Ten Years of Change: Reflecting Back and Moving Forward

John Petersen ’88, Director, Environmental Studies Program

Conjure up your memories of an Oberlin winter at its darkest and bleakest, and you'll have a sense of the conditions that greeted me a little more than 10 years ago. It was a snowy evening in late December of 1999 when I rolled into town in a moving van, ready to start a career as a junior faculty member in Oberlin’s Environmental Studies (ES) Program.

In spite of apocalyptic predictions, the ball fell in Times Square on the eve of New Year’s 2000, and the lights stayed on in Oberlin. As far as my partner, Nancy, and I could tell from our strategic vantage point in our new Oberlin home, “civilization” as we had come to know it didn’t miss a beat. Computer disks kept right on spinning, civil order was maintained, and the oil and coal that had driven the 20th-century economy kept right on flowing.

2010 marks the 10th anniversary of the completion of Oberlin’s Adam Joseph Lewis Center for Environmental Studies.

The Oberlin Project

By David W. Orr, Paul Sears Professor of Environmental Studies and Special Assistant to the President on Sustainability

From its origin in the 1830s, Oberlin College has been a national leader in human rights issues, access to higher education, and progressive causes generally. In the late 1990s, we constructed the first substantially green, entirely solar-powered, zero-discharge building on a U.S. college campus (the Adam Joseph Lewis Center). Other LEED projects are currently under way at Oberlin, including the highest LEED-rated jazz studies and performance center in the world and a LEED-gold residence hall. In 2004, Oberlin’s board of trustees adopted what is still the most comprehensive environmental policy in higher education. In that same year, the college initiated development of a campus resource monitoring system that provides students with real-time feedback on their electricity and water use in dormitories to engage, educate, and empower them to conserve resources. In 2006, the college became a charter signatory to the American

The Oberlin Project envisions transitioning one of the finest small towns in America into a model of environmental sustainability that offers lessons that others might follow.
GRADUATING SENIORS PERSPECTIVES AND REFLECTIONS ON THEIR WORK AT OBERLIN

There’s no better way to understand an Oberlin education than through students’ reflections on their experiences. In the paragraphs below, Julia Nakad writes about her work as an activist and how it lead her and fellow students to found *Headwaters* magazine. Kate Coury considers her collaborative work on education through gardening within local Oberlin schools. Emily Arons reflects on her two years as a student representative on the Environmental Studies Program Committee.

Julia Nakad

Last semester, I came home from a class field trip to West Virginia with the words of the activist Larry Gibson ringing in my ears: “If you don't say something about coal now, in 50 years you're going to be asking yourself 'why didn't I do something?’” I wasn't the only one who left the trip shaken. A sudden deluge of activism started on campus surrounding the college’s use of coal in its central heating plant; a coal working group formed to build popular support for alternative energy, and a petition circulated during the course of a week that garnered the signatures of over half the student body of Oberlin.

In the midst of all this activity, Erika Zarowin and I wondered how we could facilitate the upsurge of activism on campus. We realized that while there were tremendous things being done, there was also a dearth of information flowing between organizing groups, students, and the administration. This realization inspired us to start a campus environmental magazine, *Headwaters*, to provide activists and other members of the campus community with ways for collaborating and building a sustainable community. With the financial support of EnviroAlums, the Environmental Studies Program, and the Office of Environmental Sustainability, we published our first issue in March, and our second is scheduled for release before commencement. Those interested in receiving a copy should email a request to Eliza Haburay-Herrling (ehaburay@oberlin.edu).

Kate Coury:

In 2008 Oberlin senior Virginia Drier started a “learning garden” at Prospect Elementary School. The goal was to help youngsters better understand relationships between land, food, and health and to foster a sense of pride, responsibility, and wonder both in themselves and the larger world of soil and plants. In reality, the partnership between the college students, the teachers, and their students has fostered a learning environment that has benefited Oberlin students as much as the community.

I joined the project early on and have since worked with Prospect teacher Barb Enos, Jones Farm Education Coordinator Evelyn Bryant, and Oberlin College students to develop the concept. The collaboration has posed a number of challenges. Helping to overcome them and forging what we hope will be a lasting partnership has been one of my most gratifying experiences at Oberlin. In the last year, groups of college students from the introductory environmental studies classes have helped develop the garden space and lessons, coordinating a spring day of service with the Bonner Center and facilitating recess activities. In January four college students developed a series of seasonally appropriate lesson plans by grade and a gardening guide. As I prepare to graduate, I am pleased to report that first-year student Rebecca Deustch has agreed to take on the position of garden coordinator for the next few years, an important step in continuing to strengthen this collaboration!

Emily Arons:

For two years I have been thrilled to serve as one of two student representatives to the Environmental Studies Program Committee (ESPC), the faculty committee that oversees the ES program and curriculum. During this time I have witnessed and contributed to many important changes, including the hiring of two new professors and development of the “curricular pathways” requirements, major steps toward creating greater focus for students majoring in environmental studies.

The opinions of students, which typically reflect a variety of sometimes-disparate interests and passions, are highly valued in the program’s decision-making process. During the faculty hiring process, for example, my fellow student representative, Maggie Zimmer, and I were charged with coordinating student participation in the interviewing process. I value the freedom that the ESPC faculty granted to us, trusting us to engage with the candidates and assert our perspectives, and then listening carefully to what we had to say.

Actually, this was one of the features of Oberlin College that attracted me as a prospective student; I wrote my “Why Oberlin?” essay on this atmosphere of student empowerment. Environmental studies majors are perhaps some of the most active and engaged students on campus, recognizing and taking advantage of this power. Students who work with the Living Machine, others who organize anti-coal initiatives, and those who have brought an array of speakers to campus demonstrate such activism and leadership. My experience has been that the structure of ENVS courses encourages this, as most professors call on us to formulate and carry through our own research or action projects. During my years at Oberlin, I have been regularly inspired by my fellow students, and I appreciate the role that my professors have played in fostering a supportive and catalytic environment.
MY TWO DROPS: EMBODIED ENERGY AND CARBON IN WATER IN OBERLIN

Rumi Shammin, Assistant Professor, Environmental Studies

When a student or resident of Oberlin turns on their faucet, it is unlikely they are thinking about coal-fired electricity or global climate change. Yet in our society today, water and energy are intricately related. One powerful way to understand this is by considering the full life cycle of water: water moves through the human-controlled portions of the hydrological cycle before it is delivered to faucet and then, eventually, is carried down the drain. Like many other amenities, precious resources such as electricity and water are easily taken for granted. Flip on a switch, and electricity is readily available for your service. Turn on a faucet, and water is there for your needs. The direct costs of these two resources are relatively low in this country—less than 5 percent of annual expenditure by the average household. While there is a growing awareness about carbon intensive sources of electricity (coal, oil, etc.), the connection between water consumption and the energy and carbon impact of making that water available for household use and then treating the wastewater is not generally understood.

To help analyze and communicate the environmental implications of water use, my students and I have used life cycle analysis to calculate the embodied energy and carbon in water delivered to Oberlin. Here, the term “embodied” refers to the amount of energy and carbon used in the processes necessary to deliver a product to the consumer and then remove and process associated wastes.

Since Oberlin has a local source of water, we had neatly defined boundaries for our analysis. We started by considering the electricity used for pumping water from the Black River, treating it at the freshwater treatment plant, lifting it to the distribution tower, and finally, treating the wastewater at the wastewater treatment plant before the water was released into Plum Creek. We also considered the natural gas used to heat these municipal facilities, the gasoline used by vehicle fleets belonging to these facilities, and the carbon dioxide equivalent of methane emissions at the wastewater treatment plant. We found that each gallon of water delivered to students in a residence hall or to the local public has 86 btu of energy and 0.013 lbs of carbon embodied in it. Other cities that get their water from deep underground aquifers or transport water over long distances may have a much larger amount of energy and carbon embodied in water.

