Minnesota State Senator Allan Spear ’58 will deliver this year’s commencement address and receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Oberlin College during the May 26 ceremonies. Molecular biologist and biophysicist Philip Hanawalt ’54, professor of biology at Stanford University, will receive a Doctor of Science degree at this year’s commencement.

Canadian soprano Edith Wiens ’75 will receive a Doctor of Music degree. Journalist Carl Rowan ’47 will receive the Alumni Medal. Oberlin Chief of Police Robert "BJ" Jones ’72 will deliver the baccalaureate address—“Pluralism, Power, and Passion”—Sunday, May 25, during Oberlin’s commencement weekend.

Professor of Politics Paul Dawson will present Allan Spear for his degree.

An associate professor of history at the University of Minnesota, where he has been on the faculty since 1964, Spear was first elected to the Minnesota State Senate in 1972 and has been reelected seven times since then, most recently in 1996. He has been president of the Minnesota senate since 1993.

Chair of the Senate’s Crime Prevention Committee and member of the judiciary, Human Resources, Finance, Commerce, and Rules and Administration committees, Spear holds his special legislative concerns criminal law, law reform, human rights, and human services. He is the first and longest-serving gay male legislator in the nation and a founding member of the International Network of Lesbian and Gay Officials.

Spear counts among his major legislative accomplishments a sliding-scale child-care program that provides child-care subsidies for low-income families; battered-women programs; the American Indian Language and Culture Education Act; the Vulnerable Adults Act, which requires reporting and investigation of physical or psychological abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of disabled or incapacitated people; the Civil Government Reform Law, and the Guardianship and Conservatorship Reform Act, which safeguards the elderly, mentally retarded, and mentally ill from abuse and exploitation. He has also played dominant roles in hate-crimes legislation and built the legislative coalitions necessary to pass the Gay/Lesbian Bisexual/Transgender Rights Act. He is the chief author of most of the omnibus crime bills passed in Minnesota since 1989.

Spear’s earned Ph.D. degree is from Yale University. His brother is Richard Spear, Jay Professor of Art.

The Department of Politics will host Spear as its honored guest at the department reception for graduating seniors Sunday, May 25, 10:12 noon in the Rice Faculty Lounge. All members of the campus community are welcome.

Honorary Degrees for Philip Hanawalt and Edith Wiens

Dennis Luck, chair of Oberlin’s biology department, will present Philip Hanawalt for his award. Hanawalt, an Oberlin physics major who holds a joint appointment in Stanford’s medical school, is also a professor of dermatology at the university. Since his days as a graduate student at Yale University, where he earned his Ph.D. degree in biophysics in 1959, Hanawalt has carried out DNA research. Before receiving his doctorate, he initiated studies that provided the first quantitative assessment of the inhibitory effects of ultraviolet light on DNA synthesis and the first suggestion that recovery mechanisms can eventually restore the DNA synthesis. A few years later he discovered DNA excision repair, establishing himself as an internationally known leader in the field of DNA repair. Work done in his laboratory.

Oberlin’s Alternate Gets a Break: Amy Evans

Amy Evans, a December graduate with a double major in creative writing and French, was an alternate in the Watson Fellowship competition until last week (see the April 11 Observer). But one of the newly named Watson fellows has declined the fellowship, and Evans will be able to carry out her project as a Watson fellow. She (a senior) and her (junior) brother to become Oberlin’s second Watson winner of 1997 and Oberlin’s 60th winner since 1969, when the Watson Foundation awarded the first fellowships.

The name of Evans’s project is Communities of Resistance: The Development of Consciousness among Black Writers in France and Germany. Showing Our Colors, a book Evans read for a class at Oberlin, inspired the project, she says. Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out, edited by May Optiz, Katharina Oguntayo, and Dagmar Schultz (University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), is a collection of interviews with Afro-Germans that draws parallels with Black Americans struggling to find their identity and with African Americans who have emigrated to Europe. In her project Evans will take a sociological point of view, she says, and talk with Afro-German writers as well as African Americans experienced in France about how

Today and Tomorrow: College and City Cosponsor Nord-Funded Symposium on Sustainability

Discussions of energy, land-use, and economic renewal in northeastern Ohio are drawing national experts, government officials, regional community organizations, and community members to Oberlin.

Amy Evans

Amy Evans

The final longrange planning report will soon be passed Oberlin Online and the Oberlin Observer Online (http://www.oberlin.org).
Faculty Meeting

General Faculty Heats President Dye on Long-Range Planning, Listens to Memorial Minutes, and Approves Student-Senate Changes by Leaving Reform Document on the Table

At the General Faculty (GF) meeting of April 15 members heard Mathis Sokolow, professor of French, deliver a memorial minute for Lawrence Wilson, emeritus professor of French and Italian. Herbert Henke, professor of English, delivered a memorial minute for Clifford Cook, emeritus professor of string instruments and music. Associate Dean of Student Academic Services and instructor in Mathematics Gloria White, chair of the Student Life Committee, gave a report of the Nord Foundation. 

