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What is OSCA?

OSCA is the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association. OSCA, (pronounced “Ah-skuh”) has been Oberlin’s cooperative housing and dining alternative since 1951. It is one of the few things that truly sets Oberlin apart from all other liberal arts colleges. In fact, Oberlin has the highest percentage of the student body involved in housing and dining co-ops of any college or university in the country!

A co-op is a business directly controlled by its members. Members are user-owners; they support the business with their dollars but also own its earnings and assets equally. Members control the co-op’s day-to-day operations, its finances, and its mission. OSCA is a housing and dining co-op. That means, as a member of OSCA, you are an owner of OSCA as well! That’s why you need an Owner’s Manual like this one.

The key to OSCA’s success is self-reliance. The fact that student members do their own cooking, cleaning, and operational work makes co-ops less expensive than campus housing and dining and provides a much stronger sense of community. Students do everything from making pizza to mopping floors, from buying food to sitting on the Board of Directors. Additionally, OSCA operates “at cost,” meaning that any money your co-op does not spend is returned to you at the end of the year. Making an organization the size of OSCA work is a terrific learning opportunity, and a tremendous responsibility.

We rent our 7 co-op buildings from the College, but we run them ourselves. Individual co-ops set all their own internal policies every semester, and each has its own social, culinary, and political character. Except for our employees (Business Coordinator, Financial Manager, Financial Assistant, Food Safety Advisor, and Office Assistant), Oberlin students handle the massive administrative duties of a corporation—something very few people could ever imagine doing in college! Each co-op elects representatives to the Board of Directors and various all-OSCA committees, and there are many opportunities for individual co-opers to get involved at the all-OSCA level.

OSCA has achieved its autonomy because its members work together in pursuit of common goals. Making such an independent community work entails a commitment on your part to participate in the cooperative process of self-governance. What do you think OSCA should be doing? What’s your cooperative vision? OSCA is all about realizing dreams that would be impossible anywhere else, so get involved and make them come true!
Meet the Co-ops

Brown Bag Co-op (BBC)
207 South Professor Street (in Old Barrows Co-op)

Originally called 5-Kid, Brown Bag Co-op (referred to as BBC) was opened in 2003. BBC dines 55 students living off-campus or in village housing who have limited time to devote to a traditional co-op; BBC works sort of like a co-op grocery store, so members cook the food in their own kitchens, rather than communally. Members are allotted a bi-weekly food allowance, and, don’t worry, it’s plenty of food.

BBC is located in Old Barrows Co-op in the former Old Barrows kitchen, as of summer 2017. BBC uses walk-in fridges and dry foods rooms for food storage, and members may come at their leisure to get food.

Each member completes a weekly hour-long cleaning shift if they do not have an elected position. The co-op only meets once or twice a year, so members communicate using email and Google Docs. As such, this is generally not the sort of tight-knit community one finds in other co-ops. The elected positions that BBC has in common with other co-ops include a DLEC (Dining Loose Ends Coordinator), treasurer, food buyers, kitchen coordinator, board reps, membership coordinator, and unpackers. Most of these people are required to meet once a week for the Co-op Management Team meeting, when co-op business is discussed and decisions are made.

Do you live off-campus or in village housing? Do you have the motivation and time to cook all of your meals for yourself? Are you okay with being a co-op with loose community and few (if any) group meals? If so, then perhaps BBC would be good for you. Talk to your friends in BBC about what they think!

Fairchild Co-op (Fairkid)
93 Elm Street

Fairchild—more commonly referred to as “Fairkid”—is a dining-only OSCA cooperative in the basement of Fairchild Hall (a campus dorm unaffiliated with the co-op). Fairkid is one of the most centrally located co-ops, which is close to the Adam Joseph Lewis Center for Environmental Studies and the Oberlin Conservatory.

Fairchild is one of the smaller co-ops on campus, with approximately 55 people each semester, who share a tight-knit community filled with supportive, generous and conscientious students. Fairchild is known for its
careful attention to where food comes from, what the consumption of that food does to society, and how food affects the people who eat it.

When Fairkid was opened in 1977, it became the first “all natural” co-op with vegetarian options at every meal. Fairkid bases its food-policy decisions on supporting farms with fair labor practices, environmental consciousness, and other core values. Being one of the vegetarian co-ops, Fairkid never has meat, although they may choose to buy dairy and eggs if the membership decides. Most of the meals themselves are vegan, with dairy available for individual consumption. Because of their attention to food justice, Fairkid is often a place where students with various dietary restrictions, from veganism to gluten intolerance, feel most comfortable dining. Fairchildren and non-Fairchildren alike have described the food as innovative, vegan-tastic and awesome.

