

CLASS OF 1965

REUNION COMMITTEE

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Dear Classmates:

A visit to Oberlin in the fall: who could ask for anything more?

The class of '65 reunion committee had its second meeting in the first week of October. Thirty-two members made it to campus, and another four were able to participate by phone. Our primary task was to select our 50th Reunion Class Gift projects – which we did – but there was much more to our visit.

We engaged in extensive dialogues with senior administrative staff about the college's financial aid policies and support programs offered to students. A breakfast with President Krislov gave us a chance to hear first-hand about the opportunities and challenges facing the college and also receive a more complete explanation of the events leading up to the Day of Solidarity in March. We toured the Apollo/Cinema Studies Center and learned about exciting new programs in that department. Later that day we were impressed by the electronic music composition program called TIMARA (Technology in Music and Related Arts) in the Conservatory, which expands the world of digital music in ways we could not have dreamed.

We benefitted from a number of opportunities to hear from students about their experiences on campus and view presentations of student research and summer internship projects. A few of us stayed after the meeting for Homecoming and walked leisurely around campus (it rained off and on, but what's new?) and watched the football and soccer games (outcomes: football – disappointing, soccer – impressive).

Let me give you a little background on how we accomplished our primary task. For over a month our committee engaged in a thoughtful online conversation that seemingly was about potential class gift ideas but actually delved much more deeply into the role that the college and its alumni should play in addressing broader national and global issues. At our final committee session, Jim Johnson tied all our comments together and gave them a unifying theme. He eloquently described his response to the two Martin Luther King, Jr. visits to campus, including

most memorably our commencement speech and Dr. King's call to action – nay, his demand for action.

As you probably remember, Dr. King made it very clear we should not sit idly by and be passive observers. His mission was to create opportunities not just for African-Americans but for everybody in society. He inspired us, as students and adults, to get involved and do something special – something that mattered. As Jim and others reminded us, King was a renaissance man who valued the breadth of exposure that an Oberlin education could provide: it was co-ed, it was multi-racial, it exposed us to art, music, literature, and science, and it imbued us with a commitment to engage in the world, push limits, and seek to improve opportunities for all mankind. In short, Dr. King left the class of '65 a legacy of inspiration.

Our committee took this legacy to heart. We incorporated one theme forcefully articulated in the online conversation: the growing income inequality that characterizes our society. We endorsed a recommendation developed before our meeting by an informal working group: that our class fund a program of paid internships for students from low-income backgrounds.

The college's career services office, which carries out this type of program, has very little money to subsidize internships for Pell-eligible students, who usually have to earn money during the summer and thus cannot benefit from the internship opportunities, often non-paying, that are available to well-off students. These internships often have academic value, but more critically they frequently open doors and create networks for career advancement that low-income students generally don't have access to.

The committee enthusiastically endorsed this new internship program and challenged our class to raise \$50,000 a year over the next 5 years in current dollars, which would support 10 internships a year at \$5,000 each. To this core concept (described more fully in the fund description attached to this letter) we added some ways that direct alumni involvement could improve students' intern experiences. Specifically, alumni could take active roles in identifying intern opportunities, working with hosting organizations to create a meaningful work experience, serving as mentors for students, and helping them build a network that could benefit them during their academic career and beyond.

As Richard Berman, director of the college's career center (a relatively new and very impressive addition to the college administration), wrote us after the meeting:

On behalf of Oberlin's low income students, and all students for that matter, we are so very grateful for the spirit and resolve your class will demonstrate as the funds for current use are raised. Our career center team will begin work soon on designing a process that will embody the key tenets you outlined as the conversation unfolded last week – fairness, equity, good stewardship, engagement, professionalism, and quality assurance.

We also look forward to reporting outcomes and sharing the stories of the many students your gift will support ... the futures this gift will enhance ... and the lives your donations will change.

We also committed to a significant gift to the Allen Memorial Art Museum, with a goal of \$50,000, to aid in restoring the striking main ceiling in its central court, which years of pollution have terribly obscured. The museum, and especially the courses taught there by Professor Ellen Johnson and her colleagues, had a lasting impact on many of us. This gift will exemplify our commitment to supporting the breadth of the Oberlin experience.

Additionally, we re-affirmed our class commitment to the MLK Scholarship Fund, which we established at our 25th reunion but has languished over the last 2½ decades. Since this fund is endowed, both cash and deferred gifts can be designated to increase the principal balance.

All these options, plus the Annual Fund, are shown on the pledge card included in this mailing. We hope you will give each of them serious consideration, depending of course on your own individual preferences.

I would also stress that the committee fully recognized that each of us had many memorable Oberlin-related experiences during and after our college years. Inspiring professors, seminars, lab work, involvement in on-campus groups and activities (sports, College Chorus and Orchestra, Musical Union, theater, Mock Convention, co-ops, student council, Review, language houses) — the list is endless, as is the one for off-campus activities (e.g., re-building churches in the south, spending a summer in Cape Cod with the G&S players, junior year abroad in Salzburg). These all had profound effects on what we did with our lives and who we are today. Many alumni have chosen to honor these experiences and the people who made them possible with their own designated gifts. In fact, almost all the major donations to the college and conservatory fit into this category. The committee supports and promotes the idea that individual alumni should determine how best to reflect their Oberlin experience when making a special contribution for our 50th reunion.

Returning to Oberlin is a wonderful experience, not just for the nostalgia about our time spent on campus but also because it makes us aware of how energized the current students are to be there and how engaged the campus remains in the world beyond its borders. It is often said that college is wasted on the young. At Oberlin that is certainly not the case. Please come back for the reunion, May 22-25, 2015, and see for yourself how exciting our alma mater has remained.

One last comment: every classmate who is on the college and conservatory active alumni list has been assigned to a member of our reunion committee. This member will contact you within the next month. The reason we are doing this outreach is to try to re-connect with as many classmates as we can, as early as we can, to share our enthusiasm about maintaining and building on our legacy, and to encourage you to contribute to these very

worthwhile endeavors. Please be responsive to this overture. (If you should be moved to give a little extra to celebrate our 50th reunion, that wouldn't be so bad.)

Regards to all. Looking forward to seeing you at the reunion.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allan". The script is cursive and fluid.

Allan Borut
Chair of 50th Reunion Committee
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