So, what does this mean in terms of environmental impact? According to the American Water Works Association, each person uses on average 170 gallons of water per day (indoor and outdoor), which in Oberlin equates to about 14,620 btu of energy and 2.2 lbs of CO2 per day! This is roughly equivalent to the energy content of a pound of coal and the CO2 emissions associated with one kilowatt-hour of electricity. Interested in more specific values? How about 1,000 btu of energy for the average shower in Oberlin or a quarter of a pound of CO2 for daily use of the toilet by one person?

Lots of us like to think in the shower. One thing we might think about is how to save water by taking shorter showers, preventing wasteful uses of water, installing water efficient appliances, and supporting public policies that promote water-use efficiency. Since about 90 percent of electricity in Ohio is generated from coal, the relationship between water use and burning coal is intimate. If you care about a coal-free energy future, conserving water is among the many small steps you can take as an individual. These are my two drops! •

Drinking water for Oberlin is initially collected from the Black River (top). After being processed at the drinking water treatment plant, used and then treated again at the waste water treatment plant it is released into the Plum Creek (bottom) which drains into a lower section of the Black River and then into Lake Erie (Photos by Rumi Shammin and John Petersen)

D avid Orr has described the “pedagogy of architecture” in the Lewis Center, which houses Oberlin’s ES program. There is just as certainly an “architecture of pedagogy” to the program itself. Since an extensive program review conducted in 2005, the Environmental Studies Program Committee (ESPC) has focused a great deal of attention on the question of how we develop an intellectual framework and program structure that best prepares our students for the singular environmental challenges and opportunities before us. From the early 1980s until 1999, Oberlin’s ES program relied on one full-time faculty director and a dedicated Environmental Studies Program Committee drawn from faculty from across the college. A curriculum was built primarily on courses offered by the director and those offered through other departments. Increasing interest in and recognition of the importance of environmental challenges has contributed to a rapid growth in faculty since 2000. Systems ecologist John Petersen arrived in 2000, and an energy and society position was added in 2002 (now filled by Rumi Shammin). In the fall of 2009, environmental humanist Janet Fiskio joined the group, and in fall of 2010 we will welcome social geographer Camille Washington-Ottombre—bringing our full-time faculty up to five. With the complement of 12 other dedicated faculty members on the ESPC from economics, history, biology, geology, chemistry, Russian, psychology, English, and art, Oberlin’s ES program has a breadth of representation that truly captures the multidisciplinary foundation of environmental studies.

One manifestation of the extra staff and interest in environmental studies is a wealth of new course offerings. Janet Fiskio and Rumi Shammin have recently introduced new courses that will become permanent offerings. These include Nature, Culture and Interpretation; Sustainable Cities: Theory, Analysis and Design; Climate Change: Ethics, Equity and Narratives; American Agricultures; and a Seminar in Environmental Justice Literature. Faculty in other departments have also added important permanent offerings to the ES curriculum, including Food and Drink in World History; Ecological Perspectives on Small-Scale Societies; Land Arts in an Electronic Age; and The Concept of Nature in Early American Writing. Visiting faculty members Crystal Fortwangler, Dane Kuppinger, and Daniel Barber have further enriched the curricular experience by providing one-time course offerings this last year that included Environmental Anthropology; Landscape Ecology; Drivers and Impacts of Mountaintop Removal; Modernism and Environmentalism; and Architecture and Climate.

While the diversity of courses and approaches to learning are a hallmark and strength of Oberlin’s ES program, over the last five years the committee has worked hard to revise its curriculum to ensure that our majors pursue a focused and intentional course of study. Beginning in fall 2010, each student who declares an ES major will be required to propose and execute a “curricular pathway.” This is a course of study that emphasizes either a topical area or the application of particular disciplinary approaches to understand and address environmental issues. We recognize that many of the most pressing contemporary issues in ES are highly interdisciplinary and can be most successfully understood through a curricular plan that focuses coursework across disciplines. Pathways are intended to equip ES majors with a depth of knowledge, analytical skills, and experiences in a particular topic or subject area of special interest to them. Successful completion of a pathway will be marked by several requirements and documents that include: 1) selection of a pathway focal area at the time the ES major is declared; 2) development and approval of a “pathway proposal” that incorporates both a statement of goals and intent and a course trajectory; 3) completion of a capstone experience and a capstone experience report related to the pathway; and 4) a pathway report. The ES program has developed a broad set of focal areas that range from environmental history, public health, systems ecology, environmental literature and media to urban analysis and design. Students have responded to this new curricular initiative with enthusiasm.
STUDENT AWARDS

Through an array of fellowships, awards, and honors projects Oberlin’s environmental studies majors have received significant recognition, encouragement, and financial support for their research and positive community engagement. It is especially gratifying to have our students recognized by external granting agencies for the excellence of their academic and extracurricular work and the quality of their ideas for bringing about positive change. The paragraphs below provide a glimpse into the rich degree of learning and labor resulting from student initiatives.

Honors research projects:

Four students successfully completed honors theses in 2009-10 under the auspices of environmental studies. Their work spans the breadth of topics and approaches that characterize ES.

Kate Coury’s thesis, “Urban parks, Decentralization and Access to City Space and Environment” examines how a city’s central urban park exists as a space in community members’ imagination and how the tension of decentralization in this urban landscape has been reflected in changing perceptions and uses of this park through its more than 100-year history as a centerpiece of community identity. Crystal Fortwangler served as Kate’s primary adviser.

Emily Arons’ thesis, “The Role of Environmentalism in the Movement to Abolish Surface Mining in Appalachia, 1960-2010,” presents a history of resistance to surface coal mining in West Virginia and other parts of Appalachia, which includes an analysis of the rhetoric and strategies used by these movements. Sam White served as Emily’s primary adviser.


Katherine Thompson’s thesis, “Climate Justice and the Rhetoric of the 2003 McCain-Lieberman Climate Stewardship Act” examines the climate justice rhetoric used by senators during the deliberations over the first proposed cap and trade bill. Rumi Shammin served as Katherine’s primary adviser.

Fulbright Award:

Rebecca Page received a Fulbright research grant for her proposal to study the “Effects of Drinking Water Pollution on Public Health in Sichuan Province, China.” The Fulbright program is a U.S. government-funded international exchange program that supports students, scholars, and professionals who undertake international graduate study, advanced research, university teaching, and teaching in elementary and secondary schools worldwide. Rebecca will be examining the effects of drinking water pollution on urban and rural public health. “I am interested in investigating health impacts and understanding community-based tools for improving water access/quality.”

Compton Mentor Fellowship:

Mackenzie Brown received this prestigious fellowship for her proposal to promote food entrepreneurship in Oberlin’s neighboring city of Elyria. The Compton Foundation provides 10 graduating seniors at participating colleges and universities with a $35,000 grant to design a project of social merit that focuses on the environment, peace and conflict resolution, reproductive health, or equal opportunity. Mackenzie’s project will focus on creating healthy alternatives to fast food by supporting sustainable businesses in Elyria that prepare and serve local foods. Her business partner and fellow Oberlin senior Danny Cowan will join her in the project.

