

Rebirth of Antioch College:

Proposal for a New First-Year Curriculum

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This proposal is written as a component of the planning efforts for the re-establishment of Antioch College. The scope of this proposal only covers the first year of academic study in the undergraduate program. The proposal is written so as to be relevant to audiences with varying degrees of familiarity with Antioch College and its history. This proposal may be distributed to interested faculty, alumni and the public. A proposed timeline for program planning activities is attached as Appendix D.

Rebirth of a College

Antioch University is a six-campus private liberal arts university that operates in four states. The University's undergraduate program is offered through Antioch College at the Yellow Springs, Ohio campus. Antioch College has been operating at financial deficit exceeding \$4.5 million a year since the 1990s. While graduate programs at the other campuses continue to operate at a profit and provide nearly \$1.5 million in revenue to support the undergraduate degrees at Antioch College, reduction of other funding sources has rendered the deficit unmanageable. The Antioch University Board of Trustees has opted to close the Yellow Springs campus until 2012, when they will launch a new residential undergraduate program. This proposal outlines a reform of the first year of undergraduate study as part of the effort to reopen the college with sustained academic quality and improved cost-effectiveness. The first-year program establishes the academic foundation and prepares students for subsequent individualized learning programs and experiential learning through cooperative education.

Institutional Values

Antioch College practices interdisciplinary education and preaches the value of viewing knowledge as interconnected. The undergraduate program emphasizes experiential learning through study abroad, cooperative education, and self-directed projects. The College conducts programs in alignment with longstanding institutional beliefs that "experience counts" and "curriculum is shaped to the world." Founder Horace Mann delivered a commencement message to the class of 1859 challenging them to "be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity," an ideal repeated each year at commencement to highlight the commitment to social justice. Mission and key beliefs are attached as Appendix A; in reading this proposal for the reformed first-year program, one will agree that the design fits well with the mission and values.

Current and Subsequent Purpose of the First-year program

The first year is reserved for laying the academic and cultural foundation for subsequent studies and preparing for the co-op experiences of the second and third years. During the first academic year, or the immersion year, students are to receive general education credits in four areas of inquiry: Arts, Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities (Antioch Catalog 2005-2006). During this time students participate in *integrated* learning through a *community environment*, thereby allowing them to take an *interdisciplinary* learning approach. By the end of the first year of study, students should have also built fundamental skills in verbal dialogue, critical thinking, writing, quantitative reasoning, and civic engagement (Antioch Catalog 2005-2006). This year prepares students to engage in scenario-based situated learning, meaningful workplace activities, and self-directed studies, all of which they will experience in subsequent semesters.

Undergraduate Students and the First-Year Program

The ideal student entering Antioch is well prepared for college. Students requiring remediation of secondary-education material are less likely to succeed. Students must also be well equipped for epistemic development, working, and engagement in civic matters. A desire to travel and engage other cultures is common among students. Students will likely be attracted to Antioch based on their ability to identify with the institutional values or the College's commitment to experiential learning.

A strong high school or college record correlates with achievement at Antioch. Most applicants will have studied a foreign language, at least three years of math and science, and four years of English while in high school. The College also looks for evidence of leadership or participation in extracurricular activities, demonstrated use of a special talent, and work or volunteer experience. (Antioch Catalog 2005-06, p.27)

Most students entering Antioch are accustomed to studying each subject in isolation rather than engaging in an interdisciplinary approach. Skill levels in critical thinking, quantitative

reasoning, writing, and communication will vary widely for each incoming student. Antioch College will provide students an opportunity for assessment in each of these areas prior to beginning their program of study. Students will immediately begin making progress towards each of the expected outcomes for graduation in the first-year program. Each student will be given the opportunity to begin customizing their learning priorities and plan to form a customized major. The first year of study has a fixed curriculum intended to provide a platform upon which students can build their future studies equipped with the learning skills and community necessary for success.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes for the First Year of Study

Students in the Antioch College undergraduate program should begin progress toward the expected learning outcomes outlined in Appendix B as graduation competencies. The first-year program sets the tone and establishes a foundation for this developmental journey.

To track progress toward the graduation competencies, students will assemble a portfolio of work which will be judged, using a rubric, by their academic advisor and two other faculty from the first-year program. By the end of the first-year program, students should have developed, in partnership with an advising faculty member, a sense of their individualized program of study with specific learning priorities and goals for the second year of study. The students are responsible for outlining this course of study and the learning priorities in a one to two page learning goals statement that will continue to evolve through their studies and will be posted online so faculty assigned to the student in subsequent courses can continue to guide their development. To be considered prepared to move forward with the second year of study students must be able to pass a mathematical competencies test, a writing competencies test, and identify two exemplary pieces of writing to include in their portfolio. One writing assignment should be an essay which takes a position and makes a persuasive argument and one should be a creative

piece. If students fail to achieve one or more of these benchmarks, remedial summer study options will be made available, but all students must complete each of these objectives by the end of the Fall term in the second year.

