

The Observer

Volume 19, Number 10 February 13, 1998

THE OBERLIN COLLEGE FACULTY AND STAFF NEWSPAPER

Nancy Dye Applies \$150,000 Knight Grant to Programs for City School Children and Other Students from Low-Income Families

President Nancy Dye is directing \$150,000—awarded to the College in December by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation for her discretionary use—toward seeding two related goals, both of which, she says, emerged in the recent strategic planning as central to the College's values and mission.

"Diversity and a strong commitment to educational access have always been central values for Oberlin," says Dye. "I want Oberlin once again to be at the forefront of efforts to expand American ideas about and practices concerning educational access."

First, says Dye, she would like "to move forward on creating a major and sustained collaboration between the College and Oberlin's public schools." Second, she and a small number of faculty and staff are working to develop a summer program for low-income middle-school or high-school students.

Dye's first proposal fits one of the goals named by the Oberlin and Educational Access planning team in its report, published as a section of *Broad Directions for Oberlin's Future*, the summary report of the strategic planning that took place last academic year.

Under "Adopt and be adopted by Oberlin High School and Langston Middle School" the planning team wrote in explanation: "It is in the interests of the College as a whole to pursue this objective to enlarge our admissions pool, to enhance service-learning opportunities, and to enable Oberlin to attract and retain faculty members with school-aged children."

Dye's second plan, to expand access to education, will focus the remainder of the Knight funds on a summer program in academic enrichment for middle-school or high-school students. In *Broad Directions* the Oberlin and Educational Access planning team provided this rationale for such a plan:

"... over the past generation, the world of higher education has changed dramatically, and henceforth, we must do more than in the past to recruit and retain a truly diverse student body. We need to develop partnerships with secondary schools and nurture relationships with prospective students from a wide variety of backgrounds. . . . In the end, we will have to teach ourselves as well as our future students how to create and sustain a community dedicat-

Continued on page 3



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN SEYFRIED

Concrete Improvement

Over the years, freezing, thawing, ice, and salt have done a number on the front steps of the conservatory's Bibbins Hall. On January 28, however, the elements met their match when Schirmer Construction tore out the old crumbly steps and poured new steps over a hidden, if not secret, weapon: a glycol-water snow-melt system like those installed in some segments of Oberlin's downtown sidewalks.

Controlled by an outside sensor, the system will turn on automatically and warm the area when the outside temperature goes down to about 35 degrees, says Eugene Matthews, director of facilities maintenance, so salt will not be needed in case of ice or snow.

"Usually winter is not a good time to pour cement," says Matthews, but on the day of the pouring Oberlin saw 50 degrees, perfect for making concrete. Tarpaulins have kept the following two weeks of colder air off the con-

Continued on page 3

Teaching Students How to Change the World

By Mark Graham

Beginning this fall, a \$116,000 grant from the Catherine Filene Shouse Foundation will fund a three-year pilot program to teach students how to succeed in nonprofit organizations. The Shouse Non-Profit Leadership Program will integrate academic classes, internships, and career-skills workshops.

Although more than 70 graduate schools offer programs that prepare students to work in the nonprofit world, few undergraduate institutions do. Oberlin's program was not modeled after programs at any other institution, say Wendy Miller, director of Career Services, and Daniel Gardner, director of the Center for Service and Learning, who wrote the proposal with the staff of the Office of Sponsored Programs.

Many students who are enticed by Oberlin's "Think one person can change the world" slogan would like more training in how to change the world, says Miller, who expects the program to become popular with students. "This program will help fill a vacuum," she says, "It will tie together students' education and interest in social change."

"Most students feel a disconnection between what they're doing in the community and what they're doing in the classroom," says Gardner. "This program is about making that connection."

All students in the program will take a new history course, *The Rise of Nonprofit Institutions: A History of Engaged Citizenship*, to be developed and taught by Carol Lasser, associate professor of history.

"I'm looking forward to teaching a course that is both content rich and innovative in pedagogy," Lasser says. While studying a sample of American social movements and organizations, Lasser's students will work in a nonprofit organization for at least 40 hours during the semester.

