

Controversial Plaque Restored to Computing Center

A plaque that 15 years ago caused so much campus controversy that it was removed from the Houck Computing Center is back in its original spot. The plaque has been up about a month, and so far few have protested, says Gary Kornblith, acting director of computing, who returned the plaque originally put there by Don Mittleman, emeritus professor of mathematics and former director of the Computing Center.

Vinio Rossi, now Ruberta T. McCandless Emeritus Professor of French, may have given the plaque its most public dressing down. In 1979, in the inaugural address Rossi gave on being named to his chair, published in the Fall 1979 *Oberlin Alumni Magazine*, he called the plaque "parochial" and said "... I am offended first, by the

loaded language and second, by the smug position that prompted the outrageous last sentence."

The last sentence? Here it is: "Knowing how to use a computer should now be equated with knowing how to use a book; in the future it will prove to be more important." Above that sentence are these: "Computing is a basic skill, on the order of reading, writing, arithmetic. We must not deny the student the competence to use the computer as an intellectual resource."

Before Don Mittleman retired from Oberlin, he created a work of art for the Computing Center. He used his mathematical background to design Nine Unequal Squares, executed in carpeting and installed on a lobby wall of the center. The centerpiece of the work was

the plaque, which was removed and replaced with another square of carpet around 1981.

The plaque had been in Mittleman's house for 15 years, but before he went south for the winter this year, Mittleman presented it to Kornblith. Asked recently who was the author of the words on the plaque, Mittleman replied, "I was—along with about 10,000 other people with a vision."



First-year students LaToyia Huggins and Belice Cabrera keep their noses in their books while the wall behind them seethes with history and prophecy.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LINDA GRASHO

Where the Budget Is Being Cut

In about a week the College should know where all the cuts will occur that will eliminate Oberlin's \$3 million structural deficit from the 1996-97 budget, President Nancy Dye said this week. Except for \$200,000, the general areas of all the cuts are already decided, she said. Here are the amounts to be cut from the various budget areas.

- \$600,000 Office of Student Life and Services
- 430,000 Extra-Help Budget Lines throughout Campus
- 400,000 Postretirement Health Benefits Accounting Savings
- 300,000 College of Arts and Sciences
- 300,000 Division of Operations
- 230,000 Treasurer's Office (VP)
- 150,000 Office of Admissions (VP)
- 150,000 Libraries and Computing Center
- 125,000 Conservatory of Music
- 120,000 Office of Development, Alumni Affairs, and Communications
- 60,000 Office of the Controller
- 60,000 Office of Human Resources

At least some of the \$200,000 gap will be closed by reducing the number of intern positions across campus, Vice President for Finance Andy Evans said Wednesday.

In its last three issues the *Observer* has reported some details about the changes in several of the other areas, namely accounting for postretirement health benefits (see story on page 3), the college, the conservatory, operations, the Treasurer's Office, admissions, and human resources. The *Oberlin Review* has reported more thoroughly on changes, not yet completed, in Student Life and Services.

The Office of the Controller will find its savings in cutting nonsalary operating expenses and in enhancing its revenues, including those from the Oberlin Inn, Evans said. The libraries, the computing center, and the Office of Development, Alumni Affairs, and Communications are still working out their plans.

News Notes



Marcia Colish, Frederick B. Artz Professor of History, gave the keynote address, "Re-envisioning the Middle Ages: A View from Intellectual History," at the conference of the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Arizona State University February 17. Tomorrow she will give a speech, "Peter Lombard and Philosophy," at the Claremont Graduate School during Issues in Medieval Philosophy: A Symposium in Honor of Richard C. Dales. Colish derived the first paper from her *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition*, forthcoming from Yale University Press. The second paper is from her last book, *Peter Lombard* (Leiden, 1994).

