Nancy Dye Applies $150,000 Knight Grant to Programs for City School Children and Other Students from Low-Income Families

President Nancy Dye is directing $150,000—which was awarded to the College in December by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation for her discretionary use—to fund two related goals, both of which, she says, emerged in the recent strategic planning as central to the College’s values and mission.

“Diversity and a strong commitment to educational access have always been central values for Oberlin,” says Dye. “I want Oberlin once again to be at the forefront of efforts to expand American ideas about and practices concerning educational accessibility.”

First, says Dye, she would like to “move forward on creating a major and sustained collaboration between the College and Oberlin’s public schools.” Second, she and a small number of faculty and staff are working to develop a summer program for low-income middle- or high-school students.

Dye’s first proposal fits one of the goals named by the Oberlin and Educational Access planning team in its recommendations for Oberlin’s Future, the summary report of the strategic planning that took place last academic year. Under “‘Adopt and be adopted by Oberlin’ High School and Langston Middle School,” the planning team wrote in explanation: “It is in the interests of the College as a whole to pursue this objective to enlarge our admissions pool, to enhance service-learning opportunities, and to enable Oberlin to attract and retain faculty members with school-aged children.”

Dye’s second plan, to expand access to education, will focus the remainder of this year’s funds on a summer program in academic enrichment for middle-school or high-school students. In Broad Directions the Oberlin and Educational Access planning team provided this rationale for such a plan: “… over the past generation, the world of higher education has changed dramatically, and henceforth, we must do more than in the past to recruit and retain a truly diverse student body. We need to develop partnerships with secondary schools and nurture relationships with prospective students from a wide variety of backgrounds. … In the end, we will have to teach ourselves as well as our future students how to create and sustain a community dedicated to service and learning.”

Teaching Students How to Change the World

By Mark Graham

Beginning this fall, a $116,000 grant from the J. Paul Getty Foundation will fund a three-year pilot program to teach students how to succeed in nonprofit organizations. The Shouse Non-Profit Leadership Program will integrate academic classes, internships, and career-skills workshops.

Although more than 70 graduate schools offer programs that prepare students to work in the nonprofit world, few undergraduate institutions do. Oberlin’s program was not modeled after programs at any other institution, say Wendy Miller, director of Career Services and Daniel Carriere, director of the Center for Service and Learning, who wrote the proposal with the staff of the Office of Sponsored Programs.

Many students who are enticed by Oberlin’s “Think one person can change the world” slogan would like more training in how to change the world, says Miller, who expects the program to become popular with students. “This program will help fill a vacuum,” she says. “It will fill together students’ education and interest in social change.”

“Most students feel a disconnection between what they’re reading in the community and what they’re doing in the classroom,” says Gardner. “This program is about making that connection.”

All students in the program will take a new history course, The Rise of Nonprofit Institutions: A History of Engaged Citizenship, to be developed and taught by Carol Lasser, associate professor of history.

“I’m looking forward to teaching a course that is both content rich and innovative in pedagogy,” Lasser says. While studying a sample of American social movements and organizations, Lasser’s students will work in a nonprofit organization for at least 40 hours during the semester.

Students in the program will take two other classes in the college or conservatory that cover issues related to their internships. Students will be able to count Professor Fundamental Development for Musicians, a conservatory course, toward satisfying the nonprofit-leadership-program requirements. A course-development stipend that is part of the Getty grant will be used this summer to redesign the course and enhance it in ways that fit the program.

Over the years, freezing, thawing, ice, and salt have done a number on the front steps of the conservatory’s Bibbins Hall. On January 28, however, the elements met their match when Schimmer Construction tore out the crumbling steps and poured new steps over a hidden, 2 foot secret weapon: a glycol-water snow-melt system like those installed in some segments of Oberlin’s downtown sidewalks.

Controlled by an outside sensor, the system will turn on automatically and warm the area when the outside temperature goes down to about 35 degrees, says Eugene Matthews, director of facilities maintenance, so salt will not be needed in case of ice or snow.

U.S. usually winter is not a good time to pour cement,” says Matthews, but on the day of the pouring Oberlin saw 50 degrees, perfect for making concrete. Tarpaulins have kept the following two weeks of colder air off the concrete.

Concrete Improvement

Continued on page 3

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN SEYFRIED

Winter at Oberlin

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN SEYFRIED

In the Conservatory, students work with the glycol-water snow-melt system to keep the area around the Bibbins Hall front steps from freezing.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN SEYFRIED

Continued on page 3
Late this fall the General Faculty’s Committee on Research and Development granted 10 H. Powers Awards to Oberlin College faculty members. The grants were $33,140. Powers awards, also known as Powers Travel Grants, or the Powers Grants, are endowed per diem costs for travel to more than one site outside North America, for the purpose of research or broadening experience, according to the donor. 