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations,” says David Orr, professor of environmental studies, who wrote the grant proposal for the event. The event is funded by a $20,000 grant from Sustainability.
An article that called for Fiorina’s analysis “is worth careful reconsideration because it suggests that there is little connection between constituencies and partisan outcomes.”

Robert Bosch, associate professor of mathematics, and Natasha Stout ’94 are the authors of the lead article in the June 1997 issue of the journal "Socio-Economic Planning Sciences." Their paper, "Reform of the Kaplan and Duff’s " contests the problem of finding the optimal length of a phase III clinical trial for a new AIDS drug.

Robert Herrist, associate professor of chemistry, is working on a summer stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities to establish a project called "Words on Rocks: Monumental Calligraphy in China." He will spend two months in China conducting research on a monumental calligraphy engraving on boulders and mountainsides. He will record his observations about the location, content, and style of the inscriptions and the contents of the inscriptions. He will write didactic calligraphy to illustrate the written word in China? Robert plans to write a book on the topic of his investigation.

In January Catherine Jarvisian, professor of music education, was a major presenter at the annual Conference on the History of Music, at the University of Minnesota—St. Paul. She lectured on contemporary religious music, and chairs the Inclusive Practice Committee of the Oberlin Community Fund Advisory Board.

The March 31 edition of the Oberlinian reported on the first Checkmate Program, a teaching and learning program to teach home and traffic safety to children. The program was started in 1980, designed and implemented by the Oberlin Police Department.

The April 17 issue of the Minnesota University—St. Paul at St. Paul reported on a public art competition. The event was to select the best art work in the U-M Ecology Building. (See http://biosci.cbs.umn.edu/collections/ECOLOGY/ECOL1.html.)

Jane Redmond, Baccalaureate Speaker, was editor of the Harvard Divinity Bulletin in the early 1980s while she was director of public relations and development associate at Harvard Divinity School.

Most of the clients she has served as an independent consultant have been agencies addressing the causes and consequences of urban poverty in hunger and food programs, economic development, housing, and health care. She lectures on contemporary religious music, and chairs the Inclusive Practice Committee of the Oberlin Community Fund Advisory Board. (under the Community Foundation of Greater Lorain County, J.) She is also a member of the Oberlin College Board of Trustees, and a board member of the Community Foundation of Greater Lorain County and the Leadership Lorain County Program. Her research is on the Lois County 20/20 Steering Committee and chairs the Inclusive Practice Committee of the National Council on Foundations. A graduate of the 1990 class of the Florida Police Management Program for Diversity and chairs the Inclusive Practice Committee of the National Council on Foundations.

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George Andrews Seeks Slow Change in Social Security

George Andrews, Andrew and Pauline D. Rue Professor of Mathematics, is spending his 1996-97 leaves at the U.S. social-security program. Carol Ganzi, emerita editor of The Observer, talked to him in early April.

We hear a lot about the crisis in social security. Is there a crisis? Not according to the dictionary definition of crisis. No immediate or short-range financial problem faces the OASI portion of the social security program. That's the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program. I don't want to talk about the Medicare portion because I'm not an expert in it or even particularly knowledgeable about it.

You see no crisis in the OASDI program even though, as commentators often remind us, fewer and fewer people support more and more retirees. What's happening to the ratio of workers to retirees is no surprise. When social security was enacted in 1935, there were perhaps 300 workers for every retiree. By 1960 it was five to one. Now we have about three plus to one and in another 20 years we'll probably be down to two to one, and in 75 years we'll be down to 1.8 to one or something like that. That is startling to some people, but it should have been known all along. When you start a plan with a lot of people contributing and only a few eligible for benefits, and then more and more people become eligible for benefits, that's what's happening. But the contributions of two workers can be adequate to fund the one retiree we ended up with.

And what is the right thing? Make gradual changes—like those in the 1983 revision of the program. Let me back up and explain what I mean by that. That's what I've been talking about lately. There's an Advisory Council to the Social Security Administration, appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, that meets every four years. The report has usually been unanimous, or nearly so—an acclamation, if you will, of how things ought to be, with suggestions for changes. But the most recent Advisory Council report was nowhere near unanimous. Within the 13-person council there were three distinct groups with three proposals. One I call the traditional plan, and that's the one I prefer. Reduce benefits slightly by putting off retirement ages a bit, and increase the actuarial balance of something like 2.18 percent in 75 years. The assumptions involve things like fertility rates, interest rates, and mortality rates—the demographic makeup of our society. A falling fertility rate would mean that there would be fewer workers to contribute to the social security program, but that's anathema to the immigration rate. A young immigrant is like a birth so far as the labor force is concerned.

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