

antioch lives!

BY ALUMNI FOR ALUMNI

The first official function at Reunion was the “State of the College” address, Friday morning in Kelly Hall. Chancellor Toni Murdock, President Steve Lawry, Chairman of the Board of Trustees (B.O.T): Arthur Zucker and roughly 10 members of the Board. After a rousing faculty statement questioning the decision to close (it can be read at: <http://antiochians.org/faculty/faculty-statement/>), the program moved into a question and answer session. Frustrated alumni tried repeatedly to obtain satisfactory explanations for the board’s decision, and the shroud of secrecy surrounding it. It was in short, three hours of frustration, which caused several alumni to leave reunion in disgust.

Demoralized, most of the remaining alums went to lunch, which promised small group discussions with B.O.T members. Over at the Community Government Office, a group of mostly former CM’S (largely from the past two decades) met with the current Community Managers. After a few minutes of strong-personality driven head butting, we settled into brainstorming about the closure and what steps we might take to prevent it. At the end of the session we outlined what had come from our brainstorming. We resolved to take the outline to the next reunion events and decade groups, to engage as many alums as possible, facilitate discussion and foster positive action.

Meanwhile, the Alumni Association Board was taking the lead in the fight to keep the College open. They set up a bank account to hold checks and pledges, expanded their officer roll to include a Treasurer and Secretary (in addition to the President and Vice President,) and consistently made it known they would fight to keep the

College doors open.

The Community Manager working group, with input from the alumni, refined the outline of discussion points and decided to hold a larger discussion at the Saturday afternoon Community Meeting. It was suggested the agenda include a Saturday evening meeting with the B.O.T. although on such short notice, they were unavailable to attend. On Saturday afternoon, shortly after the faculty held a press conference expanding on their point of view, the Community Meeting took

Unified at Reunion

By Rowan Kaiser, ‘05

PHOTO: DENNIE EAGLESON



place. We first heard presentations from representatives of various stakeholder groups including the union staff, Alumni Board, and town business owners. The CMs organized hundreds of alumni into breakout groups, and each facilitated a smaller discussion. After the disappointing, angry meeting in Kelly Hall the previous morning, it was hard not to have low expectations of another huge meeting. But by any measure, the breakout sessions were a rousing success! In engaging the alums in this way, the best aspects of our community governance system came shining

through. Out of this meeting came an outline of a plan, which provided those in attendance the first pragmatic reason for optimism since the announcement of the proposed closure. The “Action Items” from that meeting can be seen here: <http://antiochians.org/news/action-items-from-todays-community-meeting/>.

With the potential meeting with the B.O.T canceled, the CM group decided to present their consolidated document to the alumni community during dinner. The Alumni Board, seeing the momentum from the afternoon session, worked to turn the dinner into a fundraiser. The CM group went to the library, printed up pledge cards, copies of the Action Items, and headed to dinner.

The meals were being hosted in a big tent behind Main Building and offered buffet-style food, wine and beer. The Alumni Board set up a microphone and pledge table in front of the food so people had to pass them and the fund raising table, in order to get fed. A gentle rain was falling outside the tent and a pile of energetic young organizers showed up with evidence of effective organizing. It was, in short, a perfect storm for a fundraiser, and in roughly an hour, \$200,000 was raised.

Meanwhile, in the Caf, the Alumni Board was having an auction. Organizers scrambled at the last minute to see if donation proceeds could be given to the new “College Revival Fund.” Almost all the donators were more than willing to have funds go to the alumni fund, and another \$15,000 was raised.

And then? We went to the Union and danced, all night long.

Alumni raised \$200,000 more that weekend, and the College Revival Fund was off and running.