

**Community Responses to the Preliminary Report form, in order received  
As of 05.21.15 at 8:07 PM**

4:36:46 PM 05.05.15

**Evan Cameron**

*Student*

I feel particularly strongly about Core Values 3 [Historic commitment to diversity], 4 [financial accessibility], and 5 [operational excellence and efficiency], and that emerging strategic directions align very well with those. I think while these have been hallmarks of an Oberlin education in the past (first to accept African American students and women, our motto “Learning and Labor,” etc.), this is not necessarily the case today (~5-8% of our student body identifying as African American, students increasingly finding difficulty in affording an education here). Employed strategies should first look to unique ways to make Oberlin more financially sustainable, and in turn this will hopefully allow financial aid packages and the overall cost of an Oberlin education to be more manageable for the students that we wish to attract.

I think that these Strategic Directions are very well thought-out and I agree with most everything expressed in them. I think that they align with the Core Values presented very well in the general sense, and the only area for improvement in my mind would be more specificity. I see in the Strategic Directions some mention of very specific actions (i.e. creating a “year-round Oberlin,” creation of an “innovation zone,” etc.), but some of the Strategic Directions are more vague. However, I imagine that from May to December they will be fleshed out more. Also, in general, even after perusing through Appendix D, I’m very confused as to what the “innovation zone” is and what that would look like.

G [Thoroughly engaging with financial objectives in light of resource challenges] is my top priority. I believe that with a changing financial model that looks to utilizing, collaborating with, and appreciating the unique alternatives that already exist on this campus (Bonner Center, OSCA, etc.), the priority of F [Developing even more effective institutional structures to achieve equity, diversity, and inclusion] will also be more easily met. I also support the idea of a “year-round Oberlin” as a way to increase net revenue, as these programs could offer additional financial support to the four-year educational experience and prevent costs from rising there, while also offering a snapshot of what Oberlin does best to a wide range of people for a shorter period of time.

F [Developing even more effective institutional structures to achieve equity, diversity, and inclusion] is my second priority, as I alluded to above. I particularly think that a focus on student recruitment and admissions will be necessary to shift the composition of Oberlin to reflect the Oberlin that the Core Values expresses a desire for. Also, I think there is a lot of room to grow for inter-departmental collaboration, especially in the natural sciences. After the events of March 2013, there seems to have been occasional bursts of interest in having natural science courses have a more nuanced perspective. This perspective would utilize elements from the humanities and social sciences to present a fuller view of how students preparing to be career scientists should approach

their work in light of our current national and global problems with racism, classism, sexism, etc.

J [Maintaining leadership in environmental sustainability and fulfilling the prior institutional pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025] is my third priority, but not by much over any other. I think when considering Oberlin's role in the future landscape of higher education, we must appreciate where we stand now relative to other institutions and how we can further differentiate ourselves. Environmental sustainability seems to be one way that we are most primed and ready to do this. Achieving carbon neutrality is certainly a lofty goal, but if it's accomplished, Oberlin will have likely enacted a number of new facilities, policy, and institutional changes that will attract an increasingly climate change-minded prospective student population to choose Oberlin over other peer liberal arts institutions.

4:51:03 PM 05.05.15

**Oliver Konkell**

*Student*

Why is value 8 [Renewing a commitment to leadership in environmental sustainability] phrased as a suggestion rather than an imperative? It seems to me that environmental sustainability is just as imperative as resource sharing.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction Question] A [Ensuring students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond]: I do not feel that the path provided for me was clearly demarcated. I have had to do an immense amount of my own research and work in order to reach the point where I am today, and I think that as a 3/2 Engineering major I lost out on the usefulness of the Career Center as well as the feeling of belonging to a specific department and the college in general.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction] J [Maintaining leadership in environmental sustainability and fulfilling the prior institutional pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025]: Carbon neutrality is crucial to the future of the world and Oberlin cannot afford to ignore that.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction] G [Thoroughly engaging with financial objectives in light of resource challenges with the goal of reorienting Oberlin's financial model towards greater long-term stability]: Oberlin fails to fulfill the mission it articulates in this plan and forgets its legacy of inclusion in its financial aid policies. Providing merit-based aid to those with more than enough money to pay while deducting that aid from the need-based allocations of those who cannot afford the school is just one example of a policy that goes directly against the idea of access.

9:36:19 PM 05.05.15

**Sidney Rosenfeld**

*Faculty (emeritus)*

The semicolons in the mission statement are misplaced: “Oberlin prepares students for lives of intellectual and artistic breadth and rigor; leadership; and sustained inquiry and impact.” They should be replaced with commas.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Students must learn to think, speak, and write clearly. I trust that most do. My limited experience since retirement, tells me, however, that many are deficient in these virtues.

8:09:24 AM 05.06.15

**Michael Fisher**  
*Faculty*

Dear Vice President Stuart and Members of the Strategic Planning Committee:

We appreciate your thoughtful efforts and this preliminary report.

I am concerned, however, about the marked omission in your report of one key aspect of the 2005 Strategic Plan, that is the absence of “internationalism.” The 2005 Strategic Plan included that concept as one of its main Principles, elaborated in Directions #5: “Internationalize Oberlin.”

The Draft plan does speak to Oberlin students studying away. But the 2005 Plan highlights among its prime Strategies, “Build on the strengths of our area studies programs and other international curricular offerings to make our curriculum richly global. Emphasize the study of foreign languages and cultures. Enhance the recruitment of international students. Establish relationships and collaborations with international institutions of higher education and with business, governmental, non-governmental, and other organizations in the interest of creating educational exchanges for students and faculty and creating additional opportunities for international study and internships.”

While I feel confident that you considered the significance of this substantial change away from “internationalism,” I am unconvinced that study of the rest of the world is less a factor today (or in the future) than it was a decade ago.

Thank you,  
Michael Fisher  
Chair, History Department  
Robert S. Danforth Professor of History

8:55:33 AM 05.06.15

**Sebastiaan Faber**  
*Faculty*

None of the core values strike me as misguided, but there are a couple of important things missing, the most central one of which is a recognition of the place of Oberlin College & Conservatory in the world. There is strangely little reference in the whole report to the

fact Oberlin is part of a context—in terms of prestige and competition for student and faculty recruitment; in terms of student learning paths and graduate careers; and in terms of the financial, political, cultural, social and natural environment—that transcends the United States. It behooves the institution to come to terms with that fact and adjust its self-image and goals accordingly.

In addition to the note about the international above, I'm not sure it makes sense to strive for a "greater use of educational and administrative technologies" as much as for a "more effective" or "more creative" use.

[Response to Top Strategic Directive]: Some of the additional directions outlined in my comments above would probably be among my top priorities. That said, from the directions listed in the report, my top priority would be engaging 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;

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: encouraging more collaboration and interconnections between and among the College, Conservatory, library, and the Allen Memorial Art Museum;

[Response to the Third Top Strategic Direction]: recruiting and retaining an excellent and diverse faculty, and ensuring that they are compensated at a level that is competitive with our peer institutions in each continuing rank.

9:13:39 AM 05.06.15

**Marc Blecher**

***Faculty***

This is a profoundly troubling document. "Diversity" is mentioned 17 times, "scholarship," "scholar" and "scholarly" 5 times, and faculty compensation twice.

A trustee recently said to me, unprompted and in a different context, that "the faculty is the core of the College." Yet the faculty is being sidelined both here and in the recent wider practice of the College (e.g., the shocking difference in the rates of expansion of the faculty and the senior levels of administration over recent decades, and particularly this year in the Dean's Office [even setting aside our new legal responsibilities under Title IX]).

Oberlin is structurally underendowed. The only way we survive is from superhuman efforts of the faculty to handle classes and advising loads that are at least a third larger than they should be, and than they are at the likes of Swarthmore, Grinnell and Washington & Lee (where all courses are capped at 20). In short, day in, day out the faculty are making up for the relatively poor performance of the endowment over recent decades.

It is clear from this document that the College is now taking this situation for granted. We are at the end of a major capital campaign, but a widely-agreed need for a structural increase in faculty compensation is still in serious doubt.

Diversity is unquestionably at the core of what Oberlin is, and it should remain so. But first and foremost, Oberlin is a college that wants to provide education for all, not a civil rights institution that happens to be a college. The balance in this document is not where it should be.

This is a matter of the College's core interest, not the parochial interest of the faculty. My colleagues and I have long demonstrated that we prize the former over the latter.

Support for faculty, in the form of expansion (to reduce the outsized, punishing loads) and compensation.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: See above.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Support for faculty, in the form of expansion (to reduce the outsized, punishing loads) and compensation.

10:31:28 AM 05.06.15

**Kirk Ormand**

*Faculty*

For some time now there have been rumors circulating about the Strategic Planning Committee's direction with regard to budget; thank you for producing this document, and confirming our worst fears. Our budget is evidently "unsustainable" and the drift of the current document is that we will need to cut. Unfortunately, awareness of this unsustainability comes after a decade of belt-tightening within the core academic program and also—one must point out—after we have decided to borrow \$23 /Million/ for new building projects (primarily the Inn and the new stadium). Perhaps we should have done some financial planning /before/ borrowing these huge sums of money and committing to these massive new capital projects that are now part of our "unsustainable" future. Oops. The critical sentences of the strategic planning document, in any case, are these: "our tuition is higher than virtually all of our "Sweet Sixteen" peer group; and our financial aid packages are frequently not competitive enough to attract the best students, especially those from economically disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds." So: our tuition is too high, and our financial aid is not competitive. Where is all this tuition money going, then, if not to financial aid? Is it going to the salaries of the faculty and staff? Apparently not, since our faculty salaries—as the Administration admitted after a three-year struggle—are 13th out of the "sweet sixteen" at all ranks.

In brief, something is off. Our tuition is higher than most of the sweet sixteen, but our salaries are lower and our financial aid packages are not competitive. So something /other than faculty salaries and financial aid/ is drawing down on our limited income. What could that thing be? I don't know, but if it isn't faculty salaries and it isn't financial aid, there aren't many areas left to look.

At the start of this process I asked the SPC to look at how our expenditures for upper-level administration have grown over the past 10 years, both in terms of positions and in terms of percentage of the budget. I haven't heard that anyone has looked into this. Perhaps now would be a good time to do that. This is a long non-answer to what I think is the wrong question. So let me try to answer the question of my top priority: I think Oberlin needs to make education its first priority. We need the best available faculty and staff to /teach/ our students. But institutions compete for faculty and staff on the open market; and as long as our salaries are consistently lower than /most/ of the institutions in our peer group (13th out of 16, remember?) we will not be able to hire or retain those faculty or staff. I will further note that it is /particularly/ difficult to recruit and retain faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds when our salaries are not competitive. And make no mistake: they are not. Yes, hard choices need to be made. They have needed to be made for some decades now. I suggest that a good place to start would be to put our /educational/ mission first, and to see what resources we have left for the rest of the "core values" and "strategic directions."

In the current draft after we have done that, and done it well. I don't know what an "innovation zone" is, but I do not think it should be realized at the expense of adequate compensation for faculty and staff. Other "directions" in the document are laudable but, in the language of the report itself, perhaps "not sustainable." In other words, no, I do not think that we can run faster, jump higher, build more buildings, become more inclusive, and teach more effectively while cutting costs—which are 70% salary—to our core educational programs. To attempt that is to put the cart before the horse, and then to shoot the horse and set it on fire for good measure.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Our core /educational/ programs

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Our core /educational/ programs

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Our core /educational/ programs.

3:38:20 PM 05.08.15

**Tom Cooper**

*Alumnus*

**Here is the new Mission Statement.** Note the passive constructs in the new MS. I see that educational excellence is no longer part of our mission, although we acknowledge its history. Don't we aspire to provide an excellent education?

- ***The Oberlin College and Conservatory educational community is built upon a history of academic and musical excellence.***

OK, our history is fine, but so what? How is this relevant to today's mission? Perhaps we should say "builds" rather than "is built." But is our mission really building on our history? I hope so, but how?

- ***It champions educational access and opportunity for all, embracing a diverse and inclusive learning environment that welcomes a free and respectful***

*exchange of ideas, and an enduring commitment to equality, social justice, and environmental sustainability.*

- How can we say that we “champion” access for all, when we admit 30% of applicants and charge \$40,000 in tuition? Perhaps we champion others to provide access as well? “Social justice” means different things to different people, and I find it vague and mildly offensive. I wonder about “environmental sustainability”. Are we trying to make our campus “sustainable,” or the country, or what? Or do we plan to graduate missionaries for the social-justice and environmentalist movements? If so, let’s say it.
- ***Oberlin prepares students for lives of intellectual breadth and rigor; academic, musical, and artistic excellence; leadership; and sustained inquiry and impact.*** This is actually not bad, although still soft. Is “prepare” the best we can say? The old MS tried to explain how we went about that.
- ***Oberlin graduates are empowered with knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that are essential to confront complex and difficult issues and to create change and value in the world.*** “empowered”? Seriously? That is one of those words, like the phrase “social justice”, that betrays a certain world view: in modern parlance, only women and minorities can be “empowered.” Another passive construct that actually means very little. I haven’t seen the phrase “habits of mind” before... not sure about that. I would eliminate “and difficult”, and leave it at “complex issues.”

**Here is the old Mission Statement.** Note the active verbs throughout: Graduate, Provide, Offer, Open, Nurture, Help, Enable. It’s too long, but it’s clearer.

- *Graduate liberal arts and conservatory students who have learned to think with intellectual rigor, creativity, and independence*
- *Provide the highest level of conservatory education to exceptionally talented young musicians*
- *Offer superb liberal education across the arts and sciences, in the humanities, natural and social sciences, and the arts*
- *Open the world to its students and develop in them the skills and knowledge they will need to engage with and navigate in highly diverse communities and in a global society*
- *Nurture students’ creativity by providing rich curricular and co-curricular opportunities for studying and making art and music*
- *Help students clarify and integrate their intellectual strengths and interests, social commitments, and vocational aspirations*
- *Enable students to integrate and apply their knowledge*
- *Nurture students’ social consciousness and environmental awareness*
- *Provide outstanding preparation for success at the highest level of graduate and professional education and in careers*
- *Graduate individuals who are humane, thoughtful, and influential actors in the world who will provide leadership in their communities and professions and in*

*the arts, politics, education, international relations, public service, science, business, and communications.*

**The bottom line is that the old MS is better than the new, except that it's too long.**

12:12:26 PM 05.10.15

**Steve Volk**

***Faculty***

Oberlin is a residential liberal arts college. At the heart of that experience is the nature of the interaction between students and the instructional staff (faculty and staff). This teaching/learning relationship is central, it is why people will pay a huge amount for this education. The strategic plan suggests various ways to strengthen the outcomes from this relationship (connections, the nature of the student body, etc.), but it never actually says what is at the heart of that relationship. While it may be implied in all that is written, by leaving it out of the plan, you provide no room for: funding classroom re-design based on latest pedagogical approaches; understanding the specific K-12 educational background and its impact on how we should be teaching (and the resources we need: technology, etc.); supporting on-going professional development of teachers as teachers; taking greater advantage of where we are located, etc. I expect that many of these points will be made by the curricular process underway in Arts & Sciences—but for that process to align well with strategic planning, the strategic plan needs to highlight what is assumed to be obvious: the teaching/learning process at a residential undergraduate institution.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Pt. F [Developing even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity and inclusion] is a particularly important issue, but it is written in a way that is unnecessarily limiting. The context of “F” is the development of goals related to “equity, diversity, and inclusion.” The 3rd bullet (“increase...intergroup interaction and critical thinking by enhancing pedagogies, residential experiences, and extra-curricular opportunities...”) locates a central aspect of what we do here solely within the framework of diversity and inclusion. Nothing wrong with that, but I’m not finding a general statement to suggest that the college, as a strategic direction, needs to develop appropriate pedagogies, engage residential experiences, curricular and co-curricular activities, and all its resources to enhance student learning in general and not just (or only) in relation to diversity/inclusion goals.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: (D) [Deepen collaboration and interconnection between the college and the conservatory, academic and other divisions, departments, the Allen Art Museum and the library system to enhance student connected learning outcomes]: I very much support this point, but it should explicitly reference curricular and co/extra-curricular activities and that Oberlin should take advantage of its privileged position as a residential liberal arts college to create the “connected learning outcomes” that this section references. In the expansion of (D), in the appendix, the report speaks of “overcoming academic and administrative compartmentalization”—I



think that is a strategic direction that needs to be highlighted and raised to a major point, not a subheading.

5:15:48 PM 05.10.15

**Yolanda Cruz**

*Faculty*

The strategic planning document correctly recognizes the ideal outcomes of a college education in an equally ideal world. It says, “The Oberlin College and Conservatory educational community is built upon a history of academic and musical excellence.” Close at the heels of that sentence it continues, “It champions educational access and opportunity for all, embracing a diverse and inclusive learning environment that welcomes a free and respectful exchange of ideas, and an enduring commitment to equity, social justice, and environmental sustainability.” Since the financial condition of the college is not in an ideal situation, viz., “Oberlin also faces many challenges: we have a lower endowment-per-student ratio than many of our peer schools and depend on tuition for more than 80% of our operating budget; our tuition is higher than virtually all of our ‘Sweet Sixteen’ peer group; and our financial aid packages are frequently not competitive enough to attract the best students, especially those from economically disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds.” And likely never has been or will be, we should perhaps reflect on what Oberlin has managed to do so well during its 182-year history: focus on a strong academic program and musical training for its students. The temptation is great to solve all manner of contemporary problems and get on the bandwagon of political and socio-cultural trends, as Oberlin surely has experienced since its founding. But we are an undergraduate college with limited resources. And we do one thing well: teach and learn. Dissipating resources to be more in synch with ebb and flow of societal changes does not seem worth the risk of losing what the institution is really about. That’s not being reactionary; that’s just being truthful.

