



2026 State of the College Address

Good evening everyone.

It's truly good to see so many members of the Antioch community gathered together from near and far tonight. Moments like this remind me that a college is not just buildings or programs, it is a community of people who care about the same future.

Colleges, like communities, sometimes move through challenging moments. What matters most is that we continue to do the work that brings us together, educating students, strengthening our community, and preparing the next generation to lead with courage and care.

It means a great deal to see all of you here tonight. When a community gathers like this – students, educators, neighbors, alumni, and friends – it reminds us that Antioch has always been more than a college.

It is a shared project.

A place built generation after generation by people who believed education could change lives and help shape a more just world.

Nine months ago, the Reverend Doctor William Barber stood before our graduating class and called on us to “shock the nation with the power of love.” Americans need more heart work, he said.

In many ways, that heart work defines the State of the College today.

It lives in our students' courage to raise their voices for the causes and communities they believe in. It lives in the relationships they build while on co-op. It lives in the ideas they shape here and carry into meaningful lives and careers.

The world is hurting. And the question before us tonight is clear:

What can Antiochians do?

For generations, Antioch graduates have met moments like this with conviction and action. Reverend Barber reminded us that “anyone with a heart must join in.” That it is time to stand together, move together, fight together, and believe together.

Today, I stand in that same spirit. Not only to call us to fight for our country and its people, but to fight for Antioch itself. To ensure this institution thrives for the next 175 years.

Places like Antioch must exist.

Places where people belong, where they are challenged, and where they can fully become themselves.



Each of us carries a story of how this college shaped our lives. Tonight, I want to share what Antioch College looks like today and where we are headed next.

Let me begin with the heart of this institution, our students.

When 88 percent of our first-year students choose to return for their second year, that tells us something important. It tells us they are finding belonging here. It tells us they are challenged, supported, and inspired.

The Dean's Council put new systems in place to help us improve that retention rate and to increase our six-year graduation rate by 64 percent since the launch of our Social Enterprise and Enrollment Plan in 2023.

Improvements this year include the professionalization of our Student Life team and a reimagined approach to helping students navigate interpersonal challenges. We have expanded the circle of student advocates across campus, engaging work crew staff supervisors and others who work closely with students every day.

We revised the general education curriculum to introduce co-convened courses, expand cultural and global engagement learning, and partner more intentionally with Student Life in introductory courses.

We strengthened academic advising with greater consistency, clarity, and support, and we adjusted the academic sanctions process to give students more time to adapt to the demands of college.

Finally, we partnered more closely with Admissions, Financial Aid, and Student Billing to improve the overall student experience.

When 100 percent of surveyed graduates report meaningful employment immediately after graduation, that speaks volumes about the distinctive education Antioch provides. While we know that we will not always achieve 100 percent, we remain committed to staying above 90 percent.

But behind these numbers are real human stories.

Recently, one of our students returned from a co-op placement working with a community organization focused on water quality and environmental restoration. During that experience, the student told us something that stayed with me. They said:

"Before coming to Antioch, I thought learning happened in classrooms. Now I understand that learning happens when you take responsibility for the world around you."



When our students step into communities through co-op, when they apply their learning to real problems and real people, that too is heart work.

That insight captures the spirit of Antioch's work-integrated education. Our students do not simply study the world, they step into it.

More than 90 percent of our graduating students consistently report being satisfied or very satisfied with their Antioch experience. Those numbers reflect something deeper than data, they reflect confidence, connection, and purpose.

Our graduates are shaping classrooms in California, Texas, and right here in Ohio. They are practicing law across multiple states, serving as lawyers and paralegals, and advancing justice in their communities. They are healthcare professionals, medical doctors, and social workers, strengthening lives and families. They are artists and writers and filmmakers. And they are serving in the Peace Corps, carrying their commitment to service across the globe.

What makes Antioch extraordinary is that a community of this size continues to produce graduates who shape classrooms, communities, and movements across the country.

Antioch has always been sustained by people who believe education should prepare students not only to make a living, but to make a difference.

These are the hearts of Antiochians in action.

Antioch's reach extends beyond our degree-seeking students.

This summer we are looking forward to programming which includes our second year of the Roots and Wings Youth Summer Camp, an Eco Farm and Food Forestry Program, and an Adult Art Camp.

