

**Preliminary Report from the Strategic Planning Steering Committee
and Working Groups**

**APPENDIX D
Strategic Directions Explanations & Details
May 5, 2015**

- A) Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond. The College should deploy a wide range of mechanisms and services to provide appropriate and personalized advising, counseling, mentoring, and health and wellness support to accomplish this. This may include international study and a culminating senior experience.
- Effective holistic advising and support are foundational to a successful connected learning experience tailored to the individual needs and aspirations of students for academic, artistic, personal, and professional growth. Advising and student support services at Oberlin should be integrated from the student's perspective. Connections among pre-major and major advising, academic and personal development and wellness advising and support, and career-oriented advising should all be enhanced and designed to support students in integrating their opportunities for self-development.
 - Oberlin students are currently afforded a wide range of opportunities to study and engage cultures, languages and societies throughout the world through the curriculum, study away, internships, the collections of the Allen Memorial Art Museum, and co-curricular activities. Clear curricular pathways and coordination with majors and co-curricular activities would enhance the education impact of international experiences. While we send around 450 students abroad on semester/year-long programs and international winter terms each year, there are financial, curricular, and cultural obstacles that prevent more students from having off-campus/international experiences. Expanded use of summer and winter term opportunities for those students whose course of study does not easily allow for a full semester away, and developing specific financial support for off-campus opportunities, would open the experience to a greater number of Oberlin students.
 - Integrative culminating experiences for all students will cultivate and promote high educational achievement. Culminating experiences can take many forms, depending upon the interests of the student and the available educational resources to support the student's endeavor.
 - Superior connected learning involves the promotion of increasing educational achievement throughout the undergraduate years, culminating in the sophisticated application of acquired skills in independent, intellectually rigorous, creative and synthesizing ways. Emulating the high achievement of our faculty and professional staff, all students should be challenged and guided to engage the entire trajectory of high-achieving critical thinking and artistry to the fullest extent of their ability through their senior year. Integrative culminating experiences should be student-centered and not

necessarily major-centered. It is an opportunity for students to draw together the range of knowledge and skills acquired in their undergraduate experience, anticipating the transition to their professional lives.

- B) Support Oberlin’s mission in the current environment of a dramatically changing landscape in higher education through the creation of an “innovation zone” to pilot new programs involving novel pedagogies, technology, and disruptive innovations.
 - A new “project bank” would exist to encourage and fuel aspirational thinking and opportunistically promote projects. It would also provide the environment and resources to allow members of the Oberlin community to innovate, investigate, engage, fail at, and develop programs that could have a strategic impact on the future of Oberlin or in reaffirming Oberlin’s position as a leader in higher education.
- C) Provide students with resources to maintain the health and wellness necessary to achieve academic and personal success during their time at Oberlin.
- D) Deepen collaboration and interconnection among the college and the conservatory, academic and other divisions, departments, the Allen Memorial Art Museum, and the library system to enhance student connected learning outcomes.
 - The combinations of college and conservatory, academic and residential experience at Oberlin offers extraordinary—and in some ways even unique—resources for connected learning. As Oberlin expands and deepens its opportunities for connected learning, it must respond to the challenges of overcoming academic and administrative compartmentalization that detracts from the learning outcomes of our students.
- E) Develop a new model for integrating the work of the Career Center and the Alumni Office to create, strengthen and broaden support and professional opportunities to help students and young alumni make the transition to their professional lives. At the same time, enhance opportunities for career counseling for current students to the end of preparing our students for finding careers that will allow them to synthesize the many facets of their undergraduate learning experience.
 - Connected learning prepares students with the experiences and skills to build a successful bridge to their futures. Oberlin should help students think intentionally about their undergraduate education as a foundation for citizen engagement and their professional lives. Deep self-understanding, mental health and wellness, personal and professional resilience, and the acquisition of leadership skills are critical for the undergraduate experience to be an effective facilitator for lives of meaning and challenge. Rich exposure to career options and acquiring skills for professional interaction and networking

are also important, especially as the student progresses through their undergraduate years. Both greater campus-wide focus and collaboration on fostering students' professional and personal development, and enhancing alumni engagement in this endeavor, are essential for preparing our students and recent graduates for their futures. Investment in personnel and programming in this area is also needed: Oberlin is currently under-resourced relative to peer institutions in both the career center and alumni relations professionals.

