Greetings from the Program Director

by Roger Laushman, Director, Environmental Studies Program

IT HAS BEEN A BUSY and productive year in the program, with many changes...some welcome...some not so much. The good news: John Petersen was promoted to the rank of full professor; Md Rumi Shammin was promoted to associate professor with continuous tenure; Camille Washington-Ottombre was reappointed and will enjoy a research leave; Janet Fiskio has spent her research leave in Oregon, but with a few welcome trips to Oberlin; and Michael Maniates finished his two-year visiting position with continued distinction in the classroom and for the program. The students will miss his skills and guidance.

The not-so-welcome news of change: Jordan Suter has accepted a position at Colorado State University; Sam White has accepted a position at Ohio State University; and David Orr and Harlan Wilson have announced their plans to retire in 2014. Students have the impression that "everyone is leaving!" While this is not the case, these are program faculty members who will be sorely missed.

The program continues to grow in majors, with more than 120 declared. The fact that students are drawn to the program is wonderful, but the long wait lists for courses present many challenges. And there are many nonmajors who would like to take our courses—another sign of success. With the Class of 2013 graduating, all students now will be engaged with the curricular pathways aspect of the major. It will be exciting to see how capstone experiences and pathway reflections help to make this a vital and growing part of the student experience.

This spring, many students were engaged in discussions about the core curriculum, requirements, diversity of coursework, and curricular breadth. Faculty members and approximately 30 students took part in two discussions that were valuable in sharing ideas and possible directions. The depth of interaction and commitment by our students will serve to make the program stronger in both the short- and long-term.

I have kept busy as program director this year, and I will continue in this capacity through fall 2013, after which I will teach in the Oberlin-in-London program in spring 2014. I also look forward to developing a new environmental biology course, BIOL 103, which will be taught for the first time this fall.

FACULTY AND STAFF NEWS AND NOTES

NICK CLARKE
After graduating from the environmental studies program at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, Utah, last spring, I was privileged to join the Environmental Studies Program here at Oberlin as the sustainable technology research fellow. Over the past year, I’ve worked closely with John Petersen, Sean Hayes, and a host of students to improve and expand the resource monitoring systems throughout the college and in the city of Oberlin.

This year, one of our most notable accomplishments was to install large digital content displays in both the Oberlin Public Library and Prospect Elementary School. These displays feature a host of sustainability-themed content. We have live data feeds for citywide use of electricity and water, as well as for the individual buildings themselves. Beyond this, students have done considerable legwork to get photos, interviews, and

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THE PROGRAM SPONSORED talks and workshops by a range of seminal thinkers on environmental issues this year. A sampling:

- Peter Harper, founder of the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales, What Americans Don’t Get About Climate Change: A Jaundiced View from the U.K.
- David Orr, Professor of Environmental Studies, The Importance of Keeping Our Money Local
- Dr. Jennifer Hirsch, applied anthropologist specializing in sustainability, cultural diversity, and community development, Engaging Diverse Communities in Environmental Planning & Action: Using Anthropological and Visual Approaches to Make Climate Change Local and Meaningful
- Aaron Birk ’01, The Anarchist’s Apiary: Guerilla Gardening, Urban Agriculture, and Restoration Ecology in the Post-Industrial Age
- John Vaillant ’84, investigative journalist, The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival
- Elizabeth Schuster ’00, Who Cares About Econometrics? Practical Applications for Researching Water Resources and Small-Scale Agriculture
- Dr. Donald A. Falk ’72, University of Arizona, School of Natural Resources, Restoration and Resilience Ecology in a Changing World
- Viviana Gentry ’11, human rights monitor, Working in Guatemala with Guatemalans Protesting Severe Environmental Degradation Caused by Gold Mining
- Janine Benysus, author of “Biomimicry” and founder of The Biomimicry Institute, whose mission it is to nurture and grow a global community to create a healthier, more sustainable planet
- Dimiter Kenarov, Pulitzer Center Journalist, Shale Gas: From Poland to Pennsylvania and Ohio: Global Business, Local Costs
- Mark Shepard, Forest Agriculture Enterprises, Restoration Agriculture: Farming in Nature’s Image
- Sandor Katz, fermentation revivalist and author of “Wild Fermentation,” Fermentation: Coevolution, Culture, and Community

This year I’ve been on research leave. While it’s been a productive time, I miss seeing my students and colleagues on a daily basis, and I especially miss the way that teaching enriches my thinking about research questions. I have been working on a series of articles as well as a book project, Poetics of Climate Change: Mourning, Protest, Hospitality.

