

antioch lives!

BY ALUMNI FOR ALUMNI

Over the course of my association with Antioch College, the school has always struggled to attract more students. A roving finger of blame has been pointed at various aspects of the College to account for the failure to increase enrollment. Blaming Admissions, the physical plant, Co-op, and the academic calendar was a popular sport during my day. Recently, the Renewal Plan seemed to implicitly blame the curriculum and faculty, and the College President has publicly blamed the students.

The University's plans as laid out in the Summary Recommendations appear to blame the College in its entirety, given their abandonment of the College's students, staff, faculty, tripartite educational model, traditions, and values. It might be more helpful to think in terms of responsibility than blame: to what and whom are we responsible?

I am mindful that the problems Antioch College faces have been a long time in the making. Taking a long view, I think I may have identified our central, historical, institutional problem: *grandiosity*. The creation of the multiple Antioch Centers back in the 1970's was grandiose. The construction of new buildings on the Antioch campus in the 1980's was grandiose. The hasty formulation and implementation of the Renewal Plan was grandiose. Asking students to pay above the national average for a private education at a school with facilities well below average is probably grandiose. Assuming enrollments will increase

without providing adequate support for recruitment efforts is grandiose. It seems unlikely that foundations and other granting agencies might be willing to fund our institution because, in our grandiosity, we have fallen short of keeping promises we have made.

The latest proposition by the Board of Trustees is the zenith of grandiosity and the nadir of reason and morality. Planning to build a flashy new campus with money we don't have is grandiose. Dreaming of starting from scratch with a brand

It is sad but perhaps unsurprising that the failure of the grandiose Renewal Plan has inspired the even more grandiose Summary Recommendations to abandon Antioch College's distinctive educational approach, in order to open the campus to higher-density development. However lucrative such a deal might be in terms of the University's bottom line, it is not worth the price of Antioch College's soul.

Grandiosity may be a part of our institutional culture and heritage, but that doesn't mean we must let it run unchecked. Instead, let us be modest. Instead of trying so hard to be innovative, let us modestly practice our traditions (in which there is sufficient pride). Instead of resorting to posturing and puffery about "a state-of-the-art campus for the 21st century," let us humbly do the hard work of sustaining a 155 year-old liberal arts college. Instead of pointing the fingers of blame at one another, let us be responsible to one another, as well as to our traditions and historic values as Antiochians.

Above all, let Antioch be Antioch.

The three pillars of an Antioch College education are its reason for being. It is not mere nostalgia that has moved alumni to work so feverishly to prevent closure of the College; it is a deeply felt resolve that our College is a unique and valuable institution on the landscape of American higher education. Antioch College must not perish. We are ashamed to let it die, and you should be, too.

Naming the Problem

Analysis By Dan Shoemaker '92



PHOTO: DENNIE EAGLESON

new faculty, staff, and student body (springing from nowhere, like Athena from the brow of Zeus) is grandiose. Expecting Antioch College alumni to support such a plan is grandiose. I was heartened that nobody at our Alumni Reunion seemed to be buying it. Meanwhile, betraying current students, staff, faculty, alumni, and the historic values of our institution is an unconscionable obscenity.