Students in the program will take two other classes in the college or conservatory that cover issues related to their internships.

Students will be able to count Professional Development for Musicians, a conservatory course, toward satisfying the nonprofit-leadership-program requirements. A course-development stipend that is part of the Shouse Foundation grant will be used this

summer to redesign the course and enhance it in ways that fit the program.

Besides completing the community-service segment of Lasser's history course, students will intern with a nonprofit organization at least 120 hours during one Winter Term or summer and complete a second 40-hour semester-long community-service segment.

"We want to develop internship relationships with national, prominent organizations who in turn will want to be a part of the Shouse Non-Profit Leadership Program," says Miller. One incentive organizations will have to participate is that they will have the inside track in hiring the program's graduates. Having acquired skills such as grant writing, budget management, and public relations, program graduates should be very competitive in the nonprofit market, says Miller.

Workshops led by career-services staff will focus on a array of skills students will need to be effective in nonprofit organizations. The workshops will "teach students how to apply classroom knowledge to the real-world situations they will encounter in their in-

ternships and community-service experiences," Miller says.

A yet-to-be-named coordinator of the program will work with the Office of Career Services, the Center for Service and Learning, and a program committee to ensure that each student is learning a wide range of essential skills. The coordinator will also prepare the 20 students in the pilot program to effectively present their portfolio of skills and accomplishments to potential employers. Students who fulfill the program requirements will receive a letter of completion from the College.

Oberlin's new program is named after Catherine Filene Shouse, author of *Careers for Women*, which she wrote in 1920, and founder of the Women's National Democratic Club, the Institute of Women's Professional Relations, and the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts. Shouse was the first woman to receive an M.Ed. degree from Harvard University. Her middle name should be familiar to those from Boston, where her grandfather's Filene's department stores are a local institution.

10 Will Travel the Globe on H.H. Powers Awards

Late this fall the General Faculty's Committee on Research and Development granted 10 H. H. Powers Awards to faculty. The total amount of the grants was \$33,140. Powers awards, also known as Powers Travel Grants, cover transportation and per diem costs "for travel to more than one site outside North America, for the purpose of research or broadening experience," according to the award terms.

This year's awards went to Marc Blecher, professor of politics and East Asian studies; Marcia Colish, Artz Professor of History; Julia Lawall, visiting assistant professor of computer science; Joe Lubben, visiting assistant professor of music theory; James Millette, professor of African-American studies; James Morris, associate professor of religion; Lynda Payne, visiting assistant professor of history; Ann Sherif, associate professor of East Asian studies; Bruce Simonson, professor of geology; and Steven Volk, associate professor of history.

Marc Blecher will visit three Chinese cities on his H.H. Powers grant. In Xinji he will conduct research for an article to update *Tethered Deer: Government and Economy in a Chinese County* (Stanford University Press, 1996), by examining the extent to which the developmental-state model explicated in the book for the 1980s has informed the creation of a large, planned city constructed, he says, "from scratch" in the mid 1990s. In Beijing and Tianjin Blecher will keep on schedule the quantitative-survey-research components for a new book project, "A World to Lose: Workers' Politics and the Chinese State," while also attending to arrangements for the translations into Chinese of *Tethered Deer*, and of his *China against the Tides: Restructuring through Revolution, Radicalism and Reform* (Cassell, 1997).

Marcia Colish is working on a project titled *The Pseudo-Peter of Poitiers Gloss: A Critical Edition*. Peter Lombard's *Sentences* became a required text in university theological faculties in the 13th century, says Colish, although the *Sentences* began to influence theological

education in Paris almost immediately after Lombard's death in 1160. The Pseudo-Peter of Poitiers gloss on the *Sentences*, the first continuous commentary, was composed by an anonymous glossator (subsequently confused with the Parisian theologian Peter of Poitiers) between 1165 and 1170. Continuations of it were produced through the early 13th century. Colish will study and secure microfilm copies of the manuscripts (found in 10 European locations) in which the gloss is found—three complete texts and 14 partial ones—as the basis of a critical edition of the gloss. It will then be possible to assess its role in theological education at a transitional stage of early scholasticism.