• **Dave Holtzman**, assistant professor of neuroscience, and Anita Stone '96 have had an article accepted for publication in *Animal Behaviour*, "one of the premiere journals in the field," says Holtzman. The article, "Feeding Responses in Young Boa Constrictors (*Boa constrictor imperator*) Are Mediated by the Vomeronasal System" is based on work that Stone helped design, implement, analyze, and write for a Winter Term project. • Professor of Singing **Richard Miller** has received support to research the differences in resonance bal-



ance between classical and popular voice idioms. The project, partially funded by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, Inc., (NARAS) will educate both categories of singers about greater levels of vocal efficiency, thereby diminishing health hazards and improving performance. The NARAS grant will allow Miller to purchase an electroglottograph and grayscale thermal printer to carry out the research. • Monday's *Elyria Chronicle Telegram* profiled Professor of African-American studies



James Millette. The profile preceded a speech on Caribbean history that Millette gave Tuesday at Afrikan Heritage House as part of Black History Month. The piece quoted Associate Professor of African-American studies



Adrienne Lash Jones at length, including her comment that "students have a tremendous respect for [Millette] as an instructor and as a scholar." • The January/February issue of *Communication Arts* magazine quotes Professor of Environmental Studies **David Orr**.



The article "Designing for Sustainability" quotes Orr as saying, "Design is the connecting thread running through everything we do." The piece mentions Oberlin's **Environmental Studies Center**, now in planning. • The February issue of *Choral Journal* ran a review of Professor of Musicology **Steve Plank**'s 1994 Scarecrow Press book, *The Way to Heavens Doore*. The reviewer's comments on Plank's book about church music include: "Plank's presentation is infused with an infectious enthusiasm that can sweep up those readers who might initially ask 'Who cares?'" • The



computer-science department's Associate Professor **Rhys Price Jones**, Visiting Assistant Professor **Fritz Ruehr**, and Professor **Richard Salter**



presented a paper at the 1996 Association for Computing Machinery Computing Week, held February 14-20, on how World Wide Web-based laboratories in the introductory computer-science curriculum enhance formal methods. The three also presented a workshop, Programming Language

Principles and Applications Using Scheme, for the associated technical symposium for the special-interest group on computer-science education. Price Jones, Ruehr, Salter, and Professor Chris Haynes of Indiana University gave a seminar, New Technological Tools for Education, describing the HTX tool that Ruehr spoke to the Oberlin faculty about in a January presentation on technology in the classroom. Two of the students who have worked on the HTX project participated in the Student Posters Session. College sophomore Alexei Barchenkov and double-degree junior Daniel Hutchings displayed some of the curricular materials they developed for Oberlin's sophomore computer-science labs. • An article published in the December 14, 1995, *Far Eastern Economic Review* quoted Associate Professor of History **Steve Volk**. The article, "Socialist Realism: China Plays Coy with



Castro and Do Muoi," quotes Volk as saying, "No question, this trip is galling for Fidel, and he's there only because he needs money." Volk was referring to the Cuban president's December trip to Beijing in search of aid and trade deals to help Cuba offset the loss of both from the former Soviet Union. "Cuban relations with China soured in the 1960s because of the widening Sino-Soviet dispute and because Cuba accused Mao Zedong of trying to indoctrinate Cuban workers in its own brand of communism," says Volk.

Letter

I have just finished reading the February 1 issue of the *Observer*. It is the most exciting reading I have had from Oberlin in a long time.

The fact that the faculty and staff are finally "wrestling with the structural deficit" suggests that there is still a great future for Oberlin. This will be the best educational experience they will have had in a long time, and it will result, if they are successful, in a much stronger and effective college.

It is too bad that the atmosphere was such that this could not have been done seven to 10 years ago. Had it been done then, Oberlin would now be in a full leadership position among all colleges. It must be done now.

President Dye's leadership in this is important, but the effort will not succeed unless it is an all-out effort on the part of everyone.

James W. Griswold '31
Exeter, New Hampshire

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Letters to the editor directly related to campus events are welcome; those from employees and students take precedence over those from other correspondents. All letters are subject to editing; if time permits, the editor will consult with the correspondent about changes.

