

[Note: This White Paper along with a Resolution (separate document attached) were submitted to the Executive Committee of the Alumni Board by the Ad Hoc Alumni Board-Nonstop Committee in 11/08]

25-Nov-08

White Paper: Shaping the Future of Antioch College
Alumni Board-Nonstop Committee

Antiochians know and cherish what we recognize as distinguishing hallmarks of an Antioch education. In an October 2008 exercise on creating the new Antioch College in Richmond, Ind., we brought remarkable unanimity to naming those core values that have set Antioch apart over the past century even as they have been adapted to meet changing times and circumstances over the decades. We stated that we wanted those core values and traditions—the reciprocal interrogation of theory by practice, classroom by work, community government, social justice—to shape the future of Antioch College.

We learned at Antioch that values mean nothing until we test them in everyday experience and adapt them to help us face new challenges. As we have struggled to make them guides to inform and shape our lives since we left Yellow Springs, we have learned that their meaning comes from putting them into practice. They have no purchase in the abstract. As guides to shape the culture and practice of life on a campus they are not taught in books but honed and acquired through hard trial and error in testing and applying them, in each classroom project, each community government action, each faculty-student interaction. And their everyday impact is accumulated in exchanges among faculty and students and then further tested and preserved in everyday conversations among faculty and staff on the campus. Those values receive their vitality from the living experiences and memories of faculty who have experience in the

everyday practices of guiding students in challenging theory with practice, connecting community with classroom, integrating the quest for knowledge and experience with the quest for social justice. Other colleges have copied some of Antioch's features—work experience (internships) for students, for example—but in practice these programs usually fail to deliver their generative and creative possibilities for education and development because they lack Antioch's larger context and tradition as they have been passed down as practices from one faculty and staff member to others.

At this point as we are exploring how Antioch's core values can best be institutionalized in the new college, we need to think creatively and collaboratively about how we can each contribute to building the bridge from past to future, from the Old to the New. And this is very hard work: We have to imagine and build the bridge at the very time when we are trying to walk across it. We want to give fresh life to what was best in Antioch's traditions while grappling candidly with the real problems that existed in the old college's last years. And, whether we are trying to negotiate an independent future college, raise money, or create and run an improvised and exciting curriculum, this difficult feat causes lots of confusion and bruised feelings and sometimes a sense of being at cross-purposes. We have to repeatedly re-learn how secrecy and compartmentalization, institutional apartheid, gets in the way of building the mutually-reinforcing movement that is ultimately essential if we are to succeed at our daunting mission of creating and sustaining a new Antioch. We could each do our jobs better if we better understood what the others were trying to do.

We all need to explore how we can better collaborate in making the transition. But the alumni board bears a particular responsibility for encouraging rich collaboration because both the Pro Tem board and the Nonstop initiative were its creations.

On its most recent call/meeting the alumni board learned about the legal and financial challenges that the Pro Tem board is struggling to overcome as it tries to secure a free and independent Antioch of the future. The Pro Tem board is understandably focused on these challenges. But as it creates the new college this board is needing to assess the value (pedagogical and financial) of the old. What should be kept, modified or rebuilt, sold or traded off, abandoned? How hard should it fight to keep this or that? In facing these questions we became aware that different people have different perspectives on what can be learned from Antioch's experiences, whether broad issues of implementing general education and the cooperative program or specific resources like the radio station or the education abroad program. In particular, the Pro Tem board needs to develop a concept paper and business plan that are not only about the independence of Antioch but also what it will look like, however hazy the outline. How many of what kind of faculty does it take to engage how many of what kind of students with Antioch's values? The Pro Tem board needs to engage some faculty and staff from the previous Antioch College in order to enhance its credibility in the broader Antioch community and be well informed about the successes and challenges of the many things that have been tried (or should have been tried) over the years. At stake in assessing the past is the conviction that no Antiochian wants the new Antioch College to be invented out of thin air or whole cloth or to be a generic answer to generic challenges the consultant industry broadly projects for higher education.