Creativity and Leadership and Project for Peace Awards:

Graduating senior Emily Arons (see pg. 2) will leave Oberlin with funding from three granting agencies to build on her scholarly and activist work at Oberlin. Emily writes, “I will be opening a community kitchen in the Coal River Valley of southern West Virginia to promote economic development and diversification through the support of food entrepreneurship.” Her proposal to Oberlin’s Creativity and Leadership fellowship program (funded by the Morgan and Kaufman foundations), titled “Valley Community Kitchen: Rebuilding the Coal River Valley Through Food Entrepreneurship,” received a $30,000 grant. She also received a $10,000 award through Projects for Peace. During her time at Oberlin, Emily also received a $500 Jerome Davis Research Award to support travel to Coal River Valley to conduct interviews as part of her successful honors thesis (see pg. 5).

Shansi Fellowship:

Julia Nakad was awarded a two-year fellowship from Oberlin Shansi to teach English at Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. She writes, “I also hope during this time to work with environmental NGOs or possibly to research environmental concerns in Sumatra.” Oberlin Shansi continued on next page
seeks to encourage cross-cultural communication and build bonds between Oberlin and institutions in Asia.

**Udall Scholarships:**

Abby Halperin and Benjamin Jakubowski were awarded Morris and Steward Udall foundation scholarships this spring. The Udall Foundation is a highly selective national program that awards scholarships to college juniors recognized for their leadership potential across a wide spectrum of environmental fields, including policy, engineering, science, education, urban planning and renewal, business, health, justice, and economics. Abby, an environmental studies and biology major, is recognized for her work on a range of environmental education and activism projects, including her work illustrating and co-authoring the Little Green Book, a sustainability guide for Oberlin’s freshman class, and campaigning to reduce bottled water sales on campus. Her career goals include researching the ecology of climate change in national parks while making science accessible and inspirational. Ben, who is a chemistry and environmental studies major (and mathematics minor), serves on the board of the college’s Green EDGE fund and has organized and led a student research group that studied groundwater contamination in Central Appalachian coalfield communities. Ben is interested in pursuing a career in environmental epidemiology with a focus on rural environmental health.

**Doris Baron Research Fellowships:**

The Doris Baron Student Research Fund was established in 2009 by Doris’ son, Frank Baron ’70, as a way to support student-initiated research projects—particularly those related to international development and the relationships between agricultural communities and the environment. This year the Baron Fund supported the work of five students: Claudia Randrup ’10, David Fisher ’12, Sage Aronson ’12, Suman Giri ’11, and David Ohana ’12.

David Fisher’s project explored relationships between sustainable development, environmental education, and conflict resolution. Sage, Suman, and David Ohana travelled together to Nepal, where they focused their project on environmental entrepreneurship through the startup Vital Economic Growth Assistance (VEGA), an organization that promotes the marriage of micro-hydropower plants and the social sector in Nepal. Claudia was awarded funds to conduct field research in Madagascar, which she used to develop her history honors thesis, “Evaluating the Effects of Colonialism on Deforestation in Madagascar: A Social and Environmental History.”

**Schaening Memorial Fund:**

The Ann Marie Schaening ’87 Memorial Fund, established by the family and friends of Ann Marie Schaening, provides support for students pursuing winter-term projects related to the environment. Congratulations to 2010 recipients Mary Badame, Abbey Chung, Nicholas Laudeman, Julia Munson, and Marion Rockwood, who travelled with Assistant Professor Crystal Fortwangler to the Virgin Islands for a project titled “Cattle Landscapes: Interpreting Historical and Ecological Working Landscapes in the Virgin Islands.”

Maggie Zimmer received funds to support a group winter-term project on soil science, which she successfully designed, coordinated, and facilitated. Erika Zarowin focused her project on exploring strategies for ending surface coal mining in Appalachia and mechanisms for creating sustainable local economies in this region.

**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. This summer, Emeritus Professor of Biology and long-time supporter of environmental studies David Benzing will be supervising two students, Tylor Stoll ’11 and Ian Burns ’10, who will work with him on ecological management of the Lewis Center landscape, including work on wetland community restoration in the newly designed pond and amphitheater for the Lewis Center (see pg. 9 for overview of project).

Gabriel Stewart ’11 (double-degree student) will be working with Md Rumi Shammin, assistant professor of environmental studies, on ecological footprint calculations for the state of Ohio, 17 northeast Ohio counties, and the cities of Akron, Cleveland, and Oberlin. He will also assist with a new collaborative project with the Cleveland Botanical Garden to assist with an ecological footprint study of their facilities. Madeline Marvar ’11 will also work with Professor Shammin on the study of the performance of strawbale structures at the George Jones Memorial Farm at Oberlin and assist with conducting an ecosystem service valuation of community-supported agriculture and urban gardens in Cleveland.

John Petersen will be supervising three students. Glen Mackay and Kevin Smith, both ’11, will work with John on expanding the technological system that monitors and then displays electricity (and soon) water use in dormitories and residential communities in Oberlin. George Allen ’11 will continue working with John on the experimental wetland ecosystem restoration project at the Jones Farm and will be using research gathered as part of this work for a senior honors research project in biology.

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New faculty member Janet Fiskio will be co-supervising two Blank interns, William Wickham ('13) and Benjamin Agsten ('12) at the Jones Farm, along with farm manager Marco Wilkinson. Farm interns will participate in all aspects of the farm, including managing the CSA, operating the farmer’s market stand, and production and distribution for the City Fresh program. Interns will learn about composting and soil development, organic pest control, livestock care, and permaculture design, as well as develop an independent research project (see page 15 for an update on the Jones Farm).

Gorn Prize Recipients
Each year the ES program awards the Joyce Gorn Memorial Prize to one or more graduating seniors for outstanding work on an extracurricular or off-campus environmental project. This year we are pleased to bestow the award on three very worthy recipients, Emily Arons, Kate Courey and Julia Nakad (see student perspectives, p. 2). Emily receives the award for the extraordinary commitment she has demonstrated over the last two years as student representative to the Environmental Studies Program Committee. In addition to her work on the committee, Emily has played a leadership role on and off campus in the drive to transition to clean, carbon neutral sources of energy. We recognize Kate Courey for the leadership she has shown in promoting and coordinating gardening education at Prospect Elementary School. Julia is recognized for the leadership role she has played in anti-mountaintop removal activism and for co-founding Headwaters Magazine as an important vehicle for fostering dialog on pressing environmental issues at Oberlin.

IMPLEMENTING REAL-TIME RESOURCE USE FEEDBACK TO MOTIVATE AND EMPOWER CONSERVATION

In the preceding edition of this newsletter we described an $812,000 grant that Oberlin was fortunate enough to receive from the Great Lakes Protection Fund. In a nutshell, the work underway will combine real-time feedback on electricity and water consumption in residence halls, homes, and businesses with parallel measures of water and electricity flows and water quality through the entire city of Oberlin. The goal is to explore multiple modes of presenting this information in ways that engage, educate, motivate, and empower students and residents to conserve resource use. John Petersen, who has been on research leave this last year, has devoted the bulk of his energies to moving the project forward.

Project accomplishments this last year include: expansion and extensive revision of the campus resource monitoring system so that Oberlin students in every residence hall have real-time feedback on electricity use (and soon the same for water use; see www.oberlin.edu/dormenergy); completion of what is likely the first real-time total carbon emissions display to include all household utilities (gas, water, and electric) for Oberlin’s Student Experiment in Ecological Design (SEED) house; design of ultra-high resolution monitoring of water and electricity for an environmentally themed new freshman dorm that will open this fall; full monitoring of electricity and water use in each individual apartment and business in Sustainable Community Associates downtown Oberlin project; installation of $20,000 worth of water quality monitoring equipment at the Oberlin Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant to monitor stream and effluent flow and quality; total electricity and drinking water monitoring systems under way at Oberlin’s municipal facilities; the initial development of a website portal for the project (www.oberlindashboard.org); and plans to install digital signage in storefronts and the public library to display resources use and event calendars.