This year’s awards went to Marc Blecher, professor of politics and East Asian Studies, for a proposal to update Tethered Deen: Government and Economy in a Chinese County (Stanford University Press, 1996), by examining the development of the devalence-state model explicated in the book for the 1980s with the impact of new rural land reforms between 1985 and 1990. Blecher says, “from scratch” in the mid 1990s. In Beijing and Tianjin Blecher will be able to schedule his work between the autumn-summer grant periods and conduct field work.

Marcia Colish is working on a project titled The Pseudo-Peter of Poitiers Dictionary of the Latin Middle Ages. Lombard’s Sentences became a required text in university theology faculties in the 13th century, says Colish, although the Sentences began to influence theological education in Paris almost immediately after Lombard’s death in 1160. The Pseudo-Peter of Poitiers gloss on the Sentences was translated in 1179 with the continuation of the French Revolution and ended in 1188 with the emanicipation of the slaves in the Americas. Within this religious and intellectual context of emanisp, Colish will study two new spherule layers (found in 10 European locations) in which the gloss is found—three complete texts and 14 partial ones—as the basis of a critical edition of the gloss. It will then be possible to assess its role in theological education at a transitional stage of early scholasticism.

J. Julia Lawless is developing tools to improve the performance of computer programs automatically, focusing on programs written in the new programming language Java. By making it possible to distribute programs over the Internet, the Java programming language is revolutionizing the distribution of information, says Lawless. Java is also a general-purpose programming language that can be used as a tool for optimizing Java programs. The Powers grant will fund Lawless’s travel to the Institute for Research in Computer Science and Random Systems in Rennes, France, and to the Basic Research in Computer Science Center at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. Her work will be to elaborate with researchers in the development of optimization tools for Java. Because Java is an evolving language, this research area will have a significant impact on the future design and performance of Java programs, says Lawless.

James Millette is traveling to Tokyo and Karuizawa, Japan, with his Powers grant. In Tokyo he will do research on a Japanese culture during the 1960s and interview specialists in literature and postwar cinema. In Karuizawa she is to interview Eto jun, a controversial literary critic and intellectual whose writing career started in the 1960s. She is working on an article about the public intellectual and the public sphere in Japan of the 1960s.

Bruce Simonson recently found a distinctive layer of millimeter-size spherules in South Africa (see the Observer of November 8, 1998) that he interprets as melt droplets produced by a large asteroid or comet collided with the earth about 2.35 billion years ago. Simonson has traced the spherule layer over an area of 9,000 square kilometers so far, and will use his Powers grant to see if he can trace it across the Transvaal Basin and to search for additional spherule layers at other levels. Simonson is studying this layer and others like it to shed new light on the influence of large asteroids in earth history, and to see if these can correlate with layers of the Transvaal Basin and to search for additional spherule layers at other levels. Simonson is studying this layer and others like it to shed new light on the influence of large asteroids in earth history, and to see if these can correlate with layers of the Transvaal Basin and to search for additional spherule layers at other levels. Simonson is studying this layer and others like it to shed new light on the influence of large asteroids in earth history, and to see if these can correlate with layers of the Transvaal Basin and to search for additional spherule layers at other levels.
Archiving of Mudd’s A-Level Latrinalia and Other Projects to Benefit from McGregor-Oresman Assistantships

A potpourri of projects will benefit this spring semester from collaboration between faculty and students paired by the McGregor-Oresman research and teaching assistantship program. The assistantships are made possible by a grant from the McGregor Fund matched by Donald Oresman ’46. The projects, to have varying academic goals, will be in economics, folklore, the Oberlin fleet, the Oberlin Pre-school Music Lab, online group discussions of women’s studies, and an astronomy class, and writer Mary E. Wilkins Freeman.

The awards were made in November by the Committee on Research and Development, the college’s Educational Policy and Policies Committee, the Conservatory’s Educational Policy Committee, and the President’s Office. The Student Senate and the President’s Office are members of the McGregor-Oresman Scholars’ Advisory Council.

Stephanie Gilbert, professor of economics, will work with two McGregor-Oresman scholars to create an interactive tutorial on free market economics. Gilbert’s class will be a part of the nation-wide EconEdLink program.

Jennifer Lytton, professor of English, will work with two McGregor-Oresman scholars to create an online database of short fiction and an annotated bibliography of that work. The project will be a part of the nation-wide FictionEdLink program.