As we move from past to future, adapting what was best in Antioch's past to our new circumstances, the alumni board has learned how the initiative known as Nonstop is providing the key link, the central bridge, from past to future. Just as Arthur Morgan kept Antioch alive in the 1920s with a small group of faculty and students, Nonstop has become the fullest reservoir of experiences to draw on. Since its creation a few months ago, Nonstop faculty, staff, students, and community participants have creatively improvised in adapting Antioch's core values to present realities. In fact, the very desperate predicament Antioch faces has bred the sense of purpose and urgency, of creative improvisation, that inspired Nonstop's defining quest for new ways of contextualizing one's education, a quest that has always been a hallmark of Antioch education. It has helped students to attend to many different things at the same time, to take nothing for granted, to assume diverse responsibilities. As a collective enterprise, it has transplanted Antioch's traditions of community governance into the urgent new situation where everyone is expected to participate actively, responsibly, and equitably in its governance and management. And faculty know best how recent difficulties with university administration have warped Antioch's richest traditions. Most importantly, it lives the essential Antioch lesson: That values mean nothing except as they are tested and applied and adapted through practice. Nonstop, including reflections on its difficulties as much as its successes, is the most important source for learning how Antioch's values can live and shape the new college, for building a new and innovative Antioch that can assure alumni and potential students that the continuing venture "really is" Antioch at its core.

Whether in its present incarnation as Nonstop or through other mechanisms of keeping Antioch's core values alive in new circumstances, of carrying its basic DNA

from past to future, it is essential that the new governing board draw on a critical mass of faculty and staff to help plan and staff the new college. There needs to be a core founding faculty to work on curriculum development and accreditation, to draw on the vast reservoir of experience to show how Antioch's experiences with the Three C's, both rewarding and frustrating, can provide practical experiences for the next generation of Antiochians. These cumulative, collective insights are things no consultants can provide. And a key contribution a founding faculty and staff can contribute is the knowledge that not all people, programs, structures, buildings, and pedagogies from the old college were equally effective at delivering Antioch's mission.

For these reasons the Alumni Board adopts the following resolution: [See the actual resolution in a separate attachment]

[Note: See Next Page]

[Note: This resolution is the second section of a 11/08 White Paper titled "Shaping the Future of Antioch College," submitted to the Executive Committee of the Alumni Board by the Ad Hoc Alumni Board-Nonstop Committee]

The following resolution, with its accompanying rationale, comes to you as the unanimous recommendation of the Alumni Board-Nonstop Committee –

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Joe Foley
Chris Hill
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Tim Eubank
Dave Thelen, Chair*

Over the agonizing debates about and proposals for Antioch's future that have followed the shocking June 2007 announcement that the trustees intended to close Antioch, three parties have recognized that their fates are intimately intertwined if Antioch is to survive. Each of these three -- students and alumni, faculty and staff, and governing board -- brings unique perspectives, knowledge, experiences, resources, and skills to the project of establishing and sustaining an Antioch College that again be a distinctive beacon in American higher education. Each needs what the other can bring.

To draw these three together in what we hoped would be a transitional phase between the closing of the old and the opening of the new Antioch, the Alumni Board supported two initiatives to complement each other in sustaining Antioch's traditions while creating a free and independent Antioch. First, we helped to encourage and shape a new governing body—the Pro Tem Board—to establish governance for the new College. Second, we sought to encourage and sustain the heart, soul, spirit, and values of Antioch—its DNA—by supporting the faculty, staff, student, and community initiative known as the Nonstop Liberal Arts Institute. Since their respective creations these two

initiatives have proceeded more or less independently. We've now reached a point at which the Alumni Board, Nonstop faculty and staff, and the Pro Tem board needs to create better and more sustainable channels of communication in order to collaborate and be most effective.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

We call for building more inclusive, participatory and sustainable dialogues between Nonstop faculty and staff, the Alumni Board, and the Pro Tem board, that will envision and construct the best bridges from Antioch's past to its future so that Antioch's core values can shape and be founding realities when the new Antioch opens its doors. The Alumni Board calls

1. on the Pro Tem board to add a Nonstop faculty representative as was envisioned in the resolution that created that board. Such participation will facilitate the work of the Pro Tem in the short and long run by drawing on faculty expertise and building alumni support;
2. on the Alumni Board to include a Nonstop faculty representative on its calls and at its meetings;
3. for consultations between Nonstop faculty representatives and the Pro Tem board leading to development of collaborative and partnering mechanisms to plan the new college through such joint activities as developing a concept paper, business plan, curriculum, accreditation strategies, admissions policies, and priorities for resources, programs, and campus buildings.