First-Year Program Faculty

The first-year program will be governed by a committee of senior faculty assigned to teach in the program. The committee will be chaired by an associate dean that has been assigned to administer the program. The first-year program faculty will rotate to other assignments at the university every few years. For the duration of faculty members' time with the first-year program, their teaching assignments will be exclusively in the program. The core faculty will be supplemented with teaching assistants and resource room staff comprised of student employees in their third or fourth year of study. Commitment of so much attention to the first-year program is vital to facilitate strong interpersonal student-faculty relationships necessary to help students develop their own goals for their individual program of study as well as retention efforts. No more than half of the teaching faculty should rotate out in any given year to ensure continuity of the first-year program and provide a base for continuous improvement.

Considerations for a New Curriculum

First, one must consider precedent. At present, Antioch College identifies itself as the "solution" to the traditional college experience; it seems inappropriate to *completely* revamp Antioch's key curriculum beliefs (see Appendix A), as doing so would cause the College to lose its identity and create an entirely new institution as opposed to improving the one at hand. Because much of Antioch's distinctiveness indeed comes from those ideas which make it a "solution," it seems only logical to continue to integrate those values into the new curriculum.

In designing this first-year program, one must also consider the problems that faced the institution prior to the shutdown of Antioch College in 2007; primarily, enrollment was far too

small to cover costs. The institution must find a way to attract and qualify, academically and financially, a greater number of students to enter the first year of study.

Retention of students was also a significant problem; a greater percentage of students must successfully complete the first year. To ensure this happens, the first year of study must be completely reformed to facilitate a greater degree of scalability while also providing this education at a high-level of quality in the most cost-effective manner possible. The publicity campaign that will attract new students to the re-launch of Antioch College already highlights a state of the art campus, and we will attempt to define here the critical facility needs for the first year of study.

Finally, the College must recognize that, in general, curriculum reform is necessary. The prominence of capitalistic and individualistic influences in contemporary American culture has created a shift in enrollment patterns towards institutions that prepare students for immediate employment after the bachelor's degree. Antioch must stay true to its core values while finding ways to connect with today's college bound students by focusing on topics that are relevant to today's world and that hit on popular themes.

State-of-the-Art Facilities

To successfully implement this new first-year program design, Antioch College will need to revisit the design of its physical plant. Traditional lecture halls and studio spaces will need to be reformed to better facilitate truly interactive education. Long and Ehrmann (2005) provide an excellent starting reference to the faculty committees that will develop specifications for the new facilities that will be built to refresh the campus and provide room for growth. Our faculty must consider the many places, besides just classrooms on campus where learning takes place and explore ways to provide the necessary space with multiple-use designs. Critical to Antioch's philosophy will be designing spaces that allow for authentic context to enter the classroom and

provide interactivity between scholars in the classroom. Long and Ehrmann (2005) argue that the “first requirement for some portion of classrooms of the future is that they support coaching and instruction while the student is doing what the student is learning to do.” Peter Kuttner (2003) published a presentation that highlights exemplary designs, such as the Aero/Astro facility at MIT, which achieve some of these ideals; the publication also describes the process used to develop the design (Planning Facilities for Science, 2003).

An Innovative First Year Curriculum

Part of the re-launch effort involves designing an innovative first-year curriculum for the new incoming class. In an effort to respect Antioch’s key curriculum beliefs (Appendix A), we have maintained the basic idea of the Core; however, the new curriculum has been designed to speak to the fundamental reforms discussed above.

The first-year curriculum will be divided into two parts: **Core A** and **Core B**. In the Fall semester of 2012, half of the 600 students in the incoming freshman class will enroll in Core A and the other half will enroll in Core B. In the Spring semester, the students will take the opposite core; the faculty, however, will not change. Together, these cores will give the students the general education credits they need in the Arts, Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities. In addition, the cores will give students exposure in the fundamental areas of mathematics and writing, which, in the past, were not included as part of the Core curriculum but rather were a separate undertaking.

Prior to the start of Fall semester classes, the incoming freshmen will be required to take a mathematics proficiency exam as well as a writing proficiency exam. This will allow the faculty of Antioch College to divide the students based on their abilities, splitting the students so that there are some who are strong and math and some who are weak in math in either core; the same goes for writing. Inexorably, the students will take part in an interactive, civic-minded

learning environment in which students assist each other in achieving their goals.