One of the more gratifying components of the project is the inclusion of an interdisciplinary team of Oberlin faculty members, which includes Cindy Frantz and Steve Mayer in psychology and John Petersen and Rumi Shammin in ES. The collaborative group also includes many current and former Oberlin students. Hired last fall, Sustainable Technology Research Fellow Henry Bent (see pg. 19) has rapidly become the technical point person for the endeavor. ES majors Michael Murray ’04, Gavin Platt ’06, Vladi Shunturov ’05, Chris Fry ’06, and Adam Hull ’09 all now work for Lucid Design Group, an Oakland, California-based company that is a key collaborator in developing the Building Dashboard technology that is at the heart of technological component of the research project. Oberlin grads Naomi Sabel ’02, Ben Ezinga ’01, and Josh Rosen ’01 are our collaborators on the Sustainable Community Associates component of the project. Current students working on technology and research include Glen MacKay, Kevin Smith, Michael Balantekin and Vasil Zlatev, all ’11.
Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the Earth are never alone or weary of life.” — Rachel Carson

What began with a 2008 visit to the Adam Joseph Lewis Center by administrators from the environmentally themed Mevo’ot Hanegev High School in Israel evolved into a 2010 group winter term trip to Israel for Oberlin students. Dedicated to the theme of humanity and the environment, the Israeli high school boasts an innovative curriculum focusing on sustainability, environmental awareness, social and moral sensitivity, and civic responsibility. The goal this winter term was for Oberlin students to share their knowledge of environmental issues with the Israeli school’s diverse students and staff and establish a framework for solving them. Oberlin was awarded a $14,000 grant from the Minneapolis Foundation to support the trip. While in Israel, Oberlin students also met with students and professors at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies and Oranim College, and traveled throughout the country to learn about Israel’s history and its rich ecological and cultural diversity. The trip was so full of meaningful experiences, that I thought it best to let the participants share their thoughts directly:

- When natural catastrophes occur, political boundaries and language barriers disintegrate. We learned this firsthand when we taught seventh graders about the Haitian earthquake. The enthusiasm of the students was equaled only by our own unbridled excitement for stepping into the English classroom to confront real issues in real time. - Anna Dardick ’13

- I was amazed and impressed by the initiative taken by the Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians on the issue of solving the shrinking of the Dead Sea. I was touched by such unprecedented transboundary cooperation that transcended the differences among these countries in order to reach a common goal. - Joseph Chou ’11

- Each kibbutz we visited provided a different experience. Some bloomed with an amazing variety of plant life, while others centered on artistic creativity evident in the houses and sculptures crafted by the inhabitants. Many emphasized the importance of livestock as sources of food, livelihood, and affection. The one similarity that all shared and inspired me most is the dedication they have to fostering human connection through a love of community living. - Samantha Feldman ’10

- Meeting with the students from Oranim College was a great experience. It was inspiring to learn from such passionate people and to see a strong culture of environmental activism at the school, and I look forward to staying in touch with the students and faculty. - Will Shenton, OC’13

- The brave Bedouin women at Desert Embroidery showed me the power of literacy, heritage, and art. They intrepidly navigate an often-treacherous middle road between strong traditions and societal progress, raising the bar for activists the world over. - David Fisher ’12

- Getting to know students and teachers at Mevo’ot Hanegev was incredibly fun, as well as a great learning experience. I will never forget the people here in Israel, and I will forever carry with me the knowledge and wisdom that they have imparted. - Amanda Goldstein ’11

The relationships established between Oberlin students and the students and staff of Oranim College, Mevo’ot Hanegev School, and the Arava Institute of Environmental Studies will continue to grow and benefit all involved. We plan on establishing and maintaining communication with those we met and look forward to learning about new projects and developments at the school as well as sharing news about Oberlin and the Great Lakes Region. Back in Oberlin, we will encourage and work toward the planning of future trips to Mevo’ot HaNegev as well as hosting Mevo’ot students at Oberlin College.
OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER TO BE INCLUDED IN POND RENOVATION PROJECT

Shortly after Commencement/Reunion Weekend, Oberlin will break ground on a major renovation of the stormwater retention pond and wetland on the east end of the Lewis Center. The project expands the footprint and depth of the pond, improving habitat diversity and enabling the system to capture and retain more storm water. A major feature of the project will be the development of an outdoor amphitheater, with seating capacity for 20, which will create a new space for outdoor teaching and social gatherings.

Professor Emeritus of Biology David Benzing, building manager Cheryl Wolfe-Cragin, program director John Petersen, and college architect Leo Evans have worked with local landscape architectural firms Foster & Stolar and Genius Loci to develop the site plan. David and student interns will recover plants from the current pond and augment these with native species collected from local wetlands. Carved sandstone pieces salvaged from the old conservatory library, as well as sandstone block salvaged from the house demolished for the new North Professor Street dorm, will be incorporated as key features of the amphitheatre and pond. A solar pump will power gently falling water into the pond. The project is made possible by a generous donation from the family of Janeth Sperry, Class of 1985.

ENVIROALUMS AND ENVS 2009 REUNION

Carl McDaniel ’64, Chair, EnviroAlums,

“It truly was a great weekend!”
“Inspiring to have such a wonderful mix of E-lums.”
“By far the greatest value for me was connecting with recent graduates who are doing amazing things.”
“There’s a particular combination of intellect, innovation, ethics, hope, and dedication that describes Oberlin grads. Hearing the stories and seeing the successes of the wide range of EnviroAlums in attendance helped me envision the truly enormous range of opportunities that exists for those of us who are seeking professional lives that are both nourishing to ourselves and to the world around us.”

Such were alumni comments heard and written after Oberlin’s Environmental Weekend, October 9-11, 2009, sponsored by the Environmental Studies Program, EnviroAlums, and the Alumni Association. A diversity of events brought together 150 representatives of the college and town to address the challenge of using the crises of economic meltdown and climate destabilization as ways to foster environmental sustainability. Saturday morning’s panel, “Creating a Climate Neutral Oberlin,” was exceptional.

We were impressed to have such a varied group, including Oberlin’s city manager, the president of Oberlin City Council, an electrical contractor, the superintendent of schools, and college representatives and townspeople, all literally passing around and reading from the same play book. One alumnus commented, “This was the most interesting part of the reunion for me. I thought I knew most of what was going on but was delighted to hear how much more is under way.” See Alumni Magazine, Winter 2009-10 and EnviroAlums website (www.oberlin.edu/envs/oeeaa) for more on the weekend and the entire program.

If you missed this exceptional environmental gathering or crave another, you will want to be in Oberlin for the 10th anniversary of the Lewis Center, October 11-12, 2010. Put the dates on your calendar and plan to attend this major event to celebrate the history, influence, and spin-offs from the Lewis Center and to launch the “Oberlin Project” (see pg. 1). Many alumni, as well as accomplished people in the ecological design and sustainability movements, will be in Oberlin to celebrate and envision a more durable future.
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES: WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE WERE FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS

Ian, Maggie and Emily grill for the ES spring picnic 2010

Visiting Assistant Professor Dane Kuppinger with Lily Petersen and Rahil Shammin at picnic

Janet Fiskio enjoying the picnic

Environmental Studies’ Newest Hire Camille Washington-Ottombre at picnic with husband Garrett and son Noah. Garrett, is completing his PhD in Japanese history and comes to Oberlin with a post-doctoral fellowship split between Oberlin and Case Western

Students helping to plant fruit orchard in 2000

Fruit orchard, garden and 100 kW solar array all collecting the sun’s energy in 2008

Students investigating installation of 60 kW roof-top solar array on Lewis Center in 2001

Aaron Englander, farm manager for the Jones Farm, works the Oberlin Farmer’s Market (see pg 15 for Jones Farm article)
WHERE WE WERE FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS

Don’t Miss Out!

