From the College President's Desk

Belonging at Antioch

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President Jane K. Fernandes



One of the words we use often at Antioch College is *belonging*. It is an important wo
especially as Antioch continues to grow and strengthen the distinctive community
are building here. But what does belonging actually mean at Antioch? Where do we
see it most clearly, what creates it, and what might we learn from the experiences o
people across our community?

Belonging is more than being welcomed into a place. It is the experience of knowin
that there is room for you there—not because you have learned to become like
everyone else, but because you are able to bring who you are and contribute someth
of yourself to the community.

At Antioch, belonging is something we create together. It happens in classrooms an in the work students do across campus. It happens on the Farm, in the arts, in the Wellness Center, over meals, through conversation, and in the ordinary encounters that make up the life of a college. It can also happen when we disagree, provided we remain willing to listen to one another and to stay in relationship across our differences.

That work feels especially important now. We live in a time when it can be easy to divide ourselves into groups and to retreat toward people who already think, believe and experience the world as we do. Education should offer another possibility. A college can be a place where we learn how to encounter difference with curiosity, h to contribute to something larger than ourselves, and how to build community with requiring sameness.

Antioch has always asked its students to think about the world they want to create then to participate in creating it. I believe belonging is part of that work. We do not create it once and declare the work finished. We create and recreate it through how welcome one another, how we listen, how we participate, and how we make room fo others to participate as well.

Perhaps that is one of the most important things a college can teach: **belonging is n only something we hope to find. It is something we help create for one another.**

Antioch has accomplished a great deal by creating a college in which people are invited not simply to attend, but to participate—to work, learn, question, create, an contribute. Understanding more fully how belonging becomes part of that experien can help us strengthen what Antioch already does well and carry it confidently into the College's future.

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A guest post by

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Jane Fernandes is a lifelong educator who believes in the power of education, belonging and community to create meaningful change.

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