Julia Lawall is developing tools to improve the performance of computer programs automatically, focusing on programs written in the new programming language Java. By making it possible to distribute programs over the Internet, the Java programming language is revolutionizing the distribution of information, says Lawall. Java is also a general-purpose programming language used widely in industry and education. The Powers grant will fund Lavall's travel to the Institute for Research in Computer Science and Random Systems in Rennes, France, and to the Basic Research in Computer Science Center at the University of Aarhus in Aarhus, Denmark, to collaborate with researchers in the development of optimization tools for Java. Because Java is an evolving language, this research area can have a significant impact on the future design and performance of Java programs, says Lavall.

During academic year 1998-99 **Joseph Lubben** will live in Venezuela, studying the expressive potential of metric conflicts in Venezuelan folk and popular music. His research will consider the network of relationships between rhythm, text, melodic-harmonic structure, dance, and other performance rituals. He used his Powers Award in December and January to examine recordings and instruments housed in the Foundation for Ethnomusicology and Folklore in Caracas, and to record performances at festivals in the Andes mountains, the eastern Caribbean coast, and the interior plains. He plans to review the results of the trip (notes, transcriptions, and videotapes) during spring semester in order to complete the preliminary stages of his project before returning to Venezuela in the fall.

James Millette is working on a book

tentatively titled "Slavery and Freedom in the Western Hemisphere." In it Millette is synthesizing the process that began in 1789 with the outbreak of the French Revolution and ended in 1888 with the emancipation of the slaves in Brazil. Within those 100 years the institution of slavery that was widespread in the Americas was brought to an end by initiatives that originated in the Haitian revolution of 1791-1804. Millette's book examines the role that the slaves played in terminating slavery in the Americas. The Powers grant facilitates Millette's travel to several Latin American and Caribbean countries where the descendants of slaves now live. There he will examine the issues and consequences of the emancipation process from the perspective of the slaves.

James Morris's grant is for travel connected to long-term film projects that he is creating for his Oberlin students and for general religious-studies audiences. Studying the role of saints (the *awliya*' or *Friends of God* in Islamic terminology), sacred sites, and the related practices of pilgrimage, festivals, and devotional music in Andalusia (in southern Spain) and Morocco, Morris plans to integrate the experiential dimension of the central religious phenomenon through first-person accounts of people's relationships and experiences with their local saints, spiritual guides, and protectors. The project builds on Morris's Strasbourg Program seminar of last year, and is part of a longer-term project that will include similar experientially focused film studies of Muslim shrines, pilgrimages, and festivals in Turkey, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Tibet, and China. In this work Morris is pioneering the development of new methods of spiritual pedagogy (using contemporary films and music) and communication of the classical Islamic humanities, philosophy, and spirituality.

Lynda Payne will spend six weeks in the United Kingdom from mid-May to late June. At the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine in London and the Hunterian Museum and Library in Glasgow she will undertake research leading to an analysis of the links between the emergence of emotionless medical men in the 18th century and the development of the first codes of conduct, which stress humanity. The codes replaced the ad hoc and personal practitioner-patient relations that were the focus of Payne's dissertation. The ethical guidelines of John Gregory (1772) and Thomas Percival (1801) are those under which Western medicine is still largely

practiced today, says Payne. Her project will explore the genesis of these codes in light of an uneasy reaction to the development of clinical detachment in medical and surgical practice.

Ann Sherif is traveling to Tokyo and Karuizawa, Japan, with her Powers grant. In Tokyo she will do research on Japanese culture during the 1960s and interview specialists in literature and postwar history. She will also travel within Japan to interview Eto Jun, a controversial literary critic and intellectual whose writing career started in the '60s. She is working on an article about the notion of the public intellectual and the public sphere in Japan of the '60s.

