The latest model of the Environmental Studies Building shows the auditorium at far right, behind the pond. The auditorium roof will be covered in sod; another will be of material that collects solar energy. The design of the ESC allows for the structure’s elements to be exchanged as improvements in building technology and materials develop, so the building won’t be locked into today’s construction solutions.

Adam Lewis Gift of $3 Million Helps Assure Construction of Environmental Studies Building

The College has received a gift of $3 million from Cleveland philanthropist Adam Lewis for the completion of the proposed Environmental Studies Center (ESC), President Nancy Dye announced earlier this month. “Thanks to this generous gift, Oberlin plans to break ground for the center, one of the most advanced ecologically conceived buildings in America, this summer,” said Dye. Vice President Al Gore has been asked to turn the first spade of earth; the building should be ready for occupancy in fall 1998.

Three more recent gifts for the center’s construction—$80,000 from the Compton Foundation, $50,000 from the John P. Murphy Foundation, and another $100,000 from an anonymous donor—and another recent gift to the endowment that will cover maintenance costs of the building—all $270,000 from the GAR Foundation—virtually assure the realization of the revolutionary structure.

Besides resolving space constraints for the Environmental Studies Program at the College, the ESC will be a pedagogical model for cutting-edge ecological design and 21st century environmental education, says David Orr, professor of environmental studies and politics and sole fundraiser for the building. Orr is writing a book about the Oberlin project.

Alumni Program Draws 50 to Consider Sustainability

Discussion of the Environmental Studies Center was the final topic in Reducing the Human Footprint: A Symposium on Issues of Sustainability, an alumni event held on campus January 17-19. Presenters included Professor of Environmental Studies David Orr, who began the symposium with an overview of sustainability; Professor of Philosophy Norman Care, whose talk was “Moralizing Nature: From Environmental Crisis to Ecological Conscience”; Danforth Professor of Biology David Bersing, who spoke on biotic impoverishment; and Cheryl Wolfe, director of environmental health and safety, who reported on the Black River Watershed Educational Project with help from Environmental Studies Intern Brad Masi. Orr delivered the closing remarks on the ESC. The audience of about 50 included students, parents of current students, staff, and representatives from the Cuyahoga Planning Commission. The Alumni Association sponsored the symposium.

45 New Courses Bring Oberlin to the Cutting Edge in Offerings

If the Oberlin Observer’s count is right, Oberlin College is offering 45 new courses this year that have never been taught at the school before. The Department of History leads the pack with the most new courses—count ’em 10.

“This cornucopia of new courses testifies to the fertile imaginations and intense dedication of the Oberlin faculty,” says Clayton Koppes, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “These courses give continuing vitality to our curriculum, as professors introduce cutting-edge material that keeps Oberlin abreast of the fast-changing world of knowledge. Many of these courses break disciplinary boundaries and put together ideas from disparate fields— in some cases from areas of study scarcity imagined a decade ago. The commitment to diversity, general education, and international focus are particularly striking.”

Here is part one of the rundown of new courses, arranged by alphabetical order of department within academic division. This issue of the Observer covers courses in the social and behavioral sciences and in the natural sciences and mathematics. Part two, which will appear in the February 14 issue, will cover college courses in the arts and humanities and conservatory courses.

Social and Behavioral Sciences

What are the hot issues surrounding the display of Native American artifacts in museums? Students who take Museum Anthropology with Linda Grimm, associate professor of anthropology, next semester will find this out—and a whole lot more. Grimm’s new course will examine the historical context of museums, examining various modes of collection and exploring some of the diverse agendas under which museums have operated—including the highly contentious present-day exhibition environment.

The economics department will offer the new course Alternative Climate Resolution in the spring semester, taught by Hirschel Kasper, Danforth Professor of Economics, and William Perlik, adjunct professor of economics (and chair of the Board of Trustees). The course will focus on employment and labor relations.

A new environmental studies course, Climate Change: Causes and Consequences, will give a physical explanation of global change and explore the consequences of such change to natural systems and human society. The course will emphasize methods of analysis and current levels of social and scientific uncertainty as they relate to the topics. Teaching the course will be David Bersing, Danforth Professor of Biology, Lynn Fisher, visiting instructor of anthropology; David Orr, professor of environmental studies and politics, and Bruce Simonson and Steven Wojtal, both professors of geology.

Planning Teams Get Under Way

Fourteen planning teams that President Nancy Dye created in consultation with the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) began meeting this month. The teams were formed around ideas generated in planning discussion groups held over the fall. Composed of faculty, staff, and students, each team has or will have representation from the Board of Trustees and alumni.

By early April the planning teams will have completed their work of gathering information from persons in the campus community, alumni; members of the board; and, where appropriate, members of other academic institutions. Based on the gathered information the teams will then recommend broad strategies. The strategies should give Oberlin “clear directions for planning by divisions, departments, faculty, and students over time,” says Acting Dean of the Conservatory Kathryn Stuart, member of the PAC.

This is an inclusive process that will depend on a large amount of consultation for its success,” says Stuart.

And there will be recommendations will be consonant with Oberlin’s values, expressed in the four elements of the Oberlin mission: intellectual rigor, artistic/civic/voluntary, social commitment, and diversity and access.

