

Date: Fri, 28 Mar 2008 09:16:50 -0400
From: Robert Devine <bdevine@antioch-college.edu>
Subject: Letter from Toni Murdock to AAUP

The issues raised in Chancellor Murdoch's communication addressing AAUP president Cary Nelson's INSIDE HIGHER EDUCATION'S open letter about Antioch's future concern all Antioch students, faculty, and alumni.

As Cary makes clear, he attended a series of meetings in Yellow Springs in June. There he would have heard BOT members and university officials repeatedly assert that the five satellite campuses are healthy and operating in the black. They are endangered, so university officials testified, only by their association with Antioch College.

If the college is sold to the ACCC, therefore, the risk to the other campuses is eliminated and their 200 faculty protected. Of course faculty anywhere can call on the AAUP for assistance, as Antioch College faculty did.

It is a fundamental tenet of AAUP policy that faculty must be given an opportunity to present and discuss alternatives before serious actions are taken under a declaration of financial exigency. It is a matter of record that the Antioch College faculty had no opportunity to do so. Now an alternative is on the table.

The Committee A staff--not Nelson and the other elected leaders--handle complaints about academic freedom and tenure. Early in March the national staff member coordinating the Antioch case wrote to express the AAUP's official concern that the BOT make every effort to accommodate the ACCC offer.

Failure to save tenure at Antioch--if a viable means exists--could trigger further AAUP actions. Now Cary Nelson has added his personal voice to those encouraging open communication and agreement with the ACCC to keep Antioch College alive and well.



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March 21, 2008

Anita Levy, Ph.D.
Associate Secretary
American Association of University Professors
1012 Fourteenth Street, N.W. – Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005-3465

Dear Dr. Levy:

This letter is in response to your March 14, 2008, letter to Antioch University.

While I appreciate the AAUP's concern, it's obvious from the letter that your organization is operating on inaccurate second-hand information without bothering to seek sources that might be better informed, beginning with my office. The sources on which you and your president are relying for information, whom or whatever they may be, are giving you either inaccurate or misleading information, and revealing a very limited knowledge of the University's financial situation as well as a legal and administrative naiveté.

The "Open Letter about Antioch's Future" that your president posted on the Inside Higher Education web-site on March 18 was similarly lacking in fact and serves only to spread misinformation in an environment already fraught with misleading accounts.

It is noteworthy that AAUP, under the direction of an alumnus of Antioch College, has, in its communications, expressed concern for protecting the interests of faculty at only one of Antioch University's campuses, namely Antioch College. This would suggest that AAUP and Cary Nelson especially would condone putting at risk the well-being and future of the other 200 members of the Antioch University full-time faculty and the University's more than 4,000 students – all for the sake of the 40 faculty members of the College.

If that is the case, it certainly raises the question of the nature of AAUP's criteria for identifying the faculty it will recognize and "protect" and those it will not. Such selectivity hardly resonates well when compared to your mission statement. The

statement on the AAUP web-site, under the section "Protecting Your Rights," reads: "The AAUP works to protect all members of the profession: full- and part-time teachers; tenured and contingent faculty; graduate students, librarians, and academic professionals; union members and non-union-members."

The University is in the middle of a complex negotiation that has the potential to be successful for all involved. Both the University Board of Trustees and the Antioch College Continuation Corporation are working to the point of exhaustion to reach an agreement that does not place in harm's way either the College or the University. The transaction is complex and painstaking, yet the worthwhile goal of both parties is to ensure the future success of the College and the other campuses of the University, their faculty and students. You can be assured that no one is taking this matter lightly—and likewise that, as we continue our efforts to move forward, admonitions from AAUP and uninformed, naïve open letters from its president are in no way helpful to the process.

On the basis of AAUP's official statement about protecting "all members of the profession," I believe that AAUP and Cary Nelson owe an apology to the Antioch University faculty at the five non-residential campuses. As the situation currently stands, AAUP members at those campuses have genuine cause to question the ethics of your organization and the purpose of their membership fees.

Sincerely,



Toni Murdock, Ph.D.
Chancellor

Cc: Arthur J. Zucker, Antioch University Board Chair
Andrzej J. Bloch – Antioch College Interim President
Professor Tom Ayrsman – Antioch College Faculty Senate Steering Committee
Professor Jill Becker – Antioch College Faculty Senate Steering Committee
Professor Pat Mische – Antioch College Faculty Senate Steering Committee
Professor Paul Davis, President, Ohio Conference AAUP