As part of my research for this book, I traveled to Iceland to visit Roni Horn’s art installation The Library of Water in Stykkishólmur, Iceland. Housed in the former municipal library, The Library of Water holds 24 glass columns filled with water from the island’s melting glaciers. Later that week I visited glaciers where the ice had been quarried. It was a powerful experience to witness glacial disappearance firsthand. I presented versions of two chapters of the book at the MLA convention and submitted an article to Critical Inquiry drawn from this preliminary research. I have been invited, together with Kyle Powys Whyte (Michigan State University), to edit a special volume of the journal...
ERIKA BRANDT
My decision to add ENVS as a second major was probably the best decision I’ve made in college. I arrived at Oberlin certain I wanted to major in biology—I declared as a freshman and immediately planned my trajectory toward a doctorate in ecology. During spring of my sophomore year, I took my first ENVS classes, and I was hooked. The interdisciplinary nature of ENVS gave new context to the ecological principles I’d studied in biology and shifted my interests from purely scientific to the more social aspects of environmental issues.

Shortly after taking those first classes, I started working with John Petersen on restored wetlands research, which eventually became my honors project. While I think my future career lies outside the realm of ecological research, my research experience under John’s guidance has been invaluable in my developing personal qualities like resourcefulness, tenacity, and self-motivation; teaching me practical skills like plant identification and muskrat trapping; and fostering my love of wetlands.

My junior year, I realized that my interest in education, which I’d previously thought could only be actualized by becoming a professor, might have more immediate applications. I taught an ExCo class on the indigenous plants of Oberlin and their uses. Soon thereafter, I started teaching in the outdoor classroom at Eastwood Elementary, and later helped teach a food justice class at Oberlin High School. These teaching experiences have solidified my desire to become an environmental educator after graduation.

My final thought on my experiences with ENVS is just how wonderful my fellow students are. I am continually amazed, inspired, and challenged by them. I’ve said it many times, but I’ll say it again: ENVS students are truly the program’s greatest asset. Thank you all so much for making my time here perfect.

ALEXANDER DEETER
A fifth of a score ago, I began my educational journey. I must say that I have loved my time here. I am so glad I went to Oberlin and would do it again if I had a choice... or the money. I started taking environmental courses my first semester. My education has been broad, but I mostly focused on energy-related issues. When I returned from studying abroad in Denmark, I realized I needed to get more involved, because I loved the real-world experiences I got abroad.

That’s when I applied to work with John Petersen’s Campus Resource Monitoring System. I was hired to maintain the environmental orbs. The project was exciting because we were expanding the orbs to many more dorms; the project was continually growing. I spent half of that summer working on the Bioregional Dashboard project and soldering together more orbs. The project gave me real-world experience and the “joys” that come with bureaucratic systems.

I also did a summer internship with ecoSolargy, a solar company. With the help of Oberlin’s Creativity & Leadership program, I developed a community-based solar business model. I then further pursued my project with the Green EDGE Fund and became an EDGE Fund board member my senior year. I had high hopes of finally installing solar panels on Kahn Hall dormitory. I worked with Noel Myers and Ren Wiscons, fellow members of the Green EDGE Fund. The project varied throughout the year, ranging from a thermal electric mix to thin-film to finally a monocrystalline PV system with a fantastic finance option. Ren Wiscons, Evan Tincknell, and Noel Myers will be completing the project. I have loved my time at Oberlin and am excited to see it influence my future work with ecoSolargy.

KEVIN DIGUGLIELMO
Everyone knows that Oberlin graduates go on to start injustice-fighting nonprofits, develop sustainable technologies, or, at the very least, produce subversive programming for cable TV. As my own graduation approaches and I nervously try to find employment, I find myself falling back
on one of least glorious skills imaginable: sewage plant management.

