A Changing Program in a Changing World

By John Petersen ’88, Chair, Environmental Studies Program

I'll state the obvious; big changes are taking place in our current ecological, economic, and political systems. Unfortunately some of this change is not welcome. Over the last two years, for example, scientists have determined that our climate is changing more rapidly than had previously been predicted. As a result, we are coming to realize that the safe level for atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations (i.e. the level necessary to achieve some modicum of ecological and social stability) is lower than previously proposed. And this realization comes at a time when an economic crisis places constraints on our ability to act. It's hard to not be worried about the future...

Yet in spite of this, I know people join me across the nation and world in feeling a renewed sense of hope in the face of the very good changes taking place. Certainly the election of Barack Obama is indicative of the potential for surprising and dramatic openings on national and international levels. And here within Oberlin, important and exciting changes are afoot in the city, college, and ES program. These exemplify opportunities that arise together with great challenges. The articles in this newsletter highlight new seeds being planted and new ideas being cultivated in Oberlin that we hope might contribute to positive change here and beyond. The challenges are daunting, but our students and faculty and the rest of the community are engaged and hard at work.

Environmental studies supporters will be interested to learn of a number of important and positive changes taking place in the ES faculty and curriculum. As I wrote in our last newsletter, David Orr has been working half time (more like double time!) as a special advisor to President Marvin Krislov. The partnership between these two has already born substantial fruits (see David's article on page 7 for a taste of this work). We are grateful for the leadership and fortitude they are demonstrating in moving environmental sustainability to the center stage in institutional priorities and doing so in the face of substantial economic challenges. Within the program, David continues to teach his signature Ecological Design course and has added a new seminar on leadership.

We are very pleased to welcome several new faculty members to the program. Environmental anthropologist Crystal Fortwangler joined us in the fall of ’08 and will return again next year. Janet Fiskio will join us in the fall of ’09 in a new tenure-track position in environmental humanities. Dane Kupinger will also join us next year to serve as the program’s natural scientist while I take a research leave.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read more about these fascinating individuals and the strengths they bring to the program. We remain hopeful about plans to hire a new tenure track faculty member in “Land and People” and will be looking for candidates who explore the interplay between cultural, economic, political, and ecological systems in the context of changing demography and climate.

The addition of the two tenure-track faculty positions enables us to move forward with a variety of initiatives designed to strengthen and focus the educational experience for our majors. In the spring of ’09 we began a trial implementation of “curricular pathways.” Students select and design a focused course of study in the ES major on topics ranging from water resource management to environmental justice to the politics...
Janet Fiskio
Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies

Originally from Connecticut, I am a spring 2009 PhD graduate in environmental science, studies, and policy at the University of Oregon—an interdisciplinary program combining literature, philosophy, and biology. I majored in religion at Eastern College, and I hold both a Master of Divinity degree and an MA in environmental studies.

Before enrolling at the University of Oregon, I completed two terms with AmeriCorps and worked at Sexual Assault Support Services as a community educator and self-defense instructor. In my spare time I volunteered at Grassroots Garden, an organic urban farm operated by the local food bank, and I backpack as often as possible.

I completed a master's degree in environmental science from the University of Michigan. In August 2007, I received a joint PhD in Anthropology and Natural Resources & Environmental Studies with a concentration in environmental anthropology.

My research merges studies of land use, ownership and distribution with questions about what we ought to do regarding conflicts between competing interests and how best to do that. I'm particularly interested in how communities, through their experiences, manage and make sense of these patterns can inform landscape management. Students will investigate Oregon's landscape through the use of GIS technology and assess the consequence of changing land use patterns, urban development, and conservation actions upon the environment.

Outside of academia, I have worked as a community organizer with the Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project (a non-profit forest advocacy group), helped restoration efforts as an employee of the Trustees of Reservations (a land trust on Martha's Vineyard), and was employed by the Southern Appalachian Man and Biosphere Project (SAMBAP) to gather information on the state of knowledge and control of exotic species on managed lands of the southeast. She's been an active participant in local food movements in Chapel Hill and Sewanee, and he looks forward to becoming involved with and tasting Oberlin's local diversity as well. His personal interests include hiking, backpacking, gardening, cooking, and educating his kids about the natural world.

Crystal Fortwangler
Visiting Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies

Originally from southwestern Pennsylvania, locally known as the Connellsville coalfield, I have a long familiarity with coal—a topographic and social feature that's directly relevant to many students, faculty, and staff here at Onerlin College. It has been wonderful here this past year learning so much from all of you, not only more about coal, but many other environmental issues from a variety of perspectives. In such a setting, I have found it easy to integrate my own research and teaching interests into the existing program. I am an environmental anthropologist with my work situated in social science and humanities frameworks and focused in the Caribbean.