Bruce Simonson recently found a distinctive layer of millimeter-size spherules in South Africa (see the *Observer* of November 8, 1996) that he interprets as melt droplets spewed out when a large asteroid or comet collided with the earth about 2.55 billion years ago. Simonson has traced the spherule layer over an area of 9000 square kilometers so far, and will use his Powers grant to see if he can trace it across the remaining 90,000 square kilometers of the Transvaal Basin and to search for additional spherule layers at other levels. Simonson is studying this layer and others like it to shed new light on the influence of large asteroid impacts in earth history, and to see if he can correlate the layers with similar layers he found in Australia. If he can, the work could help scientists reconstruct, with greater precision than current methods allow, the geography of the early earth.

Steven Volk wants to know why Chile did not develop a national banking system before the 1860s. Chile had the most developed state in Latin America by the early 19th century, says Volk. In economic, political, and administrative matters the Chilean state was an important force, organizing and promoting the development of the country's infrastructure and its export orientation. Why, then, did the state not take equally vigorous actions within the field of finance? To try to answer the question Volk will look at one attempt—which involved negotiations between Chile's representative in London and an English merchant—to create a Chilean national bank in 1824-25. For reasons that remain hazy the matter died, and no national bank appeared in Chile until nearly four decades later. Volk hopes, during his research in Chile and London, to illuminate the larger question of how the state imagined its own power in mid-19th century Chile.

The Observer (ISSN 0193-368X), the faculty and staff newspaper of Oberlin College, published 17 times a year, is delivered to employees and made available to students on campus. Copies are mailed to retired employees, certain alumni and friends of the College, and paid subscribers. The editor welcomes off-campus readers but does not always provide background information for them: news that has already been reported in the *Review* (the student newspaper) or announced elsewhere may not be reported fully or prominently in the *Observer*.

Editor: Linda Grashoff. Assistant Editor: Mark Graham.

Published by the Oberlin College Office of College Relations, Alan Moran, vice president. Address: Office of College Relations, 153 W. Lorain St., Oberlin, OH 44074-1023. E-mail: observer@oberlin.edu. Issued bi-weekly August 29 to December 5, 1997, and January 30 to May 22, 1998. Periodicals postage paid at Oberlin, Ohio, and at additional mailing offices. Yearly subscriptions are \$16.

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.

All Oberlin College Office of College Relations publications include a minimum of 10 percent postconsumer waste. Discarded *Observers* may be recycled with office paper.

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

Faculty Meetings

College and Conservatory Hear New-Faculty Introductions

The only voting matter during the February 3 College Faculty meeting was the approval of the name change of the Judaic and Near Eastern Studies Program to the Jewish Studies Program. After some discussion the motion passed with no audible dissent. Earlier, announcements included a reminder from Bruce Richards, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, that faculty who form reading groups will receive books and refreshments courtesy of the college. Clayton Koppes, dean of the college, described University of Chicago seminars that college fac-

ulty members may attend. Koppes introduced several members new to the faculty this semester. McCandless Professor of French Janice Zinser, chair of College Faculty Council, gave a brief report of recent activities, commenting that the reason the council met so few times (four in two months) was due to efficiencies achieved with a subcommittee and QuickMail correspondence.

The Conservatory Faculty met February 10. Dean Karen Wolff's announcements included introductions of faculty and staff new this semester and in new positions. Wolff also shared

news about recent faculty activities (to appear in a future *Observer's* "Faculty and Staff Notes" section). Michael Lynn, associate dean for facilities and computing, called faculty attention to the front steps of Bibbins (see story on page 1), and said that David Slawson, an expert in Japanese gardens, would be a consultant for the redesign of the conservatory's pond and garden this summer. Faculty discussed the conservatory's accreditation review, visitations for which will occur March 1-4. Michael Manderer, director of conservatory admissions, gave a brief report.

Archiving of Mudd's A-Level Latrinalia and Other Projects to Benefit from McGregor-Oresman Assistantships

A potpourri of projects will benefit this spring semester from collaboration between faculty and students paired by McGregor-Oresman research and teaching assistantships. The assistantships are made possible by a grant from the McGregor Fund matched by Donald Oresman '46. The projects have to do with online multimedia syllabi for economics classes, Oberlin folklore, the Oberlin Preschool Music Lab, online group discussions of women's studies, an experiment in public goods, an index to the *Liberator*, Oberlin's introductory astronomy class, and writer Mary E. Wilkins Freeman.