The story of how an otherwise respectable Oberlin student found himself in this position begins the summer after my freshman year while working as a backcountry caretaker in the mountains of New Hampshire. Although it sounds rough and rugged, my job mostly consisted of meeting nice campers and maintaining a dozen composting toilets. Weirdly enough, and much to the dismay of my grandmother, this experience instilled in me an interest in the science of human waste. I had never thought too critically about modern plumbing, but with a little bit of additional reading, I suddenly found myself confronting the abundance of chemicals and waste of freshwater that we depend on whenever we flush a toilet.

When I brought this knowledge back to Oberlin, I immediately began jostling for a job at the Lewis Center’s own waste management project, the Living Machine. This Rube-Goldberg-esque series of large tanks is designed to treat the building’s wastewater with bacteria rather than artificial chemicals and then recycle it through to the building’s bathrooms. I landed a job by the end of that semester and have never looked back. This experience taught me how to manage many parts of a complex system, work effectively as a lab technician, and develop complete fearlessness in the face of all things fecal. All jokes aside, it’s also made me believe that waste management actually offers some real possibilities for introducing sustainability into America’s utility systems.

**AMANDA JACIR**

I was in a bathroom stall in the Lewis Center when I decided to come to Oberlin. The tipping point was a sign offering 25 cents per poo. I knew then that I’d be surrounded by people dedicated to tackling today’s overwhelming range of environmental issues with a whimsical energy that would inspire and sustain me to do good work. And that delightful combination of serious commitment and healthy desire to remain energized is exactly what I found.

I’ve met many students who are eager to engage in difficult conversations about privilege in mainstream environmentalism, and I have gotten to work with them to create spaces to critically discuss these ideas. For example, after returning from an internship in Palestine during my first winter term, I co-organized a panel on environmental justice to discuss the connections among water issues in Palestine, mountaintop removal mining in Appalachia, and the impact of the U.S.-Mexico border wall. As a junior, I participated on a panel during Ecolympics called Multiculturalism in Environmentalism. As a senior, I attended a beautifully organized community conversation on male privilege in environmentalism, and recently I’ve been enjoying informal ENVS program-wide student conversations reflecting on our experiences and brainstorming ways to improve our program.

I see now that this critical work has been punctuated by moments of fun that made all the seriousness manageable: a fellow ENVS major interrupting my summer research for extra hands to move a sturdy chicken coop she built for the AJLC garden; friends feeding me fresh figs they proudly grew; protesters dancing in their seat belts during car rides to D.C.; classmates urging each other to reserve time to relax together and organizing last minute parties. And the glorious discovery of the functional improvement to the poop campaign: free coffee.

**PIPER STULL-LANE**

I came to Oberlin to study the environment. As a prospective student, I was impressed by the fusion of traditional academic work and praxis-based approaches implemented in the surrounding community. The program’s awareness of its own institutional and social necessity appealed to me early on.

Once on campus, it’s easy—many say too easy—to get “involved.” Following my interest in writing and communicating, I became part of the then brand new
Headwaters, Oberlin’s on-campus environmental magazine. Since freshman year, my articles have focused on gauging perspectives that I feel are important, yet somehow marginalized. I reflected this interest through my coursework, taking Environmental Justice Literature, Ethics of Climate Change, and Vulnerability and Resilience. But though I felt drawn to what I learned is called “centering the displaced Other,” I had yet to feel responsible for my work: I wanted to own it.

I was given this opportunity the summer after my junior year. Professor Camille Washington-Ottombre requested student researchers to administer and monitor surveys for a project in Mwea, Kenya. Having just taken a class with Camille, I felt familiar with her research on community adaptation to climate change. Because I wanted to focus my senior thesis on environmental perspectives, I took her up on the offer and spent the spring before our travels reading up on our research site, a rice farming community in central Kenya.

I found that traditional academic models had difficulty categorizing non-Western perspectives, so I instrumentalized “life-stories interviews” to gain a more robust understanding of where farmers in Mwea are coming from. I spent anywhere between one and five hours on each interview, trying to be thorough, avoiding leading questions. We discussed everything from sacrificial ceremonies that are meant to increase rainfall to why some neighbors are particularly obnoxious. With this depth of information, I’ve felt more comfortable orienting myself around problems that I do not face in my own life, but that are real, frightening, and pressing for others.