- F) Develop even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion:
- Continue to assess student recruitment, admission, yield, and graduation rates and develop financial aid models, faculty and staff professional development opportunities, student support programs, and other outreach and communication programs with a focus on issues of diversity and inclusion.
 - Secure a high level of domestic and international compositional and intellectual diversity among faculty and staff in order to achieve this connected learning outcome.
 - Increase frequent and thoughtful intergroup interaction and critical thinking by enhancing pedagogies, residential experiences and extra-curricular opportunities that hone student skills and intellectual, social and cultural understanding
- Historically, Oberlin College has held a unique, moral commitment to access to higher education for traditionally underserved populations, including African American students and women. This strategic commitment expands to the reality of the changing demographics in the United States, and the effects of globalization. In order to continue identifying and admitting the talented student body that makes Oberlin the vibrant institution it is, our admissions efforts have to reflect those changes. Further, in order to prepare students for the world they will be entering, the Oberlin community must reflect the diversity of that world, must equip our graduates to operate effectively there, and must continue to do so into the future.
 - A connected learning experience relevant to our students' futures requires a diverse demographic, cultural and political environment where they can hone the skills, insights and flexibility essential for effective engagement in a multicultural and pluralistic world. Oberlin should expand and deepen its highly successful opportunities for productive intergroup interaction that currently takes place in areas of the curriculum and co-curriculum.
- G) Engage the Oberlin community in a thorough assessment of our financial objectives in light of resource challenges with the goal of reorienting Oberlin's financial model towards greater long-term stability by reducing the rate of growth of tuition (total student charges) and our reliance on it, maximizing endowment growth, developing new revenue streams, re-engineering to achieve greater efficiencies and synergies in operations—along with a building a culture for

maintaining these positive changes—and exploring greater use of educational and administrative technologies.

- We should seek to reduce our reliance on the net tuition growth model and take proactive and strategic steps to allow us to solidify our future and ensure our ability to invest in worthy projects consistent with Oberlin’s mission and values. The Oberlin community must work to continually educate ourselves on the changing dynamics of higher education so that we may be informed actors. We must prioritize our goals in light of our resources and make difficult choices when necessary to stay fiscally responsible.
 - To pursue the active creation of additional revenue streams, a division outside the normative governing processes should be developed. To take advantage of our underutilized facilities, we should develop a plan for “year-round Oberlin,” including both the summer and winter term, in order to generate net revenue from non-degree students, beginning with high school programs and including non-Oberlin college students and continuing education programs. This division will be charged with using Oberlin’s brand and distinctive resources during the summer and winter term to generate new revenue sources from new constituencies (high school students, students from other institutions, seniors, alumni, etc.), including the environment, music and the arts.
- H) An excellent and diverse faculty of active scholars, artists and musicians who are also superb teachers and mentors is critical to Oberlin’s future. A talented and diverse staff that supports the educational, personal and social development of students as well as the infrastructure of the institution is also key to its future.
- To provide outstanding support for the educational mission, prepare students for the future, and meet evolving student needs, we must continue to recruit and retain an excellent and diverse staff. Competitive compensation for staff is essential.
 - From admitting the student body to creating the residential experience and providing opportunities for students to develop life-long capacities and skills, staff make vital contributions that support the educational mission, integrate student curricular and co-curricular experiences, and meet evolving student needs so students can maximize the value of their Oberlin education.
- I) To provide an outstanding educational experience for Oberlin students, we must continue to recruit and retain an excellent and diverse faculty, and support faculty scholarly and artistic achievements as well as pedagogical innovations. To accomplish this, we must recommit to our initiative to reach a level of faculty compensation of at least the median among our peer institutions (the “Sweet Sixteen”) in each continuing rank.

- Oberlin has long maintained a commitment to enrich the education and personal development of our students by hiring and retaining faculty who are both excellent teachers in the classroom, respected researchers in their fields, and valuable mentors to our students and alumni. In order to attract and maintain faculty of the highest quality and to demonstrate the value of their work to the institution, we must remain competitive among our peer institutions. In 2013, the Board passed an initiative committing to action steps to enable us to reach at least the median compensation levels within our group of peer colleges (known as the “Sweet Sixteen”).
- J) Maintain leadership in environmental sustainability and fulfill the prior institutional pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025.
- Oberlin’s commitment to environmental sustainability is part of what defines us. The advantage of our unique geographic location and aggressive collaboration with the surrounding communities makes Oberlin’s previously announced objective of achieving carbon neutrality by 2025 a distinct possibility. The Oberlin residential experience will provide the opportunity to create lasting behavioral change; educating and influencing building occupants to behave in energy-sustaining ways. Oberlin should look to expand its commitment to environmental sustainability and maintain its position of leadership in both thought and action.
- K) Enable Oberlin to act thoughtfully and adapt to changing conditions more quickly by developing a governance structure that enhances collaboration, communication, and engagement among trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students.
- Strategic planning needs to be undertaken as a regular function of the governance process. Oberlin should create a structure to insure that there is ongoing trustee, administration, staff, faculty and student communication and education about governance. An inclusive governance structure will enable Oberlin to act both prudently and nimbly, as institutionalized planning will become a regular function of the governance process. This process must be transparent to permit all stakeholders to offer valuable insights as they contribute to the discussion on how to best meet future needs and make choices within Oberlin’s limited resources.