

AAUP

American Association of University Professors

1012 Fourteenth Street, NW
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005-3465
Phone: 202.737.5900
Fax: 202.737.5526
Web: www.aaup.org

August 7, 2007

Dr. Tullisse A. Murdock
Acting Chancellor
Antioch University
150 E. South College Street
Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387

Mr. Arthur J. Zucker
Chair, Board of Trustees
Antioch University
2012 Prescott Pl
Raleigh, North Carolina 27615

President Steven Lawry
Office of the President
Antioch College
795 Livermore Street
Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387

Dear Chancellor Murdock, Chair Zucker, and President Lawry:

Members of the faculty at Antioch College have sought the advice and assistance of the American Association of University Professors regarding the actions taken by the Antioch University Board of Trustees on June 7, 2007, to declare financial exigency, and on June 9 to suspend Antioch College's operations effective July 1, 2008, with the stated intention of reopening the college in 2012. They have shared with us a considerable amount of information about these recent events, which have also received a good deal of coverage in the media. We understand that all faculty appointments are to terminate by the end of June 2008. We were deeply surprised and disappointed to learn that members of the faculty were not consulted prior to the board's actions with regard either to the declaration of financial exigency or to the suspension of operations, and that, in fact, they were not informed of these actions until three days later at a campus meeting on June 12. Faculty members allege that the board's lack of consultation is part of what they perceive as a pattern of disregard for the faculty's legitimate role in institutional decision making for the past several years.

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The Association's interest in these matters stems from our longstanding concern for sound academic government, the principles of which are set forth in the AAUP's enclosed *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, jointly formulated with the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. The *Statement on Government*, which embodies standards widely upheld in American higher education, rests on the premise of an "inescapable interdependence" in the relationship among governing board, administration, and faculty, which calls for "adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity for appropriate joint effort." With regard to the internal operations of the institution, the *Statement on Government* further provides that "effective planning demands that the broadest possible exchange of information and opinion should be the rule for communicating among the components of a college," and that the faculty should be fully informed on all budgetary matters.

The Association's concern is based also on Regulation 4c of our enclosed *Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, which sets forth AAUP's formulation of criteria and procedural standards in the matter of financial exigency. These standards, which define a demonstrably bona fide financial exigency as "an imminent financial crisis that threatens the survival of the institution as a whole and that cannot be alleviated by less drastic means," call for meaningful faculty involvement in arriving at a decision that a condition of financial exigency is at hand and that all feasible alternatives to the termination of appointments have been pursued. We have noted the relevant provisions of Antioch College's Faculty Personnel Policies, Section 59 regarding "necessary and justifiable budget curtailment."

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According to the information available to us, Antioch College faculty have been represented in institutional governance for at least the past eighty years through a variety of mechanisms, including the Administrative Council (ADCIL), which was created by Yellow Springs faculty in 1942. While the composition of ADCIL membership appears to have changed over the years, we understand that faculty had primary responsibility for determining its membership until quite recently. Faculty members contend that in the past few years the increasing number of administrators on ADCIL as a proportion of its total membership led to a marked diminution in faculty authority with respect to various matters of institutional policy, including budgetary review. We understand that faculty and administrators have often been at loggerheads as to which administrators should have voting privileges on the administrative council. Faculty also complain that relations with the administration as well as with the board deteriorated further following the 2003 formation of the board-appointed Sesquicentennial Commission for the Renewal of

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Antioch College. With its members consisting primarily of trustees, administrators, and alumni, the commission was charged with outlining a “sustainable vision for the renewal” of the college. The commission’s report, *Experiential Learning at Antioch College: A Strategy for Renewal*, called for a radical transformation of the college curriculum, and included plans to make substantial improvements to the college’s rapidly aging infrastructure, and to engage in a capital campaign. Faculty members allege that the curriculum set forth in the renewal plan was imposed upon them without adequate consultation, and instituted ahead of schedule, two factors which may have weakened its potential impact on enrollment numbers and donor confidence. They maintain that, because they had received assurances from the board that the renewal plan would have its unqualified support for the next five years, they were taken by surprise at the board’s announced suspension of college operations. We understand that questions have been raised regarding the extent of the college’s financial difficulties, the steps announced by the board of trustees to alleviate them, and the extent of enrollment declines. Faculty members have also expressed concerns with respect to the possible elimination of the tenure system in the reopened college, and with regard to the timing of the college’s proposed reopening date, which would place it one year beyond the three years stipulated in the Association’s *Recommended Institutional Regulations* for offering reinstatement to tenured faculty members whose positions have been eliminated because of financial exigency.

The announced suspension and potential reopening of the college in 2012 are highly unusual in our experience, matched perhaps only by events in Antioch’s own history. If the college does reopen, we hope and expect that it will do so with a tenure system intact, and with a sense of its continuing obligation to the current college faculty with regard to reinstatement. We also expect that the faculty will have a meaningful role in the governance of a reopened college. For the present, we urge the institution to make every effort to assist the faculty so that they can continue their work elsewhere with minimal injury, including placement in other suitable Antioch University positions. Further, if plans go forward for the reopening of the college, it is critical that faculty contribute significantly to the development and implementation of these plans for such matters as the curriculum and the principles and procedures that will govern faculty status.

Meanwhile, however, we understand that many groups, among them faculty, alumni, and former board members, including the last three board chairs, are offering suggestions for enhancing the solvency and governance mechanisms of the college with a view toward keeping Antioch College open. We would be pleased to work with the college’s academic community in reaching this goal. In the meantime, we await further developments with interest.

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Sincerely,

Anita Levy, Ph.D.
Associate Secretary

Enclosures

cc: Dr. Andrzej Bloch, Dean
Professor Tom Arysman, Faculty Senate Steering Committee
Professor Professor Jill Becker, Faculty Senate Steering Committee
Professor Susan Eklund-Leen, Faculty Senate Steering Committee
Professor Pat Mische, Faculty Senate Steering Committee,
Professor Paul Davis, President, Ohio Conference AAUP