

Executive Summary

Working as a Renewal Commission, we met on more than 10 separate occasions, each for periods of at least two days. In addition, we met by teleconference and exchanged materials actively by electronic means. Throughout our work, we kept the charge from the Board of Trustees continually in front of us, seeking to do neither too much nor too little, but rather to meet the responsibility that had been entrusted to us.

We began by reviewing the history of Antioch College and from this we set out five foundational commitments on which to base our work. These are (1) a rigorous liberal education; (2) an education for the advancement of the human condition; (3) experiential learning, and explicitly co-op education; (4) learning in a diverse and inclusive community; and (5) student-centered, problem-focused learning. We understood that even if sound management practices and different budgeting strategies could eliminate the persistent nonbudgeted deficits incurred by the College over the past decade, the academic program of Antioch College as currently configured would still be too small to meet these foundational commitments. Therefore, to put the College on solid financial footing while preserving its academic strength meant that a different kind of academic program needed to be conceived.

The initial idea for combining Antioch's co-op learning plan with the idea of interdisciplinary team-taught learning communities arose from ideas brought forth by the Antioch College faculty members on the Renewal Commission. This idea quickly came into focus around the notion of experiential learning communities, which are referred to throughout our final report as ELCs, a term which we view as provisional, until faculty and students either settle on it or propose a more appropriate name.

Our final plan combines imaginative and rewarding interdisciplinary future-oriented college teaching with an increase in the student-faculty ratio of at least 50%, thus increasing financial viability. Every study of the effects of learning communities shows that they increase retention by substantial amounts, thereby ensuring strong and stable fiscal health. These studies also show that students show strong academic gains in learning communities.

We spent many hours discussing issues associated with student and community culture. We evaluated the evidence that learning communities increase connectedness of students to each other, to faculty, to knowledge, and to immediate experience. We saw the learning community as the

essential building block for explicitly teaching responsible community culture.

We focused on validation of student achievement through external assessment. We decided to ask for ongoing embedded assessments along with requiring students to take responsibility for their long-term academic growth by constructing portfolios of their work. We knew in taking this approach that we were moving toward the kind of validation of the quality of student achievement that all colleges will eventually require in the future.

By limiting the number of host communities for co-operative education to about ten, we saw that we could enhance the academic value of work in the world while also building alumni and employer support for Antioch College. We became convinced that we had put together a transformational design for Antioch College that, while true to its historic values, was firmly situated in a bright future where progressive students would want to be.

With assistance from a grant awarded to the Renewal Commission by the Mellon Foundation, we contacted five distinguished national experts in liberal arts education. Each person agreed without hesitation to serve as a reviewer and each gave as the primary reason their respect for what Antioch College had accomplished and stood for in the life of American higher education. The plan we submit has been reviewed by these experts, with enthusiasm. We see, and our reviewers agree, that many hazards will have to be negotiated as implementation proceeds. The road forward is as perilous as it is promising, but it is an exciting path.

We see a college where faculty set high standards, and then coach students to construct knowledge for themselves. Our vision includes a continuation of co-operative education that places students in the real world while challenging them to integrate that work experience with reflective academic intellectual analysis. We imagine a worldwide network of Antiochians, centered in host communities where, through commerce with co-op students, a living sense of continual renewal with a thriving intellectual home in Yellow Springs is nurtured. And our future includes a constructive system of ongoing embedded assessments of intellectual growth, so that students prove to themselves and others in persuasive manner the breadth and depth of the education they acquire.

We have prepared a transformational vision for a college of the future. It is a college that knows how to offer students genuine engagement with the real world of work, commerce, and everyday life in its many forms. It is a

college that is uncompromising in its commitment to rigorous liberal education, its advocacy of comfortable familiarity with valuable knowledge, skills, and values, and its dedication to civic virtue lived in a functional community that requires personal sacrifice for the common good. It is a college that honors its students by teaching them how to learn, and gives them pride by requiring that they demonstrate clearly the knowledge they have won. In this way, it is a college that also demonstrates to the world at large that it takes its mission to heart and can prove the claims it makes about the capacities it builds.

