

Detailed Notes from VT/Upstate-NY Alumni Chapter Meeting 10/20/07

We talked about how we found Antioch, what we were looking for, what we found there. Those in attendance had experienced a variety of historical periods, and it was interesting to compare the differences in our experiences and to find the common themes. Two alums who had graduated in the mid-80s brought yearbooks to share.

During our discussion with Aimee, people brought up questions about various aspects of Antioch's current situation, ranging from the status of Alumni Relations (it hadn't been fully funded since the 1990s, and has been inconsistently funded for a long time, plus the difficulties of presidential turnover), Steve Lawry, the August Board meeting, the Renewal Commission, enrollment numbers, the co-op program, governance structure of the university, and general status of the college as an institution.

We asked that big question, why hasn't the college been sustainable before this? The answers seemed to be poor management, poor governance structure, and lack of funds, and the many results of these three things (such as poorly funded and managed alumni relations and recruitment efforts!).

We also talked about solutions--what to do to make Antioch stronger and more vibrant. We talked about marketing Antioch--what key aspects of Antioch make it valuable and distinctive. Some of the things we came up with were faculty attention (they're not tied up with research requirements), community governance, co-op, interdisciplinary learning, community, and social activism.

We discussed the need for an expanded presence and recruitment, including involving alumni participation. An interesting point which Aimee brought up was that the press coverage generated by the suspension announcement and the mobilization to save the school can be used as a significant asset to recruitment efforts. Several alumni, including two high school teachers, signed up to help with admissions recruitment efforts, in anticipation of the BOT reversing its decision and the need to spread the word with college-bound students.

Aimee shared about the Science Interest Group, which she helped form. It's made up of distinguished science alumni and its purpose is to support the science program at Antioch. It has met several times, visited campus, and met with faculty and students. The group assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the science program at Antioch and explored ways that the alums, with their various connections, could help the science program by access to materials, co-op jobs, etc.

We discussed the idea of having committees like this for other areas of Antioch's curriculum and operation. Areas could include the humanities and the arts, or maybe one for the communications department (film and video). They would facilitate alums' involvement in the programs.

This connected to a larger idea of bringing alums back to the college. The overall idea

was that there are numerous ways in which the community and academic environment at Antioch could be significantly enriched by inviting alumni and other exciting/relevant people to participate and be involved. Some alums shared stories of travelling musicians and important social figures who visited the school during their time there, and how this was an important part of what made the campus so vibrant.

Alums could come to visit, live, and help out in various ways. One form this could take would be having alums (as well as non-alum professors) come to Antioch to teach or help teach a class. This would help round out and enrich the curriculum. One alum, a current professor, shared the results of conversations they had with several of their colleagues. These recently retired professors said that because of Antioch's reputation and role in academia as such a radical/progressive institution, they would be very interested in teaching at Antioch for a semester or year for low pay, just for the opportunity to experience and participate in Antioch. Alums could also volunteer and help out in numerous other ways, such as with physical projects like the organic garden.

Alums expressed interest in getting more information about the actual breakdown in budgetary costs and the Alumni Board's business plan. We are thinking of having someone familiar with the plan come to give a presentation of it at a future Chapter meeting, perhaps at several locations in the state (Montpelier, Brattleboro, & Burlington?).

Some people had ideas for doing outreach through the WYSO community, as well as the Little Art Theater, since there have been so many people (including some of the alums in attendance!) involved with those, and who love Antioch, through the years.