The awards were made in November by the Committee on Research and Development, the college's Educational Plans and Policies Committee, the conservatory's Educational Policy Committee, and the offices of the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the dean of the Conservatory of Music.

David Cleeton, professor of economics, will have a student teaching assistant construct and update online interactive multimedia syllabi for his Intermediate Microeconomics and International Financial Management courses. One major focus will be to integrate a series of interactive modeling tutorials using the new web capabilities of Mathcad 7.0. (Mathcad is software for performing, documenting, and communicating technical calculations.) The teaching assistant will also hold tutoring and consulting hours for students in the course.

Phyllis Gorfain, professor of English, will train and employ a student as a folklore archivist. The archivist will index and analyze folklore collections made by Oberlin students in folklore courses from 1989 to 1997. The collec-

tions will be housed in the Oberlin Archives, along with earlier collections from 1972 to 1989. The collections include hundreds of genres and topics. Among them are: folklore about Oberlin co-ops, conservatory professors' limericks, Mudd Center A-Level latrinalia, and family stories. The archivist will design a database and analyze the collections by date of collection, collector, informant, folklore genre, ethnicity of informant, geographical site of folklore, occupational group, and motif.

Seung-Jin Bae, a fifth-year student completing a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and a Master of Music in Teaching, will work with **Catherine Jarjisian**, professor of music education. Bae will work as a teaching assistant for the Oberlin Preschool Music Lab and a research assistant in the collection of musical materials, from a variety of cultures, suitable for use with young children. She will help plan, teach, and evaluate each weekly pair of lab sessions; conduct interviews of foreign international students, faculty members, and community members; collect by recording and transcribing songs, chants, and singing games as they are remembered from early childhood; and classify the materials according to musical attributes. The project will give Seung-Jin additional field experience in a setting in which she has considerable interest and skill; new skills in research techniques; a repertoire of musical materials for her own use in this country and her own (Korea); and continued refinement of skills in analyzing music for teaching purposes.

Wendy Kozol, assistant professor of history and women's studies, will use the McGregor-Oresman grant to hire a teaching assistant for two sections of In-

troductory Women's Studies. Intensive writing and discussions are crucial tools in encouraging students to engage with critical perspectives and often highly politicized knowledges in feminist studies, she says. Kozol plans to use the Alta Vista format to structure online group discussions as a central component of the course. The teaching assistant will have primary responsibility for monitoring and facilitating the group discussions, and will help design and implement writing workshops.

McGregor-Oresman scholars will help **Robert Piron**, professor of economics, with a two-part experiment in public goods, examining the area of free riding. Free riding is a phenomenon whereby some who benefit from a public good choose to not pay for it, seeing that all benefit if one benefits. Piron, with juniors David Schummers and Ariel Evnine, will design an experiment to separate subjects who do not free ride because they are confused from subjects who do not free ride because they genuinely wish to cooperate rather than defect. They will follow the method of James Andreoni, who first designed and ran such a filter experiment in 1995. When Piron and the students are left only with cooperators, they will design an experiment to see if such cooperation is inherent or market generated, i.e., whether cooperation is a function of relative prices.

Visiting Assistant Professor of English **Augusta Rohrbach's** *Liberator* project will receive a second McGregor-Oresman research assistant to continue work on a sample index of the *Liberator* abolitionist newspaper. The longest-running paper of its kind, the *Liberator*, under the editorship of William Lloyd Garrison, never missed an issue from its

beginning in 1831 until Garrison closed the office at the end of the Civil War in 1865. Despite the publication's important place in American history, it doesn't have an index. Focusing on the years 1850, 1855, and 1860, the sample index will provide scholars with an annotated guide to items published in the newspaper. Molly Orner, a senior, will join senior Kate Fried in assembling the index.

