

1010 High Vista Trail
Webster, New York 14580
August 27, 2001

Robert H. Devine, President
Antioch College
795 Livermore St.
Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387

Dear Bob,

We've never met, but from your many contributions to the college chat line we feel that we know something about you and the ways you respond to well-meaning criticisms of the present condition of Antioch College. On the other hand, you don't know us at all, so perhaps we need to update you on why we are giving our support to AIF.

We're glad that you read the letter we sent to the class of '51. More than likely, you have read most of AIF's mailings, which are really very few because each one costs hundreds of dollars from our own pockets. We contribute what we can in the hope that it will go toward restoration of what once was one of the best small colleges in the country. Antioch used to be a well-respected academic institution, known for excellence and innovation, with a co-op plan that was the envy of other schools. You say that it still enjoys some of that reputation; we will grant that it still probably holds prominence for "innovation," but academic eminence and the enviable co-op plan appear to have withered away.

We have a few years on you as Antiochians, years that included raising our children on stories about Antioch...about a superb faculty, a focused, hard working student body, and the pride we all felt to be part of such a great educational endeavor. We told them about co-op jobs we loved and those we hated, and about gritty housing in cities where we were strangers, and about what a great adventure it was.... most of the time. When it was time for them to choose their colleges, our children researched, spoke to guidance counselors and a few current students, and then refused even to consider Antioch. We've talked to many other Antiochian parents who have had the same experience.

We'd been somewhat out of touch with Antioch during those years when our family and our jobs took all of our attention, and the Antioch our high-schoolers were telling us about was not at all the same one we'd been reading about in the *Antiochian*. Little did we know how badly things had gone, and how little we'd been told. But others knew, and our wish that our children would benefit from an educational experience comparable to ours was gone.

However, we were motivated to find out what had happened, and so in 1986 we visited the campus and talked to many people...students, faculty and the very few remaining staff members we knew. Frankly, we were appalled. And although we continued to make small contributions each year thereafter, we had little faith that Antioch would ever again be comparable to what it once had been. In our time, deliberate destruction of campus property was unheard of, and respect for oneself, as well as for other people and their property, was part of the way we lived. Young adults with enormous potential for achievement were graduated every year, and many have become noted and notable in the years since. Undoubtedly, some of today's students are also doing well, and are creative, intelligent, people. Unfortunately, from what we have learned about too many of them, we anticipate notoriety as well.

That money is needed is apparent, but how do you expect to get it from those of us who see no improvement, or any plans for major change, in the very nature of what Antioch has become? You're asking us to invest in an organization that, in the opinion of many of us, is unlikely to grow again into a vibrant, highly civilized academic community. Please believe, Bob, that none of us is pining for an Antioch just like it was "in the good old days." **We simply want it to be as first-rate as it was then.** Unfortunately, judging from the quality of some of the student contributions to the chat line, part of the present student body is barely literate and a great many are incapable of participating in logical argument.

AIF offers Antioch both money and ideas: restore the college's status as a degree granting institution, and let it decide what it should take to earn an Antioch degree. Our peer institutions do that, and their degrees are in great demand, as are places in their freshman classes. You omitted that fact from your letter. You also neglected to mention that you, Antioch College's president, as well as the Chancellor of Antioch University and the Chairman of its Board of Trustees, are stepping down in the near future. Potential donors are likely to find those coincident events interesting.

We doubt that your claim of a diminishing pool of applicants to liberal arts colleges is accurate, or to blame for Antioch's poor share of that market. The other colleges that educated members of our family...Oberlin, St. Lawrence University, SUNY Binghamton, Cornell University.... seem to be turning away well-qualified applicants.

As for the sadly emasculated co-op program, we find it hard to understand how, in recent years when employers were desperate for talented and intelligent people to fill jobs, co-op placement opportunities could possibly have disappeared. And you wrote, "students are not content merely to enter the adult world of work, but seek opportunities that are meaningful." Perhaps you will explain just how they can do anything meaningful if they cannot support themselves while they search for "meaning". Please tell us why nobody at their college is making this point clear to them?