Cultural and Intellectual Freedom

An American context. In January 1967, eighteen months after delivering the commencement address at Antioch College, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., did something that was truly remarkable. He took a two-month sabbatical from the civil rights movement to write a book. It was not his first, but it was an important book. By 1967, many had come to believe that Dr. King's nonviolent message had been eclipsed by the call for "Black Power" and by an increasing white backlash in the face of ever escalating demands for full and complete civil rights for all Americans. Dr. King saw black power and white backlash as potential sources of societal division. He saw a need to explain in a systematic way the source and roots of black power and white resistance and how each held elements of promise – if constructively channeled. Dr. King also wished to express his views on how the escalating Vietnam War continued not only to rob the nation of many of its best sons, but was morally corrupting the nation as well and, therefore, must end. So Dr. King secluded himself in a phoneless, cliffside villa in Jamaica to write what would be judged by many to be his classic work: *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*

In *Where Do We Go from Here*, Dr. King sought to show how the civil rights movement enlarged rather than confined the meaning of democracy and gave sinews and verve to the American dream. He argued, for example, that the failure of America to fully embrace equality, to put economic teeth behind it, and to go beyond rhetorical acceptance of equality - not the civil rights struggle itself - was the source of black power and white resentment. Looking at the progress in the area of civil rights in the decade since the Montgomery bus boycott, Dr. King observed, "The practical cost of change for the nation up to this point has been cheap. The limited reforms have been obtained at bargain rates. There are no expenses, and no taxes are required, for Negroes to share lunch counters, libraries,

parks, hotels and other facilities with whites.... Even the more significant changes involved in voter registration required neither large monetary nor psychological sacrifice.... The real cost lies ahead. The stiffening of white resistance is a recognition of that fact. The discount education given Negroes will in the future have to be purchased at full price if quality education is to be realized. Jobs are harder and costlier to create than voting rolls. The eradication of slums housing millions is complex far beyond integrating buses and lunch counters.” Throughout *Where Do We Go from Here*, Dr. King reminded us that the costs of freedom are real and oftentimes substantial.

In Dr. King’s view, the central vehicle for making the shift to a just democracy involved rediscovering the meaning of community. While there exists no clearly articulated definition of community in *Where Do We Go from Here*, Dr. King leaves no doubt about his vision of community when he observed that the notion of community must be inclusive of all Americans. He wrote, “A final challenge that we face as a result of our great dilemma is to be ever mindful of enlarging the whole society, and giving it a new sense of values as we seek to solve our particular problem. As we work to get rid of the economic strangulation that we face as a result of poverty, we must not overlook the fact that millions of Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Indians and Appalachian whites are also poverty-stricken. Any serious war against poverty must of necessity include them.”

Dr. King’s *Where Do We Go from Here* leaves no easy escapes. At bottom, Dr. King places the responsibility for community on each of us without exception. Near the end of *Where Do We Go from Here*, Dr. King reminded us that we are the guarantors of community as well as its creators. “In a real sense, all life is interrelated,” he wrote. “The agony of the poor impoverishes the rich; the betterment of the poor enriches the rich. We are inevitably our brother’s keeper because we are our brother’s brother. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.”

The Antioch experience. Where does the College go from here: chaos or community? It seems clear that higher education in general and Antioch in particular has a primary role in shaping the answer to this profound question. Simply put, our role is to fashion, model, and replicate community. We do this by creating an environment for the development of curiosity, daring, courage, audacity, and generosity and, subsequently, transformation into intellectual community. The Board of Trustees through its Renewal Commission is taking the first steps to articulate a vision of Antioch College as a radically new kind of learning community consisting of

interconnected experiential learning communities in which faculty, student and staff engage in spirited, purposeful learning from one another.

