

# OSCA ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

student-run at-cost housing & dining at Oberlin College

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October 2014

## Letter from the President

by EVAN CAMERON, OSCA President 2014-2015

**HELLO ALUMNI! IT'S BEEN AWHILE** since we last updated you in the form of a newsletter. We update you now both because OSCA has been in the middle of a number of recent significant changes, but also to inform you of one proposed College policy that threatens our 64-year existence.

Last semester OSCA learned that the College, looking to restructure its financial aid system, had decided to erase OSCA savings dollar-per-dollar by taking the money OSCA members save out of their financial aid package. In 2014-2015, OSCA members in dining-only co-ops save \$3,784 for the year over those who eat in campus dining services. Members in both housing doubles and dining save \$6,040. The College would seek to reduce these numbers by several thousand dollars for those who receive financial aid. After massive student protests, the College elected to delay the decision for a year, but further discussion is ongoing.

OSCA membership is currently 594 members. In spring 2013, the OSCA Board of Directors voted to have Kosher-Halal Co-op (KHC) and OSCA go their separate ways, and now KHC operates as its own standalone co-op, with advertising support from OSCA. This pushed our membership down from 640 to 615. This year, a drop in the College's enrollment pushed our

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cooking in Fairkid (Fall 2013)

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## What's this financial aid thing I keep hearing about?

by ZO PAUL, Membership Director

**IN SPRING 2014, OBERLIN COLLEGE TRIED TO CHANGE THEIR FINANCIAL AID** to make it so that students who choose cheaper dining plans would no longer save money (if they received financial aid, which the majority of students at Oberlin do). They were doing this in an attempt to not have financial aid be based on average cost (14 meals a week), but tailor it to individual student's costs of attendance.

In its search for ways to meet the financial need with a decreasing endowment, the College has decided that OSCA is one of the areas where they will try to decrease financial aid. In early April, several students noticed changes in the housing/dining area of the financial aid website, which amongst other changes, included a statement that "If you choose to live or dine in a co-op, your financial aid will be adjusted accordingly" where it had formerly read "No adjustment is made to the financial aid of students who live and/or dine in coops." In the past, students' financial aid package was not affected by your choice of dining

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membership down again from 615 to 594 – as we're tied to the College's enrollment, with a maximum membership of 22.05% of the student body.

OSCA continues to change in a myriad number of ways, and we're still consistently filling all of our dining and housing spots and maintaining a significant waitlist. Interest continues to be high, especially in how OSCA has encouraged participation in other cooperative ventures. This past spring saw OSCA begin its own tours of co-op spaces, separate from traditional admissions tours. A record number of applications came in this past fall of 2013 to attend the NASCO Institute, and OSCA's Finance Committee voted to give subsidies to all 32 of them! A new ExCo, Cooperation & Cooperatives, based largely off of experience in OSCA and at the NASCO Institute, will be taught for the third semester in a row this fall, with plans for a separate ExCo this spring entitled Cooperation & Cooperatives II: Electric Boogaloo. This ExCo also led to the formation of an entirely new co-op on campus, SWAP: The Oberlin Book Co-op. OSCA now leases both room 109 in Harkness and the former basement locale of the Good Foods Co-op to SWAP for \$1 a year. SWAP is currently spreading the cooperative joy even further by sharing the basement space with the Recycled Products Co-op. With over 1000 books in stock after only 2 semesters running, SWAP and OSCA look forward to the same long relationship

**PERHAPS OBERLIN IS RIPE AGAIN FOR ANOTHER COOPERATIVE RENAISSANCE?**

we've established with the likes of the Bike Co-op. Perhaps Oberlin is ripe again for another cooperative renaissance?

Just this past spring, the membership voted to approve a new set of Bylaws, which include a few significant changes. Election of Officers and At-Large members of the Board has been changed to encourage more membership participation and insight into the process. OSCA's principles, based on the Rochdale principles, were also updated to respect and recognize conversations OSCA has been having about accessibility of spaces regarding existing structures of power and privilege. In line with this change to the Bylaws, OSCA also recently began holding required semesterly trainings on privilege and oppression for all members, partially in response to the racially charged events that occurred on campus in March 2013. In light of the realization that OSCA does not compensate the staff that supports our members, the Board of Directors also decided last spring to start issuing stipends equivalent to half of the board bill to our Housing Loose Ends Coordinators (HLECs), Sexual Offense Policy Advocates (SOPAs), and Accessibility Committee Coordinators (AccessCos).