4:33:04 PM 05.11.15

**Hannah Varadi**

*Student*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction] Direction 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 [...] along with a building a culture for maintaining these positive changes [...]]”

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Direction I [Continue to recruit and retain an excellent and diverse faculty, and support faculty scholarly and artistic achievements as well as pedagogical innovations. [...] re-commit to our initiative to reach a level of faculty compensation of at least the median among our peer institutions].

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Direction K [developing a governance structure that enhances collaboration, communication, and engagement among trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students].

4:54:31 PM

**Michael Calb**

*Alumnus*

The mission statement says that Oberlin “welcomes a free and respectful exchange of ideas.” Clearly, given the insanely restrictive speech code governing on campus—and the recent decision to EXPEL students based on their speech—this is NOT Oberlin’s mission. It SHOULD be Oberlin’s mission, but it’s not. Its mission is to coddle and insulate students from certain viewpoints, while reinforcing a unitary (borderline communist) rhetoric which must be followed for fear of violating the speech code or, more commonly, being retaliated against by professors through grades. Oberlin should change its motto to “ensuring that pussy college students remain pussies into adulthood, forever scared of their own shadows and unable to understand or even hear any viewpoint other than their own.”

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Get rid of the speech code.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Affirm a commitment to actual free speech, including speech people don’t like or think is “offensive”.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Remove all affirmative action policies that dilute the intellectual quality of the student body.

4:58:45 PM 05.11.15

**Mike Palmer**

*Alumnus*

I didn’t thoroughly read the whole report. But I have a bias. I worked in strategic planning for 10 years and then was involved in 4-5 start-ups. A couple went “ballistic”, some never made it. My overall thoughts:

1. A strategic plan means nothing unless you explain what you plan to do that distinguishes you from your competition. What assets do you have that you plan to exploit to win the best students? I didn't see any of this in the summary.
2. Things such as mission statements are laughed at in Silicon Valley—they are usually meaningless ... see Peter Thiel's comments on Enron’s wonderful mission statement—hilarious.
3. Oberlin loses often in competing for the best traditional students ... and rightfully. Those schools do better by traditional graduate measures—salary, endowment, etc. That’s ok ... I think Oberlin has done well lately emphasizing the “green” etc. So how is Oberlin actually going to attract the best students it wants? Emphasizing core values? I think not.
4. When I was a student, Oberlin had the best record of any school in getting graduates into their grad schools of choice ... is this still the case? If so, or even close to so, this is a huge recruiting advantage and should be emphasized.

5. In general—and again, I don't feel like reading this whole thing—it feels not tough enough. It's full of feel-good words like diversity etc., but I didn't see much of, eg .... 1) do we want to climb back up the collegiate rankings and if so, how ? 2) what are we offering potential students that others cannot? 3) what should we offer given our background and profile etc.? I don't see a strategic plan here, just a bunch of buzzwords that nobody can argue with and don't really distinguish Oberlin from many other schools. Again, I may have missed some of the above in the full body of the report, but the summary reads like lots of “strategic plans” I have seen from America's best companies and foundations, and unless more focused, I don't think it will lead anybody to change anything.

5:05:16 PM 05.11.15

**Dan Bernhardt**

*Alumni*

Oberlin has to sell the product that distinguishes itself. To some extent, it is the combination of the conservatory and college (and this is an easy sell). To some extent, it is the quirkiness (read implicitly “commitment to equity, social justice, and environmental sustainability,” etc.), which draws some students, but loses others when those students get admission to comparable quality schools, and the net value is unclear (Reed faces similar issues). This is, indeed, part of what makes Oberlin special, and certainly is a STRONG draw for a particular subset of students, including those who value Oberlin the most, and are most passionate about it. It may discourage many more others, who have less defined preferences over school choices. Narrow appeal that excludes (unlike Conservatory/College appeal, which does not) can work in the short run, but if it feeds back adversely to affect composition of student body attributes (measures of quality), then Oberlin loses even some of those who DO value what makes Oberlin special. It is a slippery slope.

The core values themselves seem innocuous by comparison, and the issue is how to set elements aside that help distinguish from competing schools—possibly greater emphasis of honors programs; possibly hands-on joint research with faculty. These things may draw a different set of students, possibly. Expansion to year-round may help. It may also help draw students from peer schools who want to graduate early, take summer courses, etc., but do not have the opportunity at their schools. Getting those students, for example, for two summers, might help a lot. Unrelatedly, I will say that Oberlin's problems stem to some extent from a badly organized effort to keep in touch with alumni, and to ask them for money. Even today, the requests are understated, and not very original/creative in design. For example, Oberlin devotes minimal efforts to personalize it even to small potential donors (I give small amounts each year to Oberlin; but I've given much more to schools that have personalized it more, for example, Carnegie-Mellon, and Queen's University in Canada, where I taught, or the high schools that my children have attended). This historically poor effort underlies the small endowment, which feeds back to affect admissions and what the school can offer, and leads to the current situation. The school should think about things that might add value to alumni (better listing of contact information for graduates), and which, in turn, might facilitate raising more money,

inspired by increased interactions of those alumni. Another possibility might be (especially with a year round program) to have small niche get-togethers of alumni with common links (co-op background, sports team, major, students of a former Conservatory professor, etc.) that might happen annually, where the interaction might lead to donations, and fresh ideas.

5:11:00 PM 05.11.15

**Philip S. Thomas '50**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Please continue programs like LAUNCH U, helping students become CEOs of their lives and professions, gaining greater self-confidence whether they end up in the non-profit, business, or government sectors. This requires strong emphasis on the English language, through extensive writing opportunities (term papers), and through numerous chances to speak (in classes and in giving talks and lectures). Maintaining Oberlin's STRONG LIBERAL ARTS education, with exposure to many fields of enquiry, is so obvious I am almost embarrassed to mention it.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: The relatively low percentage of Oberlin Alumni who contribute financially has been a constant concern. I hope this issue will continue to be assessed, perhaps by studying the practices of other colleges which have been more successful (with 60% or more contributing). Oberlin invites students to become social critics (which is great!), but, unfortunately, some alums focus criticism on their alma mater, and decide not to contribute at all.

5:17:49 PM 05.11.15

**David A. Jacobs**

*Alumnus*

Forget environmental sustainability

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: remove the environmental sustainability portion

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: more focus on robustness and perspective more focus on the value of people and the richness of culture much more focus on philosophy of mankind

5:27:38 PM 05.11.15

**Bob Turner**

*Alumnus*

It was not clear to me how many of the strategic directions, valuable though they may be, connected to the core values.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Engaging 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. Clearly Oberlin needs to rethink its financial model. Engaging the whole community is imperative so that everyone owns both the problems and the potential solutions.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Recruiting and retaining an excellent and diverse faculty, and ensuring that they are compensated at a level that is competitive with our peer institutions in each continuing rank. The faculty is the lifeblood of the institution. Without and [sic] excellent faculty who find being at Oberlin rewarding, nothing else will matter.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Developing strategies to achieve more fully the College's goals for equity, diversity, and inclusion; Oberlin must continue to stress and continue its long history of leadership in these areas. This, along with the commitment to social justice, is one of the things that sets Oberlin apart from its peers and competitors among top liberal arts colleges. Oberlin must maintain this competitive advantage in attracting the kinds of students that the Oberlin educational model is so well designed for.

5:28:56 PM 05.11.15

**David Smith**

*Alumnus*

[Core Value] # 3 especially resonates with me. Oberlin's history and legacy is one of inclusion and I believe that is its distinguishing attribute, one that I sometimes fear is in danger of being lost due to focusing on other issues, or left behind due to financial pressures.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: This is the new world these kids live in. If Oberlin had a strong job placement program—best in class—prospective students would flock to apply and matriculate. It's the number one thing on college students' minds today—how will I get my first job after I graduate. I personally believe that a liberal arts education is the best preparation for any career, but partnerships with companies, governments, and NGOs are imperative so students know meaningful job(s) await.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: You can never communicate too much. I am a staunch believer in the Quaker principle of consensus. Everyone is invited in, everything is laid out, and everything is discussed openly. Sometimes, I think that Oberlin gives this shorter shrift than it deserves. It's really part of being an inclusive school/campus.

5:35:23 PM 05.11.15

**Betty L. Beer Franklin**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Attract and maintain outstanding staff

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Commitment to environmental stability

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Keep Oberlin financially accessible

6:03:05 PM 05.11.15

**William Hoover**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Excellence must be the goal of an Oberlin education.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Learning and Labor is not an empty motto. Active apprenticeship programs would improve the Oberlin experience.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Brevity helps clarity. The sheer number of words used on this project exceeds what is necessary or desirable by a factor of 20. Cut to the meat. Be clear and direct.

6:23:24 PM 05.11.15

**Jim Fesler**

*Alumnus*

Excellent set of core values. A minor issue: all the core items 3-10 are “Oberlin must” except item 8, environmental sustainability, which is “Oberlin should”. I'd change to “Oberlin must” for consistency, and because this item is important to the future world these students will grow up in.

Item A [Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond] sounds like Mom and apple pie. Item 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] is important I think; my daughter graduated from Wesleyan University in 2011 and took full advantage of the career center (most students probably did not). She found that economic consulting firms hired in the Fall of senior year, did video practice interviews at the center, and was offered a few good jobs by December 2010.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: G—Financial Objectives—without a sustainable financial model for the college, most of the other strategic directions will be unattainable.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: F—Equity, diversity and inclusion.

Without this, Oberlin will find it difficult to distinguish itself from other institutions of higher education.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: B—Innovation zone. There's not much specificity to this item, but it is potentially very important in encouraging liberal arts students to think of the breadth of possibilities that the future may offer them. It's not just about the courses, grades, and books. Some of our greatest innovators haven't been good students.

6:34:22 PM 05.11.15

**Brandon Burnette**

*Alumnus*

Two necessary tasks: Curb expenditure growth and increase revenues. Expenditure growth. Recent research has concluded that the major reason for the high growth of college cost over the past three decades is the growth of administration head count, salaries and benefits: [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/05/opinion/sunday/the-real-reason-college-tuition-costs-so-much.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/05/opinion/sunday/the-real-reason-college-tuition-costs-so-much.html?_r=0).

Appendix D appears to support this continues growth in non-core expenditures: "... a wide range of mechanisms and services to provide appropriate and personalized advising, counseling, mentoring, and health and wellness support..." "... creation of an innovation zone to pilot new programs involving novel pedagogies, technology, and disruptive innovations." Every one of the suggestions sounds great, but which existing programs / sacred cows will be sacrificed for the new? Or will Oberlin continue to grow these new programs on top of current (arguably wonderful) programs? Increase revenues. My understanding is that Oberlin alumni do not give to the same degree as other schools. Do we know why this is so? I wish not to believe that this is because the Oberlin experience is any less meaningful. My suspicion is that Oberlin simply has not done so good a job raising money from its alumni. For example, at no time at any reunion has anyone approached me to make it clear that I (or anyone else) have an obligation to this place that has had so profound an impact on our lives. Each of us has a duty to give back, and needs to be reminded of that duty—simply, directly, with no regrets and no guilt. Other schools understand this. They research, organize, and invest in the endeavor. We should as well.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 1. Put school on a more sound, sustainable financial footing. 2. Put a sundown clause on the funding of all non-academic programs. These programs should be reviewed for relevancy every five years to make room for new ideas and curb complacency. 3. Strive for goal of need-blind admissions.

6:37:56 PM 05.11.15

**David Burress**

*Alumnus*

A point about tuition pricing: ideally, absolute level of tuition should be almost irrelevant in the sense that almost every student would be on scholarship. I am especially concerned about maximizing revenue from students whose families are able and willing to pay the full costs of supporting one student's attendance at Oberlin. Among those

families, there are economic models one can use to set tuition less scholarship at levels so as to maximize revenues. I am aware that there are fairness arguments to the contrary, but there are greater fairness considerations against depriving families of lesser means the opportunity to send their children to Oberlin—and any failure to maximize revenues from better off families does in fact deprive other families. (Note that I am not suggesting that admission standards should be linked to family wealth.)

6:58:23 PM 05.11.15

**Michael H. Lubus**

*Alumnus*

Great efforts have been made. No question. But the mission statement alone is a red flag for what follows. Obtuse, verbose, lack of focus, a parade of desperation, masquerading as inspiration. Oberlin is a victim of its own culture in a time when unique and intelligent are neither. I understand that your efforts want collaborative input. Yet unless and at minimum, a mission statement is honed to memorable words in a couple of sentences, all that follows will be an undecipherable, multi-(insert your own favorite hot-button) mush to be archived not implemented. So as they say on Shark Tank, “I’m out.”

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: See above

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: See above

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: etc., etc.

7:12:49 PM 05.11.15

**Matthew Collings**

*Alumnus*

Oberlin must be financially viable but responsive of the challenges of the 21st Century.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Financially viable

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Expand the faculty and student diversity

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Increase the use of evolving technology in education

7:13:20 PM 05.11.15

**Elijah Bergman**

*Alumnus*

None of the core values mention social justice (I know it’s in the Mission Statement). For me, it’s important to put that in there along with mentioning diversity and the environment because of Oberlin’s strong connections to economic justice and anti-war movements. Moreover, none of the values mentions the word “community,” which to me is perhaps the most important core value. I would also like to see something along the lines of “Oberlin must continue fostering and encouraging student passion to critically analyze the world as well as in brainstorm solutions both in the classroom setting and outside of it.”



[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 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.]: While I knew my Oberlin professors were great, since leaving Oberlin and talking to my friends who went to similar small liberal arts colleges and elite universities, I have realized just how special they were. Oberlin needs to continue recruiting professors who are interested in mentoring students outside the classroom. Who want to foster student passion and invite students into their homes, to ask for their help on projects, etc.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: F) [Develop even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion]: Oberlin needs to do better when it comes to creating a welcoming and inclusive space for students of color. Having a diverse student body is critical to the learning experiences of all students.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: 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.]: As a young alumni who briefly used the Career Center at the very end of my senior year. I mostly used it to get model resumes. I would like to see mandatory connections with the career services/alumni center throughout students' 4 years to get them in the habit of reaching out. Moreover, too often those centers just throw out the "networking" mantra. I would prefer a center that sells it as introducing graduating and current students into the broader Oberlin community, which is made up of individuals who want to help other Obies succeed.

7:22:07 PM 05.11.15

**Ruthann Rudel**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Developing strategies to achieve more fully the College's goals for equity, diversity, and inclusion; Income inequality is a growing problem in the US. In the world, too. Oberlin will be richer if it strives for a diverse student body.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Developing a new model for the career center and alumni relations that builds on synergies and promotes lifelong engagement of alumni with students and with the entire Oberlin community for the mutual benefit of all. I don't know about how to do this, or even if it should be a priority, but it seems like an important direction. I am a leader in a small scientific non-profit research organization, and we have a growing number of Obies on our staff.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Promoting and piloting new and disruptive ideas through an "innovation zone" tied with environmental sustainability. It is important for graduates to have TWO THINGS: 1. Strong and high quality academic training; 2. A

sense of how the world works, why it works the way it does, and how they can make an impact.

7:44:59 PM 05.11.15

**Roy Allen**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Increase funding

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Increase funding

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Increase funding

8:39:57 PM 05.11.15

**Mike Markovits**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: E—Examining financial model—need to develop new ways to maintain tuition without dramatic increases while continuing to deliver extensive financial aid.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Leadership in environmental sustainability—required for not only the future of Oberlin but more importantly the future of the world.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Equity, diversity and inclusion—again, Oberlin can and should be a leader, leveraging its history, to set a whole new standard about what this means not only in a college but in any organization.

8:42:09 PM 05.11.15

**Martin Kuntsmann**

*Alumnus*

I am an alumnus of the class of '58. Looking back over the past half century, I feel that my Oberlin education prepared me reasonably well technologically, but it didn't prepare me well for dealing with the outside world. Since nowadays learning responsibility, integrity, ingenuity, etc. has been minimized within the family structure, I think it should be emphasized more as part of the education process for dealing with the outside world.

Also as part of the planning process, problem solving should include taking an overview of the entire area from which the problem arises before jumping to a conclusion, however expedient it needs to be, before jumping to a conclusion and recommending a solution. To illustrate, recommendations by the FDA regarding health effects of fats, blood pressures, cholesterol, etc. were absolutely wrong and probably caused more harm than good. Also the current views regarding global warming/climate change are primarily focusing on reduction of carbon dioxide rather than the total picture of how it is part of the whole life cycle. The contributions of other gases, and most importantly the cyclic nature of the sun and the earth (volcanos, etc.) are not meaningfully dealt with. I have lived long enough to recognize the cyclic nature of the sun and the earth on our climate/temperature. We would be far better off if we focused on how to deal with the

extremities rather than how to control them, at least based on our current state of knowledge.

