

Notes from 11/18/07 VT/Upstate NY Alumni Chapter Meeting

We met on Sunday afternoon at the home of Robin Lloyd '61, shared snack food and proceeded to discuss and update each other on the Board of Trustees' decision and subsequent events. Jill Wolcott and Amanda Calder shared about their experiences in Yellow Springs during Antioch Homecoming. We had printouts of relevant documents and several of us had read up on the current news in advance of the meeting.

About halfway through the meeting, we spoke with Mike Brower, member of the Executive Committee of the Alumni Board, by speakerphone. The conversation included the following:

What is the status of trust or mistrust among alumni and faculty regarding the Board of Trustees and the University Leadership?

Mike said that this is a time of tension and mistrust. The Board of Trustees, for example, accepted the governance decision to have an independent board for the College, but it has not fully embraced the proposal. There are still a lot of details to be worked out and things are still somewhat tentative. The level of actual independence and power is still up in the air. The Interim Board which will select the college BOT and President won't have full and total authority. Some alumni are questioning the Alumni Board and rejecting some of the compromises it made in negotiations with the BOT. Some alumni have called for rejecting the agreement. Some major donors are concerned about the status of self-governance for the college.

How confident can we feel that the money we donate to the College Revival Fund will actually go to the College and will be well-stewarded?

The Alumni Board does have to OK any use of the funds, and the pledge forms clearly state what the limitations are (e.g. money only to the College). Although there's been talk from the University Leadership about the College repaying debts to the University, that has not come about yet and is still definitely under negotiation. Mike feels it is essential that we meet the fundraising benchmarks that have been set. Without meeting them we are in an extremely poor position as far as leveraging and negotiating power. So, the advice to those wondering about whether they should send in their pledges or withhold them in order to protest the lack of sufficient autonomy for the college, is to send it in, *and* to stay involved and questioning.

What about the recent actions of the Chancellor and the University Public Relations

office?

We were concerned with the continuance of academic programs, faculty employment, recruiting 1st year students for Fall of 2008, and getting approval from the Ohio Board of Regents to grant degrees past December 2008. Some of the actions and statements of the University Administration regarding these issues are troubling to us, such as the proposal that we only recruit transfer students for next year. The letter from Interim President Andrzej Bloch stating that faculty members would all be laid off at the end of the current academic year and then a select number would be rehired was also troubling.

We all agreed that it's vital to keep as many faculty and staff as possible and to navigate the situation of budget limitations in the most resourceful, respectful, and fair way possible, and that involvement of faculty in decision-making is vital. We also agreed that recruiting 1st year students is super-important. We discussed the situation regarding the Ohio Board of Regents and the proposal to recruit only transfer students (There is concern about a lack of sufficient financial strength to be able to guarantee a functioning college for four years).

We seem to keep returning to the question of how to deal with the University Leadership and the BOT, and what we should do now.

Mike has friends on the BOT and has confidence in the fact that they want the College to stay open and succeed. He feels that a collaborative approach, even with individuals with whom we have been frustrated, is the wisest course of action right now. Although he also said that challenging them is important, too. Mike thinks many Trustees, without an adequate understanding of the College, believe(d) that the failure of the College to attract enough students pointed to a poor/not in demand curriculum and faculty, rather than a failure to build admissions and alumni relations. The incredible mobilization of alumni and the focused fundraising efforts of the development office and alumni are two factors that are important and influential for the Trustees.

What can we as alums and in our alumni chapters do to help?

Four things:

1. **Send in pledge money** and gather more pledges.
2. **Keep our chapters active** with meetings, activities and outreach.
3. **Start new chapters**, by reaching out to Antioch friends and encouraging them to join and start chapters, and by supporting those geographically near to start chapters (such as our idea/intention to have a Brattleboro chapter). Mike said that doubling the number of chapters would really impress the BOT and would support fundraising efforts, because people give more money when they have real personal involvement.
4. **Recruit Students.**

We can informally talk to high school counselors and interested students. It turns out

that there are actually no rules barring students and alumni from communicating with prospective students about Antioch. We also found out that Community Government is creating a packet of information with students on campus, without application forms, for alumni to pass on to high school students and counselors.

Our Own Ideas for our VT/Upstate NY Chapter

- **Start new chapter** in Brattleboro (get in contact with alums down there and help schedule a meeting, Jill and/or Amanda go down to participate)
- **Schedule activities and events** for our chapter: an interesting and relevant speaker, such as Richard Coutu (wrote a book about Antioch, Prof. in the A.U. Leadership and Change PhD program), Mark Shumlin (Antioch grad, former President of Antioch San Diego, currently is President at Goddard College). Topics include the state of progressive higher education. Possible location: UVM to reach out to academic community here.
- **Recruit students:** Contact those people who expressed interest at last meeting and get to work!
- **Raise money:** Identify VT-based foundations whose values and interests jive with Antioch. Major donors can choose specific programs to support and have their money be contingent upon certain things. Idea: fundraising for the college program by program to guarantee each one, and accessing constituencies for each of them. Ideas/examples include funding a Global Studies program, the way that the Peace Studies professor at Antioch has been endowed, supporting the co-op program (e.g. supporting co-op jobs at employers that may not be able to pay a sufficient wage for a co-op student, and can be content-specific, e.g. peace studies co-ops). Janet had an idea to sort through the local philanthropic community to think about who might be interested. Another idea: creating and sending postcards to people we know asking them to give money to the Antioch College Revival Fund as their holiday gift.
- **Expand our outreach to non-alums** with a public event. Other Chapters put on a play, had an art show; showed Antioch movies. Public event could/should raise funds and increase exposure/PR.
- **Create future events** that would include a 1-hour organizational meeting as well as a speaker or activity.
- **Meet bimonthly.** We are planning to meet again in January with a speaker.

Alums who attended: Robin Lloyd '61, Elizabeth Skarie '74, Janet Kahn '71, Jill Wolcott '74, Amanda Calder '07.