We are sorry that you seem to be intent on blaming every problem on regrettable external forces. We are sorry, too, that our hope that your leadership of Antioch College would bring about substantive change has not been realized. Perhaps it was not possible, given the constraints that may have been forced upon you by the university structure.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jan and Chuck Wellers". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Jan '53 and Chuck '51 Wellers

Copy: AIF c/o Katy Jako '54, Richmond, CA



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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July 25, 2001

Dear Antiochian,

An alum recently passed along to me an appeal on behalf of the Antioch Independence Fund (AIF) that was sent to members of the class of 1951. The letter from Chuck ('51) and Jan Lehman ('53) Wellers included materials describing the AIF and its mission. Since I rarely have the opportunity to see the literature of the AIF, I was pleased to have the opportunity to see and reflect on the ideas and proposals that have been put forth by those with whom I share a commitment to the vitality and well-being of the College.

Chuck and Jan's letter noted the impact that Antioch College had on the lives of classmates of their era. "Not one of us left Antioch unchallenged or unchanged," they write, and go on to recount how the educational program of the College challenged basic assumptions and cherished beliefs, while offering a strong liberal arts education, a respected degree, and "a chance to enter the work world with experience that gave us an important edge." These words have great resonance for me. From my perspective, these observations are as true for the class of 2001 as they were for the class of 1951. Chuck and Jan go on to say, however, "It isn't quite like that at Antioch anymore. It could be that way again, but right now it isn't."

I feel compelled to disagree. I'm just beginning my 40th year as an Antiochian, and 30 of those years have been spent on the campus, experiencing the College at close range. Please permit me to share my thinking regarding the ways in which the College has, indeed, changed since you were a student here in the early 1950s, as well as some of my perspectives on the ways it has remained the same.

The GI Bill was the major force driving the enrollment at the College during the Post-WWII era, and had a great deal to do with the College's growth and prosperity at that time. This was one of two spikes in the College's enrollment history, the other being associated with the baby boomers of the 1960s. In the post-war era private institutions were educating one half of all college students, with liberal arts colleges accounting for 40% of that number. As the late Ernest Boyer reminded us several years ago, it was a period of time during which the nation moved from elite to mass higher education, and Boyer writes, "Enrollments exploded and campuses were built at the rate of one a week." College enrollments increased from 2.3 million in 1950 to 8.6 million in 1970. With the baby boomers arriving on the heels of GI bill students, Antioch managed sustained growth during this boom period in American higher education.

We are no longer in a time of prosperity and enrollment growth. Economists (and liberal arts college Presidents) Michael McPherson and Morton Schapiro tell us that today, although half of the work force passes through college, only 250,000 of 14 million students are in small private residential colleges, and the percentage of those students majoring in liberal arts disciplines, at both public and private institutions, continues to decline. While the 18-year old population is once again on the upswing, the demographics of this college-age increase will be significantly different than those of previous generations. This population will need more financial assistance, will be more

bicultural and bilingual, will be more inclined to attend schools closer to home, will have very different expectations, needs and learning styles, and will be more likely to attend public and two-year institutions.

An associated change that Antioch has experienced since the 1950s is in the process, dynamics and expense of recruiting students. With a diminishing pool of students headed in a liberal arts direction, the competition among private liberal arts institutions has become fierce. Our peer institutions spend between \$3,000 and \$5,000 per student to recruit matriculants, and then award on average \$17,000 in financial aid to entering students. Meeting the twin goals of accessibility and merit, the College struggles each year to provide \$3.2 million in unfunded institutional aid. While other institutions draw merit aid from endowment earnings to compete for high quality students, Antioch discounts its tuition and fee charges, and in effect, has \$3.2 million less to work with in providing facilities, faculty compensation and the like. Given the steady decline in Federal aid over the last two decades (Federal aid in 1982-83 accounted for 79% of an Antioch student's aid package, while last year it accounted for only 53% of the package; the percentage of Antioch institutional aid in a student's package climbed from 19% to 44% during the same time period), the College has assumed a level of responsibility for the accessibility of an Antioch education that was unimaginable in the 1950s. Currently just over 90% of Antioch students receive some form of financial aid, with almost \$8 million in Antioch scholarships and grants, loans, federal, state and work study aid flowing to our 650 students each year.