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Dane Kuppinger
Visiting Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies

Dane Kuppinger joins the Onerlin faculty from Sewanee: The University of the South, where he has taught for the last two years. Dane came to Sewanee with a background in landscape ecology, in which students will learn how patterns develop across a landscape, the ecological consequences of these patterns, and how the dynamic nature of these patterns can inform landscape management. Students will investigate Onerlin's landscape through the use of GIS technology and assess the consequence of changing land use patterns, urban development, and conservation actions upon the environment.

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How do consumers respond when they are made immediately aware of the environmental and economic costs of personal and community-levels of resource use? Do different modes of feedback, graphical displays, and degrees of data-aggregation elicit different responses? To address these questions, faculty and students at Oberlin, working in collaboration with Lucid Design Group, have been examining the role of socially and environmentally contextualized feedback as a mechanism for stimulating changes in feelings toward nature, attitudes, and consumptive behaviors in residents of college dormitories (see www.oberlin.edu/dormenergy).

With a new grant from the Great Lakes Protection Fund, we are now collaborating with Sustainable Community Associates (SCA) and the City of Oberlin to substantially expand this work. When completed, households and businesses within SCA’s new mixed-use development will be able to view and take action on their own resource use in the context of socially-comparative and environmentally contextualized feedback. What is unique about the new approach is that real-time monitoring of aggregate citywide electricity and water use and water quality in the local Plum Creek drainage basin will be combined with personal use. So, for instance, an individual consumer might receive a message suggesting this is not an ideal time for them to do a load of laundry because the wastewater treatment plant is nearing maximum capacity.

On the college side, the research team is lead by John Petersen ’88 and includes Rumi Shammin, Cheryl Wolfe-Cragin ’49, Eddie Herdentorf and Cindy Franzin and Steven Mayer (psychology), Vladislav Shantarov ’95, Gavin Pratt ’06, and Michael Murray ’04, founders of Lucid Design Group, will play key roles in the system’s technological development. Sustainable Community Associate partners include Ben Ezinga ’01, Naomi Sabel ’02, and Josh Rosen ’01. Jennifer Mannok ’99, a faculty member at Carnegie Mellon, is serving as a consultant on the human-machine interface component of the project. Collaborators from the City of Oberlin include City Manager Eric Norenberg, City Council President David Sonner, Director of OMLPS Steve Dupee, Director of Public Works Jeff Bauman, and Director of the Wastewater Treatment Plant Steve Hoffert. Current student collaborators on the project include Adam Hull, Alex Totoiu, Kevin Smith, Meaghan Hart, and Michael Babaluka.

Through previous work on the Campus Resource Monitoring System and Dorm Energy Competition, the Oberlin College team has demonstrated that socially comparative web-based feedback, combined with education and competition, can result in short-term savings of up to 56 percent in dormitory electricity use. More recently, this same team received awards for developing the dormitory energy orb that shows different colors depending on current consumption relative to typical consumption (see article in this newsletter). For the Great Lakes Protection Fund project, the new collaborative team will be developing consumer and bioregional Building Dashboards’ and other modes of feedback, including text messaging, orbs, email, and social networks.

The Great Lakes Protection Fund is a private, nonprofit corporation formed in 1989 by the governors of the Great Lakes states. It supports collaborative actions to improve the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem. The fund’s interest in Oberlin’s research stems from the project’s potential to develop novel IT-based approaches that could be widely deployed to stimulate resource conservation throughout the Great Lakes region. According to Oberlin City Council Chair David Sonner, “This grant provides the city and college with the opportunity to demonstrate creativity and leadership on the pressing environmental challenges that face the Great Lakes ecosystems and the world.”

The Study of Food Systems Provides an Ideal Point of Integration for a Liberal Arts Education

Food systems connect to just about every significant social issue that we face:

• rising obesity and poor food access in inner-city neighborhoods
• climate change
• the loss of biological diversity and spreading dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico (or a corollary dead zone in Lake Erie)
• the loss of small family farmers and growing rural poverty
• Food systems in the United States are ripe for change, and grassroots communities across the country are losing no time organizing more sustainable, equitable, and just food systems. The courses I teach at Oberlin are designed to offer Oberlin students practical experience with local food system issues in Northeast Ohio while also discussing the major social challenges to transitioning to a more sustainable food system.