In reading through the Core Values, I see a lot of “To Dos” but what do you hope to achieve by them? I think that a statement of purpose should be clearly stated for each one or collectively. With regard to J [Maintain leadership in environmental sustainability and fulfill the prior institutional pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025], I strongly agree with environmental sustainability, but I absolutely disagree with achieving carbon neutrality by 2025 as a goal because until we know the entire effect of the environment on global warming/climate change, we can't know its ultimate effect! I appreciate your allowing me to comment on the preliminary Strategic Plan and hope that my comments will be helpful. Over the past few years, I've been involved in reviewing several strategic plans and in general insufficient time was allowed to develop them with regard to their purported purpose and they became “sterile” documents that sounded nice but were not really meaningful.

9:06:04 PM O5.11.15

**Richard Wolfson**

*Alumnus*

My lack of resonance with the “core values” statement is an impression that it lacks imagination. It reads like the product of a committee, rather than the Oberlin voice of the poet. Too careful, somewhat pedantic and overall, boring. Perhaps that is a stylistic observation. Substantively, the statement sounds like it wants to “look liberal,” but still rings with an uppity exclusivity. What would it say if you had to write it as a manifesto, instead of a “core values statement,” then had to spray paint it as graffiti on walls that needed toppling?

[On Strategic Directions]: Somewhere in that sea of words there may be a message, but it's lost. How can you write of or hope to inspire disruption if the statement reflects obsolescence? The College and Conservatory hold some of the freshest voices and most creative minds in the universe. This effort sounds like a bad college admissions essay written by a student who wasn't accepted.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Transform knowledge to wisdom. Demonstrate that information is meaningless in a vacuum. Learn from all people and see all people as teachers.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Be able to verbalize what makes Oberlin special: no fraternities or sororities; no big money sports; no mass marketed consumerism. Oberlin values and its students embody individuality and creativity. That will be lost if we try to compete with other institutions without being what we uniquely are. The lesson of an Oberlin education is educating in the brilliant student the talent and abilities already within, that brought him or her to the mix.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Teach economic responsibility. I thought our mission was “Learning and Labor.” Give college credit for humble service to others.

9:13:22 PM 05.11.15

**Don Welch**

*Alumnus*

I am concerned that Oberlin is joining the East Coast “Ivy League” schools in becoming accessible to only those students who border on genius and are thus able to get a highly discounted tuition, or the very wealthy and well connected who are able to bear the cost for those not receiving a scholarship. I don’t believe either my wife or I would be able to attend these days, and I fear the Oberlin community isolates itself when it excludes ordinary students who have very good grades, but not top 1%, and are not extraordinarily wealthy. There was a time Oberlin sent well trained and morally conscious graduates into the world to teach and encourage elementary and high school students, and those in need in remote corners of the world. It seems those goals have been replaced by the pursuit of wealth and prestigious personal recognition. Perhaps not on paper, but in fact.

9:18:07 PM 05.11.15

**Porter James**

*Alumnus*

These values are all well and good, but I’m concerned that the college will not take them to heart, especially regarding living within financial constraints—the tendency currently seems to be to continue to build and maintain luxury facilities filled with expensive technological equipment, passing the costs on to the students in the form of massive student debt. Without the implementation of greater transparency (point 10) the student body will have no way of holding the school accountable these core values.

[On Strategic Directions]: Several of these points are important, but some of them (without knowing all the details) seem to be sources of further expenses, rather than cutting back on costs, which is what is needed to achieve financial sustainability (for example, points A-E all sound like they could become expensive new programs). That said, it’s hard to assess these goals without knowing all the details—if a more collaborative government structure were implemented (point K), I could trust that current students would take on the work of aligning administrative projects with student needs.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: G—reducing rate of growth of tuition, etc. You can talk all you want about increased diversity, but without addressing the issue of rising cost this diversity will only become even more of a mirage.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: K—collaborative governance structure.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: F—equity, diversity and inclusion.

9:19:56 PM 05.11.15

**Michael Buescher**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Especially on the need to keep Oberlin financially accessible; on the imperative of living within financial constraints; on the continued support of faculty scholarship and artistic achievement and of full engagement of faculty as teachers and advisors.

[On Strategic Directions]: Because it's so early in the process, the Strategic Directions are pretty vague and general. It's hard to tell how well they align with the Core Values, because they could go any of several ways.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: (F) [Develop even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion]: A one-hundred-eighty-year commitment to equity and justice is what sets Oberlin apart from its "peer" institutions, and what will continue to attract top students, staff, and faculty. Diversity in socioeconomic status is going to be crucial in the 21st century.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: (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]: An institution is only as strong as its people. I'm lucky enough to work at an outstanding educational institution, and I know how important it is to have a dedicated, talented, collaborative, respectful faculty and staff.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: (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]: There is no "long term strategic plan" without financial stability.

9:24:42 PM 05.11.15

**Frances Pickin Florio**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: They sound like what Oberlin gave to me in the 1970's.

[On Strategic Directions]: You are dealing with economic reality these days. Do you cut or do you ask for more money? There must be a balance. I hope that you have enough people who see the entire picture to make these decisions.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Based on my experience in teaching, relying on on-line courses (because they are supposedly cheaper) is the wrong way to go. Part of learning is having the ability to talk to the professor or a fellow student. You can't do that on-line. Reading a text book by myself is one thing; hearing different people share how they understood the topics under discussion is something completely different—and

absolutely what Oberlin should not lose. Small things like learning how to participate in a discussion—you can't get that when you are a computer!

9:38:41 PM 05.11.15

**Brigitte Alexander**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Mission tackles too many issues (diversity, sustainability, quality, etc.) at once. Pick one or two on which to focus, preferably of a scale on which Oberlin might have an impact. For example, sustainability is subject to vast outside influences beyond the College's control. Think local/smaller, more focused.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Quality

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Cost

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Diversity

12:49:31 AM 05.12.15

**Dawn Palmer**

*Alumnus*

[On Strategic Directions]: The concept of the Innovation Zone is not clearly described, thus hard to respond to. Also, in consideration of students with less financial resources—the ideas of international study or a culminating senior project, while potentially important and valuable, can also be divisive. I know I thought about some of the semester abroad programs, but there was no way it could happen due to extra cost on top of tuition, R&B and then loss of ability to work during the semester on top of that. ('89 grad who needed all the grants, aid, loans and work-study I could get, plus working summers and holiday breaks).

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: A [Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond] and 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] could be considered together. How to enable students to better understand career options/having viable discussions with alumni, without the default option being graduate school. I've worked 20+ years in biotech/pharma without finishing the PhD I started directly after Oberlin. I wasn't ready for grad school financially, but didn't know it; was burned out academically, but also didn't know it. If I'd have had more information that I could do research or Quality work in these companies without the PhD, I might've gone that route immediately, and saved time, stress, money, and an opening for another student.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: 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] is of course, very important even if not as directly aligned with historical Oberlin directions.

But no money, means no Oberlin. How to make this an engaging topic, focus without “turning off” the super-idealistic Obies of the past and the future will be tough. I understand that there’s been a perception of Oberlin reaching out to more “well funded” students over the past ~20 years, in order to partially (or more) subsidize the rest. I get that as a strategy, but I’ve read that there has been an impact on the diversity of the student body that could be considered unfortunate. Hence F [Develop even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion].

2:52:10 AM 05.12.15

**Edmund Frank**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Academic rigor achieved through interactions with a wider range of resources. The role of alumni should be strengthened. It will provide a view into the world outside the academic campus.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Survivable economic trajectory.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Continue the historic dedication to inclusiveness.

8:29:30 AM 05.12.15

**David Snider**

*Alumnus*

[On Strategic Directions]: Not enough emphasis on basic sciences; not enough emphasis on international studies and languages, particularly in Europe and Japan.

9:07:12 AM 05.12.15

**John C. Morgan**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Most of the core values do align with my vision of what Oberlin might be, but they need to be more succinct, perhaps grouped into a few. Where I teach now has five core values and is able to state the overall mission in one sentence. Less is more.

[On Strategic Directions]: Again, I think they could be summarized in fewer words, more like strategic statements that attract and enlighten others.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Year-round college. This would open the college of [sic] new students, provide more income, increase educational opportunities for students and perhaps draw on adjuncts.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Health and wellness. I know as a teacher of students, how many are not prepared to take care of themselves and they and the college suffer. It is not a matter of having a health facility but having this as one of the college's strategic goals.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: More nimble governance. I remember decisions often delayed at the college because of turf and governance issues. The issue here is leadership, not hierarchical but shared.

9:18:24 AM 05.12.15

**Steven McQuillin**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: They all seem excellent; Oberlin has a great campus that has some terrific historic landmarks by Weary & Kramer such as Peters Hall; Patton & Miller's Carnegie Library and all the buildings by Cass Gilbert; it also has an excellent collection of books on historic architecture. Oberlin has the potential to grow in historic preservation education.

[On Strategic Directions]: I'd further suggest that Oberlin build on its Asian connection to attract some of their best and brightest. It has a unique historical connection with Japan and China dating back for generations and that could be a real asset for the future. (Boxer Rebellion and Memorial Arch, the destruction of the Summer Palace near Beijing as a result; founding of Christian-themed universities in post-war Japan).

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: My advice relates more to physical improvements, but I suggest they could be helpful to the institution's future; I have read and agree with all the stated goals. #1. Consider rebuilding Wilder Bowl as a beautiful Asian-themed garden that recalls the original sunken garden plan when Mudd Library was first built but which could use Chinese artisans to create a beautiful environment like Portland's magnificent new Chinese Tea Garden and which could become a cultural and educational campus centerpiece.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: #2. Broaden the college's role in the community by providing incentives for local public and private enhancements that improve the whole community, including historic preservation, bike-friendly streets, downtown revitalization preservation/enhancement of the community's older and historic housing stock.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: #3. Revitalize a somewhat neglected resource, the Oberlin Arboretum, a gift to the college from Charles Martin Hall, enhance its pathways, obtain salvaged historic bridges to span Plum Creek for various pedestrian crossings, add landscaped areas, preserve the Johnson House barn, even if only for storage or even no use, although it could possibly be as dorm or public meeting space. Each of these items costs money, but possibly not as much with judicious planning, and each has the potential to build links with alumni, new students, the greater community and build on the strengths of this great institution. Thank you for providing this opportunity to make suggestions.

9:56:33 AM 05.12.15

**Renee B. Johnson**



*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: G [Engage the Oberlin community in a thorough assessment of our financial objectives]: Oberlin cannot continue to exist in an acceptable format without strong financial underpinnings.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: A [Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond]: Oberlin's commitment to the individual within its community is part of what makes it Oberlin. As our society embraces more technology that removes meaningful human interaction and support, it is imperative that we craft places and times where young people may explore the nurturing and responsibility of becoming adults. Oberlin has always been such a place to the benefit of its alumnae' academic, professional and personal lives.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: D [Deepen collaboration and interconnection]: One of the few regrets I have about my years at Oberlin is not having explored Allen or the Conservatory more. Since I didn't take classes in either, I didn't feel a welcoming to be involved. Changing that for students, creating means for them to be involved expands their knowledge, builds alumnae loyalty and makes for a more efficient usage of all the resources the College has to offer. Oberlin is not a University with separate and distinct silos of education. Oberlin is a community of laboring scholars.

10:35:43 AM 05.12.15

**Danny Kleinman**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Recruiting and retaining an excellent faculty.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Promoting and piloting new and disruptive ideas.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Year-round utilization of Oberlin resources.

10:37:52 AM 05.12.15

**Rachel Maceiras**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Raise more money: There are a few simple things the college could do to improve fundraising efforts. The materials produced by the development department are often visually unappealing and confusing. I was sent a mailer last year that was absolutely embarrassing. The full-page ads in the alumni magazine are amateurish. The college employs an award winning graphic designer in the communications department. (discloser: Emily Crawford is a friend of mine but I say this without bias) Give her the resources she needs to overhaul the materials sent/given to alum and other potential donors. If we want to project a level of sophistication this would be a good place to start. Further, the website produced for the capital campaign is

scant at best. Where are the testimonials? Where are the current and former students talking about their experience at Oberlin? Where are the examples of where my money will go? The Green Arts district is potentially one of the most exciting projects the college has undertaken. Give me details! Too much information is not enough. Too many testimonials are not enough. I should feel compelled to donate and I don't. It feels like the college is always doing everything on the cheap especially when it comes to raising money. This is a huge, massive, dumb mistake.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Do a better job engaging with Alumni: I already told this story to a development officer but I will share here. I live in Brooklyn and was invited to a picnic in Prospect Park last year. I attended with a few friends. The event was not well attended considering the number of alumni who live in Brooklyn, let alone the rest of NYC. There was a staff member from the college on hand to host. There was no table so all of the food was on a blanket on the ground. This is disgusting and was extremely awkward for the handful of older alumni. The staff member did nothing other than hand out name badges and an "I heart Oberlin" button. He did not engage (I had to initiate conversation and after asking him several questions about himself that he did not reciprocate, I moved on) nor did he facilitate introductions. When the event was over, there were still a handful of people left, hanging out. He packed up the trash and took his Oberlin banner and left. I thought this was unprofessional. If you are hosting an event, you are the last to leave. Next time, spend the money to rent a table or borrow one from someone who lives in the neighborhood. Engage with attendees—perhaps someone would be willing to help out next time or be interested in hosting a gathering in the future. Anyone who bothers to show up to a lame picnic is automatically an engaged alumni. Engage them!

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Spend money on better reunions—i.e. food and booze. I get it, Oberlin is a nutty-crunchy, do-it-yourself, can-do-spirit kind of place. However, you guys really need to kick it up a few notches at the reunions. My brother attended his 25th reunion at Harvard and said the (good) booze and (delicious) food never stopped flowing. They offered free babysitting. A delightful student offered to carry his bags to his room when he checked in. He commented that it was very over the top and very Harvard. Now, I am not suggesting that we try to pretend we are Harvard but why does it have to feel like penance? There has to be a happy medium. At one reunion I got the stink eye when I asked for an extra blanket. The picnic was held at the depressing ice skating rink and the food was completely mediocre. Again, you are asking for people to give you their hard earned money. People who work as professors and teachers and social workers. People who had kids late and are dealing with summer camp tuition late into their 40s. People who are generally progressive and probably donate to a lot of charities. People who might feel resentful because they spent so much money on their education (and probably paid it off for years). Make them feel special! Who doesn't like a little pampering? I realize this is not at all what you are looking for but the bottom line is Oberlin needs to raise money. Serious money. Period. Full stop. The end.

10:43:36 AM 05.12.15

**Lynn Guilbert Bonner '62**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: I guess this document is primarily a business plan—a survival plan. It lacks convincing rationale for why Oberlin should survive, does not say enough about the values of the College or about the “product.” The “product” should be seen as graduates who embody and live the values of a liberal education. The focus here is largely on education as the product, but education is just the means. I realize that, as said in the Talmud, “no bread, no learning”; but I would like there to be some elements in this document that inspire me to stretch to provide financial support to Oberlin and there is nothing like that here. For that I must rely on my cherished 50+-year-old memories of my inspiring education at Oberlin. However, thank you for so much hard work and thought and effort.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: “Assuring continued leadership in environmental sustainability” For survival of the planet. And practical education and experience in a field that will be financially, socially, and spiritually rewarding.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: “Developing strategies to achieve more fully the College’s goals for equity, diversity, and inclusion.” For survival of our society.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: “Recruiting and retaining an excellent and diverse faculty, and ensuring that they are compensated at a level that is competitive with our peer institutions.” For survival of quality Oberlin education.

11:37:16 AM 05.12.15

**Naomi Lipke**

*Alumnus*

[On Strategic Directions]: The Strategic Directions seem like minor changes to solve what seems to be a somewhat urgent problem. The Strategic Directions seem to be aimed at maintaining Oberlin’s strengths and improving its competitiveness rather than being about increasing revenue and reducing costs.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: “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.” Having graduated nine years ago from Oberlin, there were many practical skills that I needed when I started looking for work. I wish these practical skills had been part of my education rather than something I picked up through extra curricular activities and internships. I would be interested in seeing Oberlin better live up to its motto “Learning and Labor” to give students practical skills for changing the world. I thought I possibly understood the motto when I read Booker T. Washington’s *Up From Slavery*. I supposed that possibly both Tuskegee and Oberlin were founded with these ideals of labor and education in mind. What does this motto mean to Oberlin College? How could student labor be redirected to cut costs for the institution, minimize tuition increases, and create value for the students? I am inspired by

a school here in Denmark called Kaospilots which is educating students to be innovators and changemakers either by starting businesses or organizations or by working within one. They educate students in leadership, project management, design thinking, and business concepts through hands-on projects and residencies. Oberlin College states with pride that many of its students go on to get advanced degrees. I think that Oberlin would be better served if it could say that its students get the equivalent of an advanced degree at Oberlin, because they go on to work in professional capacities directly from their undergraduate degree.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: “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.” This sounds fine, but you have not convinced me that anything will actually change. These ideas just sound like you looked at what other colleges are doing and are proposing to do the same. Is there some synergy between Oberlin's strengths and its financial needs? Are there more creative ways that Oberlin could achieve its goals while cutting costs? In addition, what does it mean to maximize endowment growth? Will that also align with Oberlin's broader goals for social and environmental justice? How will Oberlin find opportunities for synergy and greater efficiency—who will be involved in that discussion? Will jobs be cut? What will that mean for the Oberlin community? The discussion seems to have centered on how to maintain and improve Oberlin's strengths in order to make it more competitive. I might like to see more creative thinking on how you will increase revenue and reduce costs. If you want to attract the best students and professors from around the world, what does the cost of tuition need to be in 5-10 years?

