All Roads Lead to Oberlin—Even More This Year

All Roads Lead to Oberlin, the admissions-office event for admitted students and their parents, is expanding this year to fill seven days. Last year the visits were spread over only four days. This year’s All Roads will take place Wednesday, April 17, through the following Wednesday, April 24.

The main reason for the expansion is to allow more discovery of Oberlin as it is, says Associate Director of Admissions Martha Allen, who chairs the affair’s planning committee for the fourth year in a row. Instead of attending many presentations in a closed room, visitors will have more opportunity to go to classes and open-house events. All academic departments and many administrative offices, including the Center for Service and Learning and the Multicultural Resource Center, will be open two hours on All Roads weekday afternoons and two hours Saturday morning.

Campus tours will take off five times every weekday and twice on Saturday. One co-op a day will be open seven of the days, including Sunday. During their rotating open houses visitors will be able to chat with co-opers while they are cooking dinner. Some faculty members have committed to staffing parent receptions in the Griswold lounge between 4:30 and 5:30 each of the weekdays, but Allen says she encourages more faculty and staff members to attend also.

Question and answer sessions will occupy potential students and their parents every weekday in Carnegie’s Fowler Room. On hand with answers will be a panel composed of a representative from the conservatory staff, two faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences, and two students. The Vernon Johns dinner, which celebrates Oberlin’s diversity, will be Friday evening, making it convenient for visitors to attend various Kuumba activities that take place later that night.

Abusua is sponsoring events from April 12 through April 19 in celebration of with events hosted by the Multicultural Resource Center and the Center for Engaged Service. A panel discussion on environmental justice will take place Wednesday, April 17, in the Griswold lounge.

Oberlin Is Finalist in Competition for $100,000 No-Strings Award

Oberlin is one of seven schools named finalists in the Award of Excellence in Education competition sponsored by the Consolidated Natural Gas Company (CNG) Foundation. The ultimate winner will receive $100,000, which it can invest in the program that won, or use to launch a new project.

The topic for this year’s competition is Creative Solutions to Environmental Challenges, and the award will recognize programs and activities that support solutions to environmental problems or practical methods of preventing environmental problems. The CNG Foundation established the award program in 1985, according to a CNG press release, “to recognize and encourage the creativity and innovation that is inherent in independent colleges.” The competition was open to 74 colleges.

Professor of Environmental Studies David Orr and Federal Grants Officer Barbara

Why are A&PS raises lower than faculty raises?

Our faculty is underpaid, making it difficult to recruit faculty as good as our current faculty. Let me put it this way: No students are coming to Oberlin because I’m the head of Human Resources, but they do say, “Oh, Milton Yinger taught there; David Orr teaches there; Raymond Premru teaches there . . .” The faculty is part of our advertisement. Our staff salaries are competitive, or we wouldn’t be seeing the large and qualified pool of applicants we see for open A&PS positions.

Greg Allen, who chairs the affair’s planning committee for the fourth year in a row. Instead of attending many presentations in a closed room, visitors will have more opportunity to go to classes and open-house events. All academic departments and many administrative offices, including the Center for Service and Learning and the Multicultural Resource Center, will be open two hours on All Roads weekday afternoons and two hours Saturday morning.