As we begin with our other newsletter stories, I leave you with this thought: a big thank you to all of our alumni who continue to support and remain interested in OSCA, and how you continue to spread the joys and benefits of cooperative living and dining. OSCA wouldn't be the same today without you all. •



2013-2014 local foods field trip

**THOUGHTS FROM OUR VENDORS**  
Local Farmers, Local Co-ops

by JOHN HUNT, Oberlin Farmer

**MY WIFE AND I BOUGHT A PIECE OF LAND IN OBERLIN 38 YEARS AGO**, leaving the corporate business world and becoming organic farmers. We have had a close association with OSCA for almost three decades, and have had a continuing and close relationship with many OSCA alums who frequently visit us whenever they come to town. We share many memories as they routinely offer myriad examples of how their experiences with OSCA's radically democratic governance have profoundly benefited them in their professional careers. As a local organic farmer, I have been especially committed to OSCA's efforts to procure their food from local growers. In recent years, there have been a number of comments from the College administration giving praise (well deserved, I should emphasize) to Bon Appetit for its efforts to

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procure some 35% of its food from Ohio growers. No such praise of OSCA's local foods program has been forthcoming, which is ironic since it was OSCA members who initiated the concept of feeding Oberlin College students with local foods.

It was around 1988 (long before Bon Appetit came to Oberlin, and with grant help from David Orr, founder of the Meadow Creek Project, prior to his coming to Oberlin) that five OSCA students produced a documentary, together with a 73-page research study, entitled "Local Foods and the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association," to kick off OSCA's local foods project. It is worth noting that OSCA's percentage of local foods has steadily risen from then to the present, reaching over 39% last year.

I do not wave OSCA's flag to detract from Bon Appetit's abundantly obvious, and somewhat risky, contribution to this effort. As a local farmer, I can personally attest that Bon Appetit has been on this page from the get-go as their first manager (in his first week on campus) sought me out to pick my brain about the condition of the local food infrastructure and OSCA's strategy. I have been pleasantly surprised by Bon Appetit's eager willingness to embrace what is surely to become the emerging core of the contracting food paradigm. However, it has always frustrated me, as an ex-market manager for a large multinational corporation, that for all of OSCA's institutional genius, they're very poor at promoting what I've chosen to call, "Oberlin's Best Kept Secret" – one of the most under-appreciated organizations on the planet.

OSCA's support of the principles of local agriculture extend far beyond Ohio. Because of OSCA's strict adherence to fiscal accountability and to surprisingly conservative accounting rules (that our grandparents would applaud), OSCA has been able to fund, through low-cost loans, numerous agriculture projects, from targeted local projects, to "penny banks" such as The Lakota Fund of the Pine Ridge Reservation, and to the 23-year sponsorship of their Nicaragua Sister Partnership Project, an agricultural community originally comprised of widows of the Contra war, their families, plus many others.

Does OSCA have problems? You bet they do, just as would any other organization of OSCA's size, with its radically democratic governance and judicial procedures and the "messiness" that naturally attends such a high level of complexity: competent, and not-so-competent, officers; an occasional unruly student or group of students; and an occasional kitchen shutdown (now a rarity since OSCA hired a Food Safety Advisor). From near bankruptcy in 1989 to a model of fiscal responsibility, OSCA not only supports local merchants but has also acquired the reputation of paying their bills faster than any account on campus. They have had twenty-five consecutive, "perfect" annual audits by one of the most prestigious auditing firms in Ohio who specialize in auditing non-profits.

All of this from a transient throng of credit-card "children" who enter this fray barely able to distinguish between

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Hark pageant 2011

*continued from page 1 - Financial Aid*

or housing, but now, the College would like to change that, by having your choice of meal plan, off-campus housing, or membership in a co-op cause the Oberlin College need-based grant portion of students' financial aid packages to decrease according to student choices.

In 2014-2015, OSCA members in dining-only co-ops save \$3,784 for the year over those who eat in campus dining services. Members in both housing doubles and dining save \$6,040. The College would seek to reduce these numbers, to a \$900 dining and \$1,400 dining and housing stipend, that they believe would address the "work component" of OSCA by adding stipends reflecting 4 hours of work a week at Ohio minimum wage, \$7.95, to OSCA members' financial aid packages.