Dan Stinebring, associate professor of physics, will work with two McGregor-Oresman scholars on improving the Introductory Astronomy class. The two scholars, who will be sharing one position, are first-year student Miranda Balkin and senior Nathan Shaner. The students will work on three improvements to the course: improving group (or cooperative) learning activities; making better use of the World Wide Web (WWW) for assignments and class notes; and adding observing activities to the course. Students are eager to get experience with telescopes and viewing the night sky, says Stinebring, but careful planning is needed to make telescope use manageable. The WWW has the potential to cut down on the paper flow that can swamp a professor in a course like this, he says, as well as put explorative students in touch with a wide range of astronomical resources.

An assistant for **Sandra Zagarell**, professor of English, will help Zagarell select and annotate short fiction by late-19th- and early-20th-century New England regionalist writer Mary E. Wilkins Freeman for an edition of that work to be published by Penguin. Senior English major Hillary Chute will also do some of the research on which Zagarell's biographical/historical/critical introduction will be based.

Transitions

New Faculty and Staff

New in the art department since the beginning of the academic year are visiting instructor **Sarah Thompson** and **Karl Hakken**, slide-library intern. Also this school year the athletics department has added **Anna Martin**, sports-medicine intern; **William Baker**, assistant women's basketball coach; and diving coach **Andrew Casper**. **Louis Sintasath** is a research assistant for the biology department. The Office of Career Services has added career advisors **Teresa Bump** and **Jan Burton**. **Mark Blackman** is the Bonner Scholar Program director in the Center for Service and Learning. **Dasan Thamattoor** is a visiting instructor in the chemistry de-

partment. Assistant professor **Jennifer Lyon** teaches in the classics department. The Computing Center has hired **Jane Kramer**, computer systems manager; **Donald Waldron**, analyst/programmer; and **Bryan Melmed** and **Darren McMahon**, client-services interns. In the conservatory **Hugh Floyd**, assistant professor of choral conducting; **Jonathon Field**, assistant professor of opera; **Ju-Ying Song**, visiting instructor of pianoforte; **Matthew Arnold**, Audio Services' departmental assistant; **William Lumpkin**, vocal accompanist; and **Yolanda Kondanassis**, harp teacher, began at Oberlin in the fall. The creative-writing department has two new faculty not previously introduced:

Martha Collins, professor, and **William Osborn**, visiting associate professor. The Office of Development and Alumni Affairs has added **Corrine Bolt**, director of development resources; **Deloris Mabins-Abenekan**, assistant director of the Oberlin Fund; and **Jeremy Weaver**, assistant director of major gifts. **Chao Li**, teaching assistant, and visiting instructors **Ikuko Kurasawa** and **Rei Okamoto** have joined the East Asian Studies Program. **Janice Sanborn** is the new departmental secretary for the economics department. The English department has added **Wendy Motooka**, assistant professor, and **Xiomara Santamarina**, visiting instructor. Instructor **Morris**

Young has joined the faculty of the Expository Writing Program. **Eva-Maria Renate Steiner**, teaching assistant; **Olga Bodie**, faculty in residence; and **Anna Mitgutsch**, Max Kade German Writer in Residence, have joined the German and Russian department. The history department has added **Karl Jacoby**, visiting professor, and the mathematics department has added visiting instructors **Christine Schwartz** and **Hui-Hsein Wang**. **George Clark**, manager of rental properties, has begun work for operations. **Laurie Rhodebeck**, visiting professor, teaches in the politics department. **Randy Phelps**, visiting assistant professor, has joined the physics faculty. **Yann Vienne** has begun as a teaching assistant in the Romance languages department. **Antionette McDaniel**, visiting assistant professor, has joined the sociology department. The theater and dance program has added to its staff **Jennifer Groseth**, lighting sound designer and lecturer; **Fani Quano**, assistant technical director; and **Shuang-ying Dang**, costumer and lecturer.

Knight Grant . . .

Continued from page 1

ed simultaneously to the values of equity, excellence, and generosity."

The Knight Foundation gave Oberlin the Presidential Leadership Grant

to support strengthening of the College. Dye was awarded the money because under her "inspired leadership," the foundation wrote in the letter announcing the gift, "the college has developed a new strategic framework for planning and decision making that is enabling both broad participation and informed decisive action of the type needed for the college to secure a confident future."