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Stemford University Press has published *Tethered Deer: Government and Economy in a Chinese County* by Marc Blecher and Vivienne Shue. The book—which includes 12 pages of photographs—is the first systematic, longitudinal study of the organization and operations of Chinese government at the county level, the middle ground between Beijing policymaking and community-level politics. Research for the book, which uses data from Shulu County in Hebei Province, began in 1979 when Blecher and Shue were part of a team of five scholars who made one of the earliest stints of field research in China by American social scientists. • Brenda Grier-Miller, special advisor in Student Academic Services, has been elected a trustee of the Elyria-based Nord Family Foundation. • As part of its series called Composition, Literacy, and Culture, Pittsburgh University Press has published a collection of essays, *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-Cultural Texts*, co-edited by Anuradha Dingwanyi Needham, associate professor of English. Published jointly by Oxford University Press, Delhi, India, the collection focuses on translation as a cultural practice that is influenced by a host of social and political imperatives. The book features essays by prominent cultural critics, including Edward W. Said and bell hooks, and writers, including Rosario Ferre. It also includes a co-authored essay by Professor of Religion Paula Richman, an introduction titled “Translating ‘Third World’ Cultures” by Needham, and a jointly authored piece by Needham and Carol Maier, the volume’s co-editor. • Today and tomorrow Raymond Premru, professor of trombone, is one of three judges at this year’s North American Brass Band Association championships in Columbus, where he is also conducting several bands in the reading of new music for brass band. • President Nancy Dye has appointed Robert Scheren, director of facilities planning and construction, the College representative for discussions with the City of Oberlin about downtown revitalization and rebuilding. Scheren is a member of the American Institute of Architects. • Professor of Mathematics Jeff Witmer is featured in a video series called *Anatomy of a Lesson*, produced recently for the Washington, D.C., area by the Prince George’s County Public Schools. Witmer was interviewed in Part 3: “Science for the Record,” where he talked about the use of statistics in analyzing science-lab data. The interview was in connection with his National Science Foundation grant Science Education and Quantitative Literacy.

**Con Says Yes to Staggered Terms**

Staggered terms for the Conservatory Faculty Council (ConFac) received approval in a vote without dissent at this Tuesday’s Conservatory Faculty meeting. Staggered terms for the College Educational Plans and Policies Committee (EPPC) and the councils of the College, Conservatory, and General faculties are recommended in a document drawn by the Ad Hoc Staggered Terms Committee appointed by the General Faculty Council last semester. The rest of the committee’s measure will be voted on in the College Faculty meeting next Tuesday, April 16, and in the General Faculty the following Tuesday, April 23. Before the conservatory faculty the faculty defeated overwhelmingly an amendment that would have permitted conservatory faculty members, like members of the other councils, to withhold their names from their council ballot.

If passed by the other bodies the bill will change the term length for membership on the named committees from one to two years. Half of the membership will be elected each year. The purpose of the proposed changes is to introduce continuity and perpetuation of institutional memory to the committees. Eligibility rules would change to reflect two-year terms of office. Also during the Conservatory Faculty meeting Director of Conservatory Admissions Mike Manderen reported that the conservatory has broken the 1000-application mark for the second time in a row, and set an all-time record in applications received. Applications from all four categories of prospective conservatory students (first year, transfer, Artist Diploma, and Master of Music in Historical Performance) totalled 1040 as of April 2. Last year’s applicants numbered 1020. Most of the 23 instrument and major-area totals are either slightly up or about the same as last year; bassoon, horn, percussion, and violin are significantly up; composition and TIMARA have about half last year’s number of applicants.

Oberlin continues to increase its overlap with the top music programs—those at Eastman, Juilliard, Curtis, Indiana, New England Conservatory, and Peabody, Mandener said. Of the 180 students admitted so far, 51 percent have audition scores of the highest level. With such a large candidate pool Mandener anticipates continued high selectivity, with the ability to admit 33 to 35 percent of the applicants.

Dean Karen Wolff announced at the meeting that Warren Darcy, professor of music theory, will be acting associate dean of the conservatory next semester while Kathryn Stuart is acting dean in Wolff’s absence. Wolff will be on leave.

The Conservatory Faculty passed a motion to award Jason Schenker a posthumous degree at this spring’s graduation ceremony. Schenker, a composition student, would have graduated this year and had completed his required major works, according to Randolph Coleman, professor of composition. He died January 13 of complications from mononucleosis.
NEH Grant Helps to Revamp English 200

By Anita Buckmaster ’95

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has awarded Oberlin’s English department a $25,000 grant to “rework, redefine and re-envision an appropriate pedagogy and contents for English 200.” English 200, Critical Methods, is designed to develop the understanding and application of literary criticism, according to the 1995-96 Course Catalog. The class is a requirement for the English major and minor.

The problem with the course as it stands now, says Associate Professor of English Anuradha Needham, is that it has an “incompleteness in focus.” Each of the faculty members for the team-taught course brings in his or her own specialty and interests, a practice that sometimes leads to discontinuity in the overall teaching of the class. Students have complained of overlapping readings and discrepancies between the individual lessons. Faculty point out the difficulty of teaching critical theory and methodology to students who have little or no background in criticism. The department originally designed the course to expose students to a wide variety of theories and methods early in their college careers.

