History Department Outdoes Itself, Contributes 11 Courses to Oberlin’s Mix of 63 New Courses for the Year

In 1996-97 the history department offered more new courses—10—than any other department or program in the whole College. In 1997-98 the department is offering 13 new courses: environmental studies is offering 10, and politics seven. This article concludes a two-part series about the new courses that were offered and are being offered during the 1997-98 school year. The total number of new courses this year—including those of the conservatory and the college courses in the arts and the humanities—is 63. Last year’s total was 48.

Both the conservatory and the college will move further into new curricular territory next year. The conservatory will be placing what Dean Karen Wadoff calls “new weight on equipping performance students with pedagogical abilities [that will] provide them with wider career opportunities.” And the college will be strengthening international emphases, facilitating more teaching with technology, and offering more coloquia. The moves are bound to have an impact on the new courses of 1998-99.

New Courses in the Social and Behavioral Sciences

The African-American studies department is offering three new courses this year. The entry-level Johnny Coleman, assistant professor of African-American studies and art, taught last semester—Talking Book—was cross listed in the art department and described in the last issue of The Observer.

Rebecca Dixon, visiting instructor in African-American studies, is teaching African-American Women Novelist this semester. The course explores the experiences of African American women as revealed in selected novels written since the turn of the century. Race, gender, sexuality, and color are the primary focus of analysis, but the class is also examining other social and political issues.

Calvin Hernton, professor of African-American studies, is teaching Going Away Coming Home: Caribbean Literature this semester. The seminar is a survey of writing in English by West Indian poets, novelists, playwrights, and nonfiction writers.

Linda Grimm, associate professor of anthropology, is teaching Seminar in Archeology: Gender and Archeology this semester. “After a decade of research,” Grimm says, “feminist scholars have integrated the concept of gender into the central questions that have traditionally preoccupied archeology.” The course focuses on new research that challenges assumptions about technology and gender, and the biographical bases for divisions of labor between the sexes. Gender relations in societies ranging from foraging and agricultural societies to states are being examined.

Max Kirsh, visiting assistant professor of anthropology and sociology, is teaching Seminar in Work and Labor, exploring the grips and forms of labor and work in capitalist and pre-capitalist societies. Through case studies special attention is being paid to changes that have occurred since World War II, the internationalization of the division of labor, and current relationships of organization and production. The course is cross listed in anthropology and sociology.

David Cleeton, professor of economics, taught Political Economy of European Integration last semester. The course analyzed the economic rationale for the European Union (EU). It’s course in the development of trade and growth in the EU, details of the Single Market program, convergence and disparities within the EU, and prospects for EU enlargement by integration of Central European economies. Focus was on integration theory and measurement and analysis of EU policy making illustrated with current issues such as the Economic and Monetary Union and employment policies.

This semester Stephen Sheppard, associate professor of economics and environmental studies, is teaching Economics of the Urban Environment, which is looking at housing and homelessness, urban sprawl and land-use planning, traffic congestion and mass transit, urban poverty and employment.
Faculty Meetings

Conservatory Re-Opens Faculty Discussion of Discrete Master's Degree Programs; General Faculty Deals with Faculty-Governance Issues

The Conservatory Faculty spent a good part of its April 14 meeting discussing possible modifications to the Conservatory's Discrete Master's degree programs, and the General Faculty (GF) talked about faculty governance during its April 21 meeting. Before tackling the major topic, the Conservatory Faculty voted unanimously to make minor changes in the curriculum of the conservatory's individual major—and an individual major must have an interdisciplinary emphasis—and to shorten performance times of honor's recitals. The results of the motion concerning the individual major will be incorporated in the Individual Majors Handbook, a new conservatory publication that will be available in the fall.

Normative motions were entertained during the discussion of the discrete master's degree program's (those that are not integrated into undergraduate study). Talk focused on general policy proposals—how the conservatory would administrate program requirements and not consider the programs' content. Faculty discussed the importance of the Graduate Record Examination music-test scores and diagnostic testing in admission, and how transfers from a discrete master's degree program into the Performance Diploma program would be handled. Faculty expect to vote on proposals for discrete master's degree programs put forth by two conservatory divisions during the May 12 meeting.

The faculty passed, with a friendly amendment, a motion to legislate choosing students to serve on the Educational Policy Committee. Left on the table, and so passed, was a proposal to modify the policy for studying performance majors.

