

Sustainability & Social Justice

AUNE Completes First-Ever Social Justice Audit

In keeping with its statement of purpose, Antioch University New England has undertaken to examine social justice within its own walls. AUNE's Social Justice Audit, released in December 2006, is the culmination of more than a year's worth of intensive work by a team of staff, administrators, faculty, and students from every office and department at AUNE. The Social Justice Audit, developed and conducted by AUNE's Sustainability and Social Justice Committee, is intended to serve as a starting point for evaluating and enhancing AUNE's performance in fulfilling its mission of linking the worlds of scholarship and activism, and promoting its stated social justice values.

This report is a first attempt at answering a crucial question: "When the rubber of our rhetoric meets the road of our reality, are we crashing or cruising?" said Sustainability and Social Justice Committee chairperson and ES faculty member Abigail Abrash Walton. "We think that anyone in a management or other leadership role at AUNE will benefit from digesting the Audit report, and it is presented with those stakeholders in mind. We trust that AUNE will use the findings of this report to celebrate the road already successfully traveled and to chart an even smoother course for the future."

As part of the audit process, the Sustainability and Social Justice Committee looked at a variety of arenas, both internal and external, in which AUNE's policies and practices have social justice implications: curricula, policies, procurement and business relationships, Social and Environmental Performance, and Community Relations. An external review board comprised of Hunter Brownlie (Progressive Asset Management), Dean Cycon (Dean's Beans Coffee), Carol Swenson Jue (Monadnock Family Services), and Judy Tso (Aha Solutions) assisted the Sustainability and Social Justice Committee in designing the audit. More than 750 AUNE community members (381 alumni, 287 students, and 137 employees) participated in the audit survey, one of the two core elements of the audit process.

According to Sustainability and Social Justice Committee student assistant and Clinical Psychology student Connie Bindewald, "No other academic or other institution that we know of has attempted this type of comprehensive 'whole systems' social justice audit. We anticipate that AUNE's Social Justice Audit may serve as an important model for this type of reflective action-oriented audit by other institutions."

Key Findings of the Audit:

- Ninety-one percent of survey respondents stated that AUNE's core value of social justice is important to them; with 65 percent indicating that it is very important; only 1 percent responded that it wasn't important at all. More than two-thirds of respondents stated that AUNE's mission and legacy of social justice influenced their decisions to become a part of this community. However, a third of respondents disagree that AUNE, as an institution, walks its talk; 30 percent believe it does; and nearly 40 percent are uncertain.
- In terms of fulfilling its mission of preparing and encouraging members of the AUNE community to promote social justice, the audit findings had this to say about how AUNE is serving students:
- Sixty-six percent of alumni respondents agreed that social justice principles were an important part of their educational experience at AUNE. And 69 percent of AUNE graduates reported involvement in social justice

- work, with another 24 percent indicating that they have been in the past or would like to be.
- Seventy-one percent of current student respondents agreed that their curriculum enhances their knowledge of social justice issues. And 71 percent agreed that they would welcome additional social justice theory and practice in the curriculum.

Action Plan

The Sustainability and Social Justice Committee has developed an action plan, with clear benchmarks to measure progress toward implementing recommendations. Three immediate next steps already achieved are:

- The establishment of a campus-wide Student Government to enable students to have a regular voice in the governing process of the school and to sit on committees where decisions will be made that affect them
- Completion of two inventories of AUNE's greenhouse gas emissions, and implementation of energy-saving measures including restroom light occupancy sensors, removal of vending machines and a low-tech light-switch signage campaign
- Upgrading our procurement practices, including transitioning to Green Seal-certified cleaning and restroom products and 100% post-consumer-waste recycled paper in our copiers and printers.
- Mid-term goals include developing and pursuing an advocacy and educational outreach agenda to advance social justice change within and outside of AUNE in ways that engage and benefit AUNE community members.