Fairkid’s mascot is a goat (or “kid”), and members spend their days coming up with goat-related co-op puns. Fairkid is known for traditions such as costume contests on Halloween, reading notes of appreciation for each other during meals, making up songs for themed nights, and “secret goat” gift exchanges during winter holidays. Due to Fairkid’s small size, members often form close friendships, and love to have co-op parties, plan fun themed special meals, and decorate the co-op. Due to unjust labor practices, Fairkid has been “banana free since 1983,” a practice now shared by all of OSCA.

Fairkid is one of the co-ops with a traditional dining room, which means that a majority of co-opers eat meals all together, which means that discussions run smoother and creates a sense of unity. One of the three dining co-ops that new students are permitted to dine in without living there, Fairkid is known as an extremely welcoming community of people who care greatly about their co-op.

Harkness Co-op (Hark)
113 West College Street

Harkness—often just shortened to Hark—opened in 1950 as a women’s dorm, and in September of 1967, Harkness became the fourth Oberlin housing and dining co-op. Harkness’s intense and often lengthy discussions have led to diverse and unique policies, some more successful than others. In 1979, Harkness became the first Oberlin co-op to use consensus, a decision process that soon spread throughout OSCA. The very next year, Harkness voted for the first time to use anarchy as its system of government, a decidedly less successful venture. Also in 1979, Harkness created the Contraceptive Co-op, which eventually morphed into today’s Sexual Information Center. In the mid-90’s, Harkness became the first OSCA co-op to have an elected head cook system.

The most centrally located co-op on campus (along with TWC), Harkness shares a lawn with two dorms, TWC and the Adam Joseph Lewis Center for Environmental Science and is just across the street from Dascomb Hall and King Building. Because of Hark’s location, many members of the co-op, both housing and dining, can be found in the building at all times of day, including the few 3 AM studiers. With a ramp and elevator, Hark is also one of the most accessible co-ops on campus.
Now, as for the past many years, Harkness is a vegetarian co-op with vegan options at every meal, though the meals quite frequently are completely vegan. Harkness has roughly 75 dining-only members. In the past, Harkness has relied on mobbing tables at meal times in an exciting, not altogether enjoyable system of serving food. However, in recent semesters, the membership has decided to adopt a buffet line method to allow for greater accessibility when getting food. Unlike many other co-ops, Harkies stand in mini-lines to serve themselves each food item (spread throughout the eating-space) before meals, rather than forming one large line. Between the dining hall in the basement, the common room, the porch and the lawn on Hark Bowl in front of the building, there are a number of places for people to eat their meals, which gives people many options, but sometimes makes discussions difficult.

Harkness also houses 42 people. As the largest housing co-op, Harkness is home to many informal events, from concerts of Oberlin and touring bands alike to post-Pizza Night dance parties. Harkness has traditionally been a space for radical discussion of ideas, arts, and music. Music is a common presence in the lounge, be it someone banging on the piano, a klezmer band practicing, or an ad-hoc dance party. On sunny days, many members eat meals out in “Hark Bowl” (the lawn in front of Harkness), when not participating in discussions. Special meals tend to be more extravagant and wackier-themed than in other co-ops, with a strong dress-up tradition. Harkness also frequently votes to lend its space to performing arts groups, both musical and theatrical. The Harkness mascot is a shark. While you may hear rumours about Harkness and its past reputation, the best way to truly get to know Harkness is by actually spending time with the incredibly caring and committed members of the co-op.

Keep Cottage

154 North Main Street

Oberlin’s third co-op Keep opened in 1965. Located just a block from the art buildings and across the parking lot behind Stevenson dining hall, Keep houses 53 students and additionally feeds around 20 dining-only co-ops. Keep’s basement is home to the Oberlin Bike Co-op as well, a place for both college and community alike to fix and build bikes for free. So it’s a convenient location if you’re an adamant biker. While Keep is not a vegetarian co-op, meat isn’t usually served more than once a week, and vegan and vegetarian options are always available at every meal.

A larger ratio of new students to upperclassman than other co-ops makes it so that Keep is known to be one of the most welcoming communities on campus. Keep is an inclusive and friendly co-op for eating, living, or just hanging out. With a comfortable living-room space, you can often find members spending time together throughout the day. With a porch, lawn, and porch swing(!) many members eat outside on sunny days. Keep does not provide tables or chairs, so members eat on couches, or sit on the floor. The layout of the co-op and serving space can make serving food a difficult task, but membership implements various policies each semester to ensure that getting food is as accessible as possible. Certain members have raised issue with the fact that not having chairs and tables can be difficult for individuals with certain physical constraints.