My courses include Community Food Systems (a case study of efforts to address severe food access issues in Cleveland and the development of a food policy framework for Oberlin), Organic Farming Practicum (hands-on learning modules taking place at the George Jones Farm and Nature Preserve in Oberlin), and Repressive Design (applying permaculture design to Oberlin as part of a transition away from fossil-fuel dependency). The courses are taught through a partnership with the New Agrarian Center (NAC), a non-profit regional food organization that manages the George Jones Farm in Oberlin and Great Lakes ecosystems. We welcome Eddie to Oberlin’s ES program as an affiliate scholar.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to a reunion being planned for graduates of Oberlin’s Environmental Studies Program and all others who are working on or interested in environmental issues. Spearheading the event is Visiting Professor Carl McDaniel ’64, who serves as co-chair of EnviroAlums. The reunion will take place in Oberlin on October 9-11, 2009, and is described on page 7 of this newsletter. I urge you to join us for what promises to be a unique and timely opportunity to engage, share, and strategize. The event is centered on the question of how we can re-envision and redefine the economic and ecological challenges we face as valuable opportunities for bringing about positive change. How very Oberlin! •

OBERLIN TOWN/GOWN RECEIVE $812,000 FROM THE GREAT LAKES PROTECTION FUND

The Great Lakes Protection Fund is a private, nonprofit corporation formed in 1989 by the governors of the Great Lakes states and leadership on the pressing environmental challenges that we face as valuable opportunities for bringing about positive change. How very Oberlin! •
SUSTAINABILITY IS A KEY CONCEPT in the development of human societies in the 21st century. It challenges conventional ways and forces us to take a more holistic approach to policy-making, planning, and problem solving. Sustainability is not a state, but a universal and context-dependent process that requires us to recognize the interdependencies between human societies and the natural world, the inviolable limits of nature and natural resources, and the tremendous opportunities for creativity and innovation for human societies and the human spirit. It challenges us to recognize that human societies are part of an infinitely complex natural world that we barely understand, and thus precautionary approaches are necessary to make sure we do not initiate a chain of events in nature that would go beyond our control and thus threaten our very existence.

It is true that sustainability is often interpreted differently under different contexts by different groups of people, and it is still common to label it as a vague concept. However, the broad definition of sustainability and the underlying principles of sustainability are now well established in the literature. Using these principles, one can develop a comprehensive sustainability plan for various contexts.

Definition of Sustainability
Sustainability is ensuring that critical social, economic, and ecological processes are maintained in such a way that both the short- and long-term quality of life of human societies and health and diversity of the natural ecosystems are not compromised and the scale of human activities is kept within the natural carrying capacity of the environment.

Principles of Sustainability:
1. Limits: Humans are not above or outside the natural environment—they are part of it. They are subject to many of the same laws of nature that apply to other species. There are biophysical limits to the expansion of human societies imposed by the carrying capacity of nature. The scales of human society and economy are ultimately governed by the resources available in nature. Sustainability requires us to recognize those ultimate physical limits and the fact that we are approaching some of those limits at an accelerated pace. If we formulate our plans and policies without careful considerations of those limits, we will not be able to sustain the developments in our quality of life.

2. Repeated: Sustainability requires balancing priorities in three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. Development means improving the quality of human life. However, the need for development is often narrowly identified with the need for economic growth alone. This is flawed. Many human needs are sometimes better satisfied by improved environmental quality and amenities and a safe and engaged social life. Thus, sustainability requires us to consider the triple bottom line, not just the financial bottom line.

3. Equity and Justice: Equitable distribution of wealth, opportunities, and quality of life needs to be ensured across all communities, regions, and nations around the world—now and in the future. We have a responsibility toward others in our generation to ensure equitable access to resources and a good-quality life of making sure that the impact of our activities does not disproportionately affect any particular group of people—especially those with limited say in the decision-making process. At the same time, we have a responsibility toward future generations, to give our children and grandchildren access to the resources they need for a good-quality life of inter-generational equity. These responsibilities to ensure equity and justice also extend to other species with whom we share this earth, and we need to pay attention to ways of preserving the biodiversity of nature.

4. Spatial and Temporal Interdependencies: The world is interconnected and interdependent in intricate ways, and local development cannot be sustained in the long run without paying attention to global development, and vice versa. The materials we use in our daily lives are interconnected and interdependent in intricate ways, and local development cannot be sustained in the long run without paying attention to global development, and vice versa. The materials we use in our daily lives are increasingly produced in one part of the world and consumed in another.

5. Scientific Understanding: We need a more rigorous scientific understanding of sustainability. For the last decade, environmental educators, students, and activists have spent a lot of time talking about ways to become more sustainable—and yet we barely understand, and thus precautionary approaches are necessary to make sure we do not initiate a chain of events in nature that would go beyond our control and thus threaten our very existence.

