Operations and Human Resources Describe Restructuring Plans
The Changes in Student Life and Services Will Take Longer to Decide

As Oberlin College moves ahead in eliminating $3 million from next year’s budget, two campus units are far enough along with their plans to announce reorganizations that yield structural-deficit reduction. Donna Raynsford, Vice President for Operations, and Ruth Spencer, Director of Human Resources, spoke earlier this week of the planned changes in their units. Gene Matthews, Operations’ director of facilities maintenance, and Charlene Cole, dean of student life and services, added more information.

Nancy Dye and Andy Evans
Answer Questions about the Budget

President Nancy Dye and Vice President for Finance Andy Evans have been answering questions left and right concerning the budget and the structural deficit. Here is a sampling from an in-house Tuesday press conference and Wednesday’s administrative and professional-staff breakfast.

Q. What happens if we don’t cut the $3 million structural deficit this year?
A. The deficit keeps building until the structural changes are made. If we don’t cut the $3 million this year, it will be $4 million next year, and if we don’t cut it then, it will be $5 million the year after that.

Q. Are all the cuts decided by now?
A. No, some units are still forming their plans. At this point everything is negotiable except the bottom line.

Q. What besides staff reduction is being done to eliminate the structural deficit?
A. We need to look at waste. Also, we are contemplating an accounting change in the way we handle postretirement health benefits. The benefits would still be there, but we may not need to set aside as much money as we have been setting aside. The savings could be $400,000 to $500,000.

Q. How do you reconcile budget cutting with building the Educational Studies Center?
A. The Educational Studies Center is being built on soft money, all raised for that project alone. Building the center won’t affect our hard-money budget. The Environmental Studies Program is central to Oberlin’s mission, and pulls students to Oberlin. We are raising the funds from sources that are not usual for us. Few alumni have been approached, and the people who are giving money to the center would not be giving money to Oberlin for any other purpose. The funds being raised include a maintenance endowment, so that the structure will not put pressure on the College operating budget.

Q. What will happen after we cut the $3 million?
A. We will go forward, being much more mindful of how we do business. For many years we weren’t mindful about tuition increases. We are now in danger of pricing ourselves over the cliff.

Q. How many positions are gone already?
A. Twenty positions have already been eliminated. Many of them were vacant. Extra-help positions are taking a big hit, and so are intern positions.

Q. What kind of termination policy is the College developing?
A. One that is based on years of service and a sense of equity: advance notice and a bridge to other employment, and salary and benefits while the employee is in a state of transition.

Q. Why are we approaching severance this way?
A. You have to think of what kind of employer you want Oberlin to be. That informs what you think is equitable. Oberlin College is a major economic actor in a small community that is not particularly affluent. A number of things will not happen at Oberlin. For example, we will not outsource custodial services. It would be a breach of the relationship we have with our employees, a violation of principles of equity.

Shifts in the Operations Division
Operations has eliminated two vacant positions, a position funded by the extra-help budget line, and the position of director of facilities services, Raynsford said Tuesday. One of the eliminated vacant positions is a groundskeeper, in the Grounds Department.

“We have maintained the quality of grounds care for over a year without someone in that position,” said Raynsford, “and I am sure we can continue this way, thanks to the skill and dedication of the current staff. “In the carpenter shop we have five authorized positions and have been funding a sixth from the extra-help line,” Raynsford said. When Bill Annable retires later this month the division will be able to move the extra-help carpenter into the permanent-employee ranks, and eliminate the extra-help line.

Several changes in Central Heating Plant personnel will save the College money while opening a new trainee position, Matthews said Wednesday. Budgeted for seven operating engineers and three helpers, the heating plant recently had two helpers transfer to Facilities Services. Those heating-plant positions have been eliminated. The remaining helper, Doug Simmons, is in training to become an engineer, and should earn his license in the next year or so, Matthews said.

Soon a new heating-plant trades-trainee position—open only to Oberlin’s classified personnel—will be added.
News Notes

President Nancy Dye will address the Akron Round Table February 15. Her speech, “Campus Unrest: Life and Learning at College Today,” will be broadcast live on WKSU and the Internet (http://www.wksu.kent.edu) preceded by a press conference, public reception, and luncheon. Dye was recently elected a presidential member of the executive committee for the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio, a public-relations, research, and government- liaison organization of 47 institutions of higher education.

Larry Herman, director of public relations and career development for the conservatory, plays trumpet; Marci Janas, staff writer in the Office of Communications, reads one of her poems; and Kay Thomson, assistant director of major gifts, narrates the title-track story in Emma’s Christmas, a November release by the Tower Brass Quintet on the Capstone recording label.

An Oberlin Faculty First: Jeffrey Hamburger Wins Humboldt Fellowship

Irvin Houck Associate Professor in the Humanities Jeffrey Hamburger has won a research fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Bonn that will support his travel to and from Germany and research there for a year.

“I believe this is the first time any member of the Oberlin faculty has won a Humboldt fellowship,” says Hamburger. Grants-information officer Barbara Fuchsmann concurs.

“Don’t have any other Humboldts in my data base,” she says, hedging “for the distant past I cannot speak.”

Hamburger will be studying the illuminated manuscripts and early printed editions of the writings of Heinrich Seuse (Henry Suso), a German mystic who died in 1366. He will spend next year in Munich, which has Germany’s best concentration of library resources. Hamburger’s host institution and home base in Munich, the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, has the best art-history library in Germany, Hamburger says.

Hamburger’s research will culminate in his third book, “Exemplary Images: The Art of Devotion in the Writings of Heinrich Seuse.”

While in Munich Hamburger will also compile a description of all the extant illuminated manuscripts of Seuse’s works. The Bavarian Academy of Sciences has commissioned the project for a larger catalogue of vernacular German illuminated manuscripts.