Overall, Keep offers a place to feel at home that is dedicated to excellent, nutritious food (complete with a wall for cooking tips and food comments), kind souls, music, circus ‘arts’, bicycles, vegan desserts, great bagels and general good cheer.
The inherent relaxed feeling to Keep is bolstered by people that truly care about the democratic process. For most decision making, there is a consistent and thoughtful dialog which deters apathy. Overall, Keep offers a place to feel at home that is dedicated to excellent, nutritious food, kind souls, acoustic music, bicycles, vegan desserts, and general good cheer.

**Old Barrows Co-op (Old B)**

207 South Professor Street

Old Barrows is the beautifully pillared brick building marking the southern-most point of the Oberlin Campus. Housing 21 members, Old B is a safe space for people who feel oppressed because of their gender, with an emphasis primarily on trans and nonbinary people, and secondly on cisgender women. The application for Old B is open to any student, and is anonymously reviewed by a selection committee of Old B members.

Once a housing and dining co-op, renovations over the summer of 2017 converted Old B into OSCA’s first housing-only co-op. With those renovations came seven new rooms and a new location for Brown Bag Co-op, a grocery store-like co-op for students living off campus. However, Members of Old B cannot dine as a part of BBC, but instead are able to receive their first (available) choice of dining co-op; new students may choose between Pyle, Fairchild or Third World Co-ops, while upperclassman may also choose to dine in Tank, Keep or Harkness Co-ops.

While some OSCA members cited Old B for being inconveniently far away, the members of Old B believe that this makes for a dedicated membership, as well as allows quiet and privacy away from central campus. It is located across the street from Johnson House (also known as J House or Hebrew Heritage House). Placed at the top of a hill, a grand front porch opens up to the sloping front lawn with wonderful views while several small common rooms filled with comfortable chairs create a welcoming environment on the inside.

**Pyle Inn**

40 West Lorain Street

Pyle is Oberlin’s oldest co-op. With a dining membership of around 100, Pyle is also one of the largest co-ops on campus. Located in (but not affiliated with) Asia House, the high vaulted ceilings and long wooden tables of the dining space make Pyle remarkably resemble the Great Hall in *Harry Potter*. Before Stevenson opened, the space served as one of Oberlin's cafeterias, which makes Pyle one of the most functional co-ops in terms of cooking and serving food (with a working dumbwaiter!). When weather permits, Pyle members often enjoy the weather and choose to eat outside in the Asia House courtyard.
Pyle members represent a good cross section of Obies, including a larger number of athletes due to its location, and smaller number of required hours (four instead of five). Pyle provides meat more often than any other co-op (though of course has vegan and vegetarian options). Pyle is known for its legendary pizza nights, and relaxed food-policy. It is also known for fun traditions, such as pub-night, and singing members their song of choice on birthdays. There are many jobs to choose from, and many multiples to ensure enough of those highly demanded treats are made. Maintaining accountability and intimacy, Pyle offers a great place to eat, cook (or even learn how to), compost, and most importantly, meet new people. Pyle is an exceptional community, and like any other, it depends completely on those who choose it!

**Tank Co-op**

110 East College Street

Tank is widely considered one of the most beautiful buildings on campus—complete with a turret, wrap-around porch and spacious lawn. Tank is a ten minute walk from campus and five minute walk from downtown. Tank houses 41 students with approximately 40 dining-only members. A former orphanage, Tank has the widest variety of rooms in OSCA, with a large number of singles. Between the small dining space, multiple common rooms and front porch, it can be difficult to gather the entire co-op for discussions, but this doesn’t deter a strong sense of community. Many members spend time eating outside on the porch on sunny days.

While the kitchen is equipped to prepare meat, vegetarian food often provides the base of Tank’s cuisine. However, Tank is known to serve meat more often than other co-ops. Tank is known for its exceptional food, and exceedingly creative special meals and pizza nights.

Tank’s location, slightly east of campus, makes for members who are truly dedicated to their community. The beautiful building and spacious rooms make it one of the most sought-after co-op to join. Because Tank is a fairly small housing co-op, members develop a strong connection, and parties are not uncommon. Tank is a great co-op for people who appreciate living in a historic setting and appreciate their personal space and independence.

**Third World Co-op (TWC)**

30 South Professor Street

Third World Co-op is an intentional safer space for primarily people of color as well as low-income individuals. Founded on the principles of the *Third World Liberation Front*, the approximately 40 dining-only members of TWC define their community values and agreements each semester according to the current membership.