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: “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.” I think this is important as well. I like that you are thinking about integrating advising and student support. Do you offer a class or extra-curricular activity related to personal development, leadership, or career planning? This is also something you might be able to accomplish using online resources.

12:17:14 PM 05.12.15

**Richard J. Hall, '59**

*Alumnus*

[On Strategic Directions]: The Strategic Directions over-emphasizes personalized counseling, mentoring, career advising, health and wellness counseling, etc. All of this requires lots of (support) staff; and lots of staff requires lots of money. Oberlin continues to get very good students, and most very good students will be able to get most of the advice they need from their (very good) profs. [Full disclosure: I was at Oberlin in the '50s when we had very little support staff and when jobs were plentiful.]

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Cut staff where possible. We more and more treat college students as needing lots of infrastructure help. They mostly don't; they are adults and smart ones at that. They can navigate college and the after-college world. Emphasize the essentials—good faculty and good students.

12:37:45 PM 05.12.15

**Thomas Bradford (Tom) Gregory**  
*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: At one time, I believe Oberlin graduates had the highest per capita Ph.D. attainment. Is superior academic achievement still a priority? Core Values 1 and 2 address challenge, support, and connectivity. Are we supposed to infer achievement?

[On Strategic Directions]: The College of Wooster has a “Capstone Experience.” Could you talk with them about best practices? Wooster isn't that far from Oberlin. Could students have the opportunity to collaborate with students with similar interests at the other college? Ashland University isn't that far away either. I suspect that Oberlin's laboratory facilities are superior to those of Ashland, although I don't know. Could Ashland students be bussed to Oberlin for lab classes? How about Lorain County Community College? Could revenue be enhanced this way? Could more bright students be engaged by Oberlin? There are retired faculty members still in Oberlin. Professor George Andrews comes to mind. Would they be willing to share the teaching of a class? They might well be reluctant to be tied down for a whole semester, but they might be willing to share the teaching of a course. They tend to be excellent teachers, and might be willing to teach at a reduced rate (or to contribute their time). Did the Strategic Directions address relations with the City of Oberlin?

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Without an excellent faculty, little else matters.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Efficient use of resources should always be a priority—not only to support the educational enterprise as well as possible, but also to inspire donors.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: The challenge of maintaining excellence while actively adapting and evolving is a worthy use of the awesome intellect of the Oberlin community.

1:07:36 PM 05.12.15

**Jodi Borger**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Faculty are the heart of Oberlin and the engine that runs the learning process.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Change is necessary and quick. We need to get ahead of the curve.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Offering something different from other colleges will bring in the type of students we want.

1:13:06 PM 05.12.15

**Michael Murray**

*Alumnus*

[On Strategic Directions]: Glad to see carbon neutrality in there. Leading liberal arts colleges on climate is not necessarily a cost; it adds a lot of value to Oberlin's reputation and creates many practical opportunities for current students.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: At the heart of Oberlin are great teachers. Everything else flows from talented educators.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: J [Maintain leadership in environmental sustainability and fulfill the prior institutional pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025]: This is important to differentiating Oberlin from its peers, engaging students in wide-ranging interdisciplinary studies, and connecting Oberlin's history of seeking social justice to a changing climate.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Oberlin is a liberal arts school, but it can't ignore the job market. Making Oberlin more "practical" and leading students to jobs and careers is critical. Alumni are probably underutilized in this respect—some sort of career mentorship to current students should complement a thoughtful review of class offerings to be more applied and skills-oriented.

1:23:39 PM 05.12.15

**Robert Leurck '78**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: There is a noticeable absence of business outreach. Oberlin is unique in its proud foundation and commitment to critical thinking, diversity and inclusion. Sadly there can be a tendency to assume such values are antipathy to economic institutions. There needs to be a commitment to a diverse outreach to non-government aligned business both large and small. Not just Tom Steyer :-). I think there needs to be learning opportunities to better expose Oberlin students to commercial activities as agents of change. Oberlin students need to see the Marketplace not with fear and hostility but as an objective arbiter of action. A judge of ideas as important as any professor. An area where a good idea can truly change the world with instant recognition and volition not compulsion and regulation.

[On Strategic Directions]: Aligned with greater outreach to non-government aligned business create fund-raising targets for business. Consider guest lecturer programs on markets and market behavior. On communication and presentation. Align Oberlin's passion for honest discussion with the natural need of economic interests to grow markets.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: A bit of a broken record—outreach to business, commitment to a diverse student population and how you might attract that diversity while honoring Oberlin's tradition of inclusion.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Oberlin students bring passion, they need a diverse education that includes commercial behavior and innovation. Market Oberlin's diversity and strong academic standards with the 'Labor' aspect on our logo. The farm field of today is small non-government aligned business.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Another repeat :-) Business, Business, Business. A liberal arts education is the perfect foundation for business as learning and self-learning is a capacity all business need to lead them to Market and to address and contribute to the Market. This has been dismissed by some as 'trade,' No, this is a 'life well spent' and a world changed for the better. An inquiring, truly open and courageous mind provides the best preparation for commercial innovation and actions that improve

the world with every act. Communicating that Oberlin is ‘business friendly,’ ‘business eager’ and ‘business tolerant’ should be on everyone's diversity and inclusion menu.

2:32:08 PM 05.12.15

**Jonathan Bruno**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: In general, the core values articulated in the report are very attractive, and align with my vision of Oberlin. The difficulty lies in making the kinds of tradeoffs to which the report alludes. For me, I would place relatively greater importance on academic excellence, and relatively less on non-academic support structures for students. It’s not that the latter are unimportant, but I’d sooner look for economies there than on the teaching and research side.

[On Strategic Directions]: There are some great ideas in the report’s strategic directions. The trick is to get a bit more specific. I like the idea of potentially integrating Career Services and Alumni Services, and of creating a ‘year-round Oberlin’ to raise additional revenue. I’m concerned that additional investments in non-academic support services (resource centers, wellness and counseling, etc.) may not be prudent at this time, given the institution's broader financial outlook.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: I—Recruit and retain excellent faculty. To me, this is really the core of the value that Oberlin imparts to its students. Faculty should be excellent scholars who are also deeply committed to promoting student growth in a comprehensive way—including in the intellectual, moral, and personal registers. Faculty compensation should be competitive, though not on the high end for our peer group. Recruitment efforts should focus on non-salary factors—for instance, finding posts at Oberlin for well-qualified spouses/partners, offering generous sabbatical schedules, etc.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: A—High-achieving trajectories for students. This strategic direction is very important to me, though (as noted above) I would place less emphasis on the counseling and wellness support, and much more on the individualized culminating experiences and strong advising/mentoring relationships. Ideally, the mentoring would come from faculty who are committed to student growth and achievement, at Oberlin and beyond.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: G—Engage Oberlin community in discussion of financial outlook and objectives. If our institution is going to navigate the difficult waters ahead, all stakeholders must come to understand the hard choices we face. It seems to me very important that the school's high-profile leaders—including but not limited to President Krislov—help the broader Oberlin community to see how critical the next few years will be for the institution's future.

6:51:56 PM 05.12.15

**Noah Schwarz**

*Alumnus*



[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: K: Transparent and nimble governance.  
[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: G: Reassessment of financial objectives.  
[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: I: Recruit and retain excellent and diverse faculty.

7:27:44 PM 05.12.15

**Richard Mendes**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: All very nice, but Oberlin needs to reassess its finances, or the rest becomes irrelevant. How can physical and human resources be used more extensively to lower unit costs? What changes would allow quality education affordably? Does Internet attendance and limited on-campus residence allow reduction of tuition?

[On Strategic Directions]: See above.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: First-rate educational experience.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Affordability.

8:33:53 PM 05.12.15

**Christopher Gollmar**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: I wish it said something more about the liberal arts. As colleges and universities shift to a more business-oriented model, Oberlin is unique in that it embraces learning in a more open and thoughtful way.

[On Strategic Directions]: The directions seem well correlated with the goals, but I'm bothered by the jargon in Strategic Direction 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]. It masks the non-specificity of this Strategic Direction.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: I think if Oberlin is going to be innovative and attract students, faculty, and staff who are committed to the changing intellectual and artistic landscape, then deepening connectedness and collaboration is a necessity.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Engaging the entire Oberlin community and remaining transparent as priorities are made

is absolutely essential, and was a sore point in the 2005 strategic plan. If tough decisions need to be made, let's make them together.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: A [Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond]: Developing new strategies for engaging alumni in the community is important. I want to remain connected, but don't know how to do so in a way that fits my lifestyle and needs. Please involve OSCA and the cooperative community in these discussions as well. Cooperative living is something that affects many alumni's lives for years to come.

10:16:56 PM 05.12.15

**James Fletcher**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Some of the core values are more critical than others. I think the mission statement should be narrowed. Some of the core values are essential while others are nice. That doesn't mean you throw the nice values away, but they must be kept in perspective.

[On Strategic Directions]: I think Oberlin's most important asset is its reputation for providing an excellent educational experience.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Strategic direction G, insuring the financial well being into the future, is imperative. To achieve this, costs must be reduced in a balanced way to continue to achieve the core values. The financial commitment to some of the core values may need to be cut in scope to insure the continued pursuit of the most critical values.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: I will pick H, ensuring excellent faculty. An excellent faculty is probably the most important component of an exceptional educational experience. Oberlin's most important asset is the perception on the part of the entire educational community that Oberlin provides an excellent education.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Any of the strategic directions that relate directly to the student's health, welfare and educational experience while on campus.

11:22:17 AM 05.13.15

**Anthony Bonifonte**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Step E, developing a model to expand career services. As an alumni from 2011, my cohort found it extremely difficult to transition into the professional work world. It took many of my friends and colleagues years to find a position, and many of them were mediocre at best. Expanding career services is my top priority.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Step D, broadening collaboration between departments. Most academic departments seemed very strictly self-contained, and I would have seen great value in tying them together. I think of programs such as <http://www.augsburg.edu/river/> which pick a theme and tie together natural science, politics, environmental issues, social justice, etc. I believe Oberlin could accomplish such a feat (without needing to leave campus!) and it would be a vastly rewarding experience for students.

11:31:19 AM 05.13.15

**Peter Naegele**  
*Staff*

[On Strategic Directions]: I have been working for the past several years on flipped and blended learning environments in my statistics software labs. The only place I have been able to share my work and receive support is through OCTET. It would be useful to receive additional support for this path.

12:05:35 PM 05.13.15

**Amy (Waters) Meyer**  
*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Much of what is written expresses why I was glad to attend Oberlin, even 60+ years ago.

[On Strategic Directions]: I especially noted the desire to make the school more financially sustainable and think the idea of using the campus year-round should be explored as quickly as possible. I went to Oxford for several weeks one summer (under UC Berkeley's auspices) and I have often noted summer programs at Harvard and other schools.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Summer programs, as above.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Career counseling: I sure could have used that help!

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Any other ways of making Oberlin more financially sustainable. The current cycle of increasing costs to go to college is becoming a major detriment to a future of having an educated, fully productive America.

1:31:35 PM 05.13.15

**Debbie Lund**  
*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: A: Individualized trajectory for student studies including study abroad and a culminating senior experience. As a German teacher I may be prejudiced, but I feel that spending at least a semester abroad (immersed in a different culture, not just a transplanted Oberlin campus) is essential for people who hope to play a

positive role in a globally integrated society. The culminating senior experience should be a way for a student to make a mark, not just check off a box.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: G: Financial sustainability through diversification of revenue sources. It looks like the only way since tuition alone cannot do it and tuition is out of the reach of so many of our “target audience.”

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: B: “Innovation Zone.” This is a way of thinking that is unique to the U.S. and one of our strengths as a culture. Being an incubator for such thinking has been a hallmark of Oberlin and should continue to be.

1:43:02 PM 05.13.15

**Julie Weir**  
*Staff*

[On Core Values]: I think as stated [Core Value] #2 [Oberlin’s mission is to prepare students for the future. An Oberlin education must prepare students to see and understand the connections among all aspects of their Oberlin experience, and we must strengthen the bridges between Oberlin undergraduates and the entire Oberlin community—especially the alumni community—that they will join once they have graduated] is weak because I don’t think being prepared for the future is limited to having Oberlin connections. I think and would agree with the core value of students having a strong sense of community from the time they apply to the time the graduate and beyond. I would also agree it should include Alumni. I think missing in the core values is being prepared for the future—this should be a strong individual preparation—which I think is in the mission statement, but missing in the core values. It should include gaining learning skills and knowledge that preps them for thriving in a changing workforce and society. I agree with [Core Value] #9 [Oberlin must continue to share the resources of the College and Conservatory in a meaningful way with the City of Oberlin as we recognize that true partnerships benefit all involved] but it should be the citizens or community of the town of Oberlin not the “city.” I strongly agree with all other points made.

[On Strategic Directions]: I think in general they fit the Core Values, though some of the Directions are very vague and seem to lack in a more comprehensive and complete thought.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: # A—Support of the whole student is vital, a strongly believe a culminating senior experience would go a long way to enhancing the Oberlin Education. I also think that though the following is under the goal of diversity, it should be a part of the Strategic Direction as well because it also supports the whole person and enhances the Oberlin education. “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.”

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: 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. These are rich resources at Oberlin and they all should be a more integral part of a student experience. I do believe that Computer resources should be added to this collaboration. Today flexibility including the ability to learn, research, understand different perspectives and appreciate different approaches is important to having a prosperous future no matter what your field.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: This would have been my first priority, but I think you have to support the individual student and broaden their skills and understanding first, then just as important is to be sure they have the support and knowledge to enter the working world. I would include in the collaboration of the Alumni and Career services, student employment (campus jobs and supervisors). When students do have jobs on campus they should be learning skills and practicing good habits that help them succeed at getting and holding a job. Most students today have little to no work experience. We have a unique opportunity in school to not just give them a job, but to give them training about working. I think 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] is a given and why it is not on my top 3.

5:09:31 PM 05.13.15

**Stephen Crowley**  
*Faculty*

[On Core Values]: The core mission of the College, indeed any college, should be teaching students. Oberlin College has historically long stood for diversity and progressive values, and it should not lose sight of that vision.

[On Strategic Directions]: I fully recognize that there are many folks who have worked hard on producing this document. The problem as I see it is there is much in the “strategic directions” language that is only tangentially related to the teaching of students. “Health and wellness” is mentioned twice (an important value, to be sure, but we are not the Cleveland Clinic) and I’m not sure I know what “disruptive innovations” really means. We try to do too much, and then we wonder why we are in a financial crunch. Must we give every student an “individualized” and “personalized” college experience? Would it not be enough to give students the tools they need to reflect on their lives, so they can chart their own course for the future?

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Again, I think our top “strategic direction” should be to think through how best to teach our students. Though A [Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond]

comes closest to focusing on this question, there is a lot of roundabout language here about “deploy[ing] a wide range of mechanisms and services to provide appropriate and personalized advising, counseling, mentoring, and health and wellness support.”

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: It cannot help but sound self-serving coming from a faculty member, but besides focusing on the teaching of students, we must focus on the faculty who do that teaching. There’s no question we are in a financial crunch. But unfortunately we live in a market economy, and if we move away from the commitment to bring up faculty salaries to the median of those schools we compare ourselves to, we will eventually have a faculty that is not of the same quality of those schools. In that case we might decide to stop comparing ourselves to the “sweet sixteen” and chose are different group to compare ourselves with.

5:34:12 PM

**Francis H. Schott ‘49**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: The Report gives too little attention to the imperative of improving the College’s financial position. Such an improvement should be the top priority until annual tuition increases are brought in line with no more than the cost-of-living increase. The Action program from the Report should be dominated by financial imperatives.

[On Strategic Directions]: Number G on p.12 [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] is submerged in a flood of divergent thoughts when it should be clearly labeled # 1. What else could have motivated the entire exercise? Remember: “You can’t do good unless you do well.”

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: The possible action priorities of G (p.12) should themselves be prioritized, perhaps in a time table setting clear year-by-year goals for implementation. The danger is to dismiss some savings/revenue enhancement ideas as taking too much time to be practical when the answer should be start now if you wish to have an effect in 3 - 5 years. E.g., the alumni contribution rate should be improved through intensive multi-year efforts.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Any additional priorities should fit into the imperative of enhancing the college’s financial position.

9:52:23 PM 05.13.15

**Jeffrey Bash**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values and Strategic Directions]: This comment applies to both Core Values and Strategic Directions. I have always said that the key thing I got out of Oberlin was that I learned how to think clearly, largely because of rigorous, required exposure to

many disciplines through a liberal arts education. My Oberlin education has not failed me in thinking clearly with respect to new opportunities and challenges encountered since graduation. While I think this idea was alluded to in the portion of the Mission Statement quoted below, I would have liked to have seen it reflected more clearly in Core Values and Strategic Directions. In particular, I think this is what differentiates a rigorous Oberlin liberal arts education from others. .... Oberlin graduates are empowered with knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that are essential to confront complex and difficult issues and to create change and value in the world. Furthermore, I am a fan of distribution requirements. Therefore, I found the Mission Statement, Core Value and Strategic Directions deficient in that I believe a broad, wide-ranging education should be considered an essential part of the Oberlin experience (and explicitly mentioned).