Discarded copies of the *Observer* may be recycled with office paper.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Oberlin College Development Resources, Bosworth Hall 4, 50 W. Lorain St., Oberlin, OH 44074-1089.

Transitions

New Faculty

Edward A. Zadrozny (Ohio State University M.E., University of Illinois M.M. 1975) is teacher of trombone. A former Tanglewood fellow, he has been associate professor of music at the University of Akron for 18 years and was also an instructor in music at Lawrence University. Zadrozny enjoys sports and collecting baseball cards. He and his wife, Ingrid, have a son.

Change in Appointment

Linda Delgado returns this semester as visiting instructor in history. She taught at Oberlin during the 1994-1995 school year.

General Faculty Hears about Possible Changes in Postretirement Health Benefits Accounting

Tuesday's General Faculty (GF) meeting started with a reminder from Associate Professor of History Steve Volk about the McNair fellowship opportunities for students that give faculty members summer research assistants. The deadline for applications has been extended to Monday, February 26, at 4:30, Volk said. [See the September 28 *Observer* for details of the program.—Ed.]

GF College Benefits Committee chair Jim Zinser then explained some alternatives to the way Oberlin has been financing postretirement medical benefits for employees. The committee was to meet with actuaries late this week to

consider ways Oberlin could save up to \$400,000 by reducing the charge against operations without reducing the value of the postretirement health benefit to retirees. Next week the committee will give its recommendations to the trustees. Any of the changes the committee is considering is likely to have no noticeable effect to the retiree, Zinser said.

Before adjourning, the faculty heard President Nancy Dye run down the amounts of money being cut from various College budgets to reduce or eliminate Oberlin's \$3 million structural deficit. [See "Where the Budget Is Being Cut."]

Survey . . .

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anticipated *principal* activity the following fall (compared to 29 percent of the other COFHE schools). About two-thirds of our recent alumni report attending graduate school, so it was surprising to see that so few planned to attend graduate school full time directly after graduation.

Another interesting finding involves students who are not attending graduate school full time. Only 25 percent of those students

**Table 3:
Percent in Various Phases
of Job Search**

	Oberlin	COFHE Median
Have Accepted	25	37
Still Searching	41	37
Will Begin after Graduation	29	18

reported having accepted employment, and nearly 30 percent stated that they were waiting until after graduation even to *begin* their job search. These responses contrast with those of the students from other schools in the COFHE group (See Table 3).

Plans for Future Surveys

The Senior Survey is a rich data set, and this summary only scratches the surface of information available.

Plans for future surveys include one of a random sample of all students enrolled this spring, allowing cross-class comparisons of the items and tracking of student performance and departure. We will administer the 1996 COFHE Senior Survey this year with

**Table 2:
Mean Enhancement Ratings of Skills and Knowledge**

	Oberlin	COFHE Median
Acquire New Skills and Knowledge on Own	3.51	3.46
Understand Myself: Abilities, Interests, etc.	3.40	3.38
Think Analytically and Logically	3.38	3.47
Write Effectively	3.36	3.38
Gain In-Depth Knowledge of a Field	3.34	3.33
Function Independently, without Supervision	3.32	3.34
Develop Awareness of Social Problems	3.27	2.99
Formulate Creative or Original Ideas & Solutions	3.25	3.22
Place Current Problems in Perspective	3.23	3.13
Synthesize and Integrate Ideas & Information	3.17	3.19
Plan and Execute Complex Projects	3.15	3.10
Identify Moral and Ethical Issues	3.10	3.06
Communicate Well Orally	3.10	3.05
Evaluate and Choose between Courses of Action	3.08	3.08
Acquire Broad Knowledge in Arts and Sciences	3.08	3.03
Appreciate Art, Literature, Music, Drama	3.08	2.84
Develop Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence	2.96	2.97
Relate Well to People of Different Races, Nations	2.92	2.91
Establish Course of Action to Accomplish Goals	2.87	2.92
Lead and Supervise Tasks and People	2.80	2.84
Function Effectively as a Member of a Team	2.68	2.83
Understand Role of Science and Technology in Society	2.54	2.66
Use Quantitative Tools	2.44	2.58
Read or Speak a Foreign Language	2.27	2.28

our primary interest in comparing the responses of our graduates over a two-year period that has seen many changes, particularly in Oberlin's administration.