TWC provides meals to a wide variety of speakers/ performers of color who are brought by co-op members. The co-op also
puts on programs in coalition with other organizations focused on promoting speakers and activists of color. Our programs have included a series of workshops with the Edmonia Lewis Center for Qwo-Li Driskill, a discussion and lecture with the Indigenous Women’s Series for Debra Harry.

TWC creates a space which fosters a warm, welcoming environment full of sweet love, good food and mad dancing in the kitchen. A member wrote, “This is a community where I know folks will hear what I’m saying and understand me. My favorite part of TWC is the PEOPLE! And the comfy couch.”

This dining co-op is currently located on the first floor of Baldwin, and can be easily identified by its large wooden floor-to-ceiling windows. Through the glass, members can often be spotted in front of the mural, laughing, chatting, dancing, venting about White Professors / classmates / people in general, meme-ing, and sharing the co-ops famously well-seasoned food, even if dinner was canceled. TWC is a unique space at Oberlin that offers true community and access to a lineage of knowledgeable TWC alumni. Come for the sazón, stay for the corazón. Have your exact birth place and time ready.

Member Lauren Salazar wrote, “For me, being a member of TWC is about being part of a legacy and community that have emphasized change, resistance, solidarity, and the freedom of cultural and political expression. In Third World Co-op, I know everyone’s name and everyone knows mine. We are a small community in which camaraderie is great and cliques are few. I won’t paint a rosy picture by saying that we’re totally united both politically and socially – that’s not always true. However, I appreciate the fact that friendliness overrides differences we may have and we can come together on many issues. As a first year, TWC has been a support network that has helped me find a place on this campus, and I am excited to eat there for the rest of my time at Oberlin.”

Third World Social Justice Co-op (TWSJ)

In the spring of 2018, an all-OSCA vote proposed the creation of Third World Social Justice Co-op, a housing option made to compliment the dining-only option of TWC. This housing co-op is an active housing community whose members demonstrate personal interest in themes of social justice and race. Housing members are required to participate and be actively involved in the space. The proposal passed, and 23 spaces on the third floor of Harkness was designated for TWSJ members.

Third World Social Justice Co-op seeks to promote a safer community for members of all backgrounds, especially for members of color. The co-op also supports the efforts of identity-based student and activist organizations within the Oberlin community. Co-op members are highly encouraged to regularly engage in organizational efforts through personal involvement and participation. This housing option is cognizant of and values individuals who have engaged personally with and have been affected by current societal racial dynamics. Members may choose to hold programs that educate others about topics related to social justice and race. Similar to other room and board co-op spaces, members who live in TWSJ housing dine in TWC as well.
Co-op Basics

Dining in Co-ops

While not all members of OSCA live in co-ops, almost every member eats in one. We work to feed ourselves and to get more affordable meals, and a more tightly knit community forms as a result. Each co-op is unique in its policies and methods of operation, but the following descriptions can give you an idea of what features they have in common.

If you are new to OSCA, your co-op’s New Member Trainers, Food Safety Coordinators, and Dining Loose Ends Coordinators (DLECs) can steer you to the appropriate people who will help you get started with your co-op adventure. Your all-OSCA staff can also help answer any questions you may have.

The heart of OSCA’s mission is to provide inexpensive, healthy, tasty, and environmentally wise meals. As much of OSCA’s members may devote themselves to the loftier principles of cooperation, providing accessible at-cost dining and housing is probably the most important and certainly the most obvious part of OSCA.

We get our food from several different farmers and suppliers. In recent years, we have tried to buy as much food from local farmers as possible. If you are interested in learning more about local foods, talk to one of your co-op’s food buyers or the all-OSCA Food Coordinators!

Co-ops serve lunch at 12:20 and dinner at 6:20 PM. Co-ops are open always to their members. If you need to miss a meal, you can always ask ahead of time for a “save-plate”, or make something for yourself at any time. Most co-ops have Special Meals on weekends. Special Meals are themed meals where people go out of their way to impress their fellow co-opers with their imaginative culinary skills. Friday dinner is Pizza Night, a fun time to invite friends to your co-op or visit a different co-op.

Winter Term Dining

OSCA opens to the larger Oberlin College community during winter term. Any student remaining on Oberlin campus during winter term may sign up to join a Winter Term co-op. Winter Term is a good time to try a co-op elected position since you won’t have to deal with Oberlin’s usual academic pressures. People tend to be responsible and eager to participate. It’s much cheaper and more social than regular campus dining or eating off-board.