In a brief report about conservatory facilities, Associate Dean Michael Lynn, associate professor of recorder and baroque flute, indicated that progress is being made from the faculty and said the conservatory-pond area is on schedule for summer renovation that will restore the early 19th-century garden and pond. Other plantings and improvements to "the little gardens of Robinhood" and "indoor pond" take place over the summer, he said.

During the announcements that started off the meeting Karen Wolff read someulatory remarks from the report of the external evaluators of the National Association of Schools of Music (see the Observer of March 13 for news of the external evaluators' interim report).

The April General Faculty meeting opened with presentations about faculty governance from Professor of Philoso- 

College Helps Local Residents Do Research and Make Art

By Mark Graham

William Saxe, chief of surgery at the Oberlin Clinic, became an Oberlin College affiliate scholar this semester to better study genealogy. A certified genealogist, Saxe will use his affiliate-scholar status to gain full access to the College's libraries, where he will continue his study of genealogy.

Affiliate scholars are area residents who are granted access to College resources to help with their academic pursuits. An affiliate scholar must demonstrate an understanding of his or her field and be working on an academic project.

Saxe has written dozens of articles and given many presentations, including talks at the National Genealogical Society's Dismal Drought Summit at the recent Federation of Genealogical Societies meeting in Cincinnati. His work has been acknowledged by the National Genealogical Society Award for Excellence in 1993.

This semester six more local residents joined the ranks of Oberlin's affiliate scholars, which now number 24.

The appointments are for three years and are renewable.

Naomi Barnett, professor emerita in reading and development education at the Oberlin College Faculty-Student-Staff Library, has written a new affiliated scholar with help from the College libraries, she will write and edit textbooks. Her editing experience includes her role as a consulting editor of juvenile books for G.P. Putnam and Sons and editorship of the Starlight magazine.

Norbert Lichtenberg, independent...
Continued from page 4

institutionalization of "subaltern" stud-
ies (ethnic, women's, and queer studies).

New Courses in the Natural and Computer Sciences and Mathematics

Randy Phelps, visiting assistant pro-

fessor of physics, is teaching Astrono-
mics in Higher Education, is retired from

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New Courses is the 30th Annual

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Max Kade German Writer-in-Residence

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By Karen Schafer

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Max Kade German Writer-in-Residence

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Söllner Is the 30th Annual

Samuel Goldberg, emeritus pro-

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Max Kade German Writer-in-Residence

fessor of mathematics, is teaching The

vocal arts}{Image Name: [Caption]}

marginal in and around the Hawaiian

What are the causes...}{Image Name: [Caption]}

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Continued from page 4

marginal in and around the Hawaiian

Continued from page 4.
ment centers for the upwardly mobile, and other contrasting phenomena of urban environments. This course explores how decisions about transportation, urban form, and land use contribute to produce particular types of urban environments. It also considers how the working of the economy produces particular systems of class and culture. In these courses, the class structure of society affects the vitality of the economy.

The Environmental Studies Program is offering 10 new courses this year, seven of which are cross listed in other departments. The first course is 

The Environment and Politics Seminar, which introduces students to the topics of interdisciplinary watershed education, which focuses on projects that help build understanding of the dynamics of the Black River watershed and the environmental challenges it faces. Students generated a lesson plan or activity on a specific aspect of the watershed, conducted classroom observations, and tested their activities on a local classroom.

This semester, in the practicum, the students are applying what they learned in an introduction to Watershed Education by working with a selected teacher in a local middle or secondary school as part of special projects. Students are continuing to learn about the dynamics of the Black River watershed and how it interacts with the local environment. They will gain firsthand teaching experience.

Other faculty members whose new courses are cross listed in environmental studies and who are teaching this year include: the new professor of history, Anthony Bright (history), Benjamin Schiff (politics), and John Scofield (political science). The course is cross listed in environmental studies. Last semester's American Environmental History was a course taught by Professors Benjamin Schiff and John Scofield. This semester, the course is taught by Karl Jacyob (history), who is cross listing in environmental studies.

Karl Jacyob, visiting assistant professor of history, is also teaching five new courses this year. The course is cross listed in environmental studies. Last semester's American Environmental History was a course taught by Professors Benjamin Schiff and John Scofield. This semester, the course is taught by Karl Jacyob (history), who is cross listing in environmental studies.