In an effort to curb print, postage, and environmental costs college-wide, Oberlin is moving several of its print publications online. Please make sure we have your email address, so that you don’t miss out on newsletters, invitations to alumni regional events, and more. You can update your email address (and other information) via OBIEWeb at www.oberlin.edu/alumni. Go to the MyOBIEweb box and click on “register to access the community” (it’s free). Please direct questions to alumni@oberlin.edu or call the Alumni Association at (440) 775-8692.

Students in “Energy and Society” on a tour of Carl and Mary McDaniel’s “Trail Magic” climate neutral home

Living Machine float for Big Parade 2010

Student operators of the Living Machine, standing in the doorway, in 2005

East side of Lewis Center in 2002

East side of Lewis Center in 2008
Yet while little had changed for civilization as a whole that year, something new and promising had definitely started in Oberlin. I was pleased to be arriving in time to be part of it. Final touches were being completed on the Adam Joseph Lewis Center for Environmental Studies, the brainchild and product of many years of dedicated work on the part of David Orr and a group of visionary thinkers: architects, engineers, philanthropists, poets, philosophers, landscape planners, and at least two generations of Oberlin students.

This year, 2010, marks the 10th anniversary of the Lewis Center! Although I still think of myself as a junior faculty member, much has taken place over the last 10 years within the program, Oberlin College, the town of Oberlin, and the world. During the design of the Lewis Center, David Orr spoke of the “pedagogy of architecture”—the ways in which buildings teach lessons about human relationships with each other and the natural environment. As it turns out, some of the better things that have occurred in the larger world stemmed in small ways from lessons learned from the Lewis Center.

Early days in the building were exciting. Within a week of moving in, we were initiating the self-organizing ecological processes involved in starting up the Living Machine—John Todd’s technology that condenses and amplifies natural wetland processes to treat and then internally recycle water within the center. In many ways the alchemy involved in initiating that ecosystem—the melding of a mélange of tropical and native plants with healthy doses of microbial goo and mud harvested from our local wastewater treatment facility and Plum Creek—provides a reasonable metaphor for the way in which the Lewis Center has served as a seed and catalytic icon for the evolving field of ecological design. Certainly there was ample intent and ambition in those who initiated the design of the center, but they couldn’t have envisioned the particular ways in which processes would unfold and influence the lives and career trajectories of those who participated in or were simply inspired by the endeavor.

When I first accepted the faculty position at Oberlin, one of my good friends in the environmental community asked me, “What do you think it’s going to be like living in the wake of David Orr?” My somewhat glib response at the time was, “I’m hoping to get up and surf the wave.” Reflecting back, I can say that the surfing has been pretty good these last 10 years. And the fact is, a lot of us have been riding the wave (and sometimes sharing a beer in the cockpit or taking a turn at the helm with Captain Orr). A few of the local organizations and businesses initiated by recent Oberlin College graduates (mostly ES majors) that were inspired or influenced by the development of the Lewis Center include Sadhu Johnston’s Cleveland Green Building Coalition (and his career trajectory that followed); Brad Masi’s founding of what has become the New Agrarian Center, City Fresh, and the Jones Memorial Farm; Joe Wältzer’s establishment in Oberlin of the Black River Café and later Agave restaurants; Sarah Kotok’s creation of what is now the Oberlin Market; Naomi Sabel, Josh Rosen, and Ben Ezina’s founding of Sustainable Community Associates and initiation of the East College Street development; Sam Merritt’s founding of Full Circle Fuels; and Michael Murray, Vladi Shunturov, and Gavin Platt’s work in founding Lucid Design Group.

On campus, several major projects are rooted in lessons explored and embodied in the Lewis Center: the development of a comprehensive environmental policy, a unique green energy purchasing agreement, a LEED-silver building policy, a climate-neutral commitment, and the Campus Resource Monitoring System. The recent designations of the city of Oberlin as a Clinton Climate Positive City, and the initiation of the Oberlin Project (see adjacent article) also have roots in the Lewis Center.

By the early 2000s, the iconographic status of the Lewis Center was already established with references to the building appearing in many major environmental studies textbooks and works about ecological and sustainable design. The verdict is still out on the quality of human achievements in the 21st century. But there’s a decent chance that when the inhabitants of this planet look back, they may well see the Lewis Center and its intellectual offspring as markers of what we either did or should have done to create a more sustainable relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world.

Earth Day founder and environmental visionary Denis Hayes (left) takes a tour of the Lewis Center with Program Director John Petersen (photo by Kristin Braziunas)
Converging crises of climate destabilization, environmental deterioration, rising inequity, and economic turmoil call for extraordinary responses by organizations and institutions at all levels. For its part, Oberlin College has launched a project that joins many strands of sustainability—urban revitalization, green development, advanced energy technology, sustainable agriculture and forestry, green jobs, and education—into an integrated response. This collaboration, now under way between the college and city, is an extension of the leadership described above. The Oberlin Project is premised on the notion that what we do in Oberlin can serve as a model for integrated planning in other communities. The city of Oberlin is a microcosm of much of the Midwest. Its challenges are similar to, if somewhat less extreme than, those of nearby Cleveland and Detroit. We intend to use this project as an example of how to shift electrical production from coal to efficiency and renewable sources; minimize auto-dependence; catalyze sustainable land-use patterns in the surrounding area; equip high school, vocational, and college students with the analytical skills, technical know-how, and vision necessary to become leaders in the transition to a prosperous and sustainable future; and contribute to a deeper national dialogue about the challenges and opportunities of actually creating a sustainable world, one region at a time.

In brief, we propose a five- to seven-year effort to improve college and city facilities in a way that revitalizes the downtown economy and helps to catalyze the emergence of a prosperous, post-fossil fuel-based economy in the northeast Ohio region. The Oberlin Project, specifically, will consist of three major components.

First, Oberlin College will develop a 13-acre downtown block—known as the Green Arts District—that encompasses the Allen Memorial Art Museum (a building designed by Cass Gilbert and which houses one of the finest college or university art collections in the U.S.), Hall Auditorium performance facility, and the Oberlin Inn. Both the museum and Hall Auditorium will be substantially renovated and upgraded to LEED silver or gold standards. The Oberlin Inn will be replaced by a platinum-rated, four-star hotel and restaurant featuring organically grown local foods. The remaining nine acres will include new facilities for student housing, a small conference center, office and retail space for local businesses, a black box theater, a center for innovation and ecological design, and an on-site wastewater-processing system similar to the Living Machine in the Lewis Center (but on a larger scale). The block will be powered by renewable energy sources, discharge zero waste products, and meet or exceed the highest standards for both building and neighborhood design proposed by the U.S. Green Building Council, the American Institute of Architects, and the “2030 Challenge” proposed by architect Ed Mazria. One of the most interesting outcomes of this part of the project will be the intersection of arts and music with global issues of sustainability. The Green Arts District is intended to be a major driver in the development of a post-carbon economy as well as an example of advanced ecological design at the neighborhood scale.

Second, as one of 18 global projects selected by the Clinton Climate Positive Development Program, we have launched a cooperative effort to make the college and town carbon neutral through a combination of enhanced efficiency and deployment of renewable energy technologies.

