A ROAD MAP
for an education in the
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
at OBERLIN

The road map is available online at:
http://new.oberlin.edu/office/dean-of-studies/roadmap/
AN OBERLIN EDUCATION IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU BECOME AN INDEPENDENT, SELF-DIRECTED, LIFELONG LEARNER.

It is designed to sharpen and strengthen your intellectual, social, and spiritual capacities, as well as your political and communal responsibilities. This lofty purpose will take different forms for each of you, so we invite you to be actively involved in shaping your education. Like any road map, this road map is not exhaustive. It provides you with a big-picture view of how you can develop personally and intellectually, from your first year through your last year. It also provides some concrete suggestions to help you make the most of your experience at Oberlin College.

With an actual road map, it’s most useful if you have considered your destination, as well as the sights you would like to see along the way. With this road map, the destinations are many, but you have no choice but to choose—so choose wisely.

Revisit the road map often during your time at the college, as the sights of interest and the realm of possibilities vary from year to year. If you sense you have made a wrong turn, please stop to ask for directions. Take this document with you to appointments with academic advisors, faculty, and staff. Your mentors can highlight points of interest that you have yet to consider, and direct you to resources that are essential for your work at Oberlin.
Keep in mind that an Oberlin education takes place inside and outside the classroom. With a holistic sense of your liberal arts education in mind, you can think of your progress year-by-year in the following stages:

YEAR 1  **Explore** new horizons by way of the academic curriculum and other opportunities for growth.

YEAR 2  **Connect** your ideas, values, and interests to your course work and your co-curricular activities.

YEAR 3  **Deepen** your connection to your fields of study and to the communities in which you live.

FINAL YEAR  **Develop independence** in your lifelong pursuit of intellectual, artistic, and personal growth.

These stages coincide with one another, but largely as a matter of successive progression. While no two students experience the same journey, there are many common experiences for students in their first, second, third, and final years. The road map is designed to support your development by giving shape to “the spirit of these years”—the different concerns that students face in the beginning, middle, and end of their time at Oberlin.

The road map repeatedly affirms the importance of establishing a close connection with your advisor. In many cases, the most successful students are those who develop close relationships with academic advisors, research supervisors, other faculty, or staff members. All around you at Oberlin are resources to help you understand college policies, think about the choices available to you, and review what you have done so far and what you plan to do next.
YEAR 1—EXPLORATION

You are new to Oberlin, and Oberlin’s new to you, so the first year is about exploration—intellectual, social, and personal. You can let Oberlin happen to you, or you can begin to define your intentions here. Seize the reins of your liberal arts education.

Explore new intellectual horizons

- Take courses that were not offered at your high school. Explore how your interests match up with the diversity of Oberlin courses. The general course requirements—e.g., curriculum exploration, writing, quantitative and formal reasoning (QFR), and cultural diversity—can steer you in a variety of directions. Select courses that work best for you.
- Acquire proficiency in a variety of academic practices. Make appointments at Student Academic Services and the Writing Center, in order to sharpen your reading, writing, and analytical skills. With the help of a reference librarian, master the basics of academic research. Identify your favorite place in one of the four campus libraries for focused studying.
- Write about what the opportunity to study at a small liberal arts college means to you. What are the values of our community of learning? How does your conduct inside and outside the classroom sustain or weaken this community?
- Begin a new foreign language or advance your fluency in a language you’ve already studied. The earlier you attend to this task the better.
- Use winter term to explore the college, the community, or the world. Join an on-campus service-learning project. Study language in a foreign country. Start thinking about your project during fall break. Review your ideas with an academic ambassador, and then schedule an appointment with your advisor to explore the project in more detail.

Explore new experiences

- Join a student organization, or a varsity sport, a club sport, or an intramural activity in athletics and physical education.
- Select a community service project through the Bonner Center for Service and Learning. The town of Oberlin isn’t just where you go to school. It’s where you live. Make it a better place for everyone.
- Expand your comfort zone. Attend events sponsored by the program houses, the Oberlin College Dialogue Center, and the Multicultural Resource Center.
• Get involved in the arts. Attend conservatory concerts and exhibitions at the Allen Memorial Art Museum. Audition for a theater production or one of the a cappella singing groups.

Explore the resources available at Oberlin College

• Get to know your advisor and at least one professor.