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Opening Statement --- GF Meeting (April 21, 1998)
(Norman Care, Professor of Philosophy)

1. Anecdote.

When I came to Oberlin in 1965, I came from a teaching position at Yale University. At Yale I was a full-time faculty member with a new Ph.D, but I was decidedly a minor figure. I was even on the edges so far as the business of the Philosophy Department was concerned. There were two or three "department meetings" a year for us "junior faculty members" (as we were called), but these were essentially social hours followed by a cheery and very brief report by the chair. I had no place at all in what passed for meetings of university faculty. I don't even remember if I was informed of them.

At my first meeting at Oberlin – the one in the fall at which new faculty are introduced – I had a formative experience. I was introduced, stood up and sat down, others were introduced, etc. Then some business came before the General Faculty of Oberlin College. It dawned on me that I was now a member of this group now turning to this business, and that that meant there would now be discussion of this business, and that I could participate in this discussion – now.

I was stunned. I remember talking later with academic friends at other schools, trying to articulate the formative experience. Not only did I work at Oberlin, i.e., I had a job there; not only did I have position in a small department such that I was expected at all meetings, and urged (indeed, required) to speak and argue about departmental business; I also was a member of THE FACULTY of Oberlin College. And this in fact, so it turned out, meant something.

The best I could do back then, as a way of articulating the difference, was to say to myself and others that Oberlin invited me to make it MY school. My heart went out to Oberlin on the spot. It was (as the kids say today) awesome, both in opportunity and in responsibility and in privilege. I remember speaking to a senior big-deal faculty member in those early days. I asked her what was supposed to happen at those faculty meetings. She said, "we take care of the educational program there – and that program is Oberlin College. So it's a very large responsibility."

2. The character of Oberlin.

I won't try to carry the personal story further. It's been enough for me that Oberlin means to be a place where Teaching and Research are of major importance, and also a place where Service counts. It makes for a very large job description for faculty members who come to care about the College. I learned in due time to connect the Service part to what we call "faculty governance." There are of course many schools that claim to practice "faculty governance," but that often means only that faculty sit on a committee or two, or perhaps provide an advisory opinion on something if called upon. At Oberlin the faculty has responsibility for the educational program in general, this responsibility is met in collective assembly and through powers explicitly delegated to (typically) elected councils; the faculty's decisions carry authority, and through them an educational program gets presented, and re-worked, and constantly thought about. The result is that Oberlin College has become famous as a place where serious students can receive an education of very high quality, and I have learned to care about that.
In early talks with Nancy, she and I came to agree that Oberlin has a certain character. It is a place that is marked by (a) intellectual seriousness, (b) extensive attention to aesthetic sensibility, and (c) respect for social conscience. It is also marked by (d) its insistence on diversity in its community. I think there is a further feature of the character of Oberlin College: it is (e) that its educational program is in the care of faculty governance. So now the "large responsibility" that senior big-deal faculty member spoke to me about is really very very large, and very very important.

3. Communitarian rationale

Perhaps these remarks are enough to suggest why I think the most important rationale for faculty governance at Oberlin is the one I call "communitarian." There can be different rationales for different forms of faculty governance at different sorts of schools. But the one that impresses me as best for Oberlin is the communitarian one, for it emphasizes a connection of a generalized sort between faculty members and the educational program. It asks faculty members to detach a little from their disciplinary homes, and think more broadly about the educational program and the many services and activities that support it, and not just about the tiny chunk of the whole that involves one's own courses or departmental program. I want to say that if a faculty member could not, or were not willing to, think in general about the educational program, then Oberlin would not be his or her place to be.

I also want to place emphasis on the role in faculty governance of members of the faculty meeting in collective assembly, i.e., in the divisional faculties and the General Faculty. Scattered or fragmented governance, wherein authority is exercised in independent (perhaps elected) councils, or by administrators after consultation with selected faculty members, won't meet the standards of the communitarian rationale. In a place the size of Oberlin, the scattered or fragmented sort of decision-making leaves people uninformed, without voice, and finally either demoralized or uninterested.

4. Deterioration

In my view there has been a steady deterioration in communitarian faculty governance at Oberlin over the last several years. I don't know how to date its beginning, or measure its pace. Many of us have not wanted to face the facts in this matter.

The causes of the decline are a miscellany. My own view – and here I explicitly set aside Nancy – is that we have not, in recent history, been blessed with many senior administrators interested in helping make faculty governance work. Faculty governance can decline when administrators give it little or no attention, and it can really decline when individual faculty members give it little or no attention. Many individual faculty members have found reasons to stay away from meetings. Sometimes the reasons have to do with professional work or the apparent demands of reappointment and salary; sometimes they have to do with family responsibilities; sometimes they have to do with the fact that discussion in faculty meetings is occasionally boring, acrimonious, or silly, and the issues discussed something other than challenging.