The vision offered by the Renewal Commission is a renewed Antioch that celebrates inclusiveness, one of Antioch's core foundational commitments. The Antioch community consists of many voices. Some of these voices are heard less clearly than others. Historically, those voices not distinctly heard at the College have been the voices of students, faculty and staff of color, most of whom have been African Americans. Although Antioch has been a pioneer in interracial education, it has not sustained a commitment to be thoroughly inclusive of nonwhites nor has it wholeheartedly and comprehensively committed itself to incorporate the perspectives, traditions, values, and voices of nonwhites into the fabric of the College.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Antioch's nonwhite student enrollment reached its apex, in no small measure due to the Rockefeller Foundation funded Antioch Program for Interracial Education (APIE). The College missed an historic opportunity, however, to include holistically the aspirations and concerns of poor African American and a few poor, first generation white students into the Antioch mainstream. Instead, it endorsed the demand of black students to have a separate, racially exclusive core curriculum and residence cluster, Unity House. In many respects, the failure then to educate the entire Antioch community in how to embrace diversity and make it an integral part of the Antioch experience established a precedent for successive Administrations to adopt similar paths of least effort on the one hand, or muddled and wrong-headed piecemeal approaches on the other. All of these missteps bring us today to accept no less than a total commitment to equip every member of the Antioch community with mature diversity skills.

Pathway to the future. Where do we go from here? That was the question animating Dr. King's meditation on community-building 37 years ago. The Renewal Commission seeks to bring a new vision and vitality to the College within the context of maintaining Antioch's storied tradition of social justice and progressive activism. The Renewal Commission's exploration of learning communities as the pedagogy and praxis of a renewed Antioch College addresses vexing budgetary challenges, to be sure. But its more fundamental purposes are academic. It seeks to create an intellectual environment where students, organized in experiential learning communities, discover ways to grapple with the very concepts of freedom, responsibility, equality, justice, and duty in a climate that invites and

encourages cultural and intellectual diversity. As envisioned by the Renewal Commission, experiential learning communities represent fertile ground for intellectual exploration aimed at engendering new forms of community at the College, on co-op jobs, and in the larger world.

The Renewal Commission's recommendation is radically and creatively to place cultural diversity and intellectual freedom at the core of Antioch's future as an institution unlike any other in American higher education. Implicit in this vision is a call for Antioch to create a culture, climate, infrastructure, and vision that can catapult the institution beyond color and class differentiations. At its core, the Renewal Commission explicitly seeks to move the College to a new synthesis regarding the way learning is done, a synthesis built upon the precepts of scholastic rigor, intellectual curiosity, mutuality and interdependence.

In order to realize the goal of creating a new Antioch and one that makes cultural and intellectual freedom the center of campus life, the Renewal Commission proposes raising a targeted endowment of \$10 million. We believe that only by specifically endowing this initiative can the College transform itself into an institution that embeds the embracing of diversity into its core operating values and principles. Among its functions, the \$10 million can be used to energize the collective energies of the Antioch community to reinvent itself for a future that is far more culturally rich and varied than the previous 150 years of its history.

The Renewal Commission believes that the specific uses of the interest on the endowment should be left to the recommendation of the President of Antioch College, subject to approval by the Board of Trustees. We propose the following examples as uses that would be consistent with our vision of a community embracing cultural and intellectual freedom.

- About \$2 million could be placed in an endowed Cultural and Intellectual Freedom Fund for diversity skills education of faculty, staff, and students into perpetuity. This education would be centered on assisting the College in building the wherewithal among community members to understand and embrace differences that students of color and others bring to the educational enterprise. The skills would be a part of the portfolio of every Antioch student, faculty, and staff.
- The Board could regularly invite a facilitator and resource consultant to engage the Board in a session devoted entirely to diversity goals for Antioch University.