One very remarkable change in the College since the 1950s is that we currently have the highest retention in Antioch College history. For the past two years our retention of both first year and continuing students has held at 87%, a record-breaking number for an institution that has only rarely in its history graduated more than 50-53% of its entering students.

Current Antioch students share many qualities, characteristics, values and aspirations of your generation of Antiochians, but there are also some essential differences. While the entering class of 2000 perhaps had a slightly higher relative ranking on standardized tests than did your generation, they have been shaped by a very different set of life experiences. In a recent *Atlantic Monthly* article on "The Organization Kid," David Brooks notes:

Most of today's college students were born from 1979 to 1982. That means they were less than ten years old when the Berlin Wall fell, and have no real first-hand knowledge of global conflict or Cold War anxieties about nuclear war. The only major American armed conflict they remember is Desert Storm, a high-tech cakewalk. Moreover, they have never known anything but incredible prosperity: low unemployment and low inflation are the normal conditions; crime rates are always falling; the stock market rises.

The current generation of Antioch students is bright, industrious, enterprising and morally earnest. Whereas on the national level the traditional view of the purpose of liberal education in preparing public citizens and developing a meaningful philosophy of life has been eroded since the '50s, having been replaced by a concern with increasing earning power, career advancement and private benefit, Antioch students tend to maintain a focus on the public benefits of education, the learning that comes from participation in governance and community life, and the necessity of addressing the moral and ethical questions that derive from Horace Mann's challenge to "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for Humanity."

One of the more dramatic changes that the College has experienced since the 1950s is in the nature of work and its implications for the co-op program. Many of the entry level jobs that were the bread and butter of the co-op program have been automated out of existence, and the shift of jobs from industry and commerce to the non-profit and social service sector has meant significant change in our program. The cities where jobs have traditionally been concentrated have also changed, and issues of cost-of-living and security have come to play a much more substantial role

in student decision-making. Complementing the shift away from the *in loco parentis* role that institutions played in the '50s and '60s, has been a change in the motivations and attitudes of students toward work. Current students are not content merely to enter the adult world of work, but seek opportunities that are meaningful -- in which they can make a difference.

What has remained the same? A great deal about Antioch College is as you remember it. Apart from the continuing difficulties deriving from a very old physical plant and a very small endowment, there are a number of areas that reflect persistence of mission and values:

- Antioch College's distinctive liberal arts and co-op program continues to set the national benchmarks for quality undergraduate education. In the recent Carnegie and Pew sponsored National Survey of Student Engagement, the College ranked at the top of the list of 276 institutions in categories of "Level of Academic Challenge" and "Enriching Educational Experiences," and in the 90th percentile in two of the other five categories of benchmarking.
- Antioch College continues to produce graduates who go on to distinguish themselves in graduate programs. The Franklin and Marshall study on the *Baccalaureate Origins of Doctorate Recipients* affirms that among 914 colleges and universities, Antioch College ranks 19th, in absolute numbers, in the number of Ph.D. degrees earned by alumni. Given our small size, this ranking is truly exceptional.
- Our Co-op program continues to provide a national model for "situated learning," and with new leadership in the department, and Dr. Linn's ongoing research on the lifelong impact of cooperative learning, Antioch continues to lead the field.
- The Antioch Education Abroad program continues to have two of its many programs ranked in the top 25 international programs, and has recently developed new programs in Japan, Egypt, and is currently developing a program in African art in Mali.
- The College's system of shared governance and community life is as vital and pedagogically central as it has ever been. Administrative Council continues to make decisions regarding faculty and administrative personnel, budget, policy and direction for the College. Community Council continues to wrestle with the very serious issues of campus life and civil culture. Our weekly community meetings continue to provide an exemplar for engaged community-building and problem-solving. Over half of our students are involved with community service in the surrounding community. Antioch was recently singled out for praise by the John Templeton Foundation among its *Colleges that Encourage Character Development*, and by the Bonner Foundation with a community enrichment grant in support of our leadership program. While the scope of shared governance and community life is perhaps broader than it was in the early '50s, Antioch's distinctive approach continues to lead the way nationally.