At this point I dig in my heels, say the obvious, and hope for the best. The high-quality educational program Oberlin is famous for needs the care and concern of the faculty in collective assembly. Without strong faculty governance, Oberlin will, I believe, become more "ordinary" than we want it to be. So both faculty and administrators have to wake up and give attention to how faculty governance can be helped to flourish.
5. Revitalization

Apart from waking up and giving attention (and coming to meetings), what are we to do to rejuvenate faculty governance. Here is a short list of things to do.

(a) We need new or better instruments of institutional memory. I find that I cannot carry the institutional history of my division in my head. Committee reports proposing policies to the faculty should include the recent history (if any) on their subject. We have a Faculty Guide, but we don't have helpful guides to existing legislation available to faculty members and elected members of councils. This is a solvable problem.

(b) We need appropriate socialization for new members of the faculty. My own student-and-teaching history involves four universities. But none of it made me ready for faculty governance at Oberlin, especially the parts of it concerning the educational program as a whole, and the notion that I would have "voice" in matters of policy direction for the College as a whole. This, too, is a solvable problem; it involves talk within departments and programs, meetings organized by the Deans, and informal discussion with colleagues.

(c) In our collective assemblies, we need to be less clever and bombastic and obtuse, and more trusting and generous, with one another, including the person chairing the meetings. One can make a point without belittling the opposition, and without fine displays of intimidating erudition, and one can seek clarification of something without excessive pretense of non-understanding. In our meetings, I think we should actually think of ourselves as more-or-less on a par with one another, so far as our responsibilities for the educational program are concerned. I don't know if this matter of style and attitude is a solvable problem – but I think we should try to solve it.

(d) We need more flexibility – and, frankly, more openness to flexibility – in our governance arrangements. In areas involving, say, institutional grants, but also some parts of strategic planning, and even bits and pieces of major campaigns, we should realize that officers of the College must sometimes act such that prior review of actions by the faculty in collective assembly is impractical. I think faculty governance and flexibility are not entirely incompatible. The faculty can in some cases delegate authority, and create limited pockets of discretion; in other cases it can review actions already taken and make objections if necessary. I think this is a solvable problem – or, put more modestly, a more solvable problem than one might initially think. It is, of course, a two-way street. Those entrusted with discretion in a system of strong faculty governance shouldn't run amuck.

(e) Above all, we should look to our means of communication. Strong faculty governance, if practiced well, has its way of keeping people informed about the College's issues, its troubles, and its progress. We are not practicing faculty governance well. We cancel meetings – often at the times when there are issues people should discuss. We mount Campaigns without systematic faculty input. We make major commitments to buildings and programs, but without anything like the review and approval that would be expected in a strong faculty governance system. We accept an important document concerning broad directions for the future of Oberlin without the opportunity for discussion in detail, with the usual sub-opportunities for motions and clarifications.
Let me say, here at the end, that my conversations with Nancy during this academic year have been wonderfully helpful to me. I do have concerns about governance, and her response to me has been supererogatory, especially when compared to the responsiveness of other senior administrators over the years. My thanks to Nancy. Maybe, with this conversation, and meetings next fall, we can revitalize and update our governance arrangements, and through them determine our future together.
Remarks to General Faculty  
on  
Oberlin’s Governance  
April 21, 1998  

Nancy S. Dye  

I.  
Our idea to have this public conversation came to us several weeks ago over lunch in the Rat. Norm and I were talking about Oberlin’s governance and, as you would expect, we had--and still have--points of agreement and disagreement. We decided then and there that a collegial public discussion of our ideas might be a good way to begin a larger faculty conversation on academic governance in general and on Oberlin governance in particular. Both of us think that such discourse is essential at this moment in our history--a conviction strengthened by our participation in the last College faculty meeting. We believe that such conversation must be prepared and informed, and envision a series of discussions structured around specific governance issues and questions for which all of us prepare by reading and study.

But this afternoon, Norm and I aren’t here to put forth any particular agenda. We have no legislative aims. No motions, benign or otherwise, are up our collective sleeve. We hope, though, that this brief forty-five minute conversation between us and among all of us will serve to
set the stage for a far larger effort to come to terms with the needs of Oberlin’s governance today and in the future.