Living in Co-ops

Around 1/3 of members live in OSCAs co-ops. Tank, Keep, Harkness are on-campus room and board co-ops, while Old Barrows and Third World Social Justice Co-ops are housing-only co-ops with a dining component. Housing selection is done by random lottery (in the same manner as dining) except for Old B and TWSJ, which require an
additional application. Living in a co-op means working with other residents to keep the co-op clean. Each member spends about one hour a week on house jobs, although this may depend on the co-op.

Your House Loose Ends Coordinators (HLECs) are important people to get to know (they are like the dorm RAs). They know all sorts of information about OSCA and Oberlin College, and are good people for co-op members to turn to with their problems. HLECs are also responsible for planning meetings and events and overseeing co-op functions. Most decisions affecting housing members are decided collectively during house meetings. If you want to give input on decisions being made, it is important to attend these meetings.

People who live in co-ops find through living and eating together they develop a special closeness. Members of housing co-ops also save a large amount of money compared to college dorms. It is lots of fun! You'll never forget living in a housing co-op.

**Interim**

Interim happens in co-ops at the beginning of every semester. It is a time when co-ops elect people to fill the jobs in the co-op and decide on general policies. During interim, people sign up for temporary cooking and cleaning shifts. Interim DLECs (iDLECs) are elected the previous semester to act as run discussions and act as DLECs until permanent DLECs are elected and trained.

After interim, the Membership Coordinator (or in some co-ops the Work-Chart Coordinator) creates a work-chart for the co-op, which tells everyone what shifts they will have each week for the remainder of the semester. Interim can be a hectic time, and sometimes meals are canceled before head cooks have been elected to cook on a consistent basis, but things usually settle down and get better once interim is over (usually after two-weeks maximum) so do not be discouraged. Co-op life is worth the wait!

**Crew**

Crew is a magical time during which co-opers clean up their kitchens. Everybody in OSCA must do at least one crew per week. There are crews after every meal, even if a meal is canceled. Members don’t have specific jobs assigned during crew, but everyone is responsible for making sure all tasks are completed.

The PIC (or “Person In Charge”) assigned to your crew shift will let you know how you can best help, and you will be trained to do jobs during “crew training” in your individual co-op. The Person In Charge on your shift, or any experienced co-op member can answer any questions you have about the process.
Co-op Job Descriptions

Every job receives a certain amount of hour credit, determined each semester by the membership of each individual co-op. There is a fair amount of consistency in jobs across the co-ops. However, some co-ops differ in this area.

Co-op Management Team (CMT)

Each co-op has a Co-op Management Team consisting of members elected to do the behind-the-scenes jobs that help co-ops run smoothly. Many of these positions receive more hours of credit per week than other co-op jobs. Most CMT positions require two people.

- Dining Loose Ends Coordinator (DLEC)
- Food Safety Coordinator (FSC)
- Kitchen Coordinator (only in select co-ops)
- Membership Coordinator
- Work-Chart Coordinator
- Food Buyer
- Accessibility Coordinator
- Nutrition Coordinator
- Treasurer

Non-CMT Job Descriptions

There are many non-CMT jobs through which members can fulfill required co-op work hours. These include both food and non-food related jobs. They are usually more hands-on cooking and cleaning jobs, or involve sitting on committees.

These jobs include:

HEAD COOK
In charge of planning and cooking one meal each week. Each Head Cook will sign up for or be assigned a certain meal slot which will remain consistent. Head Cooks direct all food prep during their cooking shift.

FIRST OR SECOND HOUR COOK
Help head cook prepare meals during one or both hours of a cook shift (in most co-ops cook shifts usually last 2 hours).

BOARD REPRESENTATIVE
Sit on the OSCA board of directors. Write and discuss proposals for all OSCA.
EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE
Sit on the education committee. Help plan events for OSCA, create educational materials, and educate the co-op about OSCA related things.

NICARAGUA SISTER PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE
Sit on the Nicaragua Sister Partnership Committee (NicSis). Educate the co-op about all things related to NicSis and facilitate members voting on whether to contribute to the NicSis fund each year.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE
Sit on the Environmental Concerns Committee.

HISTORIAN
Write one article a month for the OSCA newsletter. Do a project for your co-op related to the co-ops history. Help facilitate events or co-op activities to go down in OSCA history.

CHEESE-CUTTER OR DAIRY QUEEN (IN SELECT CO-OPS)
Cut cheese and flavor yogurt for your co-op. Put cheese and other dairy products out in the dining space so they are accessible during meals.

GRANOLA MAKER
Make granola for the co-op each week.

TASTY-THINGS MAKER
Make tasty-things (such as sweets, baked goods, or savory treats) for your co-op each week.

BREAD MAKER
Make bread for your co-op each week.

