

March 19, 2008

ANTIOCH COLLEGE ALUMNI OF DC

An Open Letter to the Higher Education Community:

Today we ask the higher education community to join us in saving historic Antioch College. This is a critical time in our negotiations and we need your help now. We know the situation is confusing and we will try to explain it.

Antioch College is still open and accredited. Antioch University, its governing entity, is also open and accredited. Over the last seven months, since the University Trustees announced the closure of the College because of “financial exigency,” alumni across the country have raised over \$19 million and have been negotiating with the University’s Trustees and Chancellor to return our school to its original **independent status as Antioch College**. Three weeks ago the University once again stymied our efforts to keep our school alive.

Please write a letter to Chancellor Toni Murdock and Board Chair Art Zucker in support of the College regaining independence from the University and staying open. An editorial in the March 6 edition of the Yellow Springs News put it this way:

The trustees’ lack of engagement is heartbreaking. This is a moment when energy for Antioch College is incredibly high. Alumni leaders have, in the past nine months, started scores of new alumni groups, created new business plans and raised more than \$19 million for an independent college. Even though university administrators seem intent on pushing faculty, students and staff out the door, most of them just won’t budge. What has become abundantly clear is that Antioch College inspires in its students, faculty and alumni an uncommon devotion.

The lack of constructive response to our business plan leads us alumni to wonder: is money really the issue? If it is, why won’t the University take ours?

We believe the small Board committee charged with negotiating transfer of the College has failed to bargain good faith. These Trustees and Administrators have violated our trust.

We hired the internationally known management consultants Alvarez and Marsal to help create our business plan, along with alumni with impressive experience in business and higher education. But they have been rebuffed and negotiations unnecessarily prolonged. **Delay is death by degree.** Students cannot be recruited for next year, and faculty and staff must plan their futures and support their families.

We do not deny that the issues are complicated. We respect the fact that Trustees are unpaid and most work hard as a public service. **But all of higher education should be alarmed that a small Board committee is working so hard to put dedicated educators out of work.** We should all care that a school founded in 1852 and known since then for innovative education could be erased like chalk from a blackboard.

You should know that since 2001 there has been a pattern of decisions by the Trustees that systematically weakened the College, including:

- Taking endowment** gains meant for sole use of college and using them for other campuses
- Imposing** a half-baked new curriculum that produced a precipitous decline in enrollment
- Neglecting** campus facilities to the point they became unappealing to prospective students
- Preventing** development officers from raising money for the College
- Removing** the College President's power to communicate directly with the Board of Trustees and then removing the College President
- Eliminating** faculty and staff positions, notably in the development and admissions departments where they were especially needed
- Abandoning** a strategic plan that had begun to show results in higher enrollment and alumni giving.
- Hiring** consultants and appointing negotiators with little expertise in private residential higher education
- Operating** under such a heavy veil of secrecy that not even the then-College President, as well as the alumni, faculty, staff or students knew that the College was in danger of closing until the day of the vote.

Other decisions also prompt questions:

Four years ago, at a time when the College was losing faculty and students and the campus was half empty, the Board agreed to let our adult learning component float a \$13 million bond to build a new 90,000 square foot facility on the edge of Yellow Springs. This indebtedness makes it impossible for the College to borrow money to save itself.

The University has not assisted in fundraising at all since June, and has tried to block efforts to raise funds for an independent, open Antioch College. On one day the Development staff was even locked out of their offices.

But the Alumni have vowed to keep the college open, even if classes must be held off-campus. We have committed \$1 million dollars to this effort. Even with the future so uncertain, nearly 100 students have applied, and many faculty have committed to staying on. Most of the faculty has joined in filing a lawsuit against the University. Meanwhile, our negotiators – who are chartered as the non-profit Antioch College Continuation Corporation – are continuing to press the Board to come to an agreement.

If you know any trustee personally, please call him or her. If you support us, please write Arthur J. Zucker, Chairman of the Board, 2012 Prescott Place, Raleigh, NC 27615 or Toni Murdock, Chancellor, 795 Livermore Street, Yellow Springs, OH 45387.

For more information about Antioch, please go to www.antiochians.org, or www.saveantioch.org/get-informed/

For more information about this letter, please call Larry Rubin at 301-343-6487