

As Mary Ella Feinleib Leaves Office, Jim Helm Returns to the A&S Deanship

"I deeply regret that Dean Feinleib has decided to resign," says Professor of Classics Jim Helm, who soon, pending trustees' approval, will take over as acting dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S). "I've enjoyed the contacts I've had with Mary Ella and appreciate the contribution she's made to Oberlin."

President Nancy Dye sent a memo announcing Feinleib's resignation and Helm's appointment to all members of the campus community yesterday. Feinleib will resign effective March 22; Helm will officially begin his duties the next day.

Helm has been acting dean of the college before—for the fall semester and Winter Term of 1991-92, when Al MacKay was acting president during then-president Fred Starr's sabbatical leave. Helm was associate dean of the college from 1986 to 1989.

"I've never sought any administrative position but have always tried to respond when the institution requests my service," says Helm, citing a "long talk" with Dye in this case. "Mary Ella has resigned, so the college will soon need a dean; if Nancy wants me to do the job, I will," he says.

Helm's large task of the moment is to find a way to have his three classes continue. This

semester Helm has been teaching Beginning Greek, Greek and Roman Mythology, and Latin Lyric Poetry. He says he is hunting up "Oberlin grads in various stages of their careers" to take over two if not all of the classes.

When he moves to Cox, Helm doesn't intend to make waves.

"I don't anticipate taking any new initiatives in my short time in the dean's office,"

says Helm, expecting to leave the position at the end of the school year.

What will he do? One of his tasks will be to oversee the planning of the move of the modern languages departments to Peters Hall and the reconfiguration of space in Rice and King.

Besides that, "A lot of the dean's work is personnel work, and it has a cycle to it,"

[Continued on page 4](#)

President's Study Aims to Understand Black-Student Retention at Oberlin

When President Nancy Dye saw how few African-American students graduated last May, compared with how many had been accepted into the Class of 1995, word has it, she was "very distressed."

Come fall, Dye was gunning for the reasons that Oberlin has not been graduating its black students at a much higher rate.

"I am convinced that we do not know anywhere what we ought to know," she wrote a colleague in September. "I have in mind a study that will go into considerable depth

. . . hence the idea of doing a small case study rather than looking generally at retention."

This weekend Dye's "small case study" takes off in a big way when seven students begin calling every black student who entered Oberlin between 1987 and 1991 to find out why he or she left or stayed. First-

year students Theodore Jennings and L.J. Watkins, sophomores Cheryl Brown and Takeisha Hall, junior Farah Woodall, and seniors Moshe Thomas and Brian Williams will conduct 30-minute telephone interviews, the format of which a committee of Oberlin faculty and staff formulated.

How the Study Was Planned

Assistant to the President Diana Roose, a sociologist who has conducted research studies for 9 to 5 and other nonprofit organiza-

tions, has pulled together an ad hoc retention-study committee that includes three faculty members from Oberlin's Department of Sociology—Assistant Professor Daphne John, Professor Bill Norris, and Associate Professor Clovis White—as well as A.G. Miller, assistant pro-

[Cont. on page 4](#)

Temporary Quiet Falls on Budget News

A few campus units—the libraries, computing center, and the Office of Development, Alumni Affairs, and Communications—have yet to announce changes in their areas that address the \$3 million structural deficit being eliminated from the 1996-97 budget. But the recommendations that the respective administrative heads have made about savings in their units are now in the hands of Oberlin's trustees. This weekend the Board of Trustees will act on the budget recommendations and other matters. Next week the *Observer* will have more news about the issues.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN SEVRELED

Malakia Silcott, Diana Roose, and Clovis White hold a brief meeting about the phoning planned for the weekend. Yesterday White and Bill Norris began training the student callers in interviewing techniques.

Finney's New Organ Will Accommodate More Musical Styles

By Anita Buckmaster '95

In the year 2001, the music of Franck, Mendelssohn, Saint-Saens, and Messiaen will fill Finney Chapel. And finally it will sound as it is supposed to: By that time Finney's new symphonic organ will be built and installed.

Although Oberlin has added two new organs in the past 25 years—the Flentrop organ in Warner Concert Hall (1974) and the Brombaugh organ in Fairchild Chapel (1981)—it has been lacking an instrument appropriate for playing the music of the 19th and 20th centuries. The existing instruments serve the music of the late Renaissance, early Baroque, and later 17th century, while the new one will be the correct style for romantic and contemporary literature. The new organ will complement the others and distinguish Oberlin's organ collection from those of other schools, many of which have only one instrument for many styles of music, says Professor of Organ David Boe. Boe and Professor of Organ Haskell Thomson are coordinating the Finney organ project.