Oberlin is one of five liberal arts colleges whose presidents received the Knight Foundation leadership awards this academic year. The others are Berea, Carleton, Claremont McKenna, and Colby colleges.

Steps . . .

Continued from page 1

crete while it cures. By the time this *Observer* is out, the steps should be fully functional—except for the heating system, which won't be hooked up until spring, Matthews says. By summer's end the steps will sprout a center handrail and a ramp that meets standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Structural maintenance manager John Howard, hands behind his back in the photo, was the College's area manager for the project.

Correction:

Harrist Is on Leave

Contrary to the information published in the January 30 *Observer*, Robert Harrist, associate professor of art and East Asian studies, is not on research status this year. He is on leave.

Departures

James Klaiber, accounting supervisor, left his position in the Controller's Office January 30. **Linda Leimbach**, departmental assistant in the physical plant, left the College February 1.

Observations

Appreciation, Satisfaction, and Stress

Selected Results from the 1997 Survey of the Administrative and Professional Staff at Oberlin College

By Ross Peacock

A confluence of three events—the need to gather data for re-accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, results from a 1996 survey of Oberlin faculty, and a simple desire to measure the current state of Oberlin's administrative and professional staff (A&PS)—resulted in the development of a survey I recently authored with input from the 1997 A&PS Council. The survey had six goals:

- develop a profile of current A&PS,
- measure job satisfaction,
- determine the levels and sources of stress for A&PS,
- gather general information on social/political views of A&PS,
- determine perceived institutional priorities, and
- where appropriate, compare these results to those from other Oberlin populations.

This article focuses on perceived appreciation, satisfaction, and stress levels, and shows comparative data, where possible, with results from the 1996 survey of Oberlin faculty. A summary of all of the response items is available from the Office of Institutional Research.

Satisfaction and Appreciation

Although overall job satisfaction is relatively high among A&PS, it is considerably lower than levels reported by faculty and varies considerably across different aspects of their jobs.

Satisfied or Very Satisfied with Job		
	A&PS	Faculty
Relationship with Supervisor	76 %	N/A
Professional Relations with Other Administrators	74 %	66 %
Working Conditions	70 %	81 %
Overall Job Satisfaction	68 %	81 %
Social Relations with Other Administrators	58 %	N/A
Job Security	52 %	82 %
Professional Relations with Faculty	50 %	66 %
Salary and Benefits	49 %	56 %
Social Relations with Faculty	49 %	47 %

Note that Salary and Benefits ties with Social Relations with Faculty for the lowest level of satisfaction. Like the other two items directly related to employment conditions—Overall Job Satisfaction and Working Conditions—A&PS satisfaction with salary and benefits is lower than that reported by faculty. In fact, only two items are rated lower by the faculty—Social Relations with Faculty, and Professional Relations with Other Administrators. The latter may not be surprising and, as reported in the summary of the 1996 Higher Education Research Institute Survey of College and University Faculty, Oberlin faculty tend to be less satisfied with social relationships than are faculty at comparable institutions.

The difference between the two groups in satisfaction with job security is quite striking but not altogether unexpected. The tenure system provides security far beyond employment at will, under which A&PS work. However we should not dismiss the fact that it is among the lowest rated items.

Another part of the survey also addresses salary issues. Only 30 percent of A&PS believe that their annual salary increases are generally reflective of their job performance, with 46 percent disagreeing strongly that that is the case. On a positive note, A&PS report high levels of satisfaction with their supervisors and professional relationships with other administrators.

Another barometer of professional satisfaction is the response to the question If you were to begin your

career again, would you still want to be a college administrator? A similar question was posed to the faculty in 1996.

Still Be Administrator or Faculty?		
	A&PS	Faculty
Definitely Yes	12 %	44 %
Probably Yes	42 %	39 %
Not Sure	31 %	14 %
Probably No	13 %	3 %
Definitely No	2 %	0 %

Given the seniority of our faculty, their educational commitment, and the tenure system, a reasonable person would expect to see differences between these two groups in response patterns. With almost half of A&PS responding Not Sure or No, we do have signs, though, of potential staff-retention problems and might also interpret this as an indicator of morale problems. People who are not sure they are doing what they would like to do are likely to be professionally unfulfilled.