6. Innovation: Innovation for human societies is necessary. It is a practical way of increasing our creativity and making human societies more sustainable. The environmental challenges we face are so severe that we need to use new solutions. Many human needs are sometimes better satisfied by improved environmental quality and amenities and a safe and engaged social life. Thus, sustainability requires us to consider the triple bottom line, not just the financial bottom line.

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At the heart of this project is the transition to entirely renewable, carbon-free energy sources—a so-called “smart grid.” Based on a recent feasibility study commissioned by the college from Energy Ventures International of Takoma Park, Maryland, we could end our heavy dependence on coal and instead use landfill gas to generate 15-25 megawatts of electricity—enough to power the college and more. Through a unique partnership between city and college, the Green Arts District would become a national model for the creation of new business, green jobs, and the application of green technology.

Oberlin is a microcosm of many towns in the Midwest, with characteristic income levels, demographics, economic issues, and dependence on fossil fuels, the proposed model will be extremely useful for other cities and towns. We also intend to use this experience to foster deeper national dialogue about the perplexities, challenges, and opportunities related to creating a sustainable world, one region at a time.

Environmental Studies Program and “EnviroAlums” Reunion
by Carl McDaniel ’64, Visiting Professor of Environmental Studies and Chair, EnviroAlums

Join kindred elves at the first reunion of the ENVS program and EnviroAlums. This will be a wonderful way to renew and make new friendships. See firsthand the many green things the College and town are doing and meet the many alumni and students who are moving Oberlin—and their home communities—toward greater sustainability.

The environmental challenges we face are sufficient to overwhelm many of us. Now, the ongoing collapse of financial markets, massive layoffs, and huge drops in net worth seem to only increase the challenges. But we are being given a unique opportunity with this economic downturn; it is a time of enhanced possibilities. Let’s use this reunion to explore and contribute to the ways of creating a more durable and socially just society.

Over the past six months, Reunion Committee members Michael Bolker, Kristin Brazzina, Wlad Galloway, Michael Lythcott, and Carl McDaniel have laid the foundation for a fantastic weekend. In addition, four students (Ibukun Blank, Nikki Heyman, Kate Melanson, and Matt Willner) in John Peterson’s Environment and Society course have undertaken a semester-long project focused on reunion planning. The students have proposed activities to enhance student and alumni intergroup actions during the reunion and helped create a questionnaire sent in April to 1,400 Alumni with environmental interests that will provide input for the reunion as well as environmental data for the OBIEWeb database.

The reunion will begin Friday, October 9 with a dinner and keynote address by David Orr. A wide range of activities is being planned, including seminars and workshops on subjects such as water, energy, and climate change; tours of Jones Farm, SEED House, and the Lewis Center; and consideration of businesses started by Oberlin graduates, such as Black River Café, the Ginkgo Gallery, Full Circle Fuels, and the East College Street Project. Much of the weekend, however, will be devoted to socializing and networking with kindred spirits.

The Reunion Committee will be creating a detailed program over the next several months. Your input is needed and welcomed. If you would like to organize an activity or offer suggestions, visit the EnviroAlums website at www.oberlin.edu/enviroalums. Click on the Reunion link for forms to send to the Alumni Office.

Oberlin has a grand tradition of leading the way to a more fair and just world. We can make this one of Oberlin’s finest hours, if together we seize the opportunities created by the financial and climate crises.

The Reunion Committee is in the process of creating a durable future. Join us in October and make a difference in creating a more just world through visionary environmental leadership.
DORM ENERGY ORBS NAMED BEST APPLIANCE OF THE YEAR BY ENERGY EFFICIENCY MARKETS

Described by the blog Energy Efficiency Markets as “mood rings for buildings”—glowing angry red when energy use is high and green when consumption is low—Oberlin’s own energy efficiency monitoring orbs were named Best Appliance of 2008 by the environmental blog. The orbs’ work is sometimes subtle, “I still run into people who aren’t sure what the orbs are doing,” said College junior Adam Hull, a member of the team that oversees the Campus Resource Monitoring System. For now, promotion of the orbs is limited to posters in their vicinity that explain strategies for reducing energy use. “We’d kind of just letting people do what they want with them,” said Hull. The EEM post remarked, “What’s interesting is that the kids don’t pay energy bills—still they respond to the magic ball.” Hull’s theory is that the orbs mostly serve to remind Oberlin students—who are generally well informed on the importance of energy conservation—of what they already know they should be doing.

The recognition by EEM is only the latest example of outside praise for the Campus Resource Monitoring System. The orbs won the EPA’s People, Prosperity, and the Planet student design award in 2009. Additionally, faculty advisor and Environmental Studies Program Chair John Petersen received an $812,000 grant from the Great Lakes Protection Fund last September to expand the monitoring and feedback system on campus and in the city of Oberlin (see parallel article in this newsletter). Excerpted from an Oberlin Review article written by Sam Link, February 19, 2009.

