

Co-op Information for New Students

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The Oberlin Student Cooperative Association (OSCA) is an alternative to the College-sponsored dining and housing program. There are nine OSCA dining co-ops (Brown Bag, Fairchild, Harkness, Keep, Kosher Halal, Old Barrows, Pyle Inn, Tank, and Third World), four of which have residential co-op connections (Harkness, Keep, Old Barrows, and Tank).

OSCA offers significant savings over regular campus dining and housing. At the end of each fiscal year, any leftover money is refunded to the membership.

OSCA Savings on Dining and Housing for 2009-10

	OSCA	College	Savings
Dining	\$2,760	\$5,200	\$2,440
Single Room	\$5,130	\$5,780	\$650
Double Room	\$4,122	\$5,450	\$1,328
Triple Room	\$3,780	\$5,450	\$1,670

Co-ops — We Own It

You may or may not have heard the phrase “Co-ops. We own it.” But its meaning, especially when applied to OSCA, needs a bit of explanation. OSCA owns an off-campus housing co-op, but rents its other buildings. So, when OSCA members say “we own it,” we are referring to the fact that we determine ourselves how we live in our buildings, what food we eat, and all other facets of the organization. Members take responsibility for all aspects of day-to-day operations and use a democratic approach to setting co-op policy and resolving disputes. Members learn valuable lessons in self-governance and collective decision making.

Co-op policies are determined democratically in meetings both at the all-OSCA level and at the co-op level. This means that since the membership changes, each co-op reinvents itself each year. The community is a product of the collective ideas of its members. Besides praising the co-ops’ good food, reduced costs, and warm community, current and former members of OSCA describe the co-op experience as being a vital part of their education.

OSCA offers two special interest co-ops with slightly different entrance requirements: Kosher Halal Co-op (KHC) and Third World Co-op (TWC). Both are open by application. KHC is a community built on Kosher and Halal dietary laws. Priority is given to students who follow these dietary laws, but all are welcome to join. KHC also prepares a weekly Shabbat meal; the College’s rabbi serves as a religious advisor to the co-op and is an integral member of the community. TWC is a safe space for students of color, low-

income students, and first-generation college students. It is a community that promotes coalition building among students of differing backgrounds, with admittance offered by application only.

What Is Available

OSCA has a total membership of 620 students. Every year, 90 spaces are reserved for new students. Spaces in OSCA are assigned by application to our random lottery. If you do not get a space at the beginning of the year, then you will be put on a wait list and will still have a good chance of getting into a co-op during the year. If you decide you want to join OSCA during the school year, you may sign up for the same wait list online. New members can be admitted twice a month throughout the year as space allows.

Co-ops Are a Way of Life

Along with the benefits of being an OSCA member comes responsibility. Members of OSCA do all of the cooking, clean up, food buying, composting, and other tasks within their individual co-ops. Co-ops learn through experience and acquire skills they would not get elsewhere at the College. Co-op members work a certain number of hours in their co-op; each co-op decides at the beginning of each semester how much time members need to put in (usually about five hours a week). For those who hold jobs outside of the co-op, most co-ops will reduce the number of co-op hours required (what OSCA calls “time aid”), depending on how many hours a person works.

As a member you are expected to do more than just pay your board bill and do your jobs. You are responsible for participating in your co-op’s decision-making processes, as well as those of OSCA as a whole, and to be considerate of your fellow co-ops.

There are no meal cards or cafeteria trays in co-ops. Guest policies are usually set by members so they can bring friends and professors to meals without a hassle.

Many co-ops are vegetarian and vegan friendly, and allergy awareness is always a priority. The kitchens are open 24 hours a day to accommodate everyone’s schedules.

How To Apply

More information about OSCA and the application for new students is available on our web site. If you have questions about any aspect of OSCA, call or e-mail us. **OSCA’s application deadline for students new to Oberlin is June 15, 2009.**