This policy, if enacted, would threaten to reduce OSCA's membership drastically. OSCA was formed as an at-cost student-run organization that stands as a financially accessible alternative to the high prices of College-run housing and dining. Sixty-four years later, we still hold that financial accessibility as our primary mission, and many of our members report that lower cost is one of the most important, if not the only, reason why they joined OSCA. Without these savings, many students would have to work more hours and might not

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a real working kitchen and deep center field, suddenly, in the blink of an eye, “getting it all done” while offering a dazzling range of healthful, dietary options. And here’s the kicker. For the coming year, OSCA dining members will save \$3,784 (54% savings) and housing members save an additional \$2,256 (33% savings) over regular campus rates. And, last year’s OSCA’s budget-conscious members will be receiving refund checks totaling an additional \$199,000 in savings. All because OSCA members come together to learn how to work and live cooperatively, and in the process reap the benefits of their joint efforts.

I have hoped, in vain, that some scant recognition of this organizational gem in our midst (its initiative, its ongoing, obviously indispensable contribution to the local foods effort, surely the most concrete manifestation of the College’s “Learning and Labor” motto) would be recognized and appreciated by the College administration. Not hearing such, I share my thoughts with OSCA members and alumni. •

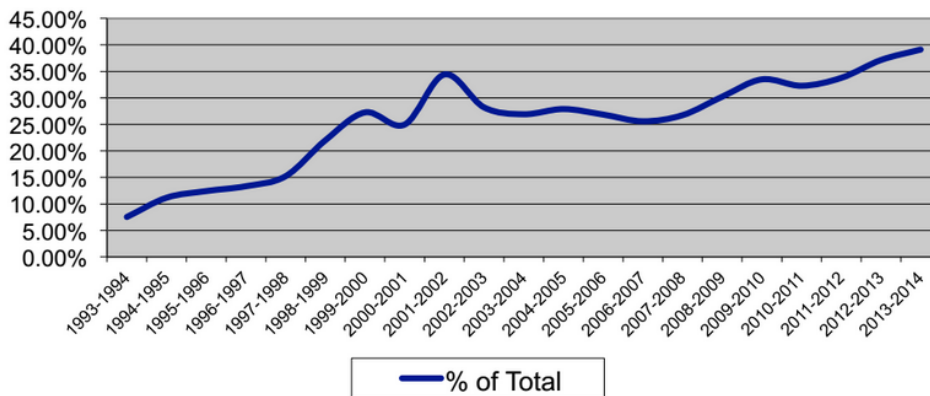
John Hunt  
Hunt’s Organic Farm Oberlin

**Oberlin Student Cooperative Association**

**Local Foods Purchases**

**Fall 1993 - Spring 2014**

**Local Foods % of Total Foods Purchased**



Year	Total Foods	Local Foods	% of Total
93-94	\$335,251	\$25,201	7.52%
94-95	\$334,230	\$37,318	11.17%
95-96	\$371,014	\$46,073	12.42%
96-97	\$389,644	\$51,997	13.34%
97-98	\$380,118	\$57,897	15.23%
98-99	\$410,670	\$90,361	22.00%
99-00	\$418,775	\$114,183	27.27%
00-01	\$405,795	\$101,366	24.98%
01-02	\$383,764	\$132,107	34.42%
02-03	\$372,306	\$105,051	28.21%
03-04	\$393,165	\$105,842	26.92%
04-05	\$416,095	\$116,080	27.90%
05-06	\$463,279	\$124,416	26.86%
06-07	\$448,384	\$114,742	25.59%
07-08	\$407,995	\$109,079	26.74%
08-09	\$460,219	\$139,117	30.23%
09-10	\$462,533	\$154,948	33.50%
10-11	\$465,368	\$150,275	32.29%
11-12	\$491,766	\$166,119	33.78%
12-13	\$480,705	\$178,594	37.15%
13-14	\$440,867	\$172,469	39.12%



have the time to be in OSCA. Some of our members even state that if it weren’t for OSCA, they would not be able to afford attending Oberlin College. What are all of these members to do when their savings drops from thousands of dollars to \$900? We believe it would spell the end of OSCA as we know and love it. As one step towards convincing the College of this, we’ve set out in undertaking a large surveying of our entire membership, the likes of which we haven’t seen in a number of years, asking questions of our members’ financial aid situations and how they would be affected by this change.