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Two phrases caught my eye in the material: .... public and media outcry regarding tuition hikes and student debt burdens .... Oberlin has always been ambitious beyond its means.... It seems to me that these two appear to represent an attitude that Oberlin is fine with ambitions beyond it means and has no problem itself with tuition increases exceeding the rate of inflation for decades (in order to achieve such ambitions). I think this is fundamentally an error and this project should have a greater emphasis on what has happened over past decades to create an uncompetitively priced product to the general public and what changes could be made in the future with respect to such “excesses.”

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: A third phrase caught my eye: .... maximizing endowment growth. I work in the investment field. I think your phrase has dangerous implications. In my opinion, the Fed’s Zero Interest Rate Policy (ZIRP) has competitively driven most asset prices to levels such that FUTURE expected average investment returns from here will be historically low. If correct, this will have severe implications for insurance companies, managers of defined benefit pension plans and institutions like Oberlin relying on endowment income. In my opinion, it is better to assess, understand and face reality now than to take imprudent risk in a likely failed attempt to maximize such endowment growth (relative to performance of recent years).

1:43:50 AM 05.14.15

**Douglas Walter**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: It’s hard to figure out how to make practical priorities out of the Core Values. Of course, that’s not their only function!

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: It’s almost meaningless to pick one, but I’ll say 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] on the theory that the current trajectory is unsustainable, and without assessment and action, there could be a failure and shuttering of the institution. The reverse of that is that a sustainable and well-assessed financial model would support and help develop a number of the other priorities.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Hard to choose between 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] and 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], because the staff and faculty are huge contributors to the Oberlin experience.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Hard for me to choose between continued, deepening collaboration as described by D and the reality that without J [Maintain leadership in environmental sustainability and fulfill the prior institutional pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025] there may not be much of a long-term future for the institution.

8:52:22 AM 05.14.15

**Alan Carroll**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 1. The Oberlin educational experience must be one that constantly challenges and supports our students... Without offering quality education, Oberlin does not offer anything unique.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Oberlin must find new ways to provide a valuable education that is financially accessible and acknowledge the imperative of living with financial constraints. Imaginative ways of using student labor, greater utilization of co-op style living and dining, and a reduction in administrative staff are paths to be considered.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Oberlin must continue to recruit and support excellence in scholarship, achievement and artistic accomplishment of faculty. More credit should be given to good teaching over published papers and books since Oberlin is an undergraduate institution, not a research university.

8:19:26 AM 05.14.15

**Allen Weintraub**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: I suggest that the first sentence for the Core Values read: "The Oberlin College and Conservatory educational community is dedicated to an enduring commitment to social justice built upon a history of academic and musical excellence." In my opinion it is this commitment to social justice that distinguishes Oberlin from other first class institutions of higher learning.

4:49:26 PM 05.14.15

**Dieter Knecht**



*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: The core values could include a more explicit value of student scholarship, research for the large number of Oberlin students who continue on to advanced degrees.

[On Strategic Directions]: There could be additional emphasis to support Core Value 6 [Oberlin must continue to recruit and support excellence in scholarship, achievement, and artistic accomplishment of faculty who are also actively engaged in teaching and advising] on faculty scholarship and achievement. The executive summary Strategic Directions needs to better align with the description in the body. Several bullets in Exec Summary don't seem to have a corresponding A, B, etc. Strategic Direction in the main text. It might help to use the same numbering or lettering system in the Exec Summary as used in the text.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Value 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]; financial success is a necessary condition for all the others to succeed.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Value 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]: faculty are also necessary for other values; included in this is Value 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]: closely aligned with H.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Value [sic] A [Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond] rewritten to say "creating a comprehensive advising and support system..."

5:20:27 PM 05.14.15

**Ellen Hertzman '85**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values and Strategic Directions]: They align since they use the same language, but I look forward to seeing much more detailed and specific suggestions.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Financial sustainability. Oberlin needs to take a leading role in figuring out how college will be affordable in the future. If we can't do this, none of the rest matters.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Preparing students for careers and further education, as well as supporting their success while they are at Oberlin, through ever

more active and accessible counseling, mentoring, wellness, and connections with alumni.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Strengthening connections to alumni. This has been an ongoing effort, and needs to continue to be a priority.

10:07:07 AM 05.15.15

**Donald B. Reutener**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Is Oberlin to be primarily a teaching college or a research college? Certainly both are important but I would prefer to see #6 under Emerging Core Values Read “Oberlin must attract and retain faculty who are primarily and actively engaged in teaching and advising as well as supporting excellence in scholarship, achievement and artistic accomplishment.” I believe it is particularly important to directly engage students in working with faculty in their area of expertise.

[On Strategic Directions]: Most colleges seem to be having money problems but doing more with less, even though helpful, does not seem to be the solution. Are you aggressively investing and is capital allocated to your best advantage. Are you attempting to build the endowment to cover costs. Do you have excellent professionals, board members and knowledgeable alums working with the college to manage development, fund raising and investments? Have past investment policies been updated? Just some thoughts. It’s likely you do all of that, but can you do any of it better.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: All of them are important. After rereading my comments above 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] is at the top of my list followed closely by 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] and 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].

10:48:34 AM 05.15.15

**Reid Wood**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: I would say that a key component in this area is not only preparing students for the future, but enabling them to have positive influences on the future of our communities, our country, and the world. Additionally, running through all areas of the document is the realization that affordability of college for all is absolutely essential.

[On Strategic Directions]: Making students more aware of current support/advising opportunities available to them, and increasing and integrating these to a greater degree is imperative.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: “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....” The current rate of escalating costs for an education will cause some colleges to cease to exist; the fact that this Strategic Plan recognizes that is an important first step. Solutions need to be found that both make college more affordable, and maintain Oberlin’s excellence.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: “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.”

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: “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.”

11:40:00 AM 05.15.15

**Elizabeth Hamilton and the Disability and Access Working Group**  
*Students/Faculty/Staff Hybrid*

[On Core Values]: While broad themes articulated in these values do indeed resonate with us, we were concerned that the word “disability” does not appear at any point in this document. What will ensure that we are attentive to students with disabilities as we strive for diversity and inclusion more broadly? Students with documented disabilities currently comprise 20% of the Oberlin student body. To be sure, many of these students also identify with other underrepresented populations whom we wish to attract to the College. In recognition of intersecting identities, we are calling for a specific discussion of the spectrum of learning styles and differences already or soon to be in our community.

In response to Core Value #1, that “an Oberlin education constantly challenges and supports our students over the course of their undergraduate experience,” we ask that the Strategic Planning team consider what it would mean to support students with disabilities in all spheres of campus life. We see opportunities for enhanced advising that encourages open communication (among students, advisers, instructors, and disability service providers) and self-advocacy. The challenges are greater in a residential environment such as Oberlin’s. We see a need for principled, coordinated attention to the pathways that join the academic, residential, and co-curricular spheres of Oberlin. This will require faculty and staff development along with enhanced communication and

advising. Yet the benefits to individuals and to the community at large will be significant. Welcoming, accessible living environments and dining options lead to better performance in class and in co-curricular activities.

Core Value #3, that “Oberlin must reaffirm and revitalize its historical commitment to diversity,” matters a great deal to all of us. Disability has as yet only a limited presence in Oberlin’s thinking about diversity, and we see this as an area for growth. We encourage the Strategic Planning team to bring new contours to this important discussion: what does it mean to value and include people with a whole range of differences? How might including bodily, sensory, mobility, and communicative difference expand our current understanding of diversity?

Our thinking is informed by knowledge of disability history. The “deficit” model of disability has long prevailed, suggesting that disability is a product of lack or weakness on the part of an individual. Yet scholarship and experience show us that complex social and historical factors—such as the presumption of incompetence or the lack of adaptive or assistive technology—can and do render a person disabled as much as any bodily condition.

We ask that the Strategic Plan recognize that people with disabilities have long faced societal exclusion and lack of access to education. Oberlin has already done much to welcome students with disabilities, yet this Core Value opens up opportunities to do more. We are poised to become a national leader in higher education for students with disabilities, particularly those on the autism spectrum.

The Strategic Plan affords Oberlin the opportunity to take a clear, public stand on access and inclusion as issues of diversity. With a concerted effort, we can strengthen our foundations and connect currently disparate resources in order to realize our ideals. In particular, we ask members of the Strategic Planning Bicentennial group to address neurodiversity in the current and future student body.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Strategic Direction F: Develop even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

We recommend that the Strategic Planning team be specific about what equity means. In our view, equity entails providing pathways to success for all learners and employees here. Oberlin as an institution must take an active role in providing those pathways. The Plan should acknowledge that bringing together students and staff with a range of learning styles contributes to interactional diversity. When we don’t fully include ranges of learning, then students miss important insights from their peers. Conversely, when we think about learning styles in relationship to each other, we will be able to facilitate programs to enable student success.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Strategic Direction 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.

We are excited by the possibilities of the proposed innovation zone and envision many creative uses for such a physical and conceptual space. Because our overarching goal is to position Oberlin as a leader in educating students with disabilities, we propose that the innovation zone be used to introduce Universal Design into our thinking and planning. Such a “safe space” for experimentation would support instructors in developing classroom pedagogy as well as curricular design. The innovation zone would create supportive conditions for professors to try to take more risks, a goal recently articulated in the CCC listening groups.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Strategic Direction 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 advocate for a comprehensive commitment to improved access to our physical plant, curricular and co-curricular programming, and communication. We need to wean ourselves from costly stop-gap measures, i.e., purchasing expensive assistive technology on short notice in response to an individual demand. Our choices should be informed by Universal Design, a set of principles that enables us to plan for the greatest possible inclusion from the outset, as opposed to costly retrofitting. Because we can anticipate that more students with disabilities will come to Oberlin—and eventually become alumni who return to Oberlin expecting access to alumni events—we should regard accessible infrastructure and related accessibility services as necessary investments.

We advocate for intentional consideration of how students with disabilities may avail themselves of all that Oberlin offers beyond our campus and after matriculation. Study abroad, community service, career and internship opportunities all belong to an Oberlin education. We need a pro-active network to reach out to students with disabilities and ensure their full participation in all of our opportunities.

Oberlin should design for equitable access with the future in mind. The ever-changing nature of disability itself allows us to anticipate needs with some assurance. Any person can acquire a disability at any stage of life. It is not too far-fetched to propose that a non-disabled person today might, as a result of accident or illness, become disabled and need services later in the week. Alternately, disabling conditions can be temporary. It is therefore essential that support structures and services be readily available. Because we know that access is needed now and will still be needed later, let us plan for economic sustainability with regard to accessibility in curricular and facilities planning.

1:43:00 PM 05.15.15

**Nicholas Jones**

*Faculty*

Some random thoughts:

1. The only really strategic goal I see here (that is, one responding to a perceived weakness or threat) is the financial. Put it up front, make clear how much it is a threat, or a crisis, and suggest action on it, serious action: it's time to audit our programs across the board and ask what we are doing and whether we could do it more efficiently.
2. About the opening sentence of the mission statement:
  1. "builds on a history of"—this is not a mission, but a retrospection. Fine for a history, not for a mission statement. Write it around what we are/need to become.
  2. "excellence"—"excellence" has been done to death. As Jan Cooper said today, "engagement" might be more useful.
  3. "academic and musical"—this is a tired and never accurate opposition. My musical colleagues are academic; many of us in A&S engage music in many ways. It feels like we are just listing modes of our work by the old bureaucratic divisions.

1:51:31 PM 05.15.15

**Kevin Greenwood**

*Staff*

[On Core Values]: I would like to see academic excellence/achievement used a more central theme to which the other values relate. I would also like to the values expressed more as values than as goals—really just rewording.

[On Strategic Directions]: I'd like the strategy to underscore the undertone of financial urgency that is expressed in this document. Also, the directions need to perhaps be restructured—some can be linked to each other.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: It seems like the dependence on tuition is unsustainable, and developing other funding sources (endowments, "all year" programs, international student outreach, etc.) needs to be put to the foreground.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Maintaining Oberlin's reputation for academic excellence/ achievement.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Collaboration and interconnection, if further cultivated, could be something that makes Oberlin stand out.

7:14:19 PM 05.15.15

**Jan Cooper**

*Faculty*

[On Core Values]: Taken together, the Core Values provided a sensible framework.

[On Strategic Directions]: Most of the Strategic Directions aligned with the Core Values. Direction 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], however, seems unnecessary to me. If we reward innovation and hire new community members interested in it, I hardly think a “zone” will be necessary. What may be needed instead is a better way of making people aware of what support currently exists.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: My top priority is direction F—develop even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. I urge the committee to consider that to achieve long lasting success in this priority will require sufficient support for constant attention to the needs of all community members once they arrive here, and that they may have very different kinds of needs than students/faculty/staff 30, 20, even 5 years ago.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: The second most interesting priority to me is Strategic Direction E—developing a new model for integrating the work of the Center and the Alumni Office. The explanation you give for that in Appendix D makes sense to me.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: My third priority is Strategic Direction C—providing students with resources to maintain the health and wellness necessary to achieve academic and personal success during their time at Oberlin. It seems to me that means strengthening the whole Student Life division of the institution, as well as the Counseling Center and Student Health. I am particularly disturbed by how overworked and under-resourced the class deans, the MRC, Disability Services, and the Office of Equity are. Health and wellness depend on a communal climate of reasonable accommodations and support, as well as traditional health care access. It worries me that Direction C was given so little explanation in Appendix D.

7:14:25 AM 05.16.15

**Lee C. Drickamer**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values and Strategic Directions]: The entire plan is extremely well done and the mission, core values, and strategic directions are all carefully thought out and presented here.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: I have mentioned what follows to Pres. Krislov, but think it worth repeating; yes, in my mind the combining I suggest does relate to the mission and values of Oberlin. I see it as a very worthwhile exercise to consider the likely new building on the site of the Inn (what remains) as a home for four offices that are now spread across campus. Each unit has some hesitancy about moving, but would be better off in a single place. If this is truly to be the Gateway Center, then (a) admissions; (b) career counseling, (c) alumni relations, and (d) development should all be in the same new building. As part of this I note that many alums find the Ward Center off the beaten path and very crowded at key times. Also, the Development Office is scattered in Bosworth and some of it looks like it needs major renovations—not the appearance we want for alums considering giving to their alma mater. Please do give this notion some thought.

[On Second Top Strategic Direction]: Scholarships are certainly a key item of need, though they lag badly in terms of the Illuminate campaign. Part, though not all of this, is due to some items I think pertaining to the naming and criteria for such awards. Financial Aid and Development need to get together on several aspects of awarding such scholarships so that people feel more comfortable providing such funds. Here also I have discussed this matter with Bill Barlow. Some things could be done to improve the way this works and how such donors are treated. I have both made a modest gift and set up my estate plan to go to Oberlin. I intended this for a named scholarship, but dropped the idea in favor of a research fund for Biology when informed of the manner in which donors were restricted in the award criteria and other such matters.

10:52:05 AM 05.16.15

**Aaron Goldman**

*Faculty*

[On Core Values]: I think that Oberlin is among the best at fostering student scholarship and has been a leader in student research among its peer institutions for at least a few decades. I was very pleased to see a commitment to faculty scholarship, but I think that there could be additional language directly addressing the excellent scholarly collaborations between faculty and students that happen at Oberlin. Student research is and should continue to be a powerful component of the education and professional preparation offered here.

[On Strategic Directions]: I'd really love to see a timeline of specific actions put into the final plan. Alternatively, maybe the "Strategic Plan" should be followed up by a "Tactical Plan."

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Hard to argue with this.



[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: 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] and 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]: Students attend Oberlin primarily for the education, so having the providers of this education be excellent teachers and active scholars should be among the top priorities. I have grouped H and I together because I think recruiting and maintaining an excellent and diverse faculty are two components of the same goal.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Yes!

3:52:15 PM 05.16.15

**David Herzig**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: The value of the Oberlin education was that it was focused on the development of the ability to think and reason not on specific preparation for any career. Mine made a number of sharp turns into arenas for which I had no precious technical knowledge. But I knew how learn, understand and deal with the problems as I saw them. Having sat in on courses at the Univ. of Michigan and spent some time on on-line courses I find the Oberlin approach to be far superior and adaptable. Please do not be seduced by the hot topic of MOOCs or other such vanities. They are not the same as "education."

5:55:10 PM 05.16.15

**Barbara Bradley Hildner**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Closer relationships with potential employers in the business and non-profit community re partnerships, scholarships, internships etc. A liberal arts education such as I had is great for helping to formulate one's philosophy and lifestyle. However I felt I was on my own in selecting and preparing for a specific career.

[On Strategic Directions]: Expand "fast track" 3 year programs. Consider online course offerings. Increase development of partnerships with businesses for internships, scholarships etc. Consider some part-time lecturers from some of the staff.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Consider expanding course offerings to more specific technical subjects in the digital world that the students will be entering.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Expand emphasis on career exploration and opportunities. Stress creative thinking for new career opportunities.