The \$1,185,000 construction cost of the organ is being covered entirely by outside donations. Kay Africa of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, gave the bulk of the money for the project as a bequest five years ago. Her contribution has been invested until the remainder of the funds needed could be raised. Africa had no connection to Oberlin but desired to leave part of her estate to a worthy cause. Her lawyer, John Douglass, advised her on the quality of the organ program at the

conservatory and its reputation as a respected center for training organists. Douglass's brother Fenner Douglass '42, taught organ at Oberlin from 1946 to 1975. The balance of the funds are from donations made specifically for the project.

C.B. Fisk, Inc. of Gloucester, Massachusetts, will build the organ. Fisk, says Boe, has significant experience constructing organs in the style of Aristide Cavallé-Coll, a 19th-century French organ builder whose work will inspire the design and construction of the Finney organ. One of Fisk's recent projects is the new organ in the Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, completed in 1992. The firm also has contracts with Rice University, Southern Methodist University, and the Seattle Symphony.

Oberlin's new organ will arrive in about five years, and will occupy the existing cabinet designed for Finney Chapel by Cass Gilbert. After the assembly, two workers will stay for nine months to voice the instrument, adjusting it pipe by pipe to ensure that the sound quality is at its highest. Most of the installation will be done during the summer

and when Finney isn't scheduled for performances. There should be little or no interruption in the use of the building, Boe says.

Thomson describes the organ now in Finney as a "disappointment to the faculty and students." The first organ in the chapel was built in 1914 by E.M. Skinner, and by most accounts was masterfully crafted. When it was rebuilt in the 1950s, much of the original character of the instrument was lost. The new symphonic organ will offer a "rainbow of tone colors," says Thomson, "with a dynamic range extending from the softest flutes and strings to the most powerful foundations and reeds; an instrument capable of making a crescendo from the most ethereal pianissimo to thundering fortissimo."

In many ways, Boe says, the decision to put in a new organ is an equipment decision. "It is not unusual for say, the biology department to update its equipment, and we're doing the same. This is just more noticeable because people have a connection to the organ in Finney. The organ is a very public instrument."

Transitions

Editor's Note: A word about departure dates seems in order. In "Transitions" the *Observer* presents information about College employees' comings and goings. The information comes from the Office of Human Resources staff, who in the case of departures gives us the last official date of employment. Most employees who leave Oberlin have vacation or severance time coming, and their last working day may be considerably earlier than the date we publish in the paper as their official leaving date. So if you want to be sure to say good-bye to someone before he or she leaves, you might get in touch with them earlier than the date the *Observer* publishes.

From time to time the *Observer* receives a note attached to a campuswide announcement asking for the announcement's inclusion in the paper. The editor regrets not being able to satisfy this sort of request. One reason the *Observer* doesn't do so is the familiar not-enough-space reason. Another is that the *Observer* tries to avoid simply publishing news already conveyed to the campus by other means.

New Faculty and Staff

Kimberly A. Kosonovich (Bryant and Stratton Business Institute) is assistant gift processor for development. She has worked for the Cooper Foster Family Practice and for

Medical Payment Systems. She and her husband, John, have a 4-year-old daughter, Olivia. Kosonovich enjoys reading, counted cross stitch, and spending time with her family. **Andrew R. Walking** (Dartmouth A.B., Cornell University M.A. 1990) is visiting professor of history. A Ph.D candidate at Cornell, he has taught at St. Olaf College and Cornell University. Recipient of a Philip Merrill teaching fellowship, an Andrew W. Mellon completion fellowship, a Theodor E. Mommen travel fellowship, a Bowmar research assistantship, and the John J. Blackmore Prize in music, he is a contributing writer to *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration* (edited by Gerald MacLean, Yale University Press, 1995) and to "Performing the Music of Henry Purcell" (edited by Michael Burden, forthcoming from Oxford University Press). He has contributed articles to *Early Music* and *Music & Letters*. A cellist, Walking enjoys musical performance and collecting antique books.

Departures

Kay Oehler, Women's Studies Program coordinator, will leave the College officially June 15. **CORRECTION:** Service and Transportation Manager **Wayne Streator**, soon to leave the College (see "Transitions" in the March 1 issue), has worked for Oberlin 28—not 20—years.

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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.

Make Your Own CD—in Mudd

For \$7.50 and a trip to the Audiovisual Department in Mudd you can now make your own CD.

A CD of what? "If you can save it [in a computer file], we can put it on a CD-ROM," says sophomore computer-science-major David Kammer, a work-study student who is running the CD operations at AV.