Third, in partnership with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, the Lorain County Metro Parks, private landowners, and state and federal agencies, we propose a long-term effort to create up to 20,000 acres as a farm and forest green belt around the city. With the purchase of development rights, easements, land trusts, cooperative agreements, and land acquisition, we propose to redirect the declining farms and suburban sprawl in our region into profitable agricultural and forestry production serving the Oberlin market and downtown restaurants, including those in a new hotel and conference center. Moreover, as a national climate policy is established, carbon sequestration will become a profitable part of land management in regional economies. Accordingly, we propose to encourage efforts to reforest substantial parts of the greenbelt in order to sequester carbon and provide the basis for wood products businesses that meet much of the local demand for materials and crafts.

The Oberlin Project is an integrated package requiring substantial cooperation among the college, city government, the municipally owned utility, the public schools, the Joint Vocational School, and civic and arts organizations, as well as county, state, and federal governments. To maximize the project’s quality and impact, we will draw on an advisory committee that includes some of the nation’s leading sustainability experts from architecture, urban design, renewable energy, and economic planning. Oberlin has led on the big issues before, and now the stakes are higher than ever. We believe that a focus on human rights, access, and justice will be crucial to the era of climate destabilization and the end of the era of cheap fossil fuels. We believe that Oberlin will lead once again.
STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

Donations to the ES program from alumni and supporters are often used to support student travel and participation in academic conferences and workshops. Requests for support were particularly great this past year. A sampling of events sponsored and some of the students who participated is included below.

Eighth annual Greening of the Campus Conference at Ball State University; Sept. 20-23, 2009. Ian Walker ('11) accompanied faculty member John Petersen to this preeminent conference on campus sustainability initiatives.

Mountain Justice Fall Summit on the Coal River Valley in WV; Oct. 17-25, 2009. Numerous students attended this event, which addressed the negative environmental and economic implications associated with the practice of mountaintop removal mining.

SPARC Workshop Oct 19-21, 2009. This unique collaborative course/workshop was organized by architects and designers from MIT, the Oberlin Art Department, and the Environmental Studies Program. The workshop, which took place at the Jones Farm, addressed permaculture, architecture, and design as related to sustainability, community, and art.

National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, March 30-April 2, 2010. ES was pleased to provide financial support for three students, Vlima Uribe ’11, Viviana Gentry ’11, and Marcelino Echeverri ’10, to travel to Seattle for this conference, which focused on environmental justice projects within Chicano communities. Marcelino writes that the conference “presented a wonderful mosaic of innovative environmental projects that Chicanos are pursuing around the nation. We are proud and happy to be part of this history.”

It is particularly valuable when students are able to present their work at professional meetings, and even more so when they do so with Oberlin faculty members. Last fall new faculty member Janet Fiskio was exceptionally impressed by the papers and expressive projects produced by students in the class Nature, Culture, Interpretation. She invited two students to submit papers, which were subsequently accepted for presentation at the International Association of Environmental Philosophy conference Geoaesthetics in the Anthropocene—an exploration of the meaning and value of aesthetics in an era when human activity has begun driving the climate in geologic time (May 24-26, 2010). Iliana Zamorska will present a paper titled “Climate Change and the Danger of Kant’s Sublime,” and Abby Halperin will present “Ephemeral Artists: Conversation and Collaboration with Nature.” Together with the dean’s office and EnviroAlums, ES is pleased to support their travel. Janet Fiskio will accompany the students and will present her own work at this conference (see p. 16).

Abbey Chung (’11) will be participating in the Clarion West Writers’ Workshop in Seattle from 20 June through 30 July, 2010. Clarion West is a non-profit literary organization that offers this intensive workshop in speculative fiction to writers at the beginning of their careers.

SPEAKERS SERIES IN ES

Beginning with Amory Lovins’ September 3 Convocation Series presentation, “Profitable Solutions to Climate, Oil and Proliferation,” this was a particularly rich year for visiting speakers on a diversity of environmental issues and from a diversity of perspectives. Environmental Studies Program students and faculty members took an active role in organizing the majority of these events. In a separate article (pg. 9), Carl McDaniel describes speakers and events associated with the EnviroAlums reunion. A partial list of other events that were in some way organized or sponsored by the ES program includes:

• John Hofmeister (president/CEO of Citizens for Affordable Energy and former president/CEO of Shell Oil Company USA), “Environmental Security in the 21st Century”
• Sarah Lashley (School of Natural Resources and Environment at University of Michigan), “Envisioning the Future: Collaborative Problem-Solving in Environmental Justice Communities”
• Steve Bollens ’82 (director, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Washington State University), “The Role of Plankton in Estuaries and Coastal Ecosystems: Integrated Basic and Applied Sciences”
• Dr. Charles Herdendorf, (professor emeritus of Limnology and Oceanography, Ohio State University, affiliate faculty member, Oberlin College), “Lake Erie: A Legacy of Environmental Issues Including the Dead Zone”
• Dr. Arjun Makhijani (president, Institute for Energy

continued on next page
Developments at the New Agrarian Center and Jones Farm

One of the most exciting aspects of my position in the ENVS program is serving as liaison to the New Agrarian Center (NAC) board, which oversees the Jones Farm and City Fresh programs. As most readers of this newsletter are aware, the Jones Farm is a 70-acre parcel of land owned by the college but managed by the NAC to demonstrate the compatibility of food production, small-scale extractive forestry, and ecosystem restoration. I am pleased to provide a report to the larger Oberlin community on developments at the farm.

This year Brad Masi, cofounder of the New Agrarian Center, has transitioned out of his position as executive director and into consulting and entrepreneurial work throughout the region. The NAC board has hired interim manager Sandy Kish-Jordan for the year. The farm has gone through several transitions this academic year and is building momentum for a fabulous growing season. We said a sad goodbye to Aaron Englander, who ably and creatively served as farm manager for the past three years, and heartily welcomed Marco Wilkinson into the position. Marco holds certificates in horticulture and urban horticulture and has a wide range of experience in education and agriculture, including work at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. The Jones farm will host two Oberlin students as interns this summer who will contribute to all aspects of the farm (market, City Fresh, and community supported agriculture) and will develop their own research projects. The farm will be expanding its community supported agriculture subscription this season, as well as continuing to sell at the Oberlin farmers market and hosting educational workshops. Check out the NAC website at www.gotthenac.org or on Facebook.

Janet Fiskio, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies

The Jones Farm’s “Learning Garden” and strawbale office, summer of 2009.

...and Environmental Research), “Realistic Solutions for a Sustainable Energy Future: Comparing "baseload" options for a carbon-free electricity portfolio”

- Susan Clayton (Whitmore-Williams Professor of Psychology and chair of environmental studies at College of Wooster), “Responding to Global Climate Change: Psychological Considerations”

- Corinne Alexander ’94 (Purdue University, associate professor of agricultural economics), “Food vs. Fuel Debate: Insights from an Agricultural Extension Economist”


- Keith McHenry (co-founder of Food Not Bombs, author, activist), keynote speaker for Third Annual Hunger Banquet


- Mark Shanahan (executive director, Ohio Air Quality Development Authority, energy advisor to Ohio Governor Ted Strickland), Nolan Moser (staff attorney and director of Energy & Clean Air Programs, Ohio Environmental Council), and Tim Krueger (coordinator for the Ohio Student Environmental Coalition), participants in panel discussion “Our Energy Future: Environmental Policy and Sustainability in Ohio”

- Derrick Jensen (author and activist), “Civilization and Resistance”

- David Kirby (journalist and recent author of Animal Factory), “Farm or Factory”

- Elisa Young (grassroots activist and coal country resident), “Coal is Killing Us”

This diverse group of outside speakers was matched by student presentations on a variety of environmental topics, including ecological justice, anti-mining activism, environmental politics in Israel, land use issues in the Virgin Islands, deforestation in Madagascar, and environmental entrepreneurship in Nepal.
Janet Fiskio

As I reach the end of my first year at Oberlin, I realize that my most frequent comment to others has been, “they didn’t teach me this in grad school.” It’s been an exhilarating year of teaching and learning from students and colleagues. In October 2009 I presented a paper, “Sonorous Voices: Gary Paul Nabhan’s Dialogical Science,” at the Association for Environmental Sciences and Studies meeting. The paper explores the challenges of interdisciplinary work and draws on my book manuscript, Nature, Knowledge, Justice, an examination of epistemology, local knowledge, and environmental justice in ethnic American literatures. I have drafted a proposal for the project and plan to submit it to a press this summer.