When I came back to campus in the fall, I wanted to continue working with environmental perception, and—with incredible support from Professor Michael Maniates—was ultimately prompted to devise and teach an ENVS 101 curriculum focused on subjective media portrayals of environmental issues, which I feel has successfully tied together my passions for writing, communicating, and tackling environmental justice issues. This is my last finals week, and only a Discussion section keeps me from entering the real world, BA in environmental studies in hand. With the experiences I’ve had both on- and off-campus, my once-looming adulthood, and its associated job market, don’t seem impossibly daunting.

STUDENT AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND GRANTS

Fulbright Scholarship:
Rachel McMonagle ’12 received a very prestigious Fulbright Scholarship to conduct a research project in Ukraine titled “Adaptation to Agricultural Reform and Climate Change in Ukraine.” Her work will highly contribute to existing scholarship on adaptation to climate change by linking economic change to global environmental change. She will spend a year in Ukraine perfecting her language skills, interviewing farmers, and surveying rural populations in various parts of the country.

Schaening Memorial Fund Awards
The Ann Marie Schaening (’89) Memorial Fund, established by the family and friends of Ann Marie Schaening, provides support for students pursuing winter-term projects related to the environment. Three students were granted awards in 2013: Talia Chorover, Paris Achenbach, and Clarissa Fortier.

Gorn Prize Recipients
Each year the Environmental Studies Program awards the Joyce Gorn Memorial Prize to one or more students for outstanding work on an extracurricular or off-campus environmental project. This year we are pleased to bestow the award on three worthy applicants: Lindsey Schwartz, Jake Holtzmann, and Eric Xue.

Blank Fellowships
Established by the Arthur M. Blank Foundation, this grant enables Oberlin students to undertake research and educational opportunities in collaboration with Environmental Studies Program faculty.

- John Petersen and Cindy Frantz’s Fellow: Evan Ticknell
- John Petersen and David Benzing’s Fellow: Erika Brandt
- John Petersen’s Fellows: Alexander Deeter, Tom Kreek
- Sean Hayes’ Fellows: Ren Wiscons, Kevin DiGuglielmo
- Brad Masi’s Fellows: Sarah Bolinger, Catherine Wilkinson
- Rumi Shammin’s Fellows: Lucy Gelb, Courtney Koletar, Eli Lisseck
- Michael Maniates’ Fellow: Nathaniel Colbert Sangree
Resilience on the theme “Climate Justice, Indigenous Peoples, and Collective Action.” In addition, I will be leading a pre-conference seminar on climate change and ecocriticism at the 10th Biennial Association for the Study of Literature and Environment conference in May.

My research and teaching continue to develop along two distinct but related lines of inquiry: climate change and food justice. These thematic areas are brought together through two theoretical and methodological approaches that shape my work: environmental justice and public humanities. The environmental justice (EJ) movement is a coalition of grassroots civil rights, environmental, and labor organizations; community activists; and academics. Growing out of civil rights activism and analysis, EJ critiques the institutionalized oppression that places disproportionate risks on people of color and other vulnerable communities through exposure to toxic living and work environments. In contrast to mainstream environmentalism’s focus on “nature,” the EJ movement defines the environment as the place where individuals and communities live, work, play, eat, learn, and worship. EJ literature brings the experiences of communities of color who have been marginalized both by mainstream environmental organizations and by the academic focus on nature and wilderness to the center as the locations for environmental theory, particularly through questions about epistemology and authority. Public humanities is a movement within academia to strengthen the publicly engaged research and teaching of the humanities through collaborative, community-based projects. The goals of this mode of engagement are greater democratic practice and social justice. Combined, the result is what I call “environmental humanities.” Teaching at Oberlin has offered me an unparalleled opportunity to define what the emerging field of environmental humanities looks like.

I have several food justice projects under way. My chapter “Sauntering Along the Border: Thoreau, Nabhan, and Food Politics” is forthcoming in The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Environment. I am especially excited about the project Cultivating Community, which examines the contributions of African American communities in Cleveland to agrarian philosophy, food justice, and culinary practices. This is a collaborative project with Rumi Shammin and Miss Vel Scott, a local urban gardener and nutrition educator. In addition, I am working on an article for the journal Solutions with Brad Masi and Rumi Shammin that examines the innovative practices of urban agriculture and policy in the wake of the foreclosure crisis. I can’t imagine a more exciting place than Cleveland to be doing this kind of research.