Needham and Professor of English Katherine Linehan, chair of the department, will codirect the NEH project. Six other members of the English faculty are participating: Longman Professor of English David Young, Professor Robert Pierce, Professor Phyllis Gorfain, Associate Professor Nick Jones, Associate Professor Pat Day, and Visiting Assistant Professor Linda Dorff. Three English professors from other institutions have joined them as consultants: Professor David Simpson, chair of the English department at the University of Colorado at Boulder; Professor Margaret W. Ferguson, University of Colorado at Boulder; and Professor Anne McClintock, Columbia University.

The project calls for intensive reading and discussion sessions through June. During this time, Oberlin faculty members will review and rework the appropriate contents and approach to the course.

The Oberlin participants met in January for the first of at least 12 sessions. There, Needham says, they began to thrash out what English 200 should be. Jones, Day, and Pierce each presented a set of core readings surrounding a central theme for the course. All project members completed the readings and then debated the usefulness of each model syllabus. Surprisingly, says Needham, there was consensus in most areas.

The other project members will present their syllabi in June. The group will probably develop more than one course syllabus, says Needham, because the members of each teaching team vary from session to session.

With the help of the outside consultants, who have had success in integrating accessible theory into intermediate courses, the Oberlin faculty will develop appropriate guidelines for the course. The goal, says Needham, is to produce syllabi that allow for engaged critical thinking, built around topics that lend themselves to team teaching. The English department will implement the new course in the 1996-97 school year.

CNG Award . . .

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Fuchsman wrote the nomination for the award. In it they cite the growth of Oberlin’s Environmental Studies Program (12 majors in 1981; 63 in 1996), the fastest growth of any department or program in the College.

Intellect and Experience

Oberlin’s program combines intellectual rigor with practical experience, and focuses on three student activities: teaching in local public schools, research and education on the Black River, and participation in the design for a new model building, now known as the proposed Environmental Studies Building.

Environmental-education projects in the Oberlin Public Schools led, in 1991, to some students writing a successful grant proposal to the Environmental Education Fund of the Ohio EPA. The resulting two-year Practicum in Environmental Education exposed Oberlin College students to the field of environmental education and helped elementary teachers introduce environmental concepts and issues to their classes. The teachers later reported that they were inspired to continue the kinds of hands-on, experiential learning in environmental education that the students introduced to their classrooms. Oberlin students continue to work in the public schools on similar independent projects.

The students are also involved in a long-term project to determine the status of the Black River watershed. They work with the Ohio EPA, other state agencies, local officials, and citizen-action groups to implement a remedial-action plan to improve its water quality and ecological health. The project has brought together citizens and people with business and agricultural interests in the river to work on their common concerns.

One hundred fifty students are working with a team of architects to design the Environmental Studies Center, a building that will meet advanced criteria for energy and materials efficiency, use of recycled materials, ecological waste-water systems, solar energy, and ecological landscaping. (See “Community-Planned Center Will Model Ecological Design” in the October 26, 1995, Observer.)

Goals of the Program

“We aim to influence the way other colleges and universities build, renovate, and educate,” wrote Orr and Fuchsman in their nomination. “In the much more crowded world of the 21st century those now in school must have the know how and the know why to sharply reduce the amount of land, fossil energy, materials, and water thought necessary for a decent life.”

The six other schools vying for the award are Allegheny College, Denison University, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Skidmore College, Westminster College, and Wilson College. The next step in the award procedure is site visits, and the finalists have each received a $1000 stipend to offset the expenses related to that visit. The date of Oberlin’s site visit is April 30.
The College Faculty has elected the 1996 Dean Search Committee; Secretary of the College Robert Haslun compiled the election results and announced them to the College Faculty Tuesday.

Committee members are Professor of Chemistry Martin Ackermann, Frederick B. Artz Professor of History Marcia Colish, Associate Professor of French Nelson de Jesus, Associate Professor of African American Studies Adrienne Lash Jones, Professor of English Katherine Linehan, Associate Professor of Chemistry Albert Matlin, and Professor of Economics James Zinser.