PIZZA COOK
Head Cook for Pizza Night each week.

PIZZA PAL
Make pizza dough for the Pizza Cook to use before each Pizza Night. (This position does not exist in all co-ops).
Special Traditions

Weekly Traditions

PIZZA NIGHT
Each Friday individual coops host Pizza Night, a meal specifically devoted to pizza, run by a specific "Pizza Cook" who is elected at the start of the semester. Specialties for pizzas include Sunshine’s Tofu Ricotta, and Mushroom Eggplant Pizza. Most Pizza is vegetarian, but some meat-eating coops (such as Pyle) enjoy meat toppings. There are always vegan, gluten free, and soy free options, as usual.

SPECIAL MEAL
Every Saturday night coops host Special Meal! A "Special Meal" is a themed meal, voluntarily "head-cooked" by one or two co-op members. Special Meal cooking shifts are an hour longer than normal cooking shifts (normal shifts ranging 2–3 hours depending on the co-op). The extra time allows cooks to make special extravagant dishes. Favorite Special Meals have included "Harry Potter Special Meal", "Carnival Night", "Hanukah Special Meal" and "Holiday Special Meal" (which included gift exchanges and candle lighting), and Fairkid’s annual "Halloween Special Meal" (which includes a costume contest).

Special Events

IRON CHEF
Iron Chef is an annual all-OSCA cooking competition. Teams of students from each participating co-op prepare their best meal, which must surround a specially chosen ingredient. In 2015, Iron Chef nearly wiped out an entire harvest of carrots, as 600 OSCA students rushed to make their best carrot dishes. After cooking, each co-op transports their food to a main room where all OSCAns can come and try every dish. A panel of chosen judges tastes and announces a winning co-op at the end of the evening.

OSCA PROM
Each Spring OSCA hosts "OSCA Prom." Student bands often play, as OSCAns dance the night away. Of course, each year new traditions are created, and each co-op has its own traditions. OSCA’s 2018 prom was themed “vegeta-Ball".
Decision Making in OSCA

Participation
As a member of OSCA, you have a responsibility to participate in making the decisions that affect your eating and living arrangements. OSCA’s consensus-based decision-making process puts every decision in the collective hands of the OSCA membership, whether it’s your co-op deciding meat policy or the Board voting on the budget. In fact, OSCA can’t function effectively if you don’t take an active role in the process. Co-ops hold a series of mealtime discussions each semester to establish operating policies for job credit, kinds of food bought, who fills which position, etc. We try to reach consensus on all decisions so that everyone is comfortable with our policies, however some decisions are made by approval voting. If you change your mind or have a great idea sometime later, anyone can bring up a policy for discussion and call for a re-vote at any time during the year.

Staff from the all-OSCA community (like Board reps, committee reps, Officers and other coordinators) also make regular appearances in the co-ops to get input on larger-scale issues. Additionally, each co-op’s Board representatives hold a “Board Night” at least once a week about the proposals coming before the Board. Ask questions and voice your opinions! For those who want to get more involved, Board meetings and most committee meetings are open and publicized. Or you can run for Board or committee rep yourself!

DISCUSSIONS AND MODIFIED CONSENSUS (THE OSCA CONSENSUS FLOWCHART)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Announced 24 hours in advance, usually by DLECs via email.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Stack is open: people talk about the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals</td>
<td>You can make a proposal at any time. However, proposals should be made when it seems that the co-op has reached consensus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Stack</td>
<td>Someone proposes to end the discussion. The discussion must end before voting on any proposals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jump-ons</td>
<td>The facilitators will offer a chance for anyone to “jump on” or say a last comment before the discussion ends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting—General feelings</td>
<td>The facilitators ask co-op for their “feelings” on the proposal. This functions as a vote on the proposal, unless two proposals are mutually exclusive. In this case, if people feel positive about both, the co-op moves to approval voting to pick one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval Voting</td>
<td>The co-op votes individually on each proposal again (see explanation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal Passes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Feelings
After a proposal is made, the co-op takes general feelings on that proposal. During “general feelings” coopers vote on how they feel about the proposal through hand-gestures. It is important to note that these hand-gestures do not express your personal preferences, but instead how you think the proposal would affect the co-op.

Members do one of three hand signals:

1) Thumbs up: You think this would not affect the co-op negatively, and would be okay with it if the proposal passed, even if you don’t love it.

2) Thumbs sideways: You think the proposal isn’t great for the co-op, but could live with it if it passed.

3) Thumbs down: You think this proposal is so bad for the co-op that you might leave the co-op all together if the proposal passes.