I’m especially excited to return to teaching this fall—particularly ENVS 219: Climate Change, ENVS 302: American Agricultures, and ENVS 304: Environmental Justice Literature—with new ideas, readings, and projects in light of this year’s research.

SEAN HAYES

My second year at Oberlin has been one of the busiest and most exciting years of my life. Katie and I bought a house last summer and have been working on it ever since. It turns out that we needed to make our initial improvements faster than planned because this February, we welcomed our first child, Amelia, to the world! Hands-down, that has been the highlight of my year.

Professionally, things have been almost as exciting. Modifications to the Lewis Center’s mechanical systems yielded substantial energy savings—a 39 percent reduction compared to 2011—and repairs to the solar arrays helped the site harness 25 percent more solar electricity than the previous year. All told, in 2012, the Lewis Center harvested 150 percent of the energy it consumed from the sun—unquestionably the best year on record. Concomitant with improved energy performance, the mechanical changes improved system reliability and thermal comfort while decreasing repairs and problems.

Though the Lewis Center is more than 13 years old, outside interest in the building remains high. I led nearly 100 guided tours last year for groups ranging from summer camps to NASA. Lessons learned from the center have been applicable to the management of other high-performance buildings on campus, and they are being put to particularly good use in the design of the forthcoming Gateway Building that will replace the Oberlin Inn.

Student workers and I have continued to work the landscape, managing succession in the wetland, pruning trees, searching for new methods of integrated pest management (feeding Japanese beetles to the chicken flock was my favorite), weeding the garden, and suppressing fire blight in the orchard. Last summer, the students built an indirect solar food dehydrator to sustainably preserve the garden’s nutritional abundance. We also built low tunnels over many of the garden beds last fall, which extended the growing season and increased the yield of vegetables—a 39 percent reduction compared to 2011—and reduced the energy required to maintain the tunnels. Modifications to the Lewis Center’s mechanical systems have been almost as exciting.

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For the past two years, I have been working on the Tsinghua University China-US Urban Sustainability Joint Research Center, which brings together Chinese and American experts to develop sustainable urban design and policy. In addition, I have been working on a project with Rumi Shammin that examines the innovative practices of urban agriculture and policy in the wake of the foreclosure crisis. I can’t imagine a more exciting place than Cleveland to be doing this kind of research.

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MICHAEL MANIATES
Michael Maniates is off to Singapore, where he’ll be joining the inaugural faculty of Yale-NUS, a new liberal arts college in Singapore and one of the few such colleges in all of Asia. Michael will be participating in the development of the environmental studies program and continuing his work around consumption and consumerism. He thanks everyone in the ES program for their friendship and support these past two years, and for the opportunity to be a part of the Oberlin community.

DAVID ORR
I arrived at Oberlin College in August 1990 as the one full-time faculty member in the Environmental Studies Program. For the past six years, I have had the privilege of working for President Marvin Krislov to help expand the vision of Oberlin in the 21st century through the development of the Oberlin Project and the Green Arts District. Twenty-three years later, I am retiring but will do so in two stages. In the coming year I will be on a sabbatical leave and thereafter serve as “counselor” to the president for an unspecified period of time.

I cannot begin to summarize nearly a quarter of a century of my professional life here, but there are several things I can say. The first and most important is simply “thank you” to an outstanding group of faculty, students, administrators, and alumni that have been supportive, dedicated, and creative colleagues. Together we’ve built the best environmental studies program in a liberal arts college in the U.S. The faculty in the program, led by John Petersen and newly tenured Rumi Shammin, is second to none. The ES curriculum offers a remarkable degree of vitality, depth, and breadth. Our students continue to shine, and our alumni are unsurprisingly doing remarkable things.

The program secretary, Bev Burgess, deserves a particular and very loud shout-out for her competence and gracious dedication. Under the skilled management of Sean Hayes, the Adam Joseph Lewis Center is flourishing as a facility and as a laboratory in the art and science of sustainability.

Second, all of us owe a large debt to Adam and Peter Lewis, who have supported the development and expansion of the program. No one has done more to enable the college and the city to transition to sustainability. There are many others who have helped as well. When the Lewis Center was just an idea, Randall Jones ’65 made the first gift to the building fund. The Gund Foundation in Cleveland and John Powers and the Educational Foundation of America bet on us early on when there was little reason to do so. We’ve been blessed by the generosity of these and many of you who have contributed to the program in the belief that Oberlin College could and should contribute significantly to the global effort to build a fair and sustainable civilization.