In a recent e-mail correspondence, Richard Tolken ('51) spelled out some prominent reasons for contributing to an educational organization. In addition to successful educational outcomes (we have many to point to), and support of innovative approaches to education (Antioch continues to be a trend-setter with its interdisciplinary curriculum and focus on educating public citizens), he listed among his reasons, "Belief in the management of the institution as recorded in its recent history." I'd like to share, and amplify somewhat, the response that I made to Dick's thoughtful assessment.

The administrative team and faculty that labors in the trenches at the College right now, has accomplished a great deal in the past five years. This team, and it has truly been a team effort, (a) has increased enrollment by 25%; (b) has cut attrition by 60% to an all-time Antioch low of 13%; (c) has increased the faculty, increased the number of tenure-track positions, increased faculty salaries by 18% (hopefully by 26% if this year goes well), and has put an additional \$1 million each year into strengthening the academic program; (d) has increased the endowment from

\$11 million to \$30 million; (e) has wired the library, and put it on line to OhioLink; (f) has wired the campus, moved the technology infrastructure from the level of Mac Classics (the standard desktop five years ago) to the level of iMacs, and has installed 3 computing labs across the campus; (g) has implemented a new year-round calendar and a revamped interdisciplinary curriculum; (h) has revisioned, revitalized and strengthened the Co-op program; (i) has put three new AEA programs on line; (j) has put an innovative summer program in place; (k) has completed a number of campus renovations and improvements and put the campus in the best condition it's enjoyed in the last three decades, and (l) has restored a measure of social capital in our town-gown relationships with the Village of Yellow Springs.

Antioch Independence Fund literature at times portrays the College as diminished and floundering, weakened fiscally and academically by its position within Antioch University, with a withered or non-existent self-governance system that has been gutted by the University, and with no control over its own future and direction. Nothing could be further from my experience during the last five years. The Board has kept the long-term health and well-being of the College central in all of its thinking, and our progress during this time was directed and charted by the College's own bottom-up Strategic Plan. The University has provided a safe harbor and support for that progress, as well as providing programmatic development that enriches the College's programs. For example, at the present time College faculty are engaged both in the developing Antioch University Ph.D. program, and in participating in a University-wide training for electronic delivery of coursework -- to enhance their ability to mentor students on co-op across the world.

We recently commissioned a feasibility study in preparation for a campaign for the College's endowment. In interviews conducted with alums, donors, Trustees, some faculty, students and administrators, the study indicated that ninety-five percent of those interviewed said they would be giving to the upcoming campaign, roughly seventy percent said they wanted to be involved, and roughly half indicated that they'd be interested in taking leadership roles in this strategic effort for the College. Best of all, the interviews indicated an understanding on the part of our constituencies that the quality and reputation of the institution are linked to the resources that it has available. Ultimately it will require the support of alumni to secure the College's long-term vitality and reputation.

In recognition of your almost 50 years as an Antiochian, I would strongly urge you to visit the campus, talk with some of our extraordinary students and faculty, and make your own determinations about the state of the College, its quality, direction and autonomy. You are also welcome to contact me directly with any questions. I look forward to seeing you on campus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R. Devine', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert H. Devine ('67)
President