Programs like these not only enhance our reputation and reach, they also help us build meaningful relationships with our local community, something we strive to do each day.

Let's talk now about our Enrollment Strategy.

We currently have 132 degree-seeking students. This includes welcoming 25 students to campus this winter, the largest winter entry class since the College reopened. For context, the previous winter class was eight students.

It is also the first time that our total number of students has increased midway through the academic year.

These numbers give us confidence as we move toward our goal of 175 students enrolled by Fall 2026.



Our application pool reflects this momentum.

Applications for Fall 2026 have increased 467 percent compared to this time last year — rising from 126 to 715. Our admitted student pool has grown from 79 to 484.

Our next step is to turn these admitted students to committed students. This gives us a significantly stronger base from which to enroll the next generation of Antioch students.

In May, we will welcome colleagues from the Higher Learning Commission for our ten-year reaccreditation visit. Preparing for reaccreditation has been a truly collaborative effort across the Antioch community.

Over the past year, faculty, staff, students, and administrators across the college have worked together to prepare for this important review. The process has been thoughtful and thorough, and it has helped us take a clear look at where we are as an institution.

Like every college committed to continuous improvement, we recognize areas where our systems and structures must continue to evolve. We have approached those areas directly and have already begun implementing changes designed to strengthen Antioch for the long term.

Just as importantly, it allows us to highlight the distinctive strengths of Antioch College: our work-integrated education model, our commitment to belonging and student success, and the dedication of a community that believes deeply in the transformative power of the liberal arts.

We look forward to welcoming the review team and sharing the progress we have made. We also understand where our deficiencies lie and we are prepared to continue addressing those. We are confident in the direction of the college and in the work we are doing together to ensure Antioch continues to thrive.

We are thrilled to share that this year, Antioch College has officially become part of the Work College Consortium. While we were designated a Federal Work College in 2024, becoming a part of the Consortium is a testament to our commitment in integrating work into the academic experience.

The network of colleges in the Consortium promotes the purposeful integration of work, learning, and service while helping reduce the cost of education for students.

Our students and leaders recently traveled to Washington D.C. to share ideas with fellow work colleges and speak with lawmakers about the value of work-integrated education.

At last year's State of the College, we announced the launch of our Demisemiseptcentennial Campaign, celebrating 175 years of Antioch College. I am thrilled to provide an update on this campaign, which concludes in the coming months.



Through our 175 Campaign we have raised over \$15 million dollars, bringing us closer to our \$17.5 million goal.

In Admissions we are 76 percent of the way toward our goal of 175 students by Fall 2026.

We are 97 percent of the way toward 1,750 co-op placements since reopening.

And 72 percent of the way toward 75,000 hours of student work since becoming a Federal Work College.

When Antioch reopened its doors in 2011, it did so on the strength of alumni belief and sheer determination. That first decade was marked by experimentation and struggle -- addressing years of deferred maintenance, earning back our accreditation, and building something genuinely new in higher education. We were, in many ways, building the plane while flying it.

Since our affirmation by the Higher Learning Commission in 2020, we have been on a different kind of journey -- not one of bare survival, but of delicate community-driven transformation. Guided by our Strategic Plan as well as our Social Enterprise and Enrollment Plan -- referred to as our SEE Plan -- and supported by a participatory budgeting process, external financial consultants, and rigorous quarterly reviews, we have rebuilt this institution from the inside out.

The results speak for themselves.

Our annual operating revenue has increased by 46% while our annual operating expenses have decreased by 11%.

Our total operating deficit has been reduced by 63%. Our structural deficit -- once one of our most stubborn challenges -- has been cut by 91%.

And I am proud to share that in 2025, the Higher Learning Commission formally removed Antioch's financial distress designation. That milestone did not happen by accident. It happened because of the amazing and dedicated work of the staff and faculty of Antioch College, supported by our alumni and donors.

I want to be honest with you, as I always try to be. Getting to this point required difficult decisions, including the use of one-time land sales as bridge funding. That was not an improvised move -- it was a deliberate part of the Social Enterprise and Enrollment Plan, and it served its purpose. Now, for the first time in a very long time, our projected budget for 2026-2027 academic year shows a surplus. Not a smaller deficit. A surplus.