Third, we cannot rest content with what’s been accomplished. This program and others like it were created in the belief that understanding and shoring up the ecological underpinnings of civilization requires transcending the particularities of any one discipline. But thinking at right angles to specialized fields of knowledge, as Aldo Leopold once said, demands intellectual stretch, moral energy, creativity, and courage. The human prospect has never been more exciting or perilous. Both ends of that spectrum are the business of environmental studies. Atmospheric CO₂ levels on May 5 are 399 ppm, 42 percent higher than at any time over the past 640,000 years. We are on course to warm the planet by 2 to 4° C with consequences we do not yet fathom, but we know that rising temperatures, along with the loss of species, ocean acidification, and growing populations, will sorely stress governments, economies, and social cohesion everywhere. Further, technological changes, including synthetic biology, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence, will dramatically alter the human role in nature in ways still largely unexamined. These, too, are the purview of environmental studies. In short, we live in a time of rapid transition, but to what we do not know. We do know, however, that we must equip our students with the analytical skills, intellectual breadth, and the wherewithal necessary to find their way in a complex, confusing, and rapidly changing world. And as citizens and scholars, we know our role is to clarify what is otherwise hidden or obscure and to help chart a path toward a future better than that in prospect.

Looking back over the better part of a quarter of a century, I am less certain of some certainties I once held so certainly, but I am more convinced than ever of the worth of a liberal education that opens minds to ideas, civility, empathy, and our implicatedness in the web of life.

JOHN PETERSON
Time is a strange animal, but particularly so when on sabbatical. Perhaps the best thing about being neither teaching full time nor serving as ES chair this year has been the luxury of focusing on one or a few things for many hours and sometimes even days. I have stayed up until the wee hours working on re-[continued on page 8]
search projects and have likewise been able to tackle several neglected house and garden projects—for the first time ever, the family garden took us all the way through winter with fresh, leafy vegetables! I wish I could say that the various writing projects I have been wrestling with have borne similar fruits, but the reality is that tomatoes and greens are less elusive than data, figures and cogent words on the page. Such is life.

On the research front, “Environmental Dashboard” was fully launched, and I am gratified by the response of the Oberlin community. As described in previous ES newsletters, Dashboard is a communication technology that combines real-time display of water and electricity use in buildings and through whole communities with photographs and ideas contributed by citizens that celebrate thinking and action that move our community toward sustainability. Last fall we deployed dashboards in the Oberlin Public Library and in Prospect Elementary School (grades 3-5). The research we initiated will allow us to assess whether dashboard enhances various dimensions of “systems thinking skills” as we hope. What we do know already is that kids and teachers really like it.

I presented work at a variety of conferences and public venues this last year. Rumi Shammin and Cindy Frantz and I organized a special session at the Behavior Energy and Climate Change conference in the fall of 2012 that focused on the Oberlin Project. In spring 2013, students Shane Clarke, Noel Meyers, Anita Peebles, and Evan Ticknell (all ’14) co-presented with me at the conference Best Practices Linking STEM Education and Great Lakes Stewardship at Case Western Reserve University. As I write this note, I am preparing for a trip to Lund University in Sweden, where I have been invited to help lead an international workshop on the “Scale Problem in Earth System Science.” In spring 2013, Sharon Pearson and I will be presenting on the “Community Voices” component of Environmental Dashboard at the Garrison Institute’s Climate Mind and Behavior conference. Later this summer I am pleased to be presenting a poster with Erika Brandt ’13 at the annual meeting of the Ecological Society of America that summarizes a 10-year experiment that we have been conducting on the role of biodiversity on ecosystem function in restored wetland ecosystems. In addition to these academic presentations, it has been gratifying to work with students and colleagues to deliver four well-attended presentations on environmental dashboard to community members in Oberlin.

One of my fondest memories from this last year will be spending an intense few days with my closest friends from my time as a student at Oberlin during our 25th reunion. Oberlin is a rich, diverse, and multi-generational family that I am thankful to be part of.