My next paper, “Ecotopia and Apocalypse,” is forthcoming in the journal Race, Gender, and Class. This work is quite current, growing out of my experience teaching the class Climate Change: Ethics, Equity, Narratives this spring—including our discussion of the film Children of Men last week! I will be presenting a version of this paper in May at the conference Geoaesthetics in the Anthropocene sponsored by the International Association for Environmental Philosophy. Two of my students, Abby Halperin and Iliana Zamorska, will also be presenting papers at this conference (see page 14).

Finally, I’ll be at the next AES meeting in June, where I will moderate the session “Teaching Food Systems” as well as presenting the paper “Food Justice and Activist Pedagogy in the Rust Belt,” reflecting on my recent experience integrating community-based learning into the class Environmental Justice Literature this spring. This last area is the one I plan to develop in my next few years at Oberlin, focusing on questions of agriculture, democracy, and environmental justice in the U.S.

Crystal Fortwangler

Crystal is leaving Oberlin after two years as visiting assistant professor of environmental studies. While at Oberlin, she taught Environment and Society, Environmental Policy, two courses in environmental justice, and a course in environmental anthropology. Teaching new courses is always demanding, but Crystal managed to balance teaching with several trips (and one group winter-term project) to her study site in the Virgin Islands and a busy schedule of presentations at national and international meetings. This spring Crystal accepted a prestigious Mellon post-doc in environmental studies and the humanities at Lafayette College. This opportunity will provide her with more time to pursue her research interests while still continuing to hone her teaching skills. An active and valued member of Oberlin’s ES program, Crystal and her enthusiasm, dedication to students, creativity in the classroom and in the field, broad interests, and intellectual fire power will be missed, but we are confident that they will serve her well in her future pursuits.

Dane Kuppinger

I must admit that I accepted the position at Oberlin with a little trepidation. Coming from the southeast, and being a lover of the southern Appalachians, Oberlin sounded incredibly flat and cold. While it is definitely the former, the cold didn’t turn out to be as bad as I had feared, and the flatness definitely has its advantages when it comes to hiking. My hope coming in was that an active student body and the opportunity to expand my teaching horizons would offset my topographic and temperature concerns. These hopes have been met far beyond my expectations.

When I interviewed here I was approached by students to teach a course on coal. I (perhaps naively) accepted the challenge, and I think I learned almost as much as the students. We all had some very novel experiences (like observing coal mining seven miles underground). My forays into new teaching arenas continued this spring with a course in landscape ecology. Once again, I was impressed by the ability of my students as they tackled a subject typically only covered at the graduate level. The remainder of my teaching at Oberlin was rounded out with a course on conservation biology and Environmental Studies 101.

While I eagerly anticipate my new position at Salem College (in Winston-Salem, NC) both for its location (“within spittin’ distance of Appalachia” as one of my mountain friends put it) and its permanence, I will definitely hold fond memories of Oberlin. My family and I have been warmly welcomed into the community, my teaching opportunities have been varied and challenging, and most importantly the students have proven themselves to be not only intelligent, but also passionate about creating change in the world. Knowing that places and students like these exist makes the future look a little brighter.

David Orr

John Petersen:
Serving as director of Oberlin’s Environmental Studies Program during a time of rapid and exciting changes (see pg. 1) continues to keep me busy! However, during the 2009-10 year I was also fortunate to be assigned “research leave” status, which meant being able to shift time from teaching responsibilities to scholarly projects. The bulk of my recent research efforts have focused on overseeing a unique grant-funded collaboration between the college, the city of Oberlin, Sustainable Community Associates, and Lucid Design Group exploring the efficacy of real-time feedback as a mechanism for encouraging conservation (see pg. 7). In November 2009, Cindy Frantz and I presented a paper describing this project at the third annual Behavior Environment and Climate Change conference in D.C.

In related work, I have been collaborating closely with Oberlin graduates at Lucid Design Group and with the National Wildlife Federation, the Alliance to Save Energy, and the Ohio Board of Regents to develop the first national energy and water use reduction competition among residence halls at different schools. In September 2009, Andrew deCorilis ‘08 and I presented a paper and organized a well-attended workshop on the feasibility of the concept at the eighth annual “Greening of the Campus” conference in Indianapolis. In March of ‘10 we presented a related paper at the EPA, “Smart Campuses” Conference in D.C. A fall pilot of the “Conservation Nationals” will take place among 40 participating schools in Ohio and California, including, of course, Oberlin College (www.competetoreduce.org).

Finally, on a totally different topic, in spring of 2009 a book I spent eight years editing with colleagues at the University of Maryland finally appeared in print. Enclosed Experimental Ecosystems and Scale: Tools for understanding and managing coastal ecosystems (J. E. Petersen, W.C. Dennison, V.S. Kennedy, and W.M. Kemp, editors) was published by Springer-Verlag in June of 2009. According to P.R. Pinet of Choice (47: 1), “This gem of a book deals with both experimentation and theory as applied to the ecology of coastal systems, covering broad scales of space, time, and complexity...The work’s prose is succinct and clear, and the figures are abundant and beautifully rendered with lots of color. This comprehensive, practical guide will be valuable to students and researchers who are studying or managing coastal ecosystems.”

Md Rumi Shammin:
Life as an assistant professor of environmental studies at Oberlin College is exciting with a balanced mix of teaching, research, and the opportunity to engage in the ongoing development of the program. In 2009, I published two papers in peer reviewed journals—one analyzing the equity impacts of climate change policy and the other investigating public perception of riparian buffers. I presented two papers at the United States Society for Ecological Economics conference in June—one on embodied carbon analysis for carbon calculators and the other on Genuine Progress Indicator as a policy tool for Northeast Ohio. I also presented a professional research poster at the Sigma Xi Annual Meeting & International Research Conference in November on life cycle analysis of energy resources and consumer goods.

continued on next page

LOSSES

The ES program marks some recent losses within our community. In the spring of 2010, Cheryl Wolfe’s partner, Dan Cragin, passed away, as did Hans Petersen ’02.

Dan enjoyed nature to the fullest and was an avid self-trained archeologist and expert on artifacts associated with native peoples of northeast Ohio. He shared his wisdom with Oberlin students through field trips for the Introduction to the Black River Watershed that Cheryl coordinates.

Hans Petersen, a history major and ES minor, devoted several years post-graduation to the Oberlin community through his work with the Oberlin Heritage Center and other community groups. Hans had been studying to become a Lutheran minister. He fell from a roof while installing solar panels.

Two founding members of Oberlin EnviroAlums also passed away recently. Eric Jansson ’62 was founder and director of Department of Planet Earth, an NGO that advocated for appropriate environmental policies in the United States and Canada and a longtime advocate for environmental justice and a toxin free environment. Pete Lavigne ’79 was a champion of environmental causes, especially for maintaining and restoring biodiversity of the nation’s rivers. Pete had the distinction of being the very first alumnus to step forward with financial support for construction of the Lewis Center and was instrumental in establishing the EnviroAlums Endowment in spring 2008. The Environmental Studies Information Center (ESIC), a library and study area in the Lewis Center, was renamed for Pete Levigne last spring. All will be missed. •
My current research projects include the efficacy of real-time feedback as a mechanism for encouraging conservation (with several colleagues from Oberlin College and elsewhere), Genuine Progress Indicator as a policy tool (with Ken Bagstad at the University of Vermont and David Beach at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History), a comparative study of behavioral responses to financial incentives and other conservation measures for residential energy conservation (with Jordan Suter at Oberlin College), a study of the energy performance of a strawbale farm building (with Brad Masi of the New Agrarian Center), a study of ecosystem service valuation of urban agriculture (in partnership with the Cleveland Botanical Garden), ecological footprint analysis of buildings and communities, and sustainable energy development in Bangladesh.