Perhaps one cause for dissatisfaction and career uncertainty is the lack of respect perceived by administrators. Three items on the survey address respect directly.

Respect—Agree or Strongly Agree		
	A&PS	Faculty
Administrators are Respected by Faculty Members	27 %	N/A
Student Affairs Have the Support and Respect of Faculty	43 %	56 %
People Here Don't Treat Each Other with Enough Respect	70 %	42 %

We see that respect in general—and specifically from the faculty—is severely lacking in the eyes of Oberlin A&PS. We should note that the third item shows a large gap despite the fact that our faculty tend to agree with this statement much more than those from schools against which we generally compare ourselves. Additionally, student surveys bring this out as an issue of campus community that must be addressed. Enhancing mutual respect, appreciation, and civility should be high on the institutional agenda. Unfortunately, the table below, summarizing what A&PS and faculty believe to be the highest priorities, shows that in their eyes sense of community ranks near the bottom of institutional priorities.

Perceived Institutional Priorities Rated High or Highest		
	A&PS	Faculty
Promote Intellectual Development of Students	97 %	98 %
Increase or Maintain Institutional Prestige	83 %	83 %
Enhance Institution's National Image	81 %	81 %
Create Multi-Cultural Environment	75 %	73 %
Help Students Understand Personal Values	66 %	68 %
Recruit More Minority Students	66 %	68 %
Facilitate Student Involvement in Community Service	62 %	56 %
Develop a Sense of Community among Students, Faculty, and Staff	49 %	51 %
Hire More Women	45 %	61 %
Hire More Minorities	45 %	54 %
Provide Administrators with Professional Development Opportunities	36 %	N/A

The last item has been a discussion point for years among A&PS in general and the A&PS Professional Development Committee in particular. It is interesting that 89 percent of the survey respondents reported attending a workshop or conference off campus during the last two years, yet only 36 percent believe that such activities are a high priority at Oberlin. This response is worthy of investigation. Do A&PS believe that more workshops are called for, or are the workshops they are attending not fulfilling their professional development needs? Or is it both?

Stress Levels

As we try to understand possible causes of dissatisfaction and/or low morale, identifying sources of stress, both in and out of the work place can provide clues. Overall, A&PS report slightly higher levels of stress than do faculty. It should be noted that for both groups women report significantly higher levels than men.

Stress Felt Over the Last Two Years		
	A&PS	Faculty
Little	5 %	10 %
Moderate	46 %	49 %
Extreme	50 %	42 %

To identify sources of stress, respondents were asked to mark the extent to which professional and personal experiences contributed to their stress. The seven items with the highest ratings are listed below. Time pressures and work loads are the most common sources of stress for A&PS. It is also noteworthy that other A&PS are contributors to stress.

Stressors Felt		
	A&PS	Faculty
Time Pressures	55 %	43 %
Work Load	55 %	N/A
Lack of Personal Time	43 %	44 %
Increases in Expectations	32 %	N/A
Finances	22 %	16 %
Other Administrators	21 %	N/A
Institutional Procedures	21 %	N/A

It is apparent that community respect and salary, especially salary increases, are of great concern to the administrative and professional staff at Oberlin College. Of course, most people would prefer to have fatter paychecks, but the large number of A&PS who do not believe that their salary increases are in line with their performance means either that we have some challenges to face regarding our compensation system, or we need to address lack of communication between supervisors and their staff regarding their performance. Most would probably say better compensation is the solution. Of course, it costs a lot of money to address that.

It costs us nothing, however, to be more respectful of each other and to appreciate the contributions that each employee and student makes to the Oberlin community. In fact, it costs us plenty not to do that. Developing a better sense of community cannot be dictated from above but can only come about through a common effort. Respecting and appreciating the individuals that make up Oberlin College will lead to a greater respect and appreciation by others of Oberlin College—a goal to which we can all subscribe and to which we should all aspire.

Ross Peacock is director of institutional research.