Seuse, says Hamburger, is one of the most influential spiritual writers of the later Middle Ages. What makes him especially interesting to Hamburger is that his writings are illustrated with images Seuse devised, and images play an integral role in Seuse’s devotional practice.

“His writings provide one of the most extensive and self-conscious commentaries on the place of art in devotion from the Middle Ages,” says Hamburger. Because Seuse wrote almost exclusively for nuns, in exploring Seuse’s work Hamburger will be continuing his interest in the role of images in female spirituality. Hamburger’s second book is “Nuns As Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent,” forthcoming from the University of California Press.
New Faculty and Staff
Robert A. Knight (Ohio State B.A., Case Western Reserve University M.B.A. 1986) is financial-planning and budget director. Knight has worked at the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services, the Case Western University School of Management, and the American Graduate School of International Management in Glendale, Arizona. He is married to Karen Knight and enjoys walking, weight lifting, reading, and European travel. Knight looks forward, he says, to “getting to know the history and culture of the Oberlin campus.”

Todd P. Mooney (Ohio University B.S.P.E., M.S.P.E. 1989) is head baseball and assistant football coach. He has been an assistant football coach at Brookhaven High School in Columbus, and at Ohio and Urbana universities. At Urbana, where he was also assistant baseball coach, two students he coached achieved Academic All-American status—one in football, one in baseball—and a third was an Athletic All-American in football. Originally from Westerville, Ohio, Mooney enjoys golf and collecting sports memorabilia. He says the recruitment of outstanding student-athletes and increased success for Oberlin College athletics will be two of his top priorities.

Cathe E. Radabaugh (Wilmington College B.A. 1972) is an analyst/programmer in the Houck Computing Center. She has worked for First Data Services and Finast. Radabaugh says she enjoys sailing, hiking, music, and travel.


Changes in Appointment
Chester Arcaba has been promoted from computer operator to network technician in the Houck Computing Center. Stephan Coleman has transferred from Campus Dining Services, where he was a maintenance worker, to Facilities Services, where he is a custodian.

Departures
Jessica Broadwell’s last day at Oberlin was January 26; she was a temporary project archivist in the Oberlin College Archives for the last six months. Jackie Foley, network intern at the Computing Center since June 1995, worked her last day February 2. John Seyfried’s last day was January 31. He had been the assistant preparator in the art museum since 1994. Today is Jennifer Amon’s last day; hired as administrative analyst/programmer four years ago, she leaves as acting director of administrative computing in the Computing Center.

Oberlin Economists Flare into Prominence
This appears to be the season of Oberlin economists. Over the last two months or so, eight Department of Economics faculty members and alumni have captured attention at two major newspapers, two professional journals, and two national meetings.

The January 6 San Francisco Chronicle and the January 9 Wall Street Journal quoted passages from a paper Professor of Economics Hirschel Kasper delivered at the American Economics Association (AEA) session Where Have All the Majors Gone. The AEA and its Allied Social Sciences Association (ASSA), held meetings January 5-7 in San Francisco.

Called “The Undergraduate Revolt against Economics,” Kasper’s paper speculated on why fewer undergraduates are majoring in economics. “There has been a lot more technical rigor in economics over the last 10 to 15 years than there has been in political science and sociology and other social-science majors,” the Journal quoted Kasper as saying. “[Students] appear attracted to the idea that people already have too much and that production which uses either physical or human resources is socially undesirable,” quoted the Chronicle, which also mentioned Kasper’s first point.

Peter Montiel, Robert S. Danforth and Ben W. Lewis Professor of Economics, presented “The Evidence from Mexico” at an AEA session called Public Debt: The Exchange Rate Connection. David and Debbie Mullin, visiting assistant professors of economics, were discusants at an ASSA session, Labor and Industry in Historical Perspective.

University of Virginia Architecture Dean to Design Oberlin’s Environmental Studies Building

By Anne C. Paine and Brad Masi ’93

William McDonough, whom Time magazine called in 1993 “the most visionary of green designers,” has been named architect of Oberlin’s Environmental Studies Center. McDonough, principal of the firm William McDonough + Partners in Charlottesville, Virginia, is also dean of the School of Architecture and Elson Professor of Architecture at the University of Virginia.

A leader in ecological architecture for two decades, McDonough designed the first solar-heated house in Ireland in 1976 and the first “green” office, the Environmental Defense Fund headquarters, in 1985. A founding member of the American Institute of Architects’ Committee on the Environment and an advisor to the President’s Council on Sustainable Development, McDonough was also the lead designer for the Greening of the White House, a $50 million project initiated by President Bill Clinton to make the White House more economically and environmentally sound.

In preparation for the World’s Fair in 2000, the city of Hannover, Germany, has commissioned McDonough to write “The Hannover Principles,” a document outlining design principles for participating architects.

Oberlin’s $2.5 million, 10,000-square-foot facility will incorporate ecological design principles, integrating the building with its environment (see the Observer of October 26, 1995). The facility will support growing student interest in the environmental-studies program and will be an educational resource for Oberlin students, community members, and builders and developers in Northeast Ohio, says Professor of Environmental Studies David Orr, who initiated the project and is raising the funds for it.

Over the next four months McDonough + Partners will work with the Oberlin community to develop a consensus on the center’s mission, decide space allocations, and select a site, says Orr. By June 1996 conceptual designs should be completed, he says. Ground breaking is set for June 1997, with occupancy due July 1998.

Details of the project are on the World Wide Web at http://www.oberlin.edu/~envs. The March issue of Around the Square will carry a feature story about the building and its architect.

Anne C. Paine is director of publications in the Office of Communications. Brad Masi is an environmental-design planner in the Environmental Studies Program.