• Outline your educational goals. Articulate the connections between your values and your Oberlin education, and review them with your advisor, class dean, or another member of the faculty or staff. Explore how your interests coincide with the opportunities available at the college.

• Throughout the semester, find time to take stock of the big picture. Life as an Obie may entail a number of metamorphoses. Keep a record.

• Learn about academic and student life policies, including the Oberlin College Code of Conduct. Understand why the Honor Code, for example, is the lifeblood of our intellectual community.

• Refine your time management and organizational skills. Make a viable plan to stay healthy: schedule times to sleep, eat, and exercise well. Find a sustainable balance between your academics, your extracurricular, and your social life.

• Get to know a returning student who can help you expand your horizons. Schedule a time for coffee or lunch with an academic ambassador.

• Make an appointment at the Career Center. Secure help on your application materials for exciting winter-term and summer opportunities—and check for early deadlines. Let Career Center staff support your efforts to pursue internships and career exploration more intentionally.

• If you are already confident about your major, introduce yourself to the appropriate student major representatives. Ask them about their winter-term projects and pertinent summer internships.
YEAR 2—CONNECTION

This year poses particular challenges and opportunities. While the novelty of the first year begins to fade, many students find excitement in connecting to Oberlin in creative ways. Use this year to select a major, broaden your general education, and understand more deeply the communities of Oberlin and beyond. Continue to give shape to the connections between your passions and your education. Ask for help when you need it. Remain confident that things will come into focus for you.

Connect your ideas, values, and interests to possible majors and other areas of study

- Take courses in the departments and programs that you find most compelling. Talk about your interests with students and faculty, including department chairs. Find out, for example, how compatible a particular major is with different study-abroad programs.

- Finish your general course requirements—i.e., curriculum exploration, writing, QFR, and cultural diversity. Take the necessary steps to declare a major by the time you complete 16 courses (by the spring of your second year, in most cases). Use your curriculum exploration requirements to explore disciplines and departments that complement your prospective major.

- Develop a résumé and begin to compile a portfolio of your accomplishments, reflections on your progress, and future plans. These tools can help you reflect upon what you have already achieved, so that you can choose wisely what to do next.

Disconnect to connect: Foster an analog life

- Exercise regularly, and maintain regular hours for meals and sleep. Foster your understanding of the connections between nutrition, physical fitness, and mental fitness.

- In the hour before you go to bed, shut down your laptop, your tablet, and your phone. Maintain habits for good sleep, for life at college and beyond.

- On a weekly basis (e.g., Sunday evening), plan out your week. Work backwards from the due dates for difficult assignments to identify blocks of time to complete the tasks, for example, of the outline, the rough draft, and the final draft of a paper.

- Identify the best hours for work and play. Figure out which hours of the day are best for reading comprehension, writing, lab work, quantitative exercises,
and aesthetic expression. Protect those hours vigilantly, and schedule social activities outside those hours. Make friends a top priority.

Connect with local, regional, and global communities

- Connect with fellow students over lunch, dinner, and for study sessions. Introduce yourself to people in your classes, and set weekly meetings to review difficult material. Talk to successful students about their study systems, and continually refine your own method of getting things done.
- Commit to some form of civic engagement. Visit the Bonner Center for Service and Learning, and work with staff members to identify a location where you can make a difference.
- Pursue activities in student organizations. Identify leadership positions in those organizations and prepare yourself for the next election.
- Talk to your advisor about nominating you for the Academic Ambassador Program.
- Consider studying abroad in a location where you can speak the language and learn more about the nation and the world. Review your academic progress, including winter terms, as you develop your proposal for an academic leave to study away (due March 15).