I am from Bangladesh, with significant teaching and research experience there, and the last project in the above list is my most recent research undertaking. I attended a conference on ideas and innovations for the development of Bangladesh at Harvard University in October and visited Bangladesh in December. My paper, “Developing Without Coal: Opportunities for a Cleaner Energy Future for Bangladesh,” has been accepted for presentation at the Biennial Meeting of the International Society for Ecological Economics to be held in Germany in August 2010.

Camille Washington-Ottombre

I am thrilled to be joining the Environmental Studies Program this fall and begin sharing my multicultural and interdisciplinary background with Oberlin students. Raised in Nice, France, I went on to study public administration in Strasbourg and environmental economics in Paris. At Purdue University, where I completed my PhD in sustainability science, I studied how farmers in the Mt. Kenya area (Kenya) mobilize their social environment to adapt to climate change and variability. Spending eight months doing fieldwork in rural Kenya was definitely one of the highlights of my research, and I look forward to returning soon.

My research builds on theoretical frameworks from political science, human geography, land-use science, and sociology and combines a variety of research methods. In particular, I utilize tools such as role-playing games, social network analysis, and spatially explicit models to study the human dimensions of global environmental changes. I am looking forward to working with Oberlin students to deepen our understanding of human responses to global environmental changes in the lab and to implement concrete actions to foster sustainable development in East Africa as well as more locally in the Great Lakes area.

Next year, I will be teaching Environment and Society and Environmental Policy. In the following year, I will be developing an upper-level class on the human dimensions of global environmental changes that will integrate readings on the social processes of human responses to global environmental changes with spatially explicit analyses using ArcGIS. In all these classes, I will employ participatory types of teaching methods such as role-playing games and work to incorporate perspectives from diverse geographical and cultural contexts. I hope to give students a more complete picture of the challenges faced at the global level by international organizations and national governments as well as those encountered at the local level by non-governmental organizations and households responding to global environmental changes.

Jordan Suter

Finishing up my third year at Oberlin I am excited about the direction of my research program. In the spring of last year I published an article in the Journal of Ecological Economics investigating policies that seek to reduce nonpoint source water pollution. Building on this research is a paper that introduces a voluntary policy for water pollution reductions with a background threat of regulation, which is forthcoming in the American Journal of Agricultural Economics. This line of research utilizes controlled laboratory economics experiments to measure policy outcomes with human decision makers as opposed to strictly relying on theoretical predictions. In this regard, I recently established the Oberlin Mobile Experimental Economics Laboratory (OMEEL), which utilizes 14 wirelessly networked netbook computers on which decisions are made. In the spring semester I conducted a set of experiments using the new facility, which seeks a better understanding of behavior in dynamic auctions, with a colleague in the economics department. I am also pursuing research in behavioral economics with colleagues at the University of Delaware that investigates decision-making with respect to public goods and common pool resources.

Outside of strictly laboratory economics experiments, I am also working on a research project with environmental studies colleague Rumi Shammin that evaluates the relative effectiveness of three types of energy efficiency strategies in Oberlin College student housing. I also have ongoing research with several colleagues at Cornell University, looking at the optimal design of wildlife corridors in the Northern Rockies and household transportation decisions and their relationship to urban spatial structure in U.S. cities. I am very excited to have more time during my research leave this coming year to devote to these projects and to start several new ones!
Henry Bent,  
Sustainable Technology Research Fellow  
Originally from New Jersey, I have resided in Oberlin for almost 10 years. Before joining the Environmental Studies Program I worked for many years at the college's Center for Information Technology in a variety of positions. My work there was wide-ranging, from simple desktop support to implementing a public-facing information wiki to specialty setup and troubleshooting for science laboratories. I was also responsible for developing and maintaining an automation system to manage the college's approximately 150 public Macintosh computers. Now working with the Great Lakes Protection Fund grant, I work to ensure that the myriad data we collect from various sources is stored and managed in a central, useful way so that it can be easily accessed for display and research purposes. I enjoy working with new technologies and learning new skills, and this position has provided an excellent opportunity to do both.

Carl McDaniel ’64  
After 33 years at RPI in Troy, NY, where I served as Professor of Biology and founding director of the Environmental Science program, I retired to Oberlin in 2008 and now volunteer as a Visiting Professor in the ENVS Department. Over the past year: I coordinated the Environmental Reunion Weekend for ENVS graduates and EnviroAlums on 9-11 October 2010; I oversaw the student committee for the Environmental Careers Speaker Program that brought 4 alumni to campus during the 2010 spring semester; I conducted field trips for two ENVS classes at Trail Magic, the positive energy home my wife and I created in Oberlin; and I taught a class on creating positive energy homes for three sections of an alternative energy course a Lorain Community College. I recently participated in an invitation only, three day Climate, Mind and Behavior Symposium at The Garrison Institute in NY and was a coauthor of a paper, Achieving Climate-Positive, Energy-Positive Homes: 60 Years of Northeast Climate Housing, published in the Proceedings of ASME 2010 Fourth International Conference on Energy Sustainability. I enjoy interacting with students on various environmental initiatives on campus and I review with Andrew deCoriolis ('08) proposals for financial support from the EnviroAlums Student Fund.

David Benzing  
David Benzing and two partners recently opened a small winery on Gore Orphanage Road, about eight miles northwest of Oberlin. Among its more interesting features are a high performance green building, a reconstructed wetland, and eight acres of premium wine grapes. You can see more at vermilionvalleyvineyards.com •

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Paul Sears Professor of Environmental Studies  
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Janet Fiskio, Environmental Studies  
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Dennis Hubbard, Geology  
Roger Laushman, Biology  
T. Scott McMillin, English  
Thomas Newlin, Russian  
David Orr, Environmental Studies  
Md Rumi Shammin, Environmental Studies  
Jordan Suter, Economics  
Samuel White, History  
Harlan Wilson, Politics
CONGRATULATIONS NEW GRADUATES!

Graduating ES majors and minors*
Emily Arons
Rusty Bartels*
Rosemary Bateman
Andrew Batjiaka
Greta Bradford
Mackenzie Brown
Hilary Burgin
Ian Burns
Robert Chester
Katherine Coury
Daniel Cowan
Jessica Cummings
Joseph DeJesus
Marcelino Echeverria
Hannah Epstein
Emily Finkel
Benjamin Fram
Gabriel Goldthwaite
Zoe Gutterman
Julie Haddad
Julia Holland*
Elsa Hoffman
Kailey Kawolics
Margaret Kent
Hana Keys
Nicholas Laudeman
Joanna Lemle
Eliot Lesar
Samuel Lewis
Madeline Logowitz
Jonathan McCall
Julia Nakad*
Rebecca Page
Lillian Perkins-High
Sara Purvin
Claudia Randrup
Nile Rice-Mitchell
Sara Moledor*
Rebecca Sim
Ayelet Singer
Leo Sprinzen
Katharine Thompson
Stacia Thompson*
Michelle Torres
Henry Whittaker
Katherine Zippin
Amalia Zeidman*
Vasil Zlatev*