STUDENT AWARDS

Joyce Gorn Prize Winners

The Joyce Gorn Prize was established as a memorial to Joyce Gorn ’73, who was active in environmental pursuits at Oberlin and at Cornell University, where she attended graduate school prior to her death from cancer in 1978. The fund was established by her parents and friends to recognize meritorious work in projects related to environmental studies. The Environmental Studies Program Committee is pleased to announce the three senior recipients of the 2009 Joyce Gorn Prize:

• Amanda Medress ’09 was a co-founder of the Student Experiment in Ecological Design (SEED) House, an environmentally themed student residence. As part of this work, she helped to procure $130,000 in administrative funding for renovation and developed a comprehensive green retrofit plan that halved the house’s utility bill.

• Amanda earned her degree in SEED house during its first two years and played a key leadership role in developing the facility and its initial programing. She has also been active with the Oberlin College Dialogue Center, a mediation and facilitation program on campus, and interned at the Jane Goodall Institute and at the Environmental Defense Fund.

• Amanda graduated with a major in creative writing and a minor in environmental studies.

Like Amanda, Lucas Brown ’09 was a co-founder of SEED house, living there its first year, and co-founder of the Ecological Design and General Efficiency (Green EDGE) Fund, a revolving loan and grant fund that finances environmental projects on campus and (occasionally) in the Oberlin community. Lucas served on the board of the Green EDGE fund since its inception in 2007. He has also been active in I Love Mountains, an advocacy group working in opposition to mountaintop removal coal mining. Winner of both a Udall Scholarship and a Rhodes Scholarship, Lucas graduated with a major in economics.

Like Lucas, Nathaniel Meyer ’09 was also co-founder of the Green EDGE Fund. Also working in opposition to mountaintop removal coal mining operations in Appalachia, Nathaniel, for his honors thesis in environmental studies, developed a complete carbon inventory for the city and community of Oberlin and an analysis of how other small cities are addressing climate change. The work was done in collaboration with the City of Oberlin and will contribute significantly to the city’s efforts to develop a climate action plan. Nathaniel received the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship in 2008 and graduated this spring with a double major in environmental studies and biology.

Ann Marie Schaening ’07 Memorial Fund Recipients

The Ann Marie Schaening ’07 Memorial Fund, established by the family and friends of Ann Marie Schaening, provides support for students pursuing Winter Term studies related to the Environmental Studies Program. Congratulations to 2009 recipients Martiella Castaldi (project: School Gardens, Waveland, Miss.), Ellen Cohan (project: Dreamfuel Center Bicycle Cooperative, Waveland, Miss.), and Amiel Stanek (project: Study of “Now to Tail” Eating, Northampton, Mass.).
LEWIS CENTER RENOVATIONS
by Cheryl Wolfe-Cragin ’89, Facilities Manager

The Lewis Center will be undergoing a few necessary changes over the summer months. In order to create office space for new humanities faculty member Janet Fiskio and Visiting Professor Diane Kuppinger (and another permanent tenure-track faculty member the following year), we are converting the current conference room at the northwest corner of the second floor into two offices. A new conference room (and another permanent tenure-track faculty member the following year), we are converting the current conference room at the northwest corner of the second floor into two offices. A new conference room will be built over the north entrance to the building, where it was located in an early plan for the building. LM Operators not seen in photo: Rose Allen ’09, Joseph Chou ’11, Jack Dunn ’10, Erika Karsch ’11, Ben Mew ’09, Assoc. Prof. John Petersen ’88, Georgia Skoirchet ’09, and Cheryl Wolfe-Cragin ’89. (Above right): Amanda Goldstein ’11, Leah Pallant ’12, and Kathleen Thompson ’10, Assoc. Prof. John Petersen ’88 with children Lily and Luke, Rose Allen ’09, Leah Pallant ’12, Ben Mew ’09, George Allen ’11, and Nora Hammack ’11 (missing from photo: Joseph Chou ’11, Jack Dunn ’10, Amanda Goldstein ’11, Georgia Skoirchet ’09, and Cheryl Wolfe-Cragin ’89).

LEWIS CENTER RENOVATIONS
by Cheryl Wolfe-Cragin ’89, Facilities Manager

A design by a local firm, Genius LoCI, Inc., of Elyria, which worked closely with Emeritus Professor of Biology David Benzing. The expanded area will incorporate an outdoor amphitheater, placed in close association with the pond, to be used by small classes. The amphitheater concept first originated as a small-group project idea in David Ors’s Ecological Design class. The project will increase the surface area of the pond and provide a beneficial depth for plants and wildlife. A rainwater collection strategy will maintain appropriate levels for the pond and wetland planted in native species. This project is being made possible through a very generous donation by the Janeth Sperry ’85. Family. Look for a detailed article and photos in our next newsletter.