- About \$2 million could be placed in trust for rotating short-term faculty chairs in Cultural and Intellectual Freedom. These appointments, at senior faculty status, would be for outstanding scholars or premier practitioners (including Antioch alumni) in a given field who spend at least one academic term on the College campus serving as a cultural and intellectual freedom resource person and adjunct ELC faculty member. The individuals named to these rotating scholar-practitioner chairs would be required to bring a particular diversity perspective to their work on the campus. Although the chairs would be open to all qualified aspirants, the incumbents selected would be required to demonstrate a record of scholarship and/or service in the area of diversity, especially with respect to their scholarship and work with African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans.
- About \$4 million could be placed in trust for two full-time faculty endowed chairs. These chairs could be named for distinguished African American graduates of the College, for example, the Eleanor Holmes Norton Endowed Chair of Cultural and Intellectual Freedom or the A. Leon Higginbotham Endowed Chair of Social Justice and Intellectual Freedom. Incumbents of the endowed chairs would be expected to participate actively in the life of the College, serve as an ELC resource with respect to the application of diversity principles related to cultural and intellectual freedom, and prepare and present annually a meditation on the state of cultural and intellectual freedom on the College campus for study and reflection by ELCs.
- The Office of Multicultural Affairs could be funded in perpetuity. This would provide a director or comparable officer as a permanent staff position at the college, to work in support of diversity initiatives and faculty, staff, and student skills development in multicultural competence.
- About \$7,500 per term for the fall and winter terms could be provided as an income stream to support student recommended and organized lectures, presentations, concerts, plays, and other events that celebrate the College's achievements in the arena of cultural and intellectual freedom.
- About \$2 million could be placed in trust for multiple scholarships to be offered annually to first generation students, especially those from impoverished urban, inner-city communities whose average family

income for a family of four is below the poverty line, and who have demonstrated a commitment to cultural and intellectual freedom.

A sense of authentic community. The Renewal Commission's recommendations focus on cultural and intellectual freedom rather than multiculturalism, per se. Creating conditions that promote multiculturalism, anti-racism, and anti-oppression efforts is an important component of fashioning an intellectually and culturally free campus, but the absence of overt racial tensions does not signify that the College has made embracing diversity the center of campus life.

Creating conditions that promote cultural and intellectual freedom imposes a responsibility on all members of the Antioch community, as well as those who aspire to become members, to accept the reality that cross-cultural challenges are a normal and logical feature of community life and will be ever present in ELCs. Such a responsibility requires that we allow others to be who they are as long as they are willing to enter common purpose with a common goal of mutual growth and development. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students who are unable or unwilling to accommodate differences in the midst of similarities of race, gender, class, background, and viewpoints may opt for a campus community elsewhere. Those who join the Antioch community must pledge to learn how to create a campus culture characterized by genuine mutual respect. Antiochians will learn how to manage diversity through its acceptance in a way that the campus truly becomes a learning community.

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation president and former Princeton University head William G. Bowen recently urged the top colleges and universities in this country to take affirmative steps to broaden the diversity of their student population by admitting more low-income students. Quoted in the April 8, 2004, edition of the *New York Times*, Bowen believes that, in order for elite higher education institutions to be more representative of the diversity of the country, they need to "put a thumb on the admissions scale, maybe even a thumb and a half" in weighing admissions policies in favor of including more low income students. Antioch has a golden opportunity not only to follow the lead of Bowen and others in opening more widely the doors of opportunity to a more diverse student population, but to lead the way in showing higher education how to make diversity the centerpiece of progressive education by expressing it in institutionalized system practices and processes that promote cultural and intellectual freedom. To do otherwise would be to respond narrowly to the enormous challenge that

those demands offer Antioch to dramatically lead the way for other educational institutions of higher education to follow.

Antioch faces a choice between a continued impulse to respond to and practice a kind of inwardly focused radicalism that has divided the campus community, as against a more demanding, mature outwardly focused radicalism that emphasizes social change in the larger world and prepares students for that work. In a reflection on his years as an Antioch student, current Trustee and Renewal Commission member Everette Freeman, '83, wrote an essay for the *Lansing State Journal* on February 14, 1988. He commented on the failure of Antioch in the late 1960s and 1970s to do seriously what was necessary to embrace students who were and are different. He wrote, "For its part, Antioch failed to provide the academic and cultural support we urban-oriented, poor, black students needed. By and large, we needed more time, more patience, more guidance, more tutoring and more encouraging than traditional Antiochians."

If Antioch desires a truly diverse student body it must invest the resources to make it possible. All who wish to see Antioch become a paragon of cultural and intellectual freedom – student, faculty, and staff – must commit to the tough work of finding common ground for constructive engagement with Antioch where it is now. Antioch is not nirvana, but it is a place that professes a desire for social justice. That is a healthy starting point and, as Dr. King might say, fertile ground upon which a community that honors differences through celebrating cultural and intellectual freedom can take root.