Associate Professor of Biology Yolanda Cruz is the first faculty member to make use of the new gizmo, a Sony CD burner inside a case made by APS (see photo and caption). Her interactive computer program for the Developmental Biology class, now on CD, started in 1993 as a hard-disk computer file. This year Benjamin von Fischer '96 worked on the project; in past years so did Edward Chowdhury '95 and Jayfus Doswell '94. The disc is called *Developmental Biology Program* for lack of a cleverer title, Cruz says. "I will solicit student suggestions for clever names, and will probably award the prize of a chocolate bar or something like that to the student in this year's class who suggests the neatest name."

"I anticipate that the program will provide an enjoyable way to learn about how embryos do their thing," says Cruz. Her animated CD demonstrates complex processes in the formation and development of several animal embryos. The program will soon be available through Oberlin Online.

Multimedia presentations like *Developmental Biology Program* are just one of the uses for CD-ROMs. Others include

- Keeping files—multimedia or not—that are too large to store on other media. CDs can handle file sizes of up to 650 megabytes.
- Storing static archival information. Compared to magnetic media, CDs have

very long lifetimes, says Assistant to the Director of Computing Linda Iroff, who directed the burner's purchase and installation.

Right now Oberlin's CD burner is set up to accept files from Macintosh machines over AppleTalk (reached through the Chooser: choose the AppleShare icon, the Library AppleTalk zone, and the CD-ROM Burner file server). But when CD-guru Kammer sets up the burner's associated computer to handle FTP (File Transfer Protocol, a platform-independent way to move files from one computer to another), any kind of computer, including those running Windows and DOS operating systems, will be able to send files to the CD burner.

The burner can create files and programs in Macintosh, ISO (Windows and DOS), or a combination, called hybrid Mac-ISO formats. It also can create CD audio disks, like those used for musical recordings. And it can combine CD audio files with the other formats on one disk. It can also do what is called sessioning: burn some files in one session and add more files later.

The Houck Computing Center bought the CD burner for \$999.95 in January. A year or two earlier equipment to produce CDs was still in the \$4000 range. A recent price reduction in Macintosh computers meant that the whole CD-ROM burner station cost about \$4000—including the burner and a one-gigabyte external hard drive. The Macintosh is a Power Mac 7100/80 with 24 megabytes of RAM and a 500-megabyte internal hard drive. The computing center placed the burner in AV because AV can better monitor the burner's use, control its access, and train people to use it.

Training people is one of the things Kammer likes best about his job, other than setting up the station in the first place. Besides working with people one on one, he will be developing an Oberlin Online web site that will explain most of the things a person needs to know to convert a hard-disk file into a CD-ROM. For now, people who want to ask questions or make an appointment to send their files to be burned may call him in the AV department at x8757, or send him E-mail at DKammer@cs.oberlin.edu.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN SEYFRIED

David Kammer set up the College CD burner—a device that makes CDs and CD-ROMs using a laser beam—and now teaches others how to use the equipment. The burner is the small box to the right of the CD David holds in his hand.

Letter

Urge Funding of NSF, VA, and NEH

Since October 1995 no appropriations bill has been signed to provide funding for FY 1996 for the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Veterans Administration (VA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and many other federal grant-making agencies. As a result, the NSF and the VA (to name two of the agencies that I am familiar with) have been shut down more than once. On March 15 they will again face government shut-down. If this situation is allowed to continue for the duration of FY 1996, this nation's research efforts will be hampered seriously and irrevocably. Obviously, lack of funding affects college and university faculty researchers the most, but programs that provide assistantships, fellowships, and internships are invaluable to the education of students at all levels and of all backgrounds.

Invite *Observer* readers who are as deeply concerned about the funding situation as I am to write to the administration and the House and Senate Appropriations committees urging them to make funding the NSF, VA, and NEH some of the highest priorities for FY 1996.

Send me QuickMail or E-mail at david_holtzman@qmgate.cc.oberlin.edu, and I'll send you the names and addresses of some pertinent politicians.

David Holtzman

Assistant Professor of Neuroscience

Leila Mae Cannon, Cook

Leila Mae Cannon, a cook in Oberlin's residence halls from 1960 to 1978, died February 18 at 84 in San Antonio after a long illness.

"She was one of the best bakers," says Marie Henderson, who worked with Cannon in Lord-Saunders (later known as Afrikan Heritage House) some years before her own retirement last year as supervisor of Talcott Dining Hall. "Breads and rolls were her specialty," says Henderson. "We used to ask her, 'What do you do to make your rolls taste so good?' and she would say, 'You have to put eggs in the rolls.'"

Before working in College residence halls Cannon baked for the old Oberlin Inn, says Henderson, and cooked for a time at the Hungry Bear, a former restaurant on College Street.

Cannon was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star, American Legion Auxiliary, and Mount Zion Baptist Church.

Survivors include a daughter, a son, five grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, a sister, and a brother.