Because we anticipate that, with time, Antioch College will again begin to receive transfer students, it is necessary to assess each core in terms of individual areas of inquiry. Therefore, Core A will award three credits in each of Social Science, Humanities, Science, Art, and Mathematics. Core B will award three credits in each of Social Science, Humanities, Science, Art, and Writing.

In order to meet the needs of today's students, each core will be built around two or three key concepts and skills that are vital to success in today's employment marketplace. These topics include science and technology, globalization and diversity, critical thinking, corporate ethics, and workplace expectations. In more general terms, the first-year curriculum at Antioch College will provide students with a diversified knowledge base and require them to begin making connections across the disciplines, a skill that is necessary not only for interdisciplinary learning but also for success beyond their four years at the College.

Although both cores will be intense and will cover a variety of subject matter, each core will consist of several *primary* topics to assist the faculty in planning. Core A will focus on Economics (Social Science), International Studies (Humanities), Physics (Science), and Art History (Art). Although the specifics of the curriculum will be designed by the fifteen Core A faculty members, the design should focus on globalization, science, and technology. Specifically, students will examine America's position in a global society, how American corporations interact with their foreign counterparts, the economics of free trade, nation-building, and the role of science and technology as it pertains to the intertwining of these items. This course is unique in that Art History will serve as the guide; the instructors will use paintings, architecture, and other art forms to guide students through the various countries and organizations that will be studied. In doing so, instructors will be able to incorporate physics and mathematics to demystify

some of the methods used to create these structures. Since Antioch College emphasizes critical thinking, students will be expected to demonstrate that they are capable of doing so through various short writing assignments and class discussion.

Core B will focus on Sociology, Anthropology, and History (Social Science); Literature (Humanities); Biology (Science); and Drawing and Digital Photography (Art). The specifics of the curriculum will be designed by the fifteen Core B faculty members; however, the design should focus on diversity, corporate ethics, and preparation for the co-op experiences. Study will be lead through various literary pieces that focus on diversity. Ideas in the literature will be applied to various workplace scenarios, both historical and hypothetical, and will ultimately lead to a study of expectations in the workplace. As part of this core, instructors will include discussion of workplace ethics. All of these issues will be looked at from various viewpoints, including through the lenses of sociology and anthropology. Students will again be required to demonstrate critical thinking skills through various analyses of the readings; they may be asked to demonstrate their thoughts in writing or through various forms of art such as painting, drawing, and digital photography. Finally, to expand their minds, students will be required to take a closer look at where various historical events occurred; they will be required to examine the people, animals and terrain from a biological perspective and understand how cultural differences may play a role in the different behaviors of people.

It is important to note that potentially there were traditional compartmentalized ways of organizing the cores. For example, in studying the role of science and technology, a program planner make opt to group all of the mathematics and sciences together, leaving the subjects of the social sciences, humanities and arts to be studied together. However, since the Antioch College believes so strongly in the idea of integrated learning, we feel it is essential that each Core integrate information from *each* of the areas of inquiry.

We must also recognize the lack of flexibility that students have in this first-year program. Students will not have the freedom to choose their general education courses like students at so many other colleges and universities. Rather, they will be locked into the specific cores that have been created here. One reason for this is that the College wishes to address the issues that are most pertinent to students. However, in the re-launch phase the College will lack the faculty and other resources to design several cores for students to choose from. Therefore, for the first year, and more than likely several years after, all students will be given the same first-year curriculum. As will be discussed later, this will greatly reduce faculty preparation time and will allow faculty to work on retention of students.

At the end of the Spring semester, students in the first-year program will be required to complete a final mathematics competency exam as well as a final writing competency exam. Students who fail to pass these exams will be required to take a summer course in mathematics and/or writing. These courses will be offered solely online, and students will need to pay tuition and fees above and beyond those paid for the regular academic year.

Achieving Reform

This proposed first-year curriculum addresses the considerations for a new curriculum that were discussed earlier. Students' studies in economics, globalization, diversity, corporate ethics, and technology will help them understand how corporations function and will prepare them for employment in and beyond their co-op positions. In turn, graduates of Antioch College will have the skills and knowledge necessary for immediate employment and rapid advancement up the corporate ladder; companies will appreciate the fact that Antioch graduates are knowledgeable about all areas of business, not just their specialty, and will be able to minimize the cost to train perspective executives. Accordingly, employers will be more inclined to recruit Antioch graduates.