1:06:50 AM 05.17.15

**David H. Finke**  
*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Perhaps it's all implicit, but something I don't specifically see and which has become important to me in the decades since being an Obie and vastly profiting from it, is the enhancement of a spiritual dimension of life. I appreciate that any approach to religion in our Oberlin years was non-dogmatic and ecumenical: I think of the role-modeling of Walter Marshal Horton and Clyde Holbrook, and my Campus YM/YW mentors Paul Rahmeier and Margie Schreiber (I'm class of '63) with whom I still stay productively in touch. My concern is that "The Life of the Mind" only goes so far in life, and turning out brilliant nerds (even with a passion for Social Justice) is not the highest calling for the Oberlin College of the past or the future. Maintaining a sense of awe in the Universe, a sense of Stewardship for life on this fragile and beautiful plant [sic], a sense of connectedness with our fellow human beings and indeed for Life Itself—is there some way of getting these Core Values and goals articulated? Certainly the MOOC's aren't going to provide it, nor will the Trade School model (or the corporate advancement pipeline) give us the kind of visionary human beings that OC has given the world in the past and that the world needs so desperately now. Although it might sound cliched or indeed obvious, I would note that the Classic exposure to the Liberal Arts (a sense of history and civilization and aesthetics) can give one the grounding to do Great Things as new opportunities and challenge emerge. Think of the model of the stem cell, whose very strength is the LACK of specialization. I frequently recall that we read Plato's Republic in at least 3 different classes... and I'm still quoting it and engaging with it (while never having become a Platonist let alone neo-Platonist; but we have to at least know what that was all about!). It's hard to put my finger on it, but what I so much valued that I got at Obie and continue to benefit from (which somehow has to do with what can vaguely be called "The Life of the Spirit") just doesn't make it in an obvious or convincing way into what has been articulated in this writing so far. I say this with an awareness that your document indeed is a Work in Progress, and that you DO value what alums such as myself (and my wife, both of us working on moving back to Oberlin to be close by as residents at Kendal) have to say. You have all my encouragement!

DHF, '64 cum laude (High Honors in Sociology); subsequent graduate work in theology, and employment in religiously sponsored social action.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Item "J" on Sustainability. I put it up here because I think others may be neglecting it. There's been fine leadership within the College community up to now, but I hate to think of it being sacrificed as a "frill" or an "extra." Aggressively leading the way (a la David Orr and his disciples) for sustainable energy and collaboration with local business and governmental entities is a "Plus" that should be marketable...capital investment in the short term, payout in the long run.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Items "H" and "I" concerning your staff. I particularly would emphasize interdisciplinary collaboration (some of my best seminars at OC were across departments) and a recent class I sat in on showed immediate benefits of having 2 profs from different departments co-teaching. Some of this is touched upon

in “D”—and I’m glad the Library and the Allen are included in the mix! Merged with this is the integrating of classroom and external engagements. I am particularly proud of the new scholarship programs that my class (1963) have endowed, for promoting such opportunities. I’m possibly putting too much in one “box” or priority here, but it has to do with the profs being not only brilliant but also ACCESSIBLE and committed to students in a mentoring, humanized relationship. That happened for me: I dearly want it also for future O.C. generations!!!

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Finding ways to reduce crushing debt, and giving adequate financial aid for the most deserving lower-income applicants, rather than the scandalous formulae that I’m reading about in some of your supplementary materials (THANKS for a good reading list) where the financial aid deal is sweetened for 4 upper-income mediocre students who will pay more tuition over time, than the one economically disadvantaged student who truly can benefit and give back in a Life of Service. You know what I mean...If adding summer programs and non-degree offerings and creative use of the physical plant can help address the upcoming fiscal crisis, so be it. As a future Kendal resident, I’d even be willing to pay a modest something to be able to audit the classes that at this point are a freebie (if I understand K.o.A.’s marketing correctly).

2:43:22 AM 05.17.15

**Diana Helper**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Haven’t had much time to respond—briefly what I miss is a sense of spirit, even spirituality, humor, humility, an enthusiastic honoring of individual ideas—listening and giving wise counsel. The kids I talk with who are interested in Oberlin like the idea they will be encouraged to think in new ways, and listened to with respect and given good comments that teach them. The work you have done on this is monumental—it’s sort of just that I had a really good time at Oberlin and I don’t quite get that spirit of good humor and fun in engaging in learning there. Education is really entertaining at Oberlin, or so I found. And so did my Mom ‘24, and our daughter ‘82. I have been cleaning out stuff in the basement after 60 years and there’s a ton of great Oberlin material—I did the recruiting here for a long time, and the alum club, and now I write the alum news for CO-WY. Still having a good time. Diana

[Second comment posted at 3:13:14 AM 05.17.15]

P.S. After I wrote = forgot to say Great Faculty is #1 and helping bring variety of students is vital. I do not see how on-line could produce an Oberlin Education which to me is bound up in personal contact with profs and students, on campus, working and doing activities together in many settings. (Yes I know I’m old...) How to pay for it?? Tell Alums Help Help, we all want Oberlin to remain great and you are doing your frugal best, but ask them all to give twice what they gave last time and if they did not give anything could they at least send \$10. Another good word to stick in somewhere is Creative. Oberlin is very Creative. Now it’s still the 16th in Hawaii, but here in Denver

it is a little past...sorry. Keep up the great work, all you people. But add some good times to it, too. I never tell kids it's "easy" but I do tell them they will have a great time.  
Diana

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Profs

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Diversity of kids

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Emphasis uniqueness COLLEGE and MUSIC all together--some kids do not realize this very fine friendly situation.

10:57:11 AM 05.17.15

**Brian Britt '86**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: These are wonderful, but there is no explicit mention of academic excellence, which will in my opinion be very important to Oberlin's future.

[On Strategic Directions]: Wonderful stuff, again, but I don't see much here about academic excellence and achievement. I worry that these values and directions focus too much on non-academic branches and offices of Oberlin, the very things that currently drive up the cost of the education.

[On Top Strategic Direction]: "deriving benefits from integrative, culminating educational experiences"—this gets to the issue of excellence in learning and education, which I believe is vital to Oberlin's identity and future.

[On Second Top Strategic Direction]: "promoting and piloting new and disruptive ideas through an 'innovation zone'"—I'm not sure what this means but I love the willingness to speak of "disruptive ideas" in the Strategic Plan, and I think innovation that builds on Oberlin's core values will only bring wonderful things.

[On Third Top Strategic Direction]: "developing strategies to achieve more fully the College's goals for equity, diversity, and inclusion"—we wouldn't be Oberlin without this, but let me suggest linking this idea to the core value of "collaboration with the City of Oberlin to benefit both College and City"—I believe there are wonderful opportunities to realize Oberlin's potential for diversity and inclusion through community activism, engagement, and service. Equity, diversity, and inclusion begin in the local community, and Oberlin sits in a region where there is work to do in these areas.

9:13:30 AM 05.18.15

**Em Caminis '62**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: ...especially agree with #1 [The Oberlin educational experience must be one that constantly challenges and supports our students over the course of their undergraduate experience through the individual contributions of dedicated faculty and staff], 2 [Oberlin's mission is to prepare students for the future. An Oberlin education

must prepare students to see and understand the connections among all aspects of their Oberlin experience, and we must strengthen the bridges between Oberlin undergraduates and the entire Oberlin community—especially the alumni community—that they will join once they have graduated], 5 [Oberlin must acknowledge the imperative of living within financial constraints through operational excellence and efficiency and prudent financial management], 6 [Oberlin must continue to recruit and support excellence in scholarship, achievement, and artistic accomplishment of faculty who are also actively engaged in teaching and advising], 7 [Oberlin must attract and retain a knowledgeable and creative staff dedicated to supporting our students and the overall operation of the College and Conservatory]

[On Strategic Directions]: We especially agree with 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], F [Develop even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion], 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], 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], 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]; otherwise we believe Strategic Directions overstate our ability to provide Core Values within our available financial models

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 1. expanding a diversified admissions pool or drastically reducing the admissions pool...we can not have it both ways.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: 2. adding faculty with qualities and abilities that will make each of them national leaders in their fields.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: 3. creating and/or improving student campus life so that it is energized and centralized in the student’s view of the College and Town as a future member of the alumni group and 4. reducing or eliminating non performing assets now under College financial responsibility whether they be a) low interest course/department selection b) old aging inefficient real property c) non competitive varsity athletics d) properties extraneous to the academic core.

10:37: 04 AM 05.18.15

**Andrew A. Zvara**  
*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: The list is too long and reads like it was written by a committee. Beginning with *sic* the mission statement. Mission statements need to be clear and to the point. For example: Our mission is to cross the Atlantic” [sic] “The mission of the Oberlin College and Conservatory is to empower our graduates with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary to create change and add value to the world.”

[On Strategic Directions]: The strategies appear to be all over the map. The list must have been copied from [sic] the brain storming list verbatim.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: “formulating plans for a ‘year-round Oberlin’” ..... This would address several of the listed strategies: at tracking and paying an exceptional faculty as well as students.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: “developing a new model for the career center .....” This could be a key recruiting tool as today’s parents are concerned about the value of a liberal education, i.e., what kind of job will their student be prepared for?

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: “providing students with the resources to maintain the health and wellness .....” I believe that the arguments for this goes [sic] back at least as far as the ancient Greeks and speaks to the deteriorating health of our youth.

11:51:09 AM 05.18.15

**Emily McClintock**  
*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: I would have liked to have seen more about what qualities we want our students to embody when they leave Oberlin. Some examples:—resilient—intellectually nimble—curious—generous—open-minded. The Mission Statement comes close, but the Core Values contain little about what we want to be known for: providing the best-educated and best-prepared students possible, ready to take on any challenges.

[On Strategic Directions]: After naming my top priority, statement A [Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond], I was hard pressed to rank the others. Of course, they are all important. I ranked 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] and 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] next, only because unless governance is effective and all constituents have a shared sense of purpose, undertaking any of the Strategic Directions would be difficult.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: A [Ensure that students...] This is what Oberlin is all about, as far as I’m concerned; the other Strategic Directions work toward this. This also builds on what Oberlin can do best. “Small” and “liberal arts” are great strengths in this regard.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: K [Enhance Oberlin to act thoughtfully...]: Without this, implementing any other Strategic Directions would be difficult.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: G [Engage the Oberlin community...]: The most important part of this statement is “building a culture for maintaining these positive changes.” Without this, difficult changes will be hard to make.

12:12:20 PM 05.18.15

**Tom Bacon**  
*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Financial viability is critical—and I’m not sure “higher utilization of facilities” is enough. Apparently, we need to work on the endowment (what’s holding us back from an endowment more like our peers?). And, of course, we can’t do all of the other high priorities (diversity, lower tuition, excellent professors, ...) without more \$. Is it more efficient to utilize online learning/team learning more to complement professors? Can we tap into local alumni more (internships, cross projects with local corporations?). I fear that the strategic direction says we want to be all things while we may have to do more prioritization.

12:24:45 PM 05.18.15

**James Elesh**  
*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: I would suggest a new program to help Oberlin increase its revenue stream. Would Oberlin consider summer programs for the alumni community? Specifically continuing education, non-credit courses that would be similar to those offered by Northwestern University. One of their courses is a series of lectures by NU professors revolving around a disparate group of subjects. The others are courses created by Evanston community members which are taught by the participants in each class. (See the NU website. ) Bringing back alumni for a week or two or even a month will reengage many former students as to Oberlin's needs, as well.

12:27:23 PM 05.18.15

**John T. Lemley**  
*Alumnus*

[On Core Values and Strategic Directions]: Stating values and objectives is important and makes sense, but there needs to be more effort aimed at determining how to achieve them or move forward toward achieving them. And, of course, there needs to be systematic review of the steps initiated, to determine whether they are materially contributing to the intended objectives. All this is the tough part.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: I think it critical that financial resources from federal and State governments be revitalized through whatever means are necessary to

continue the educational foundation that has long assured the country's pre-eminence in innovation and required infrastructure.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Time for thought is critical and ever so much more difficult than mere action. Students need to have this fundamental premise properly reinforced to prepare them for the hoped for successful life and career. It's simply too easy to substitute action for thought. The consequences for doing so are very serious indeed. Somehow this needs to be advanced in day to day classes and curriculum.

12:51:03 PM 05.18.15

**Madeline Kimmich**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Creating a comprehensive advising system providing the strongest possible suite of integrated services to students —ultimately, it is the mentoring relationships between students and faculty that foster in students the confidence in themselves and the desire to similarly nurture others they encounter in their professional and personal lives.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: Providing students with resources to maintain the health and wellness necessary to achieve academic and personal success during their time at Oberlin—My experience at Oberlin was intellectually stimulating and philosophically enriching, but was very emotionally challenging to the point where I needed to leave for a year to find my balance. I feel very proud and committed to Oberlin, and want future students to have the emotional and spiritual support to enable them to fully savor the Oberlin experience.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Assuring continued leadership in environmental sustainability—the world is at a critical juncture, and Oberlin needs to be a leader, both in modeling institutional behavior, and in infusing the younger generations with a sense of responsibility and respect for the earth and an understanding of the political and social issues that urgently need attention if we are to avert crisis world-wide.

2:30:39 PM 05.18.15

**Jamie Jacobs**

*Staff*

[On Core Values]: I would encourage the Steering Committee to affirm the college's dedication to the many employees that help to make Oberlin the wonderful place that it is. Just as David Orr pointed out in his 1997 article *Architecture as Pedagogy II*, "The typical campus is regarded mostly as a place where learning occurs but it, itself, not believed to be the source of useful learning. It is convenient, efficient, or aesthetically pleasing, but not instructional." While this excerpt refers to architecture as related to history and sustainability, I think the same connection can be made between social justice and current institutional practices. When I think of Oberlin, I see it as an institution



helping to make the world a better place, but we must lead by example, starting with our own employees. It is important for the success of any given organization to look after the well being of those lowest in hierarchy. Consideration and weight should be given not only to maintaining a supportive work environment, but also to offering staff a way to contribute their ideas to be able to streamline processes around campus.

[On Strategic Directions]: I think that Oberlin is wonderful, but there are a lot of common sense ways we can tighten things up without abandoning our core values. I have plenty of ideas about how this can be done, but ultimately they are all rooted in increased organization. Once everything is in its right place we will have a better idea of all the wonderful jewels in our crown, and only then can we decide how to best utilize them.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: I don't think enough emphasis can be placed on the development of 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]. I personally find it problematic that there is not more interaction between ASOC and the individual departments. There is a pervasive atmosphere on campus that I would describe as territorial when it comes to contacts and physical spaces. I am in favor of a symbiotic relationship between the alumni office and each individual department, perhaps an individual ambassador to meet twice a year to work on special projects. Department faculty retains their own special relationships with alumni; those relationships combined with the momentum of the ASOC office could be turned into endowments, career opportunities and publicity. I am in favor of tools that help us to be efficient, for instance, I think it would be monumental to have a department newsletter template available, with the infrastructure to send it out to all alumni. Likewise, I know we would love to work with the career center to have the tools at our disposal to easily report job opportunities. Furthermore, for offices offering these enhancing services, it would be lovely if they could send out announcements or procedures to the administrative staff. Often times students, parents, alumni, and honored guests seek direction from us. Outside of the bureaucratic procedures of the Dean's Office, we have no idea the operating procedure of other offices on campus are, as most do not publish guidelines or instructions.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Financially, I think there are plenty of ways we can cut back. If individuals or departments step outside of the accepted parameters, there should be a system in place to deal with this. In terms of proactive savings, I would start with encouraging more Skype interviews for job searches. This also supports our efforts to be more environmentally sustainable (J.)

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Regardless of the subject matter, I think it would be a benefit to have faculty, students, and administrative staff weigh in. Behind every great idea, there is support staff that assisted in getting that information out. As an administrative professional, ours is a learned knowledge. Often time we are able to see things from a procedural view, and contribute in a way that faculty and high-level administrators cannot.

2:56:42 PM 05.18.15

**Phyllis Jones**  
*Staff/Alumnus*

[On Strategic Directions]: As I think about Oberlin's future from my dual vantage point as an alumna and union member, I have one overriding concern: the increasing prevalence of the business model of education within academia, which brings with it a preference for image over substance and a devaluation of the liberal arts curriculum, particularly the humanities. Not coincidentally, we are experiencing, as everyone now recognizes, a gap between the very wealthy and the rest of us that is widening at an alarming pace. The danger exists that Oberlin will attempt to meet its financial challenges in ways that place a significant burden on the backs of workers at the lower end of the college's pay ladder, thus contributing to the problem of economic stratification. In my view, Oberlin should take a stand against cutting traditional employee benefits while offering outsized upper-level administrative salaries in the name of "market forces," policies made popular in corporate boardrooms over the past few decades with catastrophic results for all but the lucky few. To do otherwise would be incompatible with the college's stated commitment to social justice.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 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 libraries and art museum at Oberlin are extraordinary resources, and the college should actively and creatively broaden and develop their roles within academic programs and as a means of engaging with the larger community. I would also include the Apollo Theater as another valuable cultural center. In the libraries, preservation and expansion of physical collections and providing access to them are important but often overlooked priorities.

4:09:39 PM 05.18.15

**Ken Nelson**  
*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Lack of metrics & responsibilities:  
o What is the definition of a "successful" Oberlin education? Difference in knowledge/abilities between accepted and graduating students: Success isn't how far you got, but the distance you traveled from where you started. Apart from grades, how does the College know how far a student has advanced/improved?

