

AAUP

American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

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November 29, 2010

Reopening Antioch: An Open Letter to Antioch's New President and the College's Stakeholders

The AAUP's 2009 investigative report on "Antioch University and the Closing of Antioch College" included the following clearly stated expectation:

"The committee is concerned about the role that the Antioch faculty members who were released when operations were suspended will play in the development of the academic program at a reopened Antioch College and in teaching there when operations resume. The investigating committee trusts that the Antioch College Continuation Corporation will appreciate the fundamental importance of the tenure system and will offer reinstatement to those whose appointments terminated with the closing, restoring their tenure rights."

In the summer of 2010 staff members of the national AAUP's Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Shared Governance met with the interim Antioch president and members of the Pro Tem Board in the AAUP's Washington, D.C. office to reiterate those concerns. AAUP president Cary Nelson also attended the meeting at the interim president's request. The staff reminded those present that the AAUP would follow its standard procedures in handling any complaints received from tenured Antioch faculty who subsequently asserted they were denied appointment to suitable positions at the college after it was reopened.

Now that Antioch College is about to begin the process of appointing faculty members, the AAUP believes that specific guidance to the new college about academic freedom and the rights of faculty who were laid off is appropriate.

The AAUP recognizes that the new Antioch College is a different legal entity from its predecessor, that it will require reaccreditation, and that it must phase in faculty appointments as funding and enrollment permit. We note also, however, that the new College continues to invoke not only the history and legacy of the old

institution and to bear the name and goodwill of the old, but to benefit from many of the tangible assets of the historic Antioch College, including the alumni, the campus and facilities, and the substantial endowment. The faculty of the old Antioch College, including those faculty who were laid off, were at the core of creating and sustaining those assets. Thus we believe that such benefits entail certain continuing responsibilities to those long-standing employees who are qualified for and remain available for positions in the new college--especially the tenured faculty. Further, although we respect the decision of the new College to phase in faculty appointments as funds and enrollment permit, we do not believe that the decision to defer some appointments beyond the College's re-opening in fall 2011 moots the College's obligation to appoint formerly tenured Antioch faculty who are qualified and available for such suitable positions as become available. A suitable position is one for which the faculty member is qualified by previous training and/or experience or may become qualified by modest additional training.

It would not be appropriate for the college to prevent those involved in defining faculty positions from being informed about the qualifications of former faculty. There appear to be, we should emphasize, no legal impediments to the reappointment of faculty who held tenure at the former college.

The AAUP is also deeply concerned that comments by Pro Tem Board chair Lee Morgan published on November 25th in the Yellow Springs News suggest that donor objections to appointing previously tenured Antioch faculty are broadly influencing planning and hiring decisions. If this report is accurate, we must emphasize that such considerations run counter to values at the core of the AAUP and widely recognized in the academy.

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