After they finish gathering information, teams will capture their thinking in brief documents that contain short rationales for each recommendation. The entire campus community will discuss the team reports in April, and in May the president and the advisory committee will create from the reports and discussions a final planning document. Dye will present the final planning document to the faculty in May and to the Board of Trustees in June.

Continued on page 3
Faculty and Staff Notes

“Strung-Out,” the latest work by Richard Adams, teacher of composition and theory, was premiered in October by the new music ensemble of the Albany Symphony Orchestra. The piece, for electronics and chamber orchestra, was commissioned by the ensemble and presented as part of its New American Voices concert. Richard will also conduct the premiere of a work by the Madowell Colony for this month.

Richard Anderson, associate professor of singing, will deliver the semester opening address at DePauw University on February 8 at “Strung-Out,” the latest work by Peter Kamitsuka, associate professor of trombone, conducted a concert with the Royal College of Music in London January 13. The program included the British premiere of his Symphony for Brass and Percussion. Curtis Price, principal of the American Sinfonietta, is featured performing in Calgary, Milan, Seoul, and Toronto. He will conduct a concert with the Royal Academy of Music in London on February 22. His list already included classes he will give in January, February, and March 1996.

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New Courses . . .

Continued from page 1

ment offered Associate Professor Leslie Smith's new course, "World War II: Shaping the 20th Century," in the spring of 1997. The course, which is open to all students, will cover the events leading up to World War II, the war itself, and its impact on the world. It will include a discussion of the role of the United States in the war, and the development of new military technologies. The course will be taught by Associate Professor Leslie Smith, who has published extensively on the history of World War II. She will provide an overview of the major events of the war, as well as an analysis of the impact of the war on the world. The course will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00-11:15 am in the Tiffin Lecture Hall. Students should have a basic understanding of World War II history to succeed in the course.

Alumni Calls for Improvement in College-Wide Mentoring

The "Student Well-Being" committee (November 22 Observer) by Ray Eng-

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Like Minds? Views and Goals of Oberlin’s Faculty and Students

By Ross Peacock

College can prohibit racist/sexist speech 43%
Too much concern for criminals 47%
Raise taxes to reduce deficit 49%
Defend laws that violate personal values 51%
Abolish death penalty 54%
Marijuana should be legalized 59%
Sex OK if people like each other 59%
Wealth should pay more taxes 80%
National health care plan needed 84%
Abortion should be legal 88%
Control pollution 93%
Man not entitled to sex on date 94%
Federal government should do more to control handguns 94%
The four common questions, “prohibit racist/sexist speech,” “national health care plan needed,” and, to a lesser extent, “abolish death penalty” and “abortion should be legal” show a fairly high level of agreement between students and faculty.

Faculty Goals for Undergraduates and Senior Self-Reports of Skills and Knowledge Enhancement
Academic departments work hard to develop goals for majors and nonmajors and to identify ways by which goal achievement can be measured. In the faculty survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of general goals for undergraduates. The 1996 Senior Survey asked graduates to rate their level of enhancement in a variety of areas. As in the previous section, only some questions are the same, but looking at each group’s responses to all the questions helps us gain a measure of the level of congruence between students and faculty.

Teaching Goals: Faculty Responding Very Important or Essential
Prepare for family living 7%
Insist community to support 28%
End of class experience 30%
Teach classics or Western Civ 26%
Provide for emotional development 63%
Develop moral character 44%
Prepare for responsible citizenship 93%
Help develop personal values 91%
Prepare for employment 57%
End severe self-hatred 66%
Prepare for graduate education 72%
Increase self-directed learning 98%
Develop ability to think clearly 100%

lead and supervise tasks and people 26%
Evaluate and choose between courses of action 28%
Relate well to people of different races 30%
Develop self-esteem/self-confidence 30%
Communicate well orally 33%
Synthesize and integrate ideas and information 34%
Plan and execute complex projects 36%
Acquire broad knowledge in arts and sciences 39%

Formulate creative/original ideas and solutions 41%
Place current problems in perspective 42%
Appreciate art, literature, music, drama 43%
Identify moral and ethical issues 45%
Function independently, without supervision 47%
Develop awareness of social problems 48%
Write effectively 52%
Gain in depth knowledge of a field 52%
Think abstractly and logically 54%
Acquire new skills and knowledge on own 59%
Understand myself, abilities, interests, etc. 60%

Thought students somewhat differently, lifetime learning skills are reported by seniors as improving from the freshman year. Those are the same kinds of goals our faculty rate as the most important for undergraduates. One of the goals rated in the top three by undergraduates for faculty is preparing students for graduate school. This fits well with the goals of entering first-year students. Ninety-three percent of the respondents to the freshmen survey stated they desired a degree beyond the Bachelor of Arts. Other surveys show that at the time of graduation nearly 40 percent plan to enter graduate school full time, but within a year over 40 percent are enrolled in a postbaccalaureate program. That number climbs higher the longer students are away from Oberlin and results in Oberlin’s still producing the largest number of future Ph.D.s (regardless of school size) of any predominantly liberal arts institution in the country, according to the latest data from the National Science Foundation/National Research Council/Doctrate Records File.

Ross Peacock is director of institutional research. "I see tables as a small portion of the survey’s content," Peacock says. "Readers desiring complete summaries may ask me for a hard copy of the report. I can also mail results or download the tables from the institutional research home page on the web page where you can also access current data on student profile and assessment links."