

antioch lives!

BY ALUMNI FOR ALUMNI

The creation of the Renewal Commission and the decision to change the curriculum were decisions of the Board and the University

In response to “chronic and seemingly intractable” financial problems, the Board created the Renewal Commission in the Summer of 2003. The Renewal Commission was chaired by the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the University Chancellor. The initial Commission had four College community members and nine from outside campus, all of which were appointed by the Commission’s Chairs. Only two of the Commission’s members were College faculty. Midway through the Commission’s work, the Chancellor decided that incremental change would not be sufficient to address the financial problems of the College. The College was unaware that a curricular overhaul was part of the Commission’s work, and was shocked when it was announced in February 2004; however, the Board had already approved the direction of the Commission’s work just prior to the announcement. It is likely that the NCA review of accreditation in 2003, and their intent to re-visit the College in 2006, factored into the Commission’s decision.

The College community reacted negatively to the Renewal Plan’s curricular proposal

The Renewal Commission focused on low student retention as a financial problem, and decided to implement a “Learning Community”-based curriculum, which consists of team-taught, interdisciplinary courses which a student takes through for their entire term. The form of this plan was announced in Spring 2004, and students were concerned about the drastic changes to classroom as well as co-op, while faculty expressed great concern about the viability of such a curriculum

at a school of Antioch’s size, and with its co-op program. Shortly thereafter, the College faced yet another round of budget cuts, determined by the ULC, which further reduced the faculty and staff. Cuts included the Office of Multicultural Affairs, further frustrating the community. Despite these protests, the Board approved the plan and curriculum in the Summer of 2004, and the Commission disbanded into smaller implementation teams.

Retention of these students was extremely poor, with less than half staying for a second year.

After identifying the increased financial need due to the low enrollment of the Fall 2005 class, the University proceeded “Business as Usual”

In October 2005, the Board was informed that \$10 million would be needed over the subsequent five years, according to recent statements by Chancellor Murdock. In February 2006, the University clarified that the *total* financial need over the next five years would be \$21 million. However, throughout 2006, reports consistently stated the successes of the Capital Campaign, the fund raising arm of the Renewal Plan. In the Summer of 2006, the Capital Campaign shifted its focus to fund raising for a new student union and renovations to the library.

The College was promised five years of support for the implementation of the Renewal Curriculum

On February 10th, 2004, Trustee and Commission member Laura Markham stated, “...it will be much easier to raise money for the cost of renewing a college than for yearly operational costs.” Included in the final report, accepted by the Board, was a five-year projected operating deficit for the College totaling \$9 million. On June 15th, 2004, after the Board passed the resolution to implement the Renewal Curriculum, Andrzej Bloch, Dean of Faculty at the time, and one of only two faculty members on the Renewal Commission, stated that the Board of Trustees, “are aware of these issues on the budget side... and are committed to covering the extra cost of the transitional period.” On June 12th, 2007, two years into the Renewal, the Board of Trustees announced it was closing Antioch College.

The Renewal Commission

By Laura Fathauer '95



PHOTO: DENNIE EAGLESON

The Board’s Renewal Plan was the single largest impact to College enrollment since the student Strike in the ‘70’s

The Renewal Plans new curriculum, as originally approved, was to start with the Fall 2006 class, and was later moved up to start with the Fall 2005 class. Recruitment for Fall 2005 was restricted not only by the inability to describe what the program would be (for both their first year AND for the rest of their time at Antioch), but also by the lack of marketing materials to generate prospective student interest. With only one year instead of two in which to develop, market and test the new curriculum, the entering class of 2005 was only 63 students, after years of entering classes of over 150 students.