A BASELINE GREENHOUSE GAS INVENTORY FOR OBERLIN: STEPPING UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE NEUTRALITY
by Nathaniel Flaschner Meyer ’10, ENVS Honors Candidate

The City of Oberlin joined the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) in 2007, committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through ICLEI’s five-milestone process. For the first official step in this process, I conducted baseline greenhouse gas inventories for the years 2001 and 2007 for community-wide and municipal operations. I found that the community emitted 173,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2007, more than half of which was associated with the consumption of coal-intensive electricity. This amounts to 21 tons of CO2 per resident annually. Of the community’s overall emissions, the commercial sector, including Oberlin College, was responsible for approximately 65 percent, with the College itself contributing about 20 percent. The residential and transportation sectors were responsible for 17 percent and 15 percent, respectively. Quantifying emissions in this manner is crucial to evaluating the effect of various emissions reduction measures so that a climate action strategy can be systematically developed. Oberlin’s next step is to institutionalize climate action within the municipal and community structure in order to sustain a formal effort to reduce emissions. Based on interviews I conducted with officials from eight ICLEI cities, Oberlin has a variety of options to consider. The community of Oberlin, both College and city, has a unique opportunity to continue its long history of leadership—in this case in the generation-defining challenge of climate change.

OBERTIN WINS NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION CHILL OUT AWARD

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FOR THE SECOND TIME IN THREE YEARS, Oberlin College has been honored by the National Wildlife Federation as a winner in the annual competition Chill Out: Campus Solutions to Global Warming. Oberlin won for spearheading a spring 2008 program in which Oberlin residents could exchange incandescent light bulbs for energy efficient compact fluorescent bulbs (CFL). This award program honors U.S. schools that are advancing creative solutions to global warming on their campuses. The College received the award in 2007 for the development of Oberlin’s Campus Resource Monitoring System.

Oberlin is one of eight winning schools that were chosen this year from a national pool of entries. They were featured in the Chill Out: Campus Solutions to Global Warming webcast on April 15. The winners also receive a monetary award from the National Wildlife Federation to continue exploring innovative global warming solutions.

“This is a great honor,” says Oberlin President Marvin Krislov. “All credit belongs to Kristin Brazzam’s ’08, her fellow students, and John Petersen ’88, associate professor of biology and environmental studies, for having the vision and drive to expand the light bulb exchange to benefit City of Oberlin residents as well as the campus community.”

The Light Bulb Exchange is another example of Oberlin using its climate neutral mandate to forge novel alliances between students, college activists, and local citizens. The organizers emphasized exchanges for lower income community members because they spend the largest percentage of their income on utility costs and are least able to spend the money necessary to invest in CFLs. For the 9,500 bulbs exchanged off campus in 650 homes, the college estimated total greenhouse gas reductions of 6,400 tons of carbon dioxide over the life of the bulbs. This reduction amounts to 13 percent of Oberlin College’s annual carbon emissions—enough to offset the emissions from college transportation for more than two years. In addition, the program saved local citizens $775,000 in utility costs. The experience taught students that locally managed and implemented carbon offset programs have the potential to provide multiple social, educational, and environmental benefits while building community alliances.

The National Wildlife Federation’s Campus Ecology Program has been an integral part of the campus greening movement since 1989. The nation’s 4,100 colleges and universities educate more than 15 million students in any given year, making these schools important laboratories for creativity and innovation—keys to tackling a monumental crisis like global warming.

Shamin, continued from page 6

are derived from resources produced all over the world. Therefore, our use of resources in our local communities impacts faraway places. The global environment is ecologically linked in many different ways; issues like global warming affect everyone, everywhere. Thus, in the long run, global sustainability will depend on the creation of sustainable communities across the globe, and local sustainability will depend on how sustainable the world as a whole is. These principles offer an applied understanding of the broad concept of sustainability and provide an operational framework of planning, analysis, decision making, and implementation for dealing with real-world problems and solutions for cities and towns, individuals and communities, natural ecosystems, regions, nations, institutions, industries, businesses, and even universities.