We expect increased enrollment and philanthropic investment to carry us across that threshold, and the data supports that confidence.



BUT... we have to finish this year first -- and we have to finish strong.

And I want to be equally honest about what finishing strong looks like, because this community deserves the full picture.

Our facilities remain one of our most pressing challenges. Like many small colleges, we carry the weight of deferred maintenance across a number of our buildings. Our aging geothermal heating system requires constant attention. Several roofs have needed patching. And this past winter, during the hard freeze, the Foundry Theater sustained significant damage, damage serious enough that we have had to relocate several upcoming events while repairs are underway. These are not small inconveniences. They are real disruptions, and they affect real people. I want to take a moment to sincerely thank everyone who has been impacted, those who lost their rehearsal space, their event venue, their familiar classroom or gathering place. Your flexibility, your patience, and your resilience are a testament to who Antioch people are. We do not crumble when things get hard. We adapt. And we keep going.

Addressing our facilities long-term is part of the work ahead of us, and it is one more reason why the financial progress we have made matters so much and why finishing this year strong is so important.

One of the ways you can help right now is by philanthropic support. This month, we celebrate the Million Dollar March Match. Through the generosity of Scott Wheeler, Class of 1974, and a few other key donors, every gift made during March Match is doubled. We hope to raise one million dollars by March 31.

Every year, this community has risen to meet our \$500,000 goal, unlocking matching gifts and doubling the impact of every dollar donated.

Unfortunately, this year, we are behind where we need to be. Therefore, I am asking each of you -- alumni, faculty, staff, students, and friends of Antioch -- to give if you can and to spread the word. This campaign is not just a fundraising drive. It is a demonstration of collective belief in what we are building here. Let's show the world that Antioch finishes what it starts.

If Antioch has meant something in your life, this is a wonderful time to participate. You will find a QR code on your handout. There are envelopes available in the back of the room. And for those online, a link to make a gift online has been dropped in the chat.

However you choose to participate, thank you for helping build the next chapter of Antioch.

That has always been the story of this college generation after generation deciding that Antioch matters and doing something about it.

One of the great strengths of Antioch has always been its community of alumni, trustees, and friends who refuse to let this college fade quietly into history.



The Million Dollar March Match is one of those moments.

As I begin to wrap up, I'd like to note that nine months ago when Reverend Doctor William Barber reminded us that the nation needs more heart work, that phrase has stayed with me.

Antioch has always believed that education is not only intellectual work.

Because heart work is not abstract. It happens in places like Antioch.

It happens when students discover their voices and use them in service of others.

It happens when faculty challenge ideas and expand what students believe is possible.

It happens when staff sustain the daily life of this community.

And it happens when alumni and friends step forward to strengthen the college that shaped them.

Antioch has never been defined by its size.

It has always been defined by its courage.

The courage to believe education should prepare people not only for careers, but for conscience.

The courage to insist that belonging is the foundation of learning.

And the courage to keep building a college the world still needs.

And if we continue doing this heart work together...

Antioch will not simply endure.

Antioch will lead.

And perhaps, in our own way, we will help shock the nation with the power of love.

And now for our special announcement.

Few buildings carry the memory and spirit of a college the way Main Building does at Antioch College.

Generations of Antiochians debated ideas there, organized movements there, and discovered who they were there.



Main Building has been shuttered since the College closed in 2008. For years I, and many of you, have looked at that building and imagined what it could become again.

Tonight, I am proud to share that work has been taking place to reopen Main Building.

Phase One of this momentous project is nearly complete. And thanks to the generosity of a key donor, we have received a good portion of the funding needed for phase two of the restoration.

And yes, this includes reactivating Kelly Hall.

When Main Building opens again, it will not simply be a restored building, it will be Antioch's next chapter... written in brick, light, and possibility.

Antioch has never been defined by its size. It has always been defined by its courage.

We are a place where people belong. A place where work and learning are inseparable. A place where justice is not an abstract idea, but a lived commitment. A place where students become themselves fully and without apology.

This is the State of the College today. I thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to Antioch, our college that we all love so much.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our architect assisting with the restoration of Main Building, Earl Reeder of Earl Reeder and Associates.

Thank you.