RUMI SHAMMIN
After a year of being away, I returned to the ES program in fall 2012 from my junior faculty leave. While away, I was humbled to have the opportunity to dedicate more time to my research projects. Oberlin has high scholarly expectations of its tenure-track faculty, and it is difficult to fully meet them during regular semesters. My time away was a wonderful opportunity to immerse myself in my research projects. In the past year I continued to work on bringing closure to some of them: a joint publication with Jordan Suter on residential energy efficiency that is now in press; a paper on off-grid solar homes in Bangladesh with Professor Enamul Haque of United International University in Bangladesh that is under review at Energy Policy; and a paper on triple-bottom-line analysis of urban agriculture with graduating senior Laura Rose Brylowski that is in preparation for a special issue of the journal Sustainability. I am also working on two papers related to urban agriculture with Brad Masi and Janet Fiskio and continuing my research on motivating behavior change using real-time monitoring and feedback technology funded by the Great Lakes Protection Fund with John Petersen and Cindy Frantz.

In addition, I have been serving as a guest editor for a special issue of The Solutions Journal on transition to sustainable communities. One thing I realized while on leave was how much I missed my classes and my students! Oberlin students bring a wealth of knowledge and perspectives to the classroom that not only make teaching worthwhile, but help me remain fresh, reflective, energized, and grounded. My leave was also a time to implement all the changes and updates I had planned for my courses.

On top of my research and teaching, I was going through the tenure process, which certainly added an additional set of tasks (and stress). If I had any illusions about my return from leave being somewhat relaxing, that was certainly not the case. While the research, teaching, reconnecting with students, and receiving tenure were all tremendously rewarding, they

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created an extremely busy year. I guess if I were to sum it up, I would say that there never was a dull moment in 2012-13, and I fondly look forward to many more years to come.

JORDAN SUTER
This year has been one of both excitement for new beginnings as well as sadness for what I will be leaving behind. I accepted a faculty position to begin this fall in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at Colorado State University. I feel truly fortunate to have been able to work with incredibly talented and passionate students and colleagues at Oberlin over the last six years. Oberlin has been a very supportive environment for me since I arrived in the fall of 2007, and my choice to move on was not decided upon easily. I look forward to continuing to carry out an exciting research program related to water and land use issues at Colorado State and will always carry with me the terrific experiences that Oberlin has provided me.

My research focus over the past year has been on several projects that successfully resulted in publication. Research related to the use of groundwater resources, which is supported through a grant from the National Science Foundation, was published in January in the American Journal of Agricultural Economics. This research illustrates the role that difference in groundwater hydrology can play in influencing economic incentives and behavior related to groundwater use. Work continues with colleagues at the University of Delaware on two separate projects that employ economics experiments to better understand behavior that leads to inefficient and unsustainable use of groundwater.

Research related to behavior in water quality trading markets that was conducted with colleagues and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Cornell University has been accepted for publication in the journal Water Resources and Economics. This research seeks to explain why water quality markets across the United States have generally failed to deliver the level of cost saving trades that was initially predicted. I have also been fortunate to have a paper coauthored with my colleague in environmental studies, Rumi Shammin, accepted for publication in the journal Energy Policy. This paper uses data from a field experiment conducted using residential properties owned by Oberlin College to better understand the relative efficacy of energy conservation measures such as attic insulation, programmable thermostats, and financial incentives for conservation.

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TWO STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED honors theses in environmental studies in 2012-13:

Erika Brandt's thesis, “Relating Plant Spatial Patterning, Plant Biodiversity, and Ecosystem Function to Management Practices in Experimental Restored Wetlands,” concluded 10 years of monitoring and research at a restored wetland in Oberlin. In it, she examined the effects of planting and fertilization treatments on aspects of wetland ecosystem structure and function. She also explored relationships among aspects of ecosystem structure (plant biodiversity and spatial pattern) and function (aquatic metabolism and nutrient concentrations, soil organic matter, and plant production). Erika found significant effects of planting, but not fertilization, on plant biodiversity, highlighting the importance of initial conditions on long-term ecosystem structure in restored wetlands. She saw few relationships between our measures of ecosystem structure and function, but significant positive correlations between plant biodiversity and spatial pattern, indicating links between spatial heterogeneity, habitat complexity and species diversity. John Petersen served as Erika’s primary advisor.


Facult/Staff Notes, cont. 