This article is an updated version of selected topics from Shammin’s doctoral thesis and an article he wrote for a newsletter of the Sierra Club.
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES SPEAKERS AND EVENTS, 2008-2009

Obie: Green & Growing, Local Governments Fostering Economic Development and Sustainability
Speakers: David Beach, GreenCityBlueLake Institute; David Orr, Paul Sears Professor of Environmental Studies at Oberlin College and Special Assistant to the President on Sustainability; and Brad Whitehead, President of the Fund for Our Economic Future

In Defense of Food: The Omnivore’s Solution
Michael Pollan, author of In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto, The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals, and The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s-Eye View of the World, John S. and James L. Knight Professor of Journalism at U.C. Berkeley’s Graduate School of Journalism and Director of the Knight Program in Science and Environmental Journalism

A View of Climate Change from Bubbles of Air Trapped in Ancient Ice
Jeffrey P. Severinghaus, Professor of Geosciences, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego

Climate Change and The Oceans:
A View From The IPCC
Lynne D. Talley, Professor of Oceanography, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego

Sustainability Starts at Home: A Century of Green Design
Donald Watson, FAIA, architect, and author of Reclaiming Food, Introduction to Living Food Cultures, and Fermentation Workshop

Sandoz Katz, author of Wild Fermentation and The Revolution Will Not Be Microwave

Confronting the Trinity of Despair: Real Solutions for an Imperial Planet
Michael Maniates, Professor of Environmental Science and Political Science, Allegheny College

Fire, Climate, and Society in the Ancient Southwest
Christopher Roos, Department of Anthropology at Ohio State University and Director of the Mogollon Rim Historical Ecology Project

Sustainable Business Ventures
Melanie Heffler ’70, founder of the Hugen Group, an eco-friendly marketing firm that focuses on clean fuel technologies, fuel-efficient/biodegradable lubrications, and sustainable agriculture

From Concept to Crane
Presentation by Sustainable Community Associates, started by Oberlin alumni Naomi Sabe ’92, Ben Ezinge ’91, and Jodi Rosen ’01, founders of the East College Street development

Understanding Our World through Dynamic Modeling
Bruce Hanson, Jubilee Professor of the Liberal Arts and Sciences and Professor of Geography, University of Illinois, and member of the Honors Faculty of the National Center for Supercomputer Applications

National Water Crisis: Toilets, Sprinklers, and Water Rates
Peter Mayer ’86, founder of Aquacraft, Inc.

Domestic and International Wildlife Protection
Thomas Wats-FitzGerald, Assistant U.S. Attorney and Chief of Environmental Crimes, Miami

Screenings of award-winning documentary films The Waterfront
Directed by Liz Miller, and FLOW, by Irena Salina

Human’s Psychological Relationship with the Natural World
Cindy Franz, Department of Psychology, Oberlin College

Machine Learning in Ecosystem Informatics and Sustainability
Thomas G. Dietterich, Oregon State University

Making Millions from Worm Poop
Tom Szaky, Co-Founder and CEO of TerraCycle, Inc.

Poverty Symposium
Featuring speaker Marc Mortal, President of the National Urban League

The Last Tuna: Japanese Food, Culture, and Global Fisheries
Theodore C. Bestor, Professor of Social Anthropology and Japanese Studies, Chair of the Department of Anthropology, Harvard University

Rainforest Agebusiness Campaign
Andrea Samulon, member of the Rainforest Action Network

Two lectures presented by Arjun Makhijani, author and President of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research

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The True Cost of Coal
Lecture and presentation by the Beehive Collective of a mural depicting how coal mining and mountaintop removal affect communities and ecosystems throughout Appalachia

Sustainability and Entrepreneurship Symposium
Presentation on sustainable enterprise in Northeast Ohio and the role of venture capital, non-profit organizations, government, and academia with speakers Richard Stuebi, BP Fellow for Energy & Environmental Advancement at the Cleveland Foundation; James Petras ’74, Managing General Partner of Early Stage Partners Funds and President of Capital One Partners LLC; and Frederick Clarke, Executive Vice President of Ariadne Systems, a Cleveland biofuels company

Sustainable Lifestyles
BioTour event co-sponsored by the Environmental Studies Program. BioTour visited the campus as part of a weekend event promoting sustainable living and transportation.

The Environmental Studies Program co-sponsored more than 100 students who attended the Powershift 2009 Conference in Washington, DC, from February 17–March 2, 2009.

Ecomystics
Sponsored by the Environmental Studies Program. Ecomystics is a campus-wide effort to reduce emissions and promote sustainability. Events included the dorm energy competition, a Day of Service at George Jones Farm, the Plum Creek invasive species day of service, the Plum Creek cleanup, the poop campaign, and tours of the Living Machine.