When the policy was discovered in the spring, students reacted immediately, discussing and protesting the policy, as well as informing everyone they could of the policy. OSCA leadership felt that the policy violated one of our primary purposes of providing at-cost housing and dining, and that it represented a threat

**WHAT WILL TO HAPPEN TO OSCA IF ITS MEMBERS LOSE THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS IN SAVINGS?**

to the organization’s existence. The OSCA Board discussed the policy and the OSCA officers had several meetings with college administrators. The College announced that policy’s implementation would be delayed for a year so that there could be more time for students to learn about the policy as well as giving the college time to discuss concerns and alternate

solutions with students. Administrators also expressed a desire to work with OSCA leadership.

OSCA and college leadership have continued to meet throughout the summer and into the fall. The College has made no decision about this policy or any other changes to financial aid, but they are still considering it. Recently, members of the college’s Senior Staff came to meals in OSCA, where they got to learn more about OSCA. Currently, OSCA leadership is working to prove that this policy, if implemented, would have a hugely detrimental impact on OSCA and that OSCA is a vital part of Oberlin.

To support our stand against this proposed policy, we’ve also begun reaching out to faculty, other student groups and cooperative organizations, and to you all, our alumni. While the College has made no decisions, we send this letter in the fall because we know one will come soon, and we need all of the help we can get. If you agree, email Oberlin College’s President Marvin Krislov at (mkrislov@oberlin.edu) and/or Director of Financial Aid Rob Reddy (reddy@oberlin.edu) to let them know how changing the College’s financial aid policy will lead to the eventual dissolution of the most financially accessible dining and housing option on campus, OSCA. •

# A day in the life in OSCA!

We asked co-ops to describe a day in the life of their favorite co-op. This is what they told us.

## BROWN BAG (BBC)

The dry foods room is sort of smelly, but it's full of exciting things like cinnamon and olive oil. We just got munster and mushrooms in the walk in, and our unpacker is putting them away carefully. Taking home cauliflower and tofu, combining them with some soy sauce and spices in a cast iron pan, eating them out of my favorite blue bowl with garlicky couscous leftover from yesterday, I enjoy a dinner of my own design on my own schedule. Later, perhaps, I will bake bread and make hummus to sustain myself through the week. Saturday, I will have many friends over for pancake brunch. BBC is quiet when I go back, but that's okay I have friends at home and they will enjoy it when I bring them a jug of cider. OSCA's grocery coop has its place.

## FAIRKID

At 12:20pm in Fairkid, people always try to get in line as early as possible, which has caused some drama. Lunch is fried tofu and beans, rice, and spinach salad, with terrific vegan apple muffins to go along, sweetened with maple syrup instead of sugar. The discussion of the day is how much whole wheat flour should be in baked goods. Lunch crew involves much dancing and music, and gently encouraging our Champion brand (not Hobart, but Champion) dish sanitizer to heat up more quickly. As in the morning, people linger after eating to talk to each other and sprawl out on the couch (which we stole a while ago from BBC). For dinner, we have red lentils, green beans, and pasta: both wheat and gluten free. After dinner, our DLEC and a friend randomly pull out a ukulele and start singing. Totally normal. A bunch of people continue hanging out in the space, doing homework, chatting, and eating snacks until late in the night. Sometimes people fall asleep on the couch.

## HARKNESS

Breakfast is here - on a good day, tofu scramble with broccoli or kale. Since it's out at 8:20 AM, it's a small, cozy crowd that gathers around the tables in the early morning, ready to go off to their morning classes. You can feel the Harkness air permeating through everything - that's right, still has that ol' Hark smell, a mix of... well, you know.

An air of excitement is about at lunch, as people begin to rush downstairs to form the mob for the food that is about to come out. Soon enough, the hour strikes 12:20pm and a mad dash for the falafel, pita, broccoli, and tofu ricotta ensues. Some prying hands move to pick up a piece of falafel, only to be stopped by the cry of "serving utensil!" A new culture of food safety has arisen in Harkness, and everyone tries to keep each other accountable.

Dinner is rice (a little burnt) and lentils (in large quantities) served at 6:20pm. Many dedicated Harkies stick out the small amount of food to discuss the ever-burning question on many a Harkie mind — lines versus mobs, the topic of discussion tonight. Winding down the day, friends are everywhere in the halls, writing all over the walls with chalk on the chalk paint, with older Harkies reminiscing about the days when the chalk used to be paint, and the walls used to be covered with it. Soon, the piano starts up again, and you begin to hear three friends jamming in the back stairwell, playing banjo, guitar, and singing. Clearly, Harkness is alive tonight. Harkness, my home. As we have come to say, "Home is where the Hark is."