As Antioch College becomes known for its high job placement rate and the rapid advancement of its graduates, more students will desire to attend Antioch College. The College will be of particular interest to those students looking to be successful in their careers without first having to achieve an advanced degree to do so. We anticipate that the immediate return on investment students will receive will justify the cost of their private school education. Because students will want Antioch's assistance in placing them with an employer that recognizes the advantages of hiring an Antioch graduate, and because students will be able to immediately apply what they are learning in the classroom to real world situations (as opposed to waiting four years), the College should be able to maintain a relatively high retention rate. Antioch should also be able to grow its first-year class, increase its revenues, and ultimately maintain a self-sustaining budget.

The new curriculum also allows the College to maximize the dollars it is spending through effective use of faculty labor. Since faculty will remain on a core from semester to semester and there will be minimal faculty changes from year to year, faculty members will be able to maximize their time with students. Along with the 20:1 student-faculty ratio, the ability of faculty to spend the majority of their time with students (as opposed to continuously prepping new programs) will play a key role in students' decisions to remain at Antioch from year to year.

Finally, this curriculum creates the opportunity to receive additional tuition revenues. Specifically, those students not passing the final math and/or writing competency exams will be required to complete and pass online summer courses. Because math and writing are relatively static from year to year, these courses will only need to be designed once; from there, they become sources of revenue for the College.

Budget & Financial Assumptions

The Board of Trustees will need to secure significant startup funding for the re-launch of

Antioch College. Pursuit of funding for the startup costs, which may exceed \$300M, are beyond the scope of this proposal. It is assumed that the capital expenses to upgrade the physical plant, resume recruitment, and enable appointment of faculty a year in advance of student admittance will be obtained to facilitate this plan. This plan was developed based on parameters from the board that quadrupled current enrollment levels while yielding a positive revenue flow from the first-year program. Our budget projects a revenue surplus of \$2.5M per year providing a safety margin for enrollment shortfall and the potential for creation of capital accounts to self-fund future growth.

Slowly declining enrollment over dozens of years and a decaying physical plant limited recruitment efforts, leading to a structural deficit. Prior to shutdown, only 100 new students were joining the institution each year, and only 50% of them returned for a second year (Questions & Answers, 2007). In order to provide the college with a long-term solvent financial situation, enrollment will need to be significantly higher. The design of this proposal should accommodate at least 600 new students in each class. Assuming a revamped curriculum, physical plant, and recruitment campaign, the scope of this design describes a vision for how these students might be educated. If these enrollment targets are met, Antioch College will no longer be financially dependent on other campuses and can focus donations on growing the endowment.

Based on a 600 student enrollment level, the first-year program should generate approximately \$12.5 Million in revenue. This estimate derives from previous experience where an average student generates, after tuition discounting, \$21,000 in tuition revenue per year. It is expected that at this enrollment level the first-year program can support the instruction, services, and housing needed by students at a cost basis per student of \$16,000. The proposed budget for recurring expenses directly supporting the first-year program includes these major budget lines: Instructional Budget \$3.5M; Academic Support \$0.8M; Student Services \$1.1M. The remainder

of revenue covers central expenses such as housing, physical plant, and administration. Expenditures of budget lines for the first-year program have been distributed into broad categories in Appendix C.

Evaluation

A committee of faculty will be appointed and paid summer salaries to review evaluation data, design additional evaluation measures, and provide a report to the administration each summer. Evaluation of the first-year program will commence as students arrive and attend orientation. Surveys will measure initial perceptions of the academic advising process, facilities, and orientation process. Additional open ended questions will probe students' expectations for the year ahead. Longitudinal research efforts will record scores on placement tests and compare program outcomes at milestones throughout the course of the program.

End of term surveying will measure student satisfaction and explore students' reasoning for decisions about the second year of study (including withdrawal). Faculty will review student portfolio work at specific milestones throughout the first year, including the close of the year, to determine if projected student outcomes were met. At the end of the Fall and Spring terms of the second year, students, faculty, advisors, and co-op coordinators will be surveyed to evaluate student readiness and preparation for the second year relative to the outcomes expected from the first-year curriculum.

Observations will be recorded about how students use facilities, and information on student satisfaction with facilities will be obtained. Reports on use of information technology will also be collected to establish usage patterns and explore improvement opportunities. Focus groups will be organized to give students an opportunity to engage in discussion about how to improve the learning environment. Student government will also provide formal opportunities for student engagement in the evaluation and improvement of the first-year program.