Major Objections
If a person has a major objection to a proposal, it means that they think that the proposal would be bad for the co-op, to the extent that the person might leave the co-op if the proposal were to pass. A major objection may be made up to 24 hours after a proposal passes. However, any strong concerns should be brought up and addressed during the discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Objection is expressed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposers Agree to withdraw Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>(no) (yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal is rejected</td>
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Approval Voting
If there are two mutually exclusive proposals, the co-op takes general feelings on both. If the co-op agrees that everyone would be able to live with the decision (even if it isn’t their favorite) if either proposal were to pass, the co-op moves on to approval voting. The co-op votes on both again, but this time people put up fingers to vote for each proposal they want to pass. While in “general feelings” everyone gives their feelings on each proposal, during approval-voting members may vote for one or both proposals. The votes are then tallied up and whichever proposal has the most votes passes. If general feelings are negative about one of the proposals, it does not pass and there is no need for approval voting.

Tips for Happy Discussions
Because decisions in OSCA are rarely made without a good deal of discussion surrounding them, it is important for every member of the co-op to have good communication skills. That way, minority viewpoints are not squelched and every member of the co-op is an equal participant in the decision. Here are some pointers for effective participation in discussions:
• The issues in running a co-op are everyone’s problems. They should be presented as problems of the group, not individuals, and the decisions about them should be made collectively.

• Present your ideas and opinions clearly and concisely and make sure they are relevant to the topic. In other words, self-facilitate.

• If you are confused about something, ask a question. Chances are someone else is confused too.

• Listen actively. Pay attention to what people say and show your interest to them verbally and physically. Remember that what you believe may not necessarily be the only valid solution to a problem.

• Encourage the participation of all members of the group. Solicit other people’s opinions and don’t discourage people from participating if you disagree with them.

• Examine the “vibes” of the group. Are some people not participating at all? Are others dominating the discussion? Do people seem frustrated and in need of a break?

• Societal prejudices can be reflected in group discussions. Are the voices of historically marginalized groups being listened to or even discredited?

• Remember the words of the Facilitation Committee of the Federation of Ohio River Cooperatives: “May we always have the patience to listen and the courage to speak.”

Working in OSCA

One of the reasons that co-ops are less expensive than campus dining is that we perform most of the work ourselves instead of paying someone else to do it. All members of OSCA put in some number of hours of work per week (the specific amount is determined by the co-op but for most co-ops it is four or five hours). OSCA has many policies to make sure that everyone contributes to the co-op an appropriate amount. See more details below.

Hours

Every OSCA member is required to do a number of hours of work each week in their co-op, or for all of OSCA. This is how we can run our co-ops at cost. Unlike in Campus Dining Services, we don’t pay employees to do things like cook and clean for us. This requires commitment from our members to contribute a certain amount, and because of this each member saves thousands of dollars in dining and housing costs. Most co-ops require 4 or 5 hours of work per week. Members can fulfill these hours in many ways, as described in the Co-op Job Descriptions and all-OSCA Staff sections of the manual.
Work-Chart
Each co-op has a work-chart, made by a “Work-Chart Coordinator” who is elected by every co-op each semester. The work-chart designates which cooking and cleaning shifts you will do each week. During “interim” there will be an interim work-chart, where you will sign up for shifts. After the permanent work-chart is established, shifts will remain consistent for the remainder of the semester.

Time Aid
Time Aid is the term for reducing the number of hours someone must work in the co-op due to outside work commitments. OSCA aims to make co-ops as accessible as possible. For this reason, most co-ops have “time aid” policies. Co-ops use “time aid” to make co-ops accessible to people who have jobs outside of OSCA, and therefore can’t necessarily commit a full four of five work hours per week.

Policy varies by co-op, but generally 5 hours of outside work/week = 1 less hour in the co-op, and 7 hours of outside work/week = 2 less hours in the co-op. If a person does 12+ hours of outside work/week = only 1 hour of work in the co-op (This is referred to as “full time aid”). Time Aid is determined on an individual basis by the member and the Accessibility Coordinators in their co-op.

Missed Jobs
Co-ops use a system of “missed jobs” to create an environment of shared responsibility. When a person does not pull their weight in some way, such as missing a cooking shift, a fellow co-oper (or they themselves) will give them a “missed job.” This means they need to do an extra hour of work in the co-op in the next two weeks (or the amount of time allotted by the Membership Coordinator) to make up for what they missed. This is a means of holding yourself and others accountable in a way that is not harsh or harmful.

If a person continually ignores their work and leaves others to do their responsibilities for them, racking up three missed jobs, that member may have to go in front of a committee which will review whether they will be asked to leave the co-op. It is a rare occurrence but has happened in the past.

