governance structure, the University steering group has raised the following issues, thoughts and questions to which it does not have any answers:

- While one could describe the evolution of a federal model, it appears to most that federalism "died" in May-June 2001. How would one describe the model of governance at this point and would that inspire confidence in a reviewer's mind?
- Roles of campus administrators were clarified somewhat by BOT approval of the title of President rather than Provost in 1998; however, the changing of power and authority of the Chancellor and the extension of operational authority and power to a new BOT position suggests that the "monitoring" caution of NCA resulted in a "no confidence" vote in the Chancellor and/or position and brought into question the role, power and authority of the campus presidents. Beyond descriptive paragraphs, is it the intention of the BOT to permanently change the model, replace the model, or keep the current model for an undetermined period of time? If this is an interim strategy, what is the roll out plan for the future model? How does this plan take into account the leadership vacancies across the system?
- How would the NCA Self-Assessment respond to a perspective that indicates there is and or has been managerial instability and high turnover rate in key leadership positions?
- Given governance issues, the complexities of dual citizenship, and difficulties of defining with consistency Antioch as a University, what are cogent arguments for a strong central system instead of a loose confederation, with each campus having its own regional accreditation?
- The Board may need to be clear that IT believe the federal model is dead...understand the implications of that....and then articulate a conscious direction to all this, which incorporates how it sees leadership transitions and job authorities, where decentralization still makes sense to them, and where not.

The Steering Committee believes that answers to the questions above, and clarification around the points made, is a necessary beginning to providing the reviewers with a coherent response and supporting evidentiary data to the criteria and concern.

The preliminary university self-study work, the current lack of clarity around decision-making and authority in the university, the limbo status of leadership transitions and vacancies, the protracted activities concerning financial planning, cuts and consolidations, and uncertainty concerning the “Future of Antioch”, (committee or otherwise) all result in the net effect of an inability to frame cogent or convincing responses to accreditation criteria and concerns. ||

Given these circumstances, we ask the BOT to advise the Steering Group on how it would like it to proceed.