

PREFATORY COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE TO THE REPORT ON ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY AND THE CLOSING OF ANTIOCH COLLEGE

The Association's Committee on College and University Governance has discussed the investigating committee's comprehensive report on the action by Antioch University's administration and board to suspend operations at Antioch College and believes that an introduction emphasizing the wider implications of Antioch's closing for American higher education would enhance an appreciation of the complexity and multiplicity of the developments treated in the report.

Antioch College was founded in 1852 in Yellow Springs, Ohio, with an inaugural faculty of six, one of whom was the first female college professor in the United States to share equal status and salary with her male colleagues. With the internationally acclaimed education reformer Horace Mann serving as the college's first president, Antioch quickly established its reputation for educational innovation. Novel educational practices, subsequently adopted by many other institutions, included the blending of practical work experience with classroom learning, community governance, active recruitment of African American students beginning as early as the 1940s, and the first study-abroad program. The college continuously ranked highly among colleges whose graduates complete the doctoral degree and maintained its reputation for combining academic rigor and collaborative learning to provide an enriching educational experience. The decision to close Antioch College in 2008, if allowed to stand, would mean a loss to liberal arts education, and would thus be of concern to all in the academic community who share the values it embodied throughout much of its storied history.

The investigating committee's report points particularly to the kinds of problems that arise when the faculty is overlooked while key managerial decisions are made, and it analyzes each phase of the dissolution of Antioch College in relation to the Association's recommended standards for faculty governance. It details the gradual deterioration of faculty governance at the college through a series of administrative actions that culminated in the suspension of its operations.

1. There was an expansion of the college's outreach to various communities beyond its core campus, leading to the establishment of some forty autonomous satellite campuses located far afield from any central administration and common mission that required resources beyond what the college could provide. Once adult education and vocational campuses were established without any organic relation to the founding Yellow Springs campus, in places like Seattle, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Keene (New Hampshire), and even Yellow Springs itself, institutional governance became scattered, unwieldy, and, eventually, dysfunctional.
2. The cooperative faculty structure on the home campus fell into disuse, while the college's status declined within the emerging system now renamed Antioch University.
3. In the absence of effective structures for faculty participation in the affairs of the college, Antioch University's administration and board of trustees turned to nonparticipatory management practices, addressing the institution's problems by making decisions without consultation; faculty participation in devising solutions came to be perceived by the administration as a waste of time and inevitably subversive.
4. The dispersed organization of units within Antioch University fractured the administration itself—creating competition among the different campus leaders, a dispersal of scarce resources, and resentment of Antioch College by the other campuses, now independent and removed from the college's commitment to liberal education.
5. With the establishment of Antioch's satellite campuses without systems of faculty tenure, only on the core campus did the university board and administration face active and engaged tenured faculty members who could be expected to speak their minds and to insist upon a role in institutional decision making.
6. Proceeding to intervene in curricular matters, a fundamental area for faculty participation in academic

decisions, the board in 2004 imposed a new curriculum on the college over faculty objections, precipitating a crisis that accelerated the enrollment declines.

7. The board, unable to match its stated commitment to the new curriculum, and notwithstanding a promised five-year trial period for success, voted in June 2007 to declare the college in financial exigency and to suspend its operations.

The university board and administration, in suspending the operations of Antioch College with its reopening highly uncertain, appeared not only unconcerned with the college's rich history of progressive education but also determined to eliminate the financial obligations attendant upon maintaining a residential liberal arts program. During its 156-year history, the college had struggled through many hard times but had been sustained by the strong tradition of its faculty's engagement with enlightened boards, distinguished administrators, eminent alumni, and talented students working together to serve the common good. To the great fortune of those committed to progressive education, those devoted to the Antioch tradition have once again taken critical steps toward reopening Antioch College. As announced on June 30, 2009, the governing boards of Antioch University and an organization known as the Antioch Continuation Corporation have reached agreement on opening a new Antioch college, independent of the university. Reopening is anticipated for fall 2011. ■