Ideas Fly at Last Friday's Environmental-Design-Team Meeting

Put [Environmental Studies Center](#) (ESC) architect Bill McDonough—and Kevin Burke and Chris Hays from the McDonough + Partners architectural firm—in the same room with John Todd, innovative ecological wastewater engineer; John Lyle, ESC charrette facilitator and founder of the Center for Regenerative Studies; Bill Browning, director of green development services with the Rocky Mountain Institute; Professor of Environmental Studies David Orr; and a few dozen Oberlin students, faculty, staff, and townspeople, and watch the synergy send ideas through the roof. That's what happened at the

first design-team meeting for the ESC, held in Wilder 101 March 1.

The purpose of the meetings was to clarify and discuss the center's mission statement, design process, building program, site analysis, building-systems analysis, and potential ripple effects.

Orr and his Environmental Studies Program colleagues have yet to fashion the mission statement into codified form, but a sampling of the thoughts that saw light over the course of the day hint at things to come, both philosophical and physical:

- Maximize use of incoming daylight when available.
- Develop designs that emulate natural systems.
- Create inspiring spaces that reveal the qualities of northeastern Ohio.
- Use a "living machine" to process waste through a series of miniature aquatic ecosystems.
- Make the building a net exporter of energy, producing more energy than it consumes.
- Use locally available materials from as close as possible to the center's site.
- Use wood from sustainably harvested forests.
- Design the building to be easily con-

verted to housing, insuring long-term flexibility.

- Insure the highest feasible level of indoor air quality through nontoxic furnishings, fixtures, and finishings.
- Anticipate future technologies; provide options to upgrade or modify the center's technologies and systems over time.
- Use landscaping that attracts song birds.
- Provide space to preserve local endangered species.
- Design the building to sense occupancy, lighting or heating areas only where and when needed.
- Use the building as an epicenter for biological restoration and economic revitalization.
- Use components that are state of the shelf; assemble them in ways that are state of the art.
- Be ecologically intelligent and just in creating the center.

"The range of ideas being pulled into the design is extraordinary," says Orr.

Schematic designs will go before College trustees at the June board meeting. Orr expects the trustees to approve the building site—south of Harkness—this weekend. "We're right on schedule with the project," Orr says.

Deanship . . .

[Continued from page 1](#)

Helm says. "I've done the fall and winter, and now I'll do the spring." The personnel work includes salary issues and leave replacements. Helm's background on College Faculty Council, of which he was a member last year, has also helped prepare him for the personnel work, he says.

In large outlines the A&S budget for next year is set, Helm says, although some "difficult pieces" remain to be completed.

Helm says he enters his new responsibilities with two hopes: "that I can help the College in a tough time, and that the community will give me the support I surely will need."

Preliminary stages of the search for the new permanent dean have already begun. Yesterday Secretary of the College Bob Haslun mailed to all College Faculty members a list of persons eligible for nomination to the Dean's Search Committee. The search committee will be formed by April 8.

All members of the A&S college are eligible for the committee except those whose appointments terminate at the end of the semester and those who are on leave this semester. The eligibility list is to be returned to Haslun's office by Wednesday by persons who wish their name to be removed.

A preliminary ballot goes out the same day, due back to Haslun March 21, when the secretary will mail the final ballot. That ballot is due back in the secretary's office April 8.

The search committee will set its own timetables for completing the search, but estimates of when a permanent dean will be in Cox range from June into the fall.

Retention . . .

[Continued from page 1](#)

fessor of religion; Gloria White, associate dean of student academic services; Ross Peacock, director of institutional research; and students Williams and Woodall. Together the group shaped the study, identifying the issues to which the survey needed to be sensitive.

John, the number cruncher in the group, will have the help of a student to manage data from student records—including student-life records and transcripts—of the survey subjects before she begins analyzing the data. She will be working with identification numbers only, individual names having been deleted from the files.

With the help of black alumni, focus groups may also be held in several cities this spring.

Students Do Much of the Work

From the start the committee designed the survey to be carried out mostly by students.

"We thought the response rate and accuracy of information would be greater if students conducted the interviews," says Roose. "It's a great educational opportunity for students. They're doing a lot of background research, too."

Intensive work began this Winter Term, when Roose hired December graduate Malakia Silcott to coordinate student workers, who began tracking down alumni. Of the 300 black students who entered Oberlin between 1987 and 1991, all but 90 are now located.

This summer the interview data will be merged with the information from student records, and the committee will issue a report that includes recommendations for change.

"We want to implement changes by this coming fall," says Roose.

"Oberlin's mission has always been defined by its commitment to being a truly interracial educational community," says Dye. "If we are to be true to our mission, we must do a much better job in enabling African-American students to complete their educations at Oberlin."