New Faculty and Staff

Phyllis Gorfain, professor of English, will have a student teaching assistant continue working on the ¡Salud! multimedia syllabus for his Intermediate Microeconomics and International Financial Management courses. One major focus will be to integrate a series of interactive modeling tutorials using the new web capabilities of Mathcad 7.0. (Mathcad software for performing, documenting, and validating technical calculations.) The teaching assistant will also hold tutoring and consulting hours for students in the course.

McGregor-Oresman scholars will work on a new strategic framework for planning and communicating technical tools in encouraging students to engage with the building blocks of the course. The teaching assistant will have primary responsibility for monitoring and facilitating the group discussions, and will help design and implement the workshop.

Correction: Harrist Is on Leave

Contrary to the information published in the January 30 Observer, Robert Harrist, associate professor of art and East Asian studies, did not resign on research status this year. He is on leave to support strengthening of the College. Dye was awarded the money because under her “inspired leadership,” the foundation wrote in the letter announcing the gift, “the College has developed a new strategic framework for planning and decision making that is enabling both broad participation and informed decisive action of the type needed for the College to assure a secure and constricted future.”

The Knight Foundation has added Annette Steinacker, visiting associate professor, and Xiomara Santamarina, academic assistant in the physical plant, to the Knight Foundation Grant in Accounting.

Young has joined the faculty of the Expository Writing Program. Emanuela Renato Steiner, teaching assistant; Olga Verheul, visiting assistant professor, and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, faculty in residence; have joined the German and Russian department. The English department has added Karl J. Jacoby, visiting professor, and the mathematics department has added visiting instructors Christine Schwartz and Hui-Hsiun Wang, George Clark, manager of rental properties, has begun work for operations. Laurie Roodielev, visiting professor, has joined the politics department. Randy Phelps, visiting assistant professor, has joined the philosophy department. Yann Vienne has begun as a teaching assistant in the Romance languages department. Antoinette McDaniel, visiting assistant professor, has joined the sociology department. The theater and dance program has added to its staff Jennifer Groseth, lighting sound designer and director of design, and William Osborn, visiting assistant professor, has joined the Africana department.

Departures

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Appreciation, Satisfaction, and Stress

Selected Results from the 1997 Survey of the Administrative and Professional Staff at Oberlin College

Observations

By Ross Peacock

The last item has been a discussion point for years among A&PS in general and the A&PS Professional Development Committee in particular. It is interesting that 89 percent of the survey respondents reported attending a workshop or conference off campus during the last two years, yet only 36 percent believe that such activities are a high priority at Oberlin. This response is worthy of investigation. Do A&PS believe that more workshops are called for, or are the workshops they are attending not fulfilling their professional development needs? Or is it both?

Stress Levels

As we try to understand possible causes of dissatisfaction and/or low morale, identifying sources of stress, both in and out of the work place can provide clues. Overall, A&PS report slightly higher levels of stress than do faculty. It should be noted that for both groups women report significantly higher levels than men.

Stress Felt Over the Last Two Years

A&PS Faculty

Littel 5%  10%

Moderate 46%  49%

Extreme 50%  42%

To identify sources of stress, respondents were asked to mark the extent to which professional and personal experiences contributed to their stress. The seven items with the highest ratings are listed below. Time pressures and work loads are the most common sources of stress for A&PS. It is also noteworthy that other A&PS is contributors to stress.

Stressors Felt

A&PS Faculty

Time Pressures 55%  43%

Work Load 55%  N/A

Lack of Personal Time 43%  44%

Lack of Personal Time 43%  44%

Other Administrators 21%  N/A

Institutional Procedures 21%  N/A

It is apparent that community respect and salary, especially salary increases, are of great concern to the administrative and professional staff at Oberlin College. Of course, most people would prefer to have fatter paychecks, but the large number of A&PS who do not believe that their salary increases are in line with their performance means either that we have some challenges to face regarding our compensation system, or we need to address lack of communication between supervisors and their staff regarding their performance. Most would probably say better compensation is the solution. Of course, it costs a lot of money to address that.

When it comes to better respect, the last item has been a discussion point for years among A&PS in general and the A&PS Professional Development Committee in particular. It is interesting that 89 percent of the survey respondents reported attending a workshop or conference off campus during the last two years, yet only 36 percent believe that such activities are a high priority at Oberlin. This response is worthy of investigation. Do A&PS believe that more workshops are called for, or are the workshops they are attending not fulfilling their professional development needs? Or is it both?

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