Jello Wrestling, 1987

## KEEP

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,  
How does your co-op flow?  
With gossip and feels  
Composted orange peels  
In the lounge for one more snow.  
- J. Cottage

Keep, you are a home amongst dorms. Your too-cozy rooms are cocoons, where baby OSCAs get their wings. Here, amongst the random furniture, we spent our time eating and laughing. They say that Keepers draw blood, but I think we were always simply drawing each other closer. It's hard to not become friends in a kitchen that is 3 feet wide by 3 feet long. What you lack in space, dear Cottage, you make up for in spunk. Fraying couches bring back memories of nights spent with Keepers, sharing stories and tasty things in



*continued from page 5 - A Day in the Life*

a boat that seemed to protect us from ever getting tired. Windoors are gone but not forgotten!

Keep will teach you how to dysfunctionally function, and still come out on top.

## PLYE INN

When you walk into Pyle Inn for lunch, there are inevitably some people who have already been in Pyle for many hours. People love sitting around, doing homework, chatting, and doing crossword puzzles, no matter the time of day. Grab a plate, sit at one of the enormous tables, and patiently wait for the time to come. You know it's time to line up the minute you see anyone moving with their plate towards the door, or notice the general atmosphere get hot with anticipation. When the moment to line up begins, run. Run towards the door, run as fast as possible, scoot by people. Now that you're in line, relax, chill. Lunch consists of chilli in bread bowls, with some veg on the side. Delicious. You should run down to the kitchen to get copious cheese for your soup, assuming you are not of the vegan persuasion. If you are lucky, you might also find a treasure trove of tasty things down there. If you're really lucky, a dessert might come out to accompany the meal 15 minutes after the initial food was brought up.

Dinner in Pyle is similar to lunch. Different food, same rush to line up, same civil conversation after the fight to get in line has ended. Feel free to stay in Pyle late into the night, doing homework or making hot chocolate.

## TANK

The porch makes a hollow clunking noise under my shoes. I grab a bowl, a spoon, granola, and head into the kitchen to top off my breakfast with Hartzler's milk. In the kitchen, friends are singing and cooking, tunes are popping, and the lentils are boiling. Today's meal? An Indian daal, seasoned rice, roasted broccoli with NYF. Dessert? Fresh pita. I eat my granola at the table in the dining room, nodding a sleepy hello to fellow Tankers as they filter through. I leave, but I'll definitely be back.

The day passes fast; class, eat, class, work; the light in the stained glass begins to fade. The dinner line is long, but the pre-dinner conversation is good. Lucky for me, I'm close to the front. We're sitting inside for the discussion tonight: Pizza Night Head Cook is a coveted position.

Dodge the people throwing forks at the ceiling, hope they don't hit the beer bottles lining the walls, make a beeline toward the porch swing. The sun is setting but folks are still lazing on the lawn. They are enjoying Tank's best fall dessert: open season on the raspberry bushes beside the porch.

I love Tank.

## TWC (THIRD WORLD CO-OP)

*What do you love about TWC?*

[several moments of deep thought]

"The first things that come to mind are not things you'd put in a newsletter."

## DO YOU WANT TO HELP OSCA SURVIVETHEFINANCIALAIDCRISIS? TAKE ACTION!

### A NOTE FROM OSCA PRESIDENT, EVAN CAMERON

A true example of learning and labor, OSCA cannot operate if the majority of our members are not saving money through our programs. If you support us in this mission at this time of crisis, please **CONSIDER CONTACTING MARVIN KRISLOV**, the College's current President (mkrislov@oberlin.edu), and **ROB REDDY**, the Director of Financial Aid (rreddy@oberlin.edu). We can provide a sample message if you so desire.

### A NOTE FROM OSCA TREASURER, SARAH JOHNSON

At this turning point in OSCA's life as a cooperative, we must be able to meet the needs of our members who apply for scholarships. Due to record lows in interest on our endowment, we have very little money available to give OSCA scholarships. Please **CONSIDER DIVERTING A DONATION TO THE COLLEGE TO THE OSCA FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP FUND** so that we can continue to serve the members of OSCA who are most in danger of having their education disrupted by financial need. However, at this critical time in OSCA's history, **YOUR VOICE MATTERS MORE THAN YOUR DOLLAR**. Please take the time to write to Marvin Krislov and Rob Reddy in support of OSCA and financial accessibility at Oberlin College.