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Appendix A

The Mission of Antioch University

Antioch University is founded on principles of rigorous liberal arts education, innovative experiential learning and socially engaged citizenship. The multiple campuses of the University nurture in their students the knowledge, skills and habits of reflection to excel as lifelong learners, democratic leaders and global citizens who live lives of meaning and purpose.

Antioch College - Academic Mission Statement

An Antioch education is shaped to the mold of human experience. This is a radically democratic education: every theory, every belief, every ideal is re-examined and subjected to the test of experience. We ask our students to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Their work is marked by scholarly rigor — and civic engagement. They come to know the world by analyzing it — and living deeply within it. They come to know justice by studying it — and practicing it. They become humanists in the broadest, deepest sense of the word: citizens and scholars capable of meaningful action, continuous growth, and enlightened leadership.

Key Beliefs of the Curriculum

Aligned with the Academic Mission Statement of Antioch College, two key beliefs help explain the philosophy of the Antioch curriculum.

The first belief is that *experience counts*:

We believe that ideas don't make sense until you've seen them work outside the classroom, in the lives of real people. So our curriculum includes three to four semesters of work experience in our Co-op Program. After a full year on campus and an intensive three-week co-op orientation, students meet with a co-op advisor to find positions with research centers, service agencies, Fortune 500 companies, cultural organizations, and nonprofit groups as close as Yellow Springs and as far as India, each designed to extend and enrich their field of study. (The Antioch Solution)

The second conviction is that Antioch's *curriculum is shaped to the world*:

We believe that a college education should respond to the world, that students should study the world as they find it. So instead of dividing our curriculum into separate compartments - English, math, biology - we treat it as an interconnected whole. Most of our classes take place in interdisciplinary learning communities: a handful of teachers from a number of different disciplines meet with a handful of students to study a broad theme over the course of the semester. (The Antioch Solution)

Appendix B

As an Antioch graduate, one can expect to achieve competence in the following:

- 1) A basic grounding in the study of the liberal arts with a global perspective and an understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and understanding.
- 2) The ability to apply critical thinking and reasoning skills to this knowledge, including analytical thinking and the ability to engage in effective logical and civil dialogue.
- 3) Communication and interpretation skills, including the ability to read analytically, develop coherent and compelling arguments and to write effectively and creatively in order to present one's work in a professional way to an audience.
- 4) Effective and creative problem-solving based on a familiarity with the background knowledge and methodology in one's area of study, and enhanced by an experiential involvement through work and practice.
- 5) The ability to integrate theory and practice, study and work, with an eye to the betterment of the human condition, so that one can engage in an effective contribution to society as a public citizen.

(Antioch Catalog 2005-06, p.14)

Appendix C

Budget

Instructional Costs

Position Title	@	Qty	Sub-total
Associate Dean	\$120,000	1	\$120,000
Senior Faculty	\$90,000	6	\$540,000
Junior Faculty	\$70,000	12	\$840,000
Adjunct Faculty	\$35,000	30	\$1,050,000
TA - Student Mentor	\$6,000	30	\$180,000
Guest Lecturers	\$3,000	40	\$120,000
Content Licensing	\$2,000	50	\$100,000
Instructional Technology	\$550,000	1	\$550,000
		TOTAL	\$3,500,000

Academic Support Costs

Facilitates & Travel	\$250,000		
Writing Center	\$120,000		
Math Help Room	\$150,000		
Library Services	\$250,000		
Misc Acad Support	\$30,000		
		TOTAL	\$800,000

Student Services

Academic Advising	\$300,000		
		TOTAL	\$300,000

Appendix D

Timeline

June 2008	<p>Antioch College Shuts Down</p> <p>Some Faculty Separate from Institution</p> <p>Other faculty assigned to teaching or administrative assignments elsewhere in Antioch University</p>
June 2009	Deadline for Seed Funding Campaign
August 2009	New Associate Dean for 1 st Year program
2009-10 Academic Year	<p>Facilities Planning Committee Formed</p> <p>Defining Faculty Positions & Roles</p> <p>1st Year Curriculum Committee Formed</p> <p>Construction Projects Begin</p> <p>Focus Groups with Potential Students</p>
2010-2011 Academic Year	<p>Curriculum Committee Finalizes Draft</p> <p>Faculty Positions Designed</p> <p>Faculty Recruitment Begins</p>
2011-2012	<p>Faculty Hiring Completed</p> <p>Co-Op Recruitment & Study Abroad Planning</p> <p>Appointments begin with summer orientation</p> <p>Construction Complete</p> <p>Evaluation of Program Begins</p>
2012-13	Launch of 1 st Year program