Cooperative Empowerment: Women’s Liberation Through Food
Educational workshops and lectures hosted by OSCA’s Nicaragua Sister Partnership Committee

ENVS students and EnviroAlums Environmental Careers Seminar
Hosted by Carl McDaniel ’64 and Peter Mayer ’86

Using Zones to Promote Sustainability & Social Change
Lora DiFranco ’98, co-founder of GreenLight Zine, a zine to educate and provide an outlet for young environmental writers

The course will be taught by Darren Doherty of the Permaculture Institute in Australia. Darren has designed and developed more than 1,200 properties across five continents and frequently teaches with Bill Mollison & David Holmgren, co-originators of permaculture. For details, see www.gotthenac.org.

Opportunity for Alumni & Students: Permaculture Design Certification at Oberlin August 11-24, 2009
Permaculture involves the conscious design of food, energy, and shelter systems to embody the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. Permaculture can aid in the transition of backyards/homes, neighborhoods, and cities away from dependency on fossil-based energy systems and infrastructure.

This two-week design certification course will take place August 11-24, 2009. It will include a mix of lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on applications at the George Jones Farm in Oberlin and at urban sites in Cleveland. Topics will include water harvesting, adapting to more severe weather climates, natural building techniques, GIS/CAD design, community and enterprise development, and soil building.

The course will be taught by Darren Doherty of the Permaculture Institute in Australia. Darren has designed and developed more than 1,200 properties across five continents and frequently teaches with Bill Mollison & David Holmgren, co-originators of permaculture. For details, see www.gotthenac.org.

Michael Pollan looks over produce in a greenhouse at the Jones Farm during his visit to Oberlin. Photo courtesy of Brad Masi.
Crystal Fortwangler

Fortwangler, C., “A Place for the Donkey: Natives and Aliens in the U.S. Virgin Islands,” Landscape Research, April 2009

Brad Masi

Masi, B., Executive Producer of PolyCulture: Food Where We Live, an official selection for documentary films for the Cleveland International Film Festival, March 2009

Masi, B., Food, Community, Health, and the New Economy: The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition, Neighborhood Progress, Inc., 2009


Masi, B., Full-Circle Learning—Campus Growing Communities, Ohio EPA, 2008

David Orr

2009 Commencement Speaker, Department of Architecture, Washington University

2009 Honorary Doctor of Science, Furman University

2008 Commencement Speaker, School of Natural Resources, University of California-Berkeley

2008 Commencement Speaker, Nicholas School Duke University

155 reviews completed in 2008-2009


John Petersen


Md Rumi Shammin

Award: 2009 Community Based Learning Practitioner Award by staff of the Bonner Center for Service & Learning for fine work in community-based research, especially with Kendal at Oberlin and the City of Oberlin


Jordan F. Suter


Cheryl Wolfe-Cragin

Grant: 2008 Minneapolis Foundation, “Lessons of Sustainability in Israel: Humanity, Society and the Environment”, $14,000 for a Winter Term 2010 Study Tour to Israel with up to 10 Oberlin College students

Kelly is writing a blurb to place here that reminds alums to update their email addresses.

NOWHERE ARE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES, ranging from climate change to pollution to invasive species, felt more acutely than in the coastal zone where over half the human population now lives. Over the last quarter century, experimental ecosystems have become critical tools for understanding the changes taking place in these systems. The new book, Enclosed Experimental Ecosystems and Scale: Tools for Understanding and Managing Coastal Ecosystems, draws on 10 years of research conducted at University of Maryland’s EPA-funded McGuire Experimental Ecosystem Research Center. According to Oberlin’s John Petersen, who served as an author and the lead editor of the book, “our goal was to produce a unique reference that would be accessible to a diverse audience including policy makers, ecosystem managers, researchers and students.”
CONGRATULATIONS NEW GRADUATES!

December 2008 ENVS Graduates
Seyeon Malott
Corey Squire

May 2009 ENVS Graduates
Lindsey Allen
Jessica Barber
Glennon Beresin
Shannon Blake
Anna Brunner
Robert Chester
Robert Chew
Geneva Cockrell
Anna Corichi
Zoe Dash
Hannah Epstein
Elizabeth Fabis
Marc Fidelman
Benjamin Fram
Kate Greenberg
Johanna Hoffman
Rachel Karasick

Iris Kunert
Renee LaGue
Justin Lader
Connor Lee
Joanna Lemle
Jonathan McCall
Nathaniel Meyer
Colin Miller
Sara Moledor
Michael Mullaley
Lara Nagle
Erika Oba
Laura Pratt
Julia Raskin
Christopher Rice
Ian Santino
Anna Santo
Georgia Skoichet
Katharine Thompson
Cara Turett
Johanna Valente
Ayla Zeimer

May 2009 Graduates with ENVS Minors
Jessa Dickinson
Ryan King
Katherine Lauth
Hannah Lyon
Grace McCants
Amanda Medress
Benjamin Mew
Maya Shulman-Ment
Joel Solow
Melissa Streng
Laila Williams