[several more moments of thought]

"Three things I love about TWC: the food's great, the community's great, and special meals set the bar super high for the rest of OSCA. There. Does that sound good?"

*It does.*

## OLD B

Oh Old B, sometimes I forget what a beautiful old lady you are. Nestled away, in the far south of campus where everything is just so. Apple cider, donuts, homemade pretzels, mac'n'cheese, Middle Eastern special meal, open mic night part 1. Your living room could be so serene, a place to read before meals, or watercolored the sun setting over J-House, or cuddle with cuties after dinner. They say the food in Old B is the best food in OSCA for a reason, but it was my friends that always drew me back after a long day. Tomato soup and grilled cheese are best shared, after dancing in line and while talking about everything. •

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF KHC

BY RYAN MURPHY

**"I NOMINATE DAN BLOCH FOR THIS POSITION, AND EVERY POSITION HEREAFTER."** Following tradition, Dan Bloch respectfully declines. Thirty or so co-ops emit a low chuckle. This joke is funny pretty much every time Cooper says it (which is to say that Cooper says this during every single KHC election). Cooper goes back to sipping his chocolate milk and laughs.

Meals in KHC tend to be full of shenanigans: one time, I dyed all of our food blue; another, a head cook made a geology-themed meal with cookies in the shape of trilobites.

Perhaps it's because of our size — 34 members, maximum — that KHC is a tight-knit, loving, and ridiculously fun co-op. As a former member of OSCA, I can report that most things are the same: we have two DLECs (I'm one of them), elections, straw polls, status quo, beans, and lentils.

Some things, of course, are different. Many people know that it is in KHC's contract to serve meat at least once per week. We have two kitchens — one for meat, one for dairy. We follow a strict set of religious dietary rules on top of health code regulations. We have a lovely "co-existence space" where co-ops and their guests can sit on couches, study, and talk (so long as they are barefoot). We have no meals on Saturdays due to chag. Oh, and we also have a dog. And a rabbi. We have a rabbi. The dog walks the rabbi.

There are many conservatory students in KHC, meaning that there are many recitals to attend as a KHC member. This also indicates that KHC attracts a slightly different crowd than does OSCA — KHC is predictably much more religious, less vegan, and perhaps less theory-and-principle-based than OSCA.

All I can say is this: it is almost impossible for me (and for many others) to be upset while in our dining space. Positive energy abounds, as do the bagels, the challah, and the parve orange juice. •

## WHAT'S NEWS WITH YOU?

New address? New job? Just want to say hello? We'd love to hear from you!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Co-op(s) & Year(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Your News: \_\_\_\_\_

Change of Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## YES! I WANT TO SUPPORT OSCA

I can offer a winter term project  
specify: \_\_\_\_\_

I can offer an internship, job or housing  
specify: \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to visit or speak at an OSCA event  
specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Other  
specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Here is my donation to support:

OSCA Alumni News  
 Financial Scholarship Fund  
 Nicaragua Sister Partnership Project  
 Other  
specify: \_\_\_\_\_

## PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO OSCA

**DID YOU KNOW** THAT IF YOU DONATE MONEY TO OBERLIN COLLEGE YOU CAN SPECIFY THAT IT GO TO OSCA? SUPPORT OSCA'S MISSION AT OBERLIN COLLEGE!

## ALUMNI SURVEY QUESTIONS

OSCA is conducting a survey of its alumni to complement a student survey we're conducting in the month of October. If you'd like to participate in the Alumni Survey, please answer these questions briefly and send us your responses at [osca@oberlin.edu](mailto:osca@oberlin.edu), or mail us responses at OSCA, M.P.O. Box 118, Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0118.

1. When you were in OSCA, did the savings you enjoyed over College dining and housing allow you to attend Oberlin College?
2. If the savings you received were reduced by 7%, would you still have stayed in OSCA?
3. Do you support a new financial aid policy that would reduce the savings OSCA members receive?
4. Do you currently donate money to the College?
5. If so, does the news of this potential change to the College's ability to provide accessible housing and dining to students influence your decision to donate to the College regularly?
6. What did you gain from your time in OSCA? What role did it play in your time at Oberlin?
7. Would you recommend Oberlin to a young person in your life thinking about going to college? Would you recommend OSCA?

DESIGN & LAYOUT SARAH JOHNSON

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