II.

Even before I stepped foot on Oberlin’s campus as its president, I heard about Oberlin governance. “Don’t go to Oberlin,” some friends warned me. “They make mincemeat of presidents there.” As you might expect, I hear a fair amount about our governance from trustees and alumni. Much of what they have to say concerns how slowly we do things here. This hasn’t surprised me: most people who don’t spend their lives in the academy are astounded by the seemingly glacial pace of academic decision making. I tell them, with some seriousness, that our slow and deliberate ways explain why we have been around longer than any other institution in western civilization except the Church.

Rather more surprising and new to me has been the amount of talk among Oberlin faculty about governance. That talk is more complicated, and sometimes contradictory. Over the past four years I have heard many faculty talk with great pride about the strength and uniqueness of Oberlin’s traditions of faculty governance, and about the necessity to preserve and strengthen those traditions. I have also heard from many faculty who are frustrated by what they find to be opaque and difficult governance mechanisms. I have heard a lot of concern about declining participation, particularly among younger faculty members--a concern I share. I have heard a lot of complaining that governance at Oberlin too often involves procedure and too seldom involves substance. I have heard the complaint that too few important issues are put before the faculty as a whole. And I
have heard from many faculty members of various ages and genders and disciplines and political persuasions that they do not feel empowered by Oberlin's governance.

I believe that there is a common theme underlying all of these disparate concerns. In a nutshell, I think that Oberlin lacks much in the way of a theory of governance. This deficit in theory manifests itself in many ways. One good example is the recent disagreement within the College faculty about the role and authority of the divisional councils vis à vis the faculty as a whole. Our lack of theory manifests itself in the long committee discussions all of us have been party to about whether or not this particular committee has any authority to be deliberating upon the matter before it. Then, too, we don't have a whole lot of clarity when it comes to articulating the role of the trustees or the president or the deans.

Now I realize that some of you are saying that we have a remarkable theory of governance at Oberlin--that body of ideas, decisions, and actions that we call the Finney Compact. The Finney Compact is a remarkable doctrine. It is a very early (perhaps the earliest) and still important articulation of the fundamental importance of academic freedom as the sine qua non of a great institution of higher learning. As Jeff Blodgett reminded us in his recent letter, the Finney Compact cannot be understood simply by reading Charles Finney's 1835 letter to the board of trustees accepting the Professorship of Theology here on the condition that the faculty had authority to run the internal affairs of the college. It is only through situating Finney's letter in its larger context--the context of the commotion at Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, where President Lyman Beecher and the trustees forbade Finney, Asa Mahan, John Morgan and other faculty and
students to speak and act as abolitionists; the context of the Oberlin trustees' narrow and rancorous decision to admit black students; and the context of nineteenth-century academic life generally, in which the principles of faculty autonomy and academic freedom were not generally recognized or smiled upon--it is only within this larger context that we can appreciate just how powerful and important a statement Finney and the other “Lane Rebels” were making about the role of faculty in governing a college and about the full humanity of African Americans. The Finney Compact always has been and will be central to defining the distinctive ethos of Oberlin College--that Oberlin is an institution that encourages individual autonomy, free expression, and dissent and that it makes central to its mission faculty and student engagement in the issues that animate and define American society can be traced directly to the Finney Compact.

But I must also admit that I don't find the Finney Compact, even in its most developed manifestations, a sufficiently practical guide to governing a complex and multifaceted institution of higher learning. Here is why: it does not illuminate in full or very useful ways the governance question that most persistently vexes Oberlinians. That question is, simply, “who gets to decide what?”

This question is at the heart of the current dispute within the College faculty: what, properly, can the Council decide? What can't it decide? What can the dean decide? It was this question that raised its head throughout the long-range planning process last year: Will the faculty vote on this? Do the focus groups have legitimacy? Do the planning teams have any authority? All of these questions are variations on the theme of “Who decides?” The long discussions in committee meetings about the committee's proper
authority are because we can't decide who decides. These are all entirely legitimate issues, but because we lack good theory on the matter, we often devote a great deal of time and energy to deciding who gets to decide.

