

CG GOES TO NEW YORK

Members of Community Government Heard at Board of Trustees Meeting

By Chad Johnston, Dietrich Delrieu-Schulze,
& Tim Noble

Four of us drove to Manhattan for an uncertain chance at speaking with the Executive Committee of the Antioch Board of Trustees. We went in an attempt to represent aspects of the College that too easily disappear from consideration when numbers relating to finances become the primary focus of sweeping changes. Essentially, we wanted to present faces and flesh alongside the proposal and the process that produced it.

While we appreciate the individual visits made this term by financial planning committee members (Bruce Bedford, Jeff Cash, Jim McDonald), we thought it important that the entire committee hear from Antioch College Community members in person.

More people who had been involved in the process of the budget planning had planned to go, including Financial Planning Committee (FPC), AdCil, and ComCil members. However, due to the hectic schedule, a much narrower representation of the community ended up going. As we pulled away from Yellow Springs we immediately considered the implications of our actions

as defacto "representatives" of the community. We still felt it was necessary that someone go, and at least attempt to give a better picture of the implications of the board's decision on the community.

An AdCil approval of a document (by a vote of 5-4) doesn't mean that the community has finished with the issue. We wanted to demonstrate that the community is incredibly concerned and committed to continue working closely with the Board of Trustees. They are obviously deeply concerned and extremely dedicated to Antioch. It's just so rare that there's direct contact between the college community and members of the board.

The Executive Committee didn't turn us around and point west toward Ohio. Any other college's board probably would have, but that willingness to listen symbolizes to us a vibrant hope for better future communication. We hope that whoever the next president may be, will enjoy a structure of communication between the board and college that doesn't rest entirely on the president.

We managed, surprisingly to get ten minutes on their busy agenda, which actually turned into 20-25 minutes. In the meeting, we didn't present any alternative plans, and didn't have a lot of time to represent the variety of

issues that have come up in detailed FPC, ComCil and AdCil meetings. However, again, we hope our visit will incite the board to seriously consider the ramifications of the proposed cuts. This community has considered, in great depth, and an eight to ten percent budget cut this year, next year, or any time soon will cripple the college's ability to offer anything of the academic program.

Cuts on this scale are simply not viable without sacrificing the integrity of the College as a Liberal Arts school. (Please see postscript for a short history of what happened the last time major cuts were forced on the College.)

Just a few examples of immediate effects that we didn't have time to present in much detail:

- The need to restate and renew the institution's commitment to attracting an even more diverse group of students and faculty and the understanding that it will continue to require serious funding of student aid and expanding programs to reach higher enrollment goals and thus gain more revenue from tuition.
- As one of the few Academic Program cuts on the table so far, the Summer Institutes, when totally eliminated in Summer 2003, are projected (Cont. p.16)

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(Cont. from p.3)

to save \$33,000 a year. Yet several students each year enroll at Antioch after taking a single Institute block course as a visiting student. Without the revenue of those several students and of their potential future alumni giving, and without the Institutes, will we really be better off either economically or academically?

- The continued freeze on hiring and replacement searches has in effect held certain departments hostage and unable to fulfill their part of the overall program. This cripples departments without any more rationale than a tenured faculty member retiring
- Rethink the management of the endowment to realize the earnings of recent contributions rather than waiting years until their full effect is factored in.
- And we didn't even have a chance to get into depreciation, which the FPC discussed for hours and never made it into the 5-4 voted AdCil proposal.
- Cover the College until the

strategic plan are fulfilled. We're heading in the right direction. Retention right now is UNPRECEDENTED. Don't knock us back so far we can't maintain this momentum.

- Recognize that Antioch College is a residential college which functions very differently than the other satellites. Meaning: much of the Antioch education extends outside of the classroom, and that non-academic staff are just as essential to our educational effectiveness.

Again, our thanks to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees for taking even a short amount of time out of what was obviously a long and demanding day of meetings. It is clear that the Future of Antioch is in everyone's thoughts. WOW (Women On Watch), BAMN (By Any Means Necessary), and many statements in community discussions have all demonstrated very clear and informed ideas of what the future can and should be. It is

College Community be a part of envisioning and articulating what how that future will be institutionalized. We say this with the with the institution's turbulent past in mind.¹ We are a residential program, different from the other campuses. So much of the education extends beyond the classroom. This community recognizes non-academic staff as absolutely essential to the Antioch education, but it's not clear that the trustees share that view. Find a way to bridge the gap and help us to maintain the progress without sacrificing the jobs of the people who make this place run on so much work with the barest of pay. We urge the board to take some risks² with us until the long-term stability of the College can be assured by what looks to be a very successful capital campaign. This is no time for conservatism, fiscal or otherwise. The nationalist fervor drummed up by the right threatens an institution as far apart from the status quo as Antioch. Everything we do here is a risk. But what we do has continually been years ahead of the rest of American higher

education. We will be set back 15 years of progress with cuts as extreme as those proposed for the next two and a half years. Educational concerns are not driving the financial decisions. It seems to be the other way around. Whatever plan communicated by the board to the college absolutely must articulate and stem from some clear vision of a continued commitment to what we're doing and a recognition that we are in fact succeeding.

Sincerely and with continuing deep concern,
Chad Johnston
Dietrich Delreiu-Schulze
Tim Noble
Jonny Estes

¹ Excerpted from the 2001 Self-Study prepared for accreditation : In Fall 1972, HEW under the Nixon Administration announced major cuts in federal financial aid. These cuts led to great unrest on the campus when the students realized they would be unable to continue their education at Antioch College. This discontent led to a series of student and staff strikes in 1973,

which successfully closed down the school for six weeks. Student enrollment dropped dramatically from the college's largest student enrollment in 1973 of 2470 to 475 by 1985. These drops in enrollment led to faculty cuts, including closing departments and terminating contracts with tenured faculty. Faculty in 1972-73 (including faculty in administration) was 215 and by 1979-80 it had dropped to 96, a reduction of over 55% in that period. This led to more student departures. The downward spiral hit bottom in 1979 when the College was unable to make payroll and an agreement with Greene County allowed the faculty to keep teaching while receiving unemployment benefits. This period came to be known as the "payless paydays."

² From the AdCil proposal, as submitted to the board by Jim Hall: "The Board of Trustees has asked for a revised budget for this and future academic years...(that) will minimize the risks inherent in budget-making by taking a conservative approach to projecting revenues."