- What are the metrics that are highly valued by the people who pay for the education? % of senior applicants who get into their chosen grad school [and quality/ranking of that school], % of those that apply for awards that receive them. Is the college identifying students who should apply for these grants/awards and help [sic] them with their applications?
- What metrics are on Marvin's dashboard? Senior executives usually have a dashboard on their computer which shows key performance indicators [e.g., financial endowment performance, % of budget spent vs plan; # applications; # current students in award /grant process; # students applying/accepted to which graduate programs]
- Cost/Benefit: Cost can be [sort-of] identified: [Tot # students X tuition] less all scholarships. Should the college weigh/value external [Pell] scholarships more than internal [from OC endowment] scholarships. Other costs (housing, food, travel)—should these be indexed or examined for reductions? Does the co-op program offer enough of a savings to be significant? If not, is its purpose primarily social? [see other co-op question below.] Are there programs that can save \$ [bus charters for travel]? How to measure benefit. Earnings [over what period]. Recognition as knowledge leaders [% of students receiving advanced degrees / from top 25 grad school].

[On Strategic Directions]: Consider: Students learn to approach issues and problem solving from a cross-disciplinary perspective. Through a curriculum incorporating intercultural learning, students develop the analytical skills and multiple literacies to be effective in a diverse world.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 50 years ago, Oberlin was differentiated in that it was co-ed and accepted minority students. Now many of those students go elsewhere. How will the College compete for students it wants [# applications, yield]? What are the key differentiating courses and faculty [should the college have pre-law, pre-business, engineering courses].

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: How should Oberlin handle social learning and emotional intelligence? (Dating, drinking, personal and other responsibilities)? What kind of training are co-op participants given? I was in a co-op at Graduate School [Univ of Michigan] and I received training in cooking, food preparation/storage and how to plan a menu.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: How important is Non-Oberlin study? At my son's college, there was a Global Education Center that worked with international students [permanent and temporary enrollment], foreign study during the summer and school year and also handled communications with overseas Faculty on research projects and curriculum.

4:55:38 PM 05.18.15

**Bridget Flynn**  
*Staff*

[On Core Values]: [Core Value] 1 [The Oberlin educational experience must be one that constantly challenges and supports our students over the course of their undergraduate experience through the individual contributions of dedicated faculty and staff]: I'd like this to sound a little more inspiring. Oberlin is educating incredible students, educating and preparing them to make change in the world. [Core Value] 2 [Oberlin's mission is to prepare students for the future]: I suggest an addition of language that prepares students to be well-rounded, engaged citizens of their world. [Core Value] 8 [Oberlin should renew its commitment to leadership in environmental sustainability]: I recommend an addition of "and take action to achieve these goals." Or something actionable as well. Take aggressive action to achieve our stated goals and contribute to our environment while simultaneously improving access to health and wellness opportunities and reducing toxins, pollution, and harm.

[On Strategic Directions]: A [Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond]: As well as diverse selection of intriguing and engaging courses. 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]: Even in the appendix document, I don't think there's a description of "innovation zone." C [Provide students with resources to maintain the health and wellness necessary to achieve academic and personal success during their time at Oberlin]: This strikes me as important. Improving the way the gym is managed would greatly improve this goal. 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]: Highly agree. 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.]: I might also suggest including staff at Oberlin in assisting with this. What was their pathway into their position? It might serve us well to utilize the incredible staff assets we already have on campus. Connections with alumni are great and help students to envision themselves in life after college. F [Develop even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion]: Agree. Be sure to define what we mean by diversity (there are many kinds of diversity). 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]: Agree. Leverage energy efficiency and sustainability measures with long-term savings here. We need to recognize that Oberlin has the ability to think more long term and to not value engineer out features we want now that will benefit us long term. We also need to recognize that current climate projections indicate that the future is uncertain. We cannot rely on business as usual. We need to create the world we want to live in now. 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]: Agree. 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]: It is also important to note that compensation isn't just monetary. We can incentivize through benefits packages, too, as well as the reward of working at a world-class institution with a mission of making the world a better place. We need to also support faculty and staff who have chosen to live in Oberlin. J [Maintain leadership in environmental sustainability and fulfill the prior institutional pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025]: YES. We well as fully utilize this commitment as an education opportunity. 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]: Agree. I am not convinced that formulating a "year-round Oberlin" is a revenue generator. I suggest further research on this front, taking into account all costs, e.g. costs to house people in dorms with air conditioning (energy and labor), and costs in labor when maintenance staff don't have access to buildings over the summer months. Our union labor is very expensive and the summer time is the time when facilities are most easily maintained given during the year we have people in buildings (almost or always) around the clock. Rather, I wonder if we might downgrade facilities (in general and over the summer months).

6:25:11 PM 05.18.15

**Jon Dreger**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: Core Values 4 [Oberlin must find new ways to provide a valuable education that is financially accessible] & 5 [Oberlin must acknowledge the imperative of living within financial constraints through operational excellence and efficiency and prudent financial management] are more imperatives than values, but imperative they are for continued Oberlin viability!

[On Strategic Directions]: Much more emphasis is found here for raising revenues than for committing to serious cost reductions. That seems always to be the case. Oberlin needs to make some hard choices and serious moves to reduce costs, and I don't see those represented in these Directions! As such, they don't track the core values caveats that precede them.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: None, really. A tepid nod to 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] as at least pointing us toward innovation, and hopefully sustainability. We need to clearly determine our strengths—as perceived by prospective students, and build on those while drastically cutting the rest. For example, if we have a very high percentage of grads going on to, say, medical school, we need to promote that. If we don't have too many history majors finding history jobs, then maybe we eliminate that entire department, save for maybe one

professor for interdisciplinary education. Then combine several such departments into a single umbrella unit. For those who want to be history majors, maybe Oberlin would not be the right school going forward. We can no longer afford to be a universal provider of undergraduate education. We can't be all things to all students!

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: A very tepid nod to 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]. See above comments. We need more focus on the practical needs of students to successfully compete for in-demand jobs after graduation, and less on unmarketable majors while extolling the virtues of a liberal arts education. If those “virtues” aren't getting our grads good jobs, how are they ever going to pay off their educational and other debts? And how can a grad pursue his/her dream of doing social good with a huge debt upon graduation? Let the larger and/or better-endowed institutions try to be all things to all students. Let's instead concentrate on far fewer areas where we do well, and use those as student magnets while making higher education more affordable.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: 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], just to have one. We should be spending more time focusing our efforts on what prospective students want and need, then deliver that at substantially reduced costs. We've been in our ivory tower far too long to be relevant. I'm sure Oberlin continues to provide a great education, does a great job of preparing students for the big picture of life after graduation, and a superior job of providing tools for the constantly changing demands of life. But if that's not what we can sustainably and affordably provide to (prospective) students and/or it's not their priority, then we're not relevant, and on the path to extinction.

7:57:35 PM 05.18.15

**Elizabeth V. Foote**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: The core values sound good to me. I would add three aspects that could receive more attention.

1. I didn't see much about the importance of building bridges between the students and the College of today and the progressive values and events in the history of the College back to its founding, which are truly exceptional and make all of us proud. They define and shape what makes Oberlin different, why many young people and faculty chose to come to Oberlin, and IMO, care should be taken to pass that legacy on. Somehow a core value needs to be the importance of carrying forward that same similar independence of thought and courage from the past through all the constituent parts of the school.

2. Oberlin is a unique residential college, and I think that more could be made of the value of building residential community for the sake of enhancing the personal growth of

students at this important time in their lives. Experts could phrase this better, and the committee and others can think this through, but in this time of on-line courses and commuter colleges and cost savings, Oberlin should try to articulate the benefits of its version of a college community in residence, for artistic and intellectual development, growth in leadership and teamwork, and the variety of ways it offers young adults to self actualize within a reasonably small and supportive environment closely tied to faculty and all kinds of opportunities for growth in a healthy way. Somehow, I think the legacy of the Coops at Oberlin is huge here (versus fraternities, for example), with their focus on self sufficiency, team work, friendship, creativity, frugality, and building competence and confidence in students, who aren't merely passive recipients of residential benefits but learning a lot by providing for themselves, at lower cost. This residential experience also ties into "Learning and Labor" which I always thought said something distinctive and good about Oberlin, but I'm not totally sure what! But perhaps there should be a little more focus on how the values of the residential experience foster educational and personal development at Oberlin in particular.

3. Wherever I go as an alum, I am struck when meeting other Oberlin alums by what unique people each one of them is (i.e., not the clones, or the meek sheep). Somehow, there is an important value in there somewhere: that Oberlin fosters independence of thought and of action by being a community of faculty and students who value that.

4. I think somewhere should be the core value of focusing on undergraduate education. Obviously academic excellence is critical. So is the connection of the arts and music with the other fields of study. I think the values section and the directions do a good job with those.

[On Strategic Directions]: 1. I think these are good. 2. I think somewhere there should be something about the importance of reviewing and reevaluating the college curriculum, the majors, the requirements, the sequence of courses, and the core educational experience now and regularly, which will keep Oberlin nimble, up to date and top notch. One of the problems with large research institutions often can be that the curriculum can be driven by the research interests of the faculty, devolving too much into a universe of highly specialized and disjointed courses and seminars. They are really hard to change to educational offerings that are better for educating students. Being a smaller college focused on undergraduates makes attention to curriculum easier than at universities where faculty have their own fiefdoms and research agendas and don't focus enough on teaching and course content and sequencing. 3. It would be nice to articulate with a little more clarity what the strategic directions are for the residential experience at Oberlin. Somehow I feel it is uniquely rich and productive, but it would be nice to identify the components of that and strengthen those things that are particularly successful.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: Academic excellence, up to date curriculum, and teaching and scholarly encouragement of the students. Mentoring/advising is very important here as students try to discern what academic areas interest them, and what to do with their interests and aptitudes. I like the very conscious focus on personal advising.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: I really like the strengthening of connections between the Con, the College and the arts. It's a great strength of Oberlin.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Strengthening an already strong residential experience. See if more can be said about the ways in which the very unique Oberlin residential experience, with a diverse group of talented students, in a small and interesting town, with lots of opportunities for students to feel productive, connected up, stimulated, be creative and also cared for. Think about expanding the coop experience or other ways to build on strengths.

9:31:22 PM 05.18.15

**Anne Sprauge**  
*Staff/Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: In general, I believe that Oberlin does an admirable job of supporting the core values listed. Concerns for student needs and interests consistently seem to be addressed well. Several of the points listed bring to mind problems which I addressed in my recent role as President of OCOPE (January 2012-March 2015). Item #10 [Oberlin must develop a system of governance that is transparent and inclusive], I believe is intrinsically connected to 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] of the Emerging Directions. In my experience, governance across the faculty/staff spectrum appeared inconsistent and sometimes haphazard, and not entirely inclusive. Problems we encountered arose when accountability differed from office to office or department to department. The "broad legitimacy" is certainly something that should be encouraged, as an evenhanded management of situations across the campus could only help to clarify expectations for everyone. (See my remarks regarding K of the Emerging Directions).

[On Strategic Directions]: Regarding K: One of my greatest concerns and goals as President of OCOPE was education. Most supervisory staff come to Oberlin as academics, not managers. I firmly believe that it would be helpful for them to have consistent training in guidelines for managing their staff. That could only enhance the efficiency of their departments. I believe it is equally important for the support staff to understand how processes work, and what is expected from them as members of the Oberlin community. "Collaboration, communication, and engagement" seemed to be to be conspicuously absent between much of the staff and administration. Collaboration and conversation were inconsistently utilized, in my experience. Without the fundamental understanding of policies or procedures across the board, the consistent application of those guidelines is nearly impossible. Without that clarity, the responsibility and consequences for the actions of an individual are unclear, and who is accountable to whom becomes vague. Communication between differing constituencies would encourage the respect and trust that I believe are key to working together to make Oberlin an even better place.



[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: K—Improvement in the education, communication, consistency, and accountability in all aspects of Oberlin governance, for all staff, would make a huge difference in the smooth operation of the College, I believe. Better functioning offices would encourage happier and more efficient employees, and consequently, more financial efficiency (higher productivity, less time away, etc.). Communication and training would also reduce the number of costly confrontations between campus groups, and encourage mutual respect.

9:47:20 PM 05.18.15

**Roger Buffett**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: The Oberlin I knew sent a high percentage of graduates on into additional programs leading to professions, but was valued in sending students who brought broad experiences that enabled them to be innovators and creative. Today it should work to have strong ties to those professional schools so that the value of the Oberlin preparation is reinforced. I think we need to be strident in calling for changes in educational financing—the doctor, the lawyer, the professor who gets their next degree with huge student loan debts will have a hard time making the contributions back which Oberlin has long counted on. WE can't just wring our hands—we need to be leaders in organizing.

[On Strategic Directions]: Environmental sustainability can temper the rising costs and give students tools that many of them will find critical for their future. My sense is that we are entering a new era where there will be a renewed thrust towards equity, inclusion and diversity. As future graduates find they belong in that world, I think they will be positioned to make greater contributions to the world and, at least in some cases then, to make greater contributions back to Oberlin. To that end, I think “F” [Develop even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion] and “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] and [sic] especially important.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: As noted above, I think “F” and “H” must be given high priority. Were Oberlin to become an elite school for “rich, white, kids,” it would lose not only a key link to its moral heritage, but also, as I see it, the chance to be a part of an increasingly diverse world, where those who are not equipped to relate in such an environment will be in danger of being left behind.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: “A” [Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond] (which seems to include “C” [Provide students with resources to maintain the health and wellness necessary to achieve academic and personal success during their time at Oberlin]) along with “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]—

Allen, Mudd, the Conservatory and the college are still a fairly unique assemblage which creates the mix for promoting that “individualized and High achieving trajectory.” While this should not be necessary, both faculty and students will probably need to be reminded from time to time that drilling down in one department, will be to miss out on the incredible highly accessible resources which can help to produce creative minds.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: For “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] many approaches to continue the work of constantly shoring up Oberlin's financial stability will need to be pursued, but as I tried to say above, I would like to see Oberlin be in the vanguard of leading a coalition demanding that this country get back to recognizing that strong education is a public good and not simply a private good, so that there will not be a whole generation of students moving out with stifling burdens of student debt. (This may be good for some banks, but it will not be good for our country.)

9:51:47 PM 05.18.15

**Drew Wilburn**

*Faculty*

[On Core Values]: The document as a whole should be more concise.

[On Strategic Directions]: I found that the strategic directions were occasionally repetitive and somewhat vague. I think they should be stronger statements of purpose.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: E: Develop a new model for integrating the work of the Career Center and the Alumni Office. We need to strengthen the focus on career services and alumni. Oberlin students should be prepared for the job market upon graduation, and confident in their abilities to succeed with an Oberlin BA. We also provide excellent integrated training for certain professions that require additional professional schooling, i.e. medicine and law; we should not shy away from these areas. Our students, with their liberal arts education and their particular Oberlin sensibilities and ideals, can have an enormous effect upon the world as professionals.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: A. Ensure that students will have an individualized and high achieving trajectory for their Oberlin years and beyond. Culminating experiences have the potential to help students bring their major area of study together. More vertical curricula would help as well. Many departments have shied away from vertical course work because of the pressure to fully enroll and provide maximum flexibility. Career skills and job preparation need to be part of any culminating experience. The Capstone should not prevent or get in the way of job applications. The alumni also serve as an important piece of this puzzle, as they have careers, and can help our students envision what the future might hold. Also, I am unclear on how this will work with so many double (and triple) majors.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: To provide an outstanding educational experience for Oberlin students, we must continue to recruit and retain an excellent and diverse faculty. This document suggests new or expanded roles for faculty as mentors, integrated advisors and as directors of culminating senior projects, all of which will be added to faculty teaching and service obligations. A key component of the Oberlin experience is a strong faculty comprised of excellent teachers. Faculty should be compensated for doing these new things while also continuing to be excellent teachers.

[Update at 10:06:49 PM 05.18.15]: I believe that the institution also needs to put greater emphasis on technology and preparing our students for a changing world. The fact that our students must pass paperwork around (Winter Term, Athletic Schedules, Student Academic Services, Timesheets) is incredibly inefficient and environmentally wasteful. We have some excellent in-house materials that are unsupported, namely Prestissimo. The institution needs to support the technology needs of faculty and address tech-specific inefficiencies. We need to strengthen our academic offerings in CS as well, encouraging more students to take courses in programming and to understand big data sets.