CAMILLE WASHINGTON-OTTOMBRE

Since my arrival at Oberlin, I have pursued my scholarship on small land holders’ adaptation to climate change and have enriched it with a newfound interest in questions of gender, race, and age acquired through my teaching and the extensive field work that I have done for the last three years. I am currently involved in three projects. First, I continue to publish work initiated during my PhD. After considerable improvements and revisions, I have just published a paper titled “Rural Organizations and Adaptation to Climate Change and Variability in Rural Kenya” in Regional Environmental Change, a major journal in my field. I submitted another paper titled “A Multi-Layered Approach to Adaptive Capacity across Social Networks: A Case Study in Rural Kenya” to Global Environmental Change, the leading journal in my field. I also have established new scholarship and work on two NSF-funded projects titled “Institutional Dynamics to Climate Change: Longitudinal Analysis of Snowmelt-Dependent Agricultural Systems” and “Spatial Resilience of Agriculturalists Coupling of Ecological and Hydrological Variability in Rural Zambia.”

During summer 2012, I spent six weeks in Kenya along with three Oberlin students—Daniel Rosenberg-Daneri ’12, Deirdre Molitor ’13, and Piper Stull-Lane ’13—to collect archival data about water management; conduct a household survey on household attributes, water uses, and water governance; and to interview water managers. Danny, Deirdre, and Piper all participated in the testing of the household survey, supervised enumerators during the data collection of 450 surveys in Kenya, and collected data as part of their independent research (spring and fall 2012). Danny and Deirdre worked on “Gender and Water Access in Rural Kenya.” Piper’s work on “Perception of water and climate change in the Mwea irrigation scheme” resulted in a research paper in spring 2013.

After three years of teaching, I have had the pleasure of being reappointed as assistant professor in environmental studies and will be on junior leave for spring and fall 2014. My family and I will welcome a new baby in June 2013, and I will be on maternity leave during fall 2013. I will miss Oberlin students during this time away from the classroom but will use it to finish ongoing research projects and apply for an NSF Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) grant in spring 2014 to deepen my expertise in the role of social capital in framing resilient social ecological systems. For this project, tentatively titled “Gender, Age, Race, and Social Capital in The Adaptation to Climate Change of Small Land Holders Communities,” I will compare and contrast the two locations where I worked in Kenya with the situation of Amish farming communities in northeast Ohio and urban farming communities in Cleveland. I will also continue to develop my teaching towards a critical, non-U.S.-centered social science perspective on environmental studies and develop a new course titled Gender and the Environment to be taught in spring 2015. •
Environmental Studies: 2012–2013

Celebrating the installment of the Environmental Dashboard in Prospect Elementary School are Prospect teachers John Memmott and Kim Koos (far left and right); Hannah Ball-Damberg ’14, Shane Clark ’13, and Professor John Petersen (center); and Prospect student Daria Martz (front right).

Lewis Center student workers Willa Rowan ’15, Kobi Shevin ’13, and Kevin DiGuglielmo ’13 pull the Living Machine float with a little help from Aldrumesia Baker ’15 in the 2013 Big Parade.
CONGRATULATIONS NEW GRADUATES!

Graduating ES majors and minors*

Christin Anderson
Sophia Bamert
Brian Becker
Melanie Berk
Julia Bowling
Erika Brandt
Eileen Brucato
Laura Rose Brylowski
Lake Buckley
Angus Chen
Talia Chorover*
Sharon Cross*
Eli Clark-Davis
Nathanial Colbert-Sangree
Robert Conte
Victoria Cox

Tessa Cruz
Devin Davis
Alexander Deeter
Kevin DiGuglielmo
Clarissa Fortier
Christopher Hall
June Hong
Amanda Jacir
Lucia Kalinosky*
Adiel Kaplan*
Gabriel Klooster*
Yona Koch-Fienberg*
Alexander Krichels
Megan Leary
Yazhou Li
Eli Lisseck
Daniel Lobb
Kenny Ludlow*

Rachel McMonagle
Deirdre Molitor
Matthew Nahorn
Hilary Neff
Thomas Nunan*
Tina Pancho-Bernadett
Eloise Reid
Eurydice Rice
Daniel Rosenberg Daneri
Carmelita Rosner*
Elizabeth Savrann
Piper Stull-Lane
Erin Swenson-Klatt
William Towbin*
Robin Witjes
Hannah Wolfman-Arent*
Walta Yoseph
Caitlin Zinsley