Soon we will have data from a survey of our faculty, administered in November 1995, that among other things will allow comparison of faculty and student social and political views. These data, combined with that from the national Survey of American Freshmen and survey data of our

alumni, will help us understand who our students are, what they think of Oberlin, and what they are doing with their lives after college.

Ross Peacock is director of institutional research. He says he "tends to be more satisfied with stuff" than his COFHE counterparts. This article is an adaptation of a presentation Peacock gave the Board of Trustees Enrollment Committee in December 1995.

Observations

Learning and Satisfaction

By Ross Peacock

For more than 25 years Oberlin College has participated in the Survey of American Freshmen sponsored by the American Council on Education. This annual survey, reported on every year in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, provides a wealth of data on new-student expectations and backgrounds.

But until spring 1994 it had been more

than 10 years since Oberlin had surveyed its graduating students about their satisfaction with their experiences at Oberlin and about what they thought they had learned. That May we administered the 1994 Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) Graduating Senior Survey to all students about to graduate. The response rate was well

over 80 percent. And with 27 of the other COFHE schools administering the survey to their graduating seniors and receiving comparable response rates, we have excellent comparative data.

Student Satisfaction

Our students reported the highest level of satisfaction with their academic experiences—specifically, with the availability of faculty, size of classes, opportunities for independent study and research, and library and computer facilities. They reported the lowest levels of satisfaction with administrative and social areas of the college—specifically, with the sense of community on campus, administration's responsiveness, student housing, career planning, the financial-aid office, food services, and student health. These results are consistent with those of other national surveys of student satisfaction and are reflective of satisfaction levels at other COFHE institutions. Table 1 lists the responses of our students to each service and aspect addressed in the survey along with the median response from the COFHE group.

Skills and Knowledge Enhancement

One way to assess academic outcomes is to ask students to rate the level of enhancement in several key areas. The COFHE survey asked students to do this using a scale of 1 (Not at All) to 4 (Greatly). Table 2, on page 3, lists each skill or knowledge addressed in the survey with the mean scores of our graduates and those of the COFHE group. Skills required for lifelong learning (one of the goals in Oberlin's mission statement) have the highest mean scores.

Postcollege Plans

The responses in this section may be the most inconsistent with Oberlin's conventional wisdom about itself. Only 21 percent of our students reported graduate school as their

Continued on page 3

Table 1:
Percent Marking "Very Satisfied" with Various Services and Aspects

	Oberlin	COFHE Median
Library Facilities	69	53
Availability of Faculty	59	49
Computer Facilities	58	45
Size of Classes	51	51
Independent Study/Research	51	51
Quality of Instruction	47	47
Course in Major	43	45
Science Lab Facilities	43	37
Humanities and Art Courses	43	43
Interdisciplinary Courses	41	41
Athletic Facilities	41	31
Extracurricular Activities	40	41
Tutorial Help	38	32
Speakers, Cultural Offerings, Events	37	36
Classroom Facilities	36	33
Natural Science and Math Courses	35	22
Social Science Courses	34	39
Course Availability	31	33
Internships/Off-Campus Study	29	44
Intramural Athletic Opportunities	26	30
Social Life on Campus	26	18
Foreign Language Facilities	23	34
Contact with Faculty and Administrators	21	24
Ethnic/Racial Diversity of Campus	21	20
Academic Advising	21	16
Student Employment	17	27
Climate for Minority Students	16	16
Student Housing	13	21
Career Planning/Counseling	11	17
Sense of Community on Campus	11	11
Financial-Aid Office	11	22
Food Services	10	10
Student Health	8	14
Administration's Responsiveness	3	6