11:33:32 PM 05.18.15

**Paula J. Gordon**

*Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: First! Plaudits for your courage in taking on the daunting and essential task of updating/codifying a meaningful “Mission Statement” with which to inform the “Core Values.” And—had it been my task, based a lifetime of what grabs people’s attention about Oberlin—I would have sought to embolden the second sentence: “Continuing to embrace and build on its illustrious tradition of championing educational access...” (or words to that effect). (On core value # 2, it would be gracious [and not gratuitous!] to articulate “alumni” rather than stepping back in time when the grammatically masculine form is assumed to be “inclusive,” thereby weakening the assertion that Oberlin seeks to be inclusive!). As to the Core Values themselves (with which I share great affinity as they currently stand) please consider an additional perspective (below). It is based on my own overarching, lifetime experience with the College, from the time my older brother arrived there in 1959 to the present, including my own tumultuous student years, 1964-1968: The College has been FAR more important to me AFTER college than during it. POST-graduation, Oberlin was—and is—a “pole star” and “touchstone” for me in a great big bruising world. That role somehow and often seems to elude those focused on the “student years.” NOW:

“The Natural Step Process” (outlined by environmental visionary Karl-Henrik Robert) starts with “Backcasting.” Figure out where/what one wants to BE at some realistic future point. Then figure out what it will take to get/be there. If the College and Conservatory were to consider using the path in creating “connected learning” it might find value in “backcasting” from its/their Alums to better see what serves Students. Whether a student is on campus or (as technology and “away” experiences proliferate, at a “distance”) the culmination of an ALUM’s perspectives/experiences might address a number of the bullet points both in Core Values and in Strategic Directions, especially

the ESSENTIAL need and focus on get [sic] Alums themselves “connected! Secondly: I was struck as I read through the entire document how almost off-handedly it referred to “integrating” things. A word-meister could spin splendid, correct, cunning and engaging historical, grammatical and conceptual articulations playing with this concept of “integration” as you speak of “connected learning” in the emerging globalized, “multicultural” and “diverse” world.

[On Strategic Directions]: GLAD that you are thinking explicitly in these terms, I will continue to look at this and give you a more thoughtful answer than I can provide on short notice if there is value in me doing so. I’ll give it a “somewhat” mostly because I have not had time to think in these terms, focused on your questions number 1 and 3, knowing how VITAL this question IS!

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: “J” [Maintain leadership in environmental sustainability and fulfill the prior institutional pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025]: I have repeatedly, publicly and publicly identified David Orr with Charles Finney as addressing the NUMBER ONE issue of our time/s—the future of life on earth, including that of our own species. Interacting with hundreds of luminaries with whom we have engaged since launching our “Conversations with People at the Leading Edge(sm)” almost 20 years ago, the enormity of this issue is inescapable. A thunderous future awaits us, no matter what we do now to address what we have done and are doing. The resulting challenges right-this-moment and moving ahead put ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES front and center of ALL and EVERY endeavor undertaken by humankind. “Students of the Bicentennial” know this, consciously or/and unconsciously. Giving them the tools with which to put their own unique talents, passions and abilities into play living their lives is ESSENTIAL. So is giving them a glimpse of the many joys and disappointments that will be theirs, all of which are enriched by “connected learning.” And, as Professor Orr points out, “HOPE” is an imperative. Others have said, giving one ways to “flourish” in the face of the unbearable is also vital. Hence my unparalleled endorsement of your “J”-- Maintain Leadership in Environmental Sustainability (even better to be “RESTORATIVE”!)

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: “F” [Develop even more effective institutional structures to achieve measurable goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion]: Part of my STRONG affinity for what I think you're “getting at” in “J” relates directly to my Number One: ALL things Environmental.” The “diversity” part of your concerns is that we MUST be drawing from ALL the people who will be impacted in every conceivable way. Now, I implore you -- do NOT mistake what I am about to say as a “religious” reference which is absolutely NOT my intention, rather I choose a culturally accessible expression which I put entirely OUTSIDE the context of anyone’s belief system (ONE OF THE CENTRAL and OVERARCHING VALUES OF OBERLIN and an OBERLIN EDUCATION IN MY EXPERIENCE AND AS MY CONSIDERED OPINION: KEEP “RELIGION” IN THE RELIGION DEPARTMENT or an extra-curricular activity/affinity group setting!)...The historical Jewish figure called “Rabbi” in his time—Jesus of Nazareth—voiced a deep and widely ignored teaching of great truthfulness when he called on his admirers to serve his beloved “Least of These.”

They are a profound resource and come in all colors, genders and ethnicities. Their experience as “outsiders” and “other” bring insights and possibilities unfettered by orthodoxies, driven by the need to survive, nurture and (hopefully) flourish in challenging times and situations. Such times and situations will abound, and it will NOT just be the “smart people” who will get us through E.O. Wilson’s “knot-hole”! It will be those who can dream, innovate, bring on gales of creative destruction. Which brings me to my third choice (though it's tough to stick to three!)

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: “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] An “innovation zone”—though to me, the entire Oberlin endeavor\* should embody and promote this. While I am suspicious of “intellectual diversity”—having lived in the hostile American South half my life, I’ve had a belly-full of wrong-headed-ness—I do think that the overall thrust of this articulate “Direction” is laudable, doable, and would be EXTREMELY attractive (and that’s even if one ends up flipping burgers or teaching beginning piano). \* My one MAJOR criticism of my own student experience at Oberlin is how “critical” my thinking was NOT encouraged to be. I continue to have to encourage skepticism in myself! I’m now running against the clock, so will simply cheer you on in this direction. BRAVO, FOLKS! KEEP UP THE GOOD-TO-GREAT WORK!! We NEED you, just as the world today and that to come NEEDS OBERLIN. Let’s figure out how to keep it strong ALL of us, INCLUDING that far-flung bunch of “Alums”!! Being earnestly solicited to be INCLUDED (get it? “inclusion”??) in this process is a SPLENDID BEGINNING in rethinking our entire role in the institution. Did I mention, “BRAVO!”???

[Update at 12:02:07 AM 05.19.18]: I failed to mention in my strict-correspondence to your form’s questions/format—I STRONGLY endorse using the campus for OTHER purposes when the “regular” students are away. I spent two summers in what was then known as “Honors College” (for which, no doubt the professors were paid, as we paid the regular per-hour tuition)—1966 and 1968. It was a WONDERFUL experience. It was, admittedly, HOT, and you’ll have to address this if/when welcoming potential (paying) guests during the summer especially. BUT IT WAS GREAT. Additionally, I have met several people who went to summer workshops and conferences on campus in earlier decades. One in particular stands out—a Georgia girl who declares as a grown woman that just BEING on the Oberlin campus was “life-altering,” especially as she had neither the financial means or the academic standing to actually “go to College” there. This rippled through untold numbers of people with whom she was in contact, promoting a POWERFULLY POSITIVE image of the place in a part of the country not known for being in sympathy with the traditions or perspectives of the institution. If you’d given me a fourth choice, I would have put this HIGH in the “possibilities” column for structural and intellectual changes in how we go about finding new sources of revenue AND outreach into the wider world!!

11:43:25 PM 05.18.15

**Donald J. Holder**

## *Alumnus*

[On Core Values]: The only thing I would consider to emphasize is the motto: learning and labor. The only part of the mission statement that actually emphasizes “doing” something is the last sentence. We were founded as an institution based on using our intellectual power for the good of others. I wouldn’t worry about a discussion on living within our means as an institution if our message in the core values emphasized that we are about educating people who want to make change in the world by choosing to do the hard work behind change. The joke with a sense of pride has always been that you have more Obies working for free in the world than other schools’ graduates. Though that isn’t a good model for endowment building, I do believe it needs to be emphasized that we are about actively working for positive change. The new missions (sic) statement feels a bit generic and empty and the core values don’t feel like values but just things to do. Activism and change, even if you go to Wall Street or a law office, I’d like to see that. Social entrepreneurship in the other sections. We can’t lose the idealism and desire to fight for the common good. As long as we don’t go overboard like the Antiochs of the world, I would hope we can still inspire folks to think about the change in the world before the change in their pockets. Also, the wording is a bit negative for me. Renew, transparent, inclusive, revitalize, reaffirm.... Words like these and others imply that we are a community that doesn’t have these things. If we don’t then Oberlin truly is in dire straits. Are we only surviving on inertia right now? Since the end of the divisive Starr years and the Dye and current presidency I thought we had already gone a lot further on the positive track of governance.

[On Strategic Directions]: Again, I know this a preliminary document, but I do feel it’s bit thin, too vague. I read the reading list (couldn’t open appendix C, though), and thought that there were some things missing from both the readings and the committee members. Committee members consisted too much of current students and faculty. Seemed too insular to me. Not enough folks from the outside looking critically at what we have. For example, the committee looking at new pedagogical methods is still mostly our own people. Where are the people who are the leaders in this? Where are the case studies (not just chronicle articles) on how programs are doing around the world? We don’t have a graduate school of education, so who are the researches [sic] that we are consulting with? Who are the alumni looking into these issues in their own universities? I don’t know the bios of all the committee members, but at a glance it seems pretty slim on expert resources. Also, we can’t discount how high school education is changing. I didn’t see anything on how we are thinking about adapting to the challenges from students who are coming to Oberlin from high school programs already changing how they teach. I also didn’t see any committee member who has a handle on this domestically or globally. I don’t agree with the kid at Northwestern who complained about not having a flip, MOOC, or blended class, but we do need to think about diversity in instruction: maintain the LAC strength for individual teaching and learning, depth, and high intellectual engagement, but offer the options to embrace the modern global technological education environment. Too often I see folks forgetting to see how secondary edu is changing. I hope Oberlin doesn’t make the same error.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: 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]: Financials. Regardless of all the great things in the other sections, if we don't get Oberlin to more financial independence from tuition dollars by endowment building, this whole enterprise becomes just an intellectual exercise. This needs to be first and foremost. We need to have the development office out there selling the mission of Oberlin to those with deep pockets outside of our alumni community, selling our history of being a positive change in the world, showing our contributions to the sciences, arts, humanities, social justice and get people to invest in that. There have to be some donors out there looking at their own legacies and hopefully don't just want to drop 150 million on an arts center at a school with tens of billions in endowment funds. The money isn't about just building diversity, getting financial aid increased, increasing faculty salaries... All of that is a given with more funds. The money is about allowing Oberlin to continue its mission of educating the best and brightest in the world to go back out into the world empowered to enact positive change in any community. As a first generation Mexican American, I benefitted from Oberlin's generosity in FA, but I benefitted more from Oberlin's history, idealism, and activism. It has informed my own career as an educator in China for the last 19 years and continues to be in my thoughts often. The Oberlin legacy needs to be protected, but can only be done so if it's financially viable. On being a year-round campus, geographically, we have constraints, so selling the campus with [sic] be difficult (why come to small town Ohio when there is New York, Boston, LA, Chicago, DC ...?) But selling premier programs (the conservatory, environmental science, social activism etc) might be better at attracting people to summer programs. Don't go overboard in trying to offer everything to everyone, just concentrate on what truly makes Oberlin special and a leader.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: J. Sustainability. This should be emphasized more robustly. Maintaining leadership and stewardship in environmental science is a place where we can stand out among the sweet sixteen. Besides making the campus a model (get some Silicon Valley money in on this), have we considered offering a masters degree in Environmental Science or Environmental Engineering. LACs do sometimes offer one or two MAs; we used to have one in education. Right now we have the 3+2 programs, but that's siphoning people away. Right now I have students from my own school who want a LAC and would be competitive applications for Oberlin, but who choose schools like Union or Bucknell over Oberlin because of engineering resources (and in Union's case, also for connections to business and entrepreneurship programs). Again, we can't offer everything, but really pushing that the entire campus is heaven for those interested in sustainability ethically and academically would set us apart. Also, it would be good if we could link sustainability to the larger narrative of social justice, especially if we maintain activism worldwide. People can't change local political conditions if they are worrying more about just feeding their families and finding reliable drinking sources (in the US, too).

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: D. Diversity. Geographically we are pretty spread out in the US, but could do better with the South, and Southwest (though

southwest is not that populated in comparison to other regions of course). It does surprise me that we are still only 8% international. From full-tuition paying students and future endowment building this is very short-sighted. There is wealth out there and there are parents with deep pockets who might want to give to their child's alma mater. Have to be people out there who also share our values and want the type of education Oberlin provides. I don't recommend targeting one country like some colleges are doing (my country China, for example), but still need to get Oberlin more global. I'd even consider going to 20 or 25% international. Even something like Bard College's Simons Rock junior college for international students of music and other majors to spend two years of high school at Oberlin before going into their first year of university to deal with English issues and academic prep might be sth [sic] to consider (six years of tuition rather than four for those students, without a significant increase in overall student body). If we had a junior college model that was also partially endowed for FA, Oberlin could also target financial aid needing excellent high school students and underrepresented communities to have a two-year prep period before entering the first year of college. This is just me riffing on an idea in the half hour before the deadline to submit these comments, but the crux is that we can't be committed to social justice unless we are actively being creative, disruptive, out of the box, with our strategies for diversity and recruitment. This all links back to the message we give for capital campaigns and endowment building: without the funds to allow students from diverse socio economic and geographic to come to Oberlin regardless of their family income, we cannot be an institution truly committed to social justice. I'm just a principal in a public school on the other side of the planet from Oberlin, and my quarterly set donation isn't going to make much of a dent in Oberlin's financial need, but the alumni need to be organized into a united front for this. We should position Oberlin as the leader for diversity and social justice in higher education. Next time a kid doesn't go to the Ivy League after being admitted to all eight because of finances, that kid should choose Oberlin not Alabama.

11:55:23 PM 05.18.15

**Gregory Solow**

***Staff/Alumnus***

[On Strategic Directions]: For the most part, the Strategic Directions on display show a good sense for leveraging Oberlin's existing resources to the fullest possible extent. Using these resources is crucial to defining Oberlin's place as an institution and its value within the crowded market of higher learning: emphasizing the strengths of our human, facility-based and networking resources can only help to further Oberlin's mission and aforementioned Core Values. I am troubled, however, by some of the references to changes in governance and the "disruption" that has been mentioned in the document. Much has been made across all sorts of organizations, offices, and departments about these sorts of buzz words, whether that be "hacking" some sort of new solution, or "creatively disrupting" the status quo or, worse of all, "breaking stuff" as a complimentary term. While generally I'm in favor of moves that increases the College's ability to quickly move to solve problems, I am wary about the idea that these changes will come at the expense of existing checks and balances within the College governing structure, will exchange transparency and detail for speed, and fail to account for the



human and social costs that come alongside a “disruption” in the name of progress. Gimmicky language and vogue models of the moment will not be enough to fundamentally affect and repair the sorts of problems that Oberlin can expect to see in the coming years, problems that affect the entire realm of higher education and are supremely complex. I urge the Steering Committee to check themselves in the writing of the final version of this plan, and add assurances that as we face the costs of these changes we don't spend the resulting sum on attempts at magic bullets.

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: See above regarding some of my thinking on the notions of administrative attempts at “disruption” and increasing the College’s agility and autonomy on these points. My top priority out of the preliminary plan's Strategic Directions would be strongly urging the Steering Committee to think through the implications of a dedication to change for the mere sake of change on campus. Experimentation is important, new models and structures of decision-making are surely going to be part of whatever changes that the College sees in the coming years. These changes, however, do not exist in a vacuum, and often bring with them a serious human and cultural cost. Much of Oberlin’s greatness has been built on the strength of its history, its culture, and a staff history of commitment to the College and its students. A mishandling in this arena can quickly shatter the trust and relationships that various involved groups and individuals have formed over time. By all means I encourage the College to pursue innovative solutions to problems where it believes that it can secure the buy-in of those groups who it involves, and where there is a consensus of need, result, and direction of those changes. A future where these don’t exist, however, or where their importance is minimized and spirit of dictatorial policy runs free, is a future that does not seem likely to produce success.

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: The notion of a “year-round Oberlin” does seem promising: our fantastic facilities don’t do anyone much good while they are sitting fallow, after all. However, this point seems to promise immense logistical, staff, and cultural hurdles that simply are not developed in the Preliminary Report (though due to the nature of the report, this is of course expected). There are also necessarily concerns about making sure that the quality of the Oberlin name and brand is not diluted through a poorly-considered final product. I look forward to hearing what the Steering Committee and its members have to say on the details of the implementation of such a plan, and how they anticipate dealing with these hurdles.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Finally, it would be a waste if Oberlin did not continue to contribute significant resources to its commitment to maintaining a leadership position in environmental stewardship and sustainability. Existing programs and institutions are well-suited to this, and continuing their work with a fresh focus would almost certainly be to the benefit of the College and community. Musing personally, it also seems that there is some potential to flip the College financial situation on its head somewhat, and use Oberlin’s current dependence on tuition revenues to its advantage in this regard. While I do not pretend to be well-versed in the current student-led divestment campaigns that are going on across campus, it does seem to me that the endowment's limited size and yearly product suggests that it might be a source for some

of the agile thinking that the rest of the report emphasizes. Since it only represents a fraction of regular costs anyway, why not take the opportunity to invest endowment funds into new green energy stocks, both as a symbol of Oberlin's commitment to this part of its mission and as a potentially lucrative source of revenues? How do these returns compare to Oberlin's current investments, and what spread of effects might come about via the change? I certainly don't have the research on hand for sure, but it is some food for thought.

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**Jan Heininger '74**

*Alumnus*

[Response to Top Strategic Direction]: \$\$\$—need to increase endowment; secondarily increase research and program grants

[Response to Second Top Strategic Direction]: \$\$\$—reduce administrative costs. All research on drastic increase in tuition over past 40 years points finger principally at proliferation of administrators and growth of administrative functions. It's not really faculty salaries that have driven tuition increases or even educational programs.

[Response to Third Top Strategic Direction]: Ensuring thriving liberal arts education model. Oberlin is unique in higher education. Emerging strategic directions don't strike me as anything new but simply rephrasing what we've always done. And who we are (Think One Person Can Change the World? We Do.) and how we educate Obies with a commitment to training lifetime learners to give back and make the world a better place hasn't changed since 1833. And Oberlin has been committed to diversity, equity and social justice forever.