The committee met to discuss the search process Tuesday evening. On the agenda for its next meeting, April 16, is electing a chair.

The new dean will replace Mary Ella Feinleib, who resigned the position last month. Professor of Classics James Helm is acting dean until June.

A&PS ...
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Why are A&PS employees treated differently from the faculty and unionized employees? The faculty have tenure. Unions negotiate contracts to increase their members’ wages and benefits and to protect their members’ jobs. Faculty employment is long term; union contracts are long term. The College needs the fluidity of the Administrative and Professional Staff to make change. A&PS has to be like the rest of the world. What we A&PS employees experience is really the norm. A&PS is now feeling what corporate America has been feeling for years. Yes, there is lack of assuredness that the next five or 10 years will be the same for us. We have to roll with the punches as the College changes.

Division heads and other supervisors don’t treat A&PS evaluations uniformly. All managers don’t have the same amount of sensitivity and seriousness about evaluations.

That’s something I’m concerned about. Supervisors differ in their people skills, and every supervisor won’t be equally good, but you can expect all of them to follow some guidelines. I will be talking to supervisors of A&PS employees this week about evaluation procedures. [Spencer spoke with supervisors Thursday.—Ed.] Copies of all evaluation forms and recommendations for raises come to this office, and I plan to look especially at the high and low evaluations and raises. If the evaluation documentation does not support the raise—or lack of a raise—I will talk to that supervisor. Evaluations should be the result of face-to-face meetings, and this office will review carefully any merit increases that have no documentation.

Why don’t peer reviews and reviews of supervisors by their employees figure into A&PS evaluations?

All I can tell you is that the senior staff is willing to discuss that possibility.

Sometimes we hear that a 0 percent increase in salary means we are doing a good job, just not an exceptional one, and sometimes we hear that a 0 percent increase means “Take a hint: take a hike.” Which does it mean? Supervisors have discretion in establishing the increases and nonincreases in their employees’ salary, but supervisors need to explain their system to their employees. Employees deserve to be able to understand whether the whole component of their raise is merit or whether part is for cost of living. Supervisors need to communicate clearly to their employees what the increases or nonincreases mean. To some supervisors, a 0 percent increase means the employee is doing a good but not exceptional job. To others a 0 percent increase means that the employee is doing unsatisfactory work. Hints are not appropriate; raises need to be tied to evaluations, and evaluations need to be clear. Communication about progress or poor performance should also be given more than once a year; employees should not be surprised by their annual evaluations. And evaluations should tell employees at least three things: what’s expected, whether they are meeting expectations, and how they can do better.

A&PS employees seem to be taking the brunt of the budget cuts. They’re taking the brunt because the service staff has already been cut to the bone. Future long-range curricular changes, however, could have an impact on the faculty.

We’ve been hearing about an A&PS equity pool. What is it? The equity pool is money that is set aside from the salary pool to be given to A&PS employees who are not making a fair-market salary. This is the second year for the A&PS equity pool. [President] Nancy Dye redistributes the money based on recommendations of senior staff. It’s a demonstration of the priority of fairness—the overriding principle of fairness that Nancy Dye has set.

All Roads ...
Continued from page 1

13 through 20 to celebrate Kuumba (creativity), one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Another overlapping student celebration will be Pride Week, sponsored by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Union April 22 through 26.

The admissions office has invited every admitted first-year student, including those who have already enrolled under the early-decision arrangement, to All Roads. Oberlin’s acceptance deadline is May 1, and Allen and her committee members—Grace Hong and Aaron Milenski, assistant directors of admissions, and Jonathan Williams, associate director of admissions—are hoping the All Roads activities will make the visiting students’ choice to attend Oberlin this fall an easy one.

Back in Two Weeks

The Observer has completed its coverage of major budget-related changes announced this year, with the exception of changes in the libraries, still to be disclosed. The changes have resulted from various campus units addressing a $3 million collegewide structural deficit in the 1996-97 budget. The deficit was eliminated in the preliminary budget approved by College trustees in March (See “Trustees Endorse 1996-97 Budget Plan and Agree to Increase Endowment Payout” in the March 15 issue). The Observer will return to biweekly large-format production with its next issue, to be published April 26.

The Observer is on line at http://www.oberlin.edu/~observer/main.html.