Connect your education to your vocations and avocations

- Look back on your initial set of educational goals. Assess the ways in which they have changed, and update accordingly. Recognize the flexibility necessary to this endeavor, and imagine how different your values and identity may appear again in the next couple of years.
- Get acquainted with the staff and resources at the Career Center. Find ways to test the waters—and your own capacities—in fields related to your interests and values. Embrace opportunities for “real-life” experiences, which can deeply affect your education at the college and opportunities after Oberlin.
  - Learn why the Career Center has identified this year as “the year of the internship.”
- Investigate how Obies you admire made their way in the world. Learn from Career Center staff how to conduct an information interview with an alumna, or find an alum-mentored opportunity during winter term or the summer.
- Visit the Fellowships and Awards office. Learn about fellowships won by current students and recent graduates and how the application process brought unexpected rewards.
- Take steps now to construct the life you want to lead after Oberlin.
You are now nearer your departure from Oberlin than your arrival. You have declared a major and are becoming more “disciplined.” By this point, you should have a range of faculty and staff to consult with. It’s time to deepen your experience by pursuing advanced coursework in your major, and learning more about its specific theories and methods. Solidify your commitment to community participation, and continue to plan for life after Oberlin.

Deepen your knowledge

- Review plans for your major with your advisor: determine whether you will choose a formal or informal concentration and how that choice will influence your choice of capstone project.
- Become a more confident and independent researcher: consult a librarian about key resources relevant to your major, and learn how practitioners in your field produce and disseminate knowledge.
- With your advisor, develop a plan for a senior-year capstone — honors, research, senior seminar, or practicum. Decide whether it will happen within your major or if it will be a multidisciplinary project.
- Choose electives that support your academic and personal goals. Use the idea of breadth to guide you as you continue to make the most of the liberal arts education.
- Organize and participate in campus events that are relevant to your educational goals.
- Use your study-away experience to extend and deepen your knowledge of the liberal arts and the world.
Deepen your community relationships and networks

- Find out about professional societies associated with your major. Get involved with your department or program. Serve as a student major representative or arrange visits by outside speakers. Volunteer for leadership positions in student and community organizations.

- Plan a winter-term project or summer internship related to your career interests. Junior-year internships or related mentored experiences are great ways for you to test the waters of employment. They can also aid your transition from Oberlin to graduate or professional school, the working world, or both.

- Consider again the ways in which student organizations or community involvement could deepen your connection to the world around you.

- Review opportunities for fellowships after college and consult with appropriate faculty and staff.

Deepen your consideration of life after Oberlin

- Junior year is key for planning ahead. Arrange meetings with your advisors and mentors about how your work at Oberlin can support your long-term career and personal goals.

- Meet with an advisor in the Career Center to learn more about the tests required for graduate or professional school.

- Update your résumé.
FINAL YEAR—DEVELOPMENT

For three years or more, you have laid the groundwork for your last two semesters. The final year is not just about finishing at Oberlin; it is also the time to develop the independent modes of learning and living you will employ in your life after Oberlin. Select advanced coursework to develop and sharpen your understanding of the discipline. Use your last electives to expand your horizons and to embrace the joy of learning. Turn to advisors and other resources to think about life after Oberlin. Celebrate your Oberlin career and your achievements.

Develop independent, lifelong learning and creativity

- Aspire to create knowledge through your senior capstone. Use this opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of your field of study and to draw connections between your major and your other interests.
- Pursue opportunities to present your work on campus and in the community. Part of advanced work involves taking your knowledge to public forums and practicing the skills of effective speaking, writing, and presentation. Talk to your mentors and the staff in the Career Center about how to give a talk, rather than read a paper.
- Choose courses you have always wanted to take, particularly those that will enrich your life after Oberlin.

Develop your leadership capacities

- Accept leadership positions in student or community organizations. These opportunities will teach you important skills of organization and allow you to bolster the qualities of Oberlin you care about the most. Contribute to the vibrancy of the college and the community.
- Mentor Oberlin students. Tutoring and advising can allow you to master what you already know and reciprocate the generosity shown to you when you arrived at the college.
Develop a concrete plan for life after Oberlin

- Visit the Career Center on a regular basis: attend senior orientation session; practice interviewing skills, finalize your résumé, learn about writing graduate school essays. Seek out advisors to read drafts of your application essays.

- At the beginning of the fall semester, think about which academic assignments might be included in your portfolio. Select a substantial assignment that you would be willing to send out with your graduate school applications (even if you are not planning to go straight to graduate school). Build a calendar for its first draft, revision, and completion. Set up appointments with the professor and your advisor for feedback. Submit a dazzling final project.

- Review, edit, and polish your portfolio.

- Complete applications for fellowships, graduate school, post-college internships, or jobs.

- Take advantage of the networking opportunities available to you through the Oberlin Alumni Association.