I suspect that for vast stretches of our history, this lack of theory was not terribly troublesome. It was not very difficult, really, for the faculty and the president to function as a single decision-making committee of the whole. Certainly this could not have been hard when Professor Finney penned his letter: the faculty in 1835 numbered seven souls. By 1860, the number of teaching faculty had reached fifteen. By 1900? the faculty had become considerably larger--84 members. And by 1920, that number had reached 122--bigger by far, but still a relatively small number compared to today. This is not to say that there were not disagreements. Of course there were, and I am sure that they were every bit as acrimonious, if not more so, than they are today. But the world moved more slowly and intruded less upon the affairs of the College, the number of decision makers was smaller, and the faculty considerably more homogeneous than in recent years. I also suspect that because the world intruded less upon the College, that it was far clearer then than it is now just what were and were not “internal affairs.”

There is much evidence that we are far more restive today about governance structures and mechanisms. We see this restiveness in the absence of robust participation in governance, particularly in the meetings of the general and division faculties. I, like Norm, see this as a serious problem that affects the current and future health of the College as a whole.
I do not think that this lack of enthusiasm is due principally to a greater emphasis on research since the passage of the Tenure Report, or the lessening of commitment to collegiality and citizenship in favor of commitment to one's discipline, although I do think that we should do much more to educate new faculty in what it means to be a participating citizen in this academic community, and find ways to encourage and facilitate their participation. And I don't think that changes in life styles, particularly the rise in the numbers of two-career couples, explain declining interest in participation, although I do think we would do well to change our meeting time to a more family-friendly hour.

Instead, I think that our lack of theory about "who decides what" engenders feelings of powerlessness among many members of the faculty, the administration, the student body, and even the trustees. Too many of us think that it just too hard to figure out how to move something through the complicated, cumbersome and often ambiguous or unclear processes that we have built up over the years. Many of us also say that the redundancies built into our governance processes tire us out: consider for example how many eyes in how many places must put the stamp of approval on as simple a matter as authorizing the hiring of a part-time instructor to teach a single course. And I fear that our confusion about authority and decision making also encourages inaction for the same reasons. So our governance processes too often put a damper on change and forward movement. I think that governance should be positive, and that its first purpose is to enable people to make things happen, not keep them from happening.

So what should we do? I agree with Norm that we must revitalize this forum, and the forum of the divisional faculty meetings, to discuss and
act upon real and important and substantive issues. Our ability to do that will depend in part upon our ability to develop some clarity and mutual understanding about the respective roles and responsibilities of each of the three arms of governance: the faculty, the trustees, and the president. Once we have some clarity and understanding about “who decides,” we won’t have to devote so much time to the matter. What’s more, we should look to reforming governance structures so that they will facilitate rather than discourage action and change.

But it also falls to us, including me, to dedicate ourselves to bringing matters of general importance to the floor. Here are some issues that I think we should discuss and make some general institutional resolutions on: diversity, what we mean by diversity at Oberlin, and how best to set and meet our goals for creating a genuinely diverse academic community; affirmative action; the curriculum in general, and how we can improve and enhance its coherence; interdisciplinarity, what it means to us, how we encourage it, or not encourage it, as the case may be; instructional and information technologies, and what they mean for us and our students; athletics; the relationship between the College and the Conservatory; student life—an area for which the faculty has great and overarching responsibility; the relationship between Oberlin, Ohio, and Oberlin College, particularly our relationship with the Oberlin public schools. These are just a few of the general issues facing us that we can and should deliberate upon. Beyond these, there are a myriad of specifically educational and pedagogical issues.

I must say, though, that I am not as great an enthusiast for communitarian governance as Norm, and do not share his faith that this is
invariably the best or most democratic form of decision-making. For one thing, deliberations in groups of this size depend heavily upon oratory rather than conversation, and a lot of people end up feeling left out. I find myself thinking that smaller, less formal opportunities for discussion and deliberation often give better opportunities to the many voices that are consistently silent in these assemblies.

Finally, I believe that we need to think less about governance entities competing with one another, and more in terms of how we can collaborate. Our planning process last year was one model for collaborative governance, in that it brought together all of the campus constituencies, as well as alumni and trustees. The theory behind that process was that every constituency has voice in governance, and that the three major decision-making entities--the faculty, the board, the president (and administration) make better decisions collaboratively rather than competitively. There will always be some aspects of governance that are by law and custom explicitly given over to faculty control--the curriculum and the hiring, rewarding, and promoting of faculty are the two main examples. But we are living in the most difficult and complicated of times as far as the fate and future of higher education are concerned, and faculty, trustees and administration--the three traditional arms of academic governance--need each other’s efforts, experience, wisdom, insights, and support if Oberlin is to continue to be in the forefront of American colleges and universities.