The important thing is that you show up to your shifts and do your work, so it does not fall on the shoulders of your fellow co-op members. The co-op functions and is a positive environment because everyone contributes.

If you realize you can’t make one of your shifts, simply email the co-op to find someone to “swap shifts” with you. People often trade shifts when emergency conflicts occur, or more commonly when someone is sick.

If an emergency occurs where you cannot make it to a shift, simply let your Missed Jobs Coordinator/Work chart Coordinator know, or talk to your Accessibility Coordinators. If you make a mistake (ex. sleep through a shift on accident), do that extra hour of work to make up for it. This way we can keep our co-ops functioning in a collaborative manner, without leaving the work to fall only on a select few people.

Missed Jobs do stay on a cooper’s “record” during the year, but this only matters if a person continually refuses to make up their missed jobs. If this is not your situation, your record will not be looked at. Missed Jobs do not transfer between co-ops or carry over from Spring to Fall semester.
**Member Resources**

**OSCA Foundation, Inc.**

Every member of OSCA is also a member of the OSCA Foundation. The OSCA Foundation works to:

- Provide scholarships to OSCA members with financial need
- Provide scholarships to Lorain County Community College students
- Provide scholarships to Oberlin College students who work 30 or more hours per semester performing community service in Oberlin
- Help members of cooperative communities through providing low-interest loans

You can get involved by being on the OSCA Foundation Board of Directors!

**Food Safety Advisor**

OSCA’s Food Safety Advisor (FSA) can provide trainings for co-ops, workshops, and demonstrations upon request. The FSA can help with developing proposals that pertain to the kitchens and food to allow OSCA to develop new projects and enterprises without legal hassle from the Ohio Health Department. The FSA is your employee, so don’t be hesitant to request their services. They are also a resource for anything and everything on kitchen equipment, food safety solutions, Ohio Health Code, etc. If it pertains to co-op kitchens or food, the FSA can help.

**The OSCA Library**

The OSCA library has books on management, philosophy, history and cooking as well as various newsletters from co-ops throughout the country. It also has documents on educational techniques, policy making, consensus process, food buying tips, and much more! All of OSCA’s correspondence with the outside and its own internal documents are in the library archives. Use the index to help you navigate through the last few years of Board packets. The library is open to any OSCA member who wishes to browse or do research. Stop by Wilder 402 during office hours (Monday - Thursday, Noon - 4 PM) or contact the Education & History Coordinator.

The library is an excellent resource for finding co-op jobs beyond Oberlin increasing knowledge and power, empowering yourself, writing papers, and doing projects.

**Drug and Alcohol Policy**

The Housing Coordinator and the Education & History Coordinator are a resource of education for members about the effects of drug and alcohol on both individuals and communities. They distribute information about drug and alcohol use, laws, and help for on and off campus members.

**Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings**

**OBERLIN WOMEN’S CLOSED GROUP**
Off Campus – Mondays, 7:30p
First Church of Oberlin (106 N Main St, Oberlin OH 44074)

**SUNDAY OPEN MEN’S DISCUSSION**
Off Campus – Sundays, 4:00p
First Church of Oberlin (106 N Main St, Oberlin OH 44074)
SATURDAY OPEN GROUP
Off Campus – Saturdays, 8:30a
First Church of Oberlin (106 N Main St, Oberlin OH 44074)

SIOGA (OPEN GROUP)
Off Campus – Tuesdays, 8p
First United Methodist Church (45 S Professor St, Oberlin OH 44074, Room 204)

Narcotics Anonymous Meetings

ELYRIA SUNDAY GROUP
Off Campus – Sundays, 5:00p
St. Paul’s UCC (9715 East River Road, Elyria OH 44035)
Hotline: (888) 438-4673

OBERLIN MONDAY GROUP
Off Campus – Mondays, 7:30p
First Church of Oberlin (106 N Main St, Oberlin OH 44074)

Counseling and Support

OBERLIN COUNSELING CENTER
Oberlin Counseling Center: 247 W Lorain St. Suite D
Telephone: (440) 775-8470
Monday-Friday, 8:30a – 4:30p (CLOSED for lunch, 12:00p – 1:00p)
Crisis Walk-in Hours: Monday and Tuesday, 11:00a – 12:00p, Wednesday - Friday, 1:30p - 2:30p
After Hours Telephone Support: (440) 775-8470 and press the #2

PEER SUPPORT CENTER
Students trained in peer support skills will be available in during office hours to chat, help talk through a problem, or answer questions about other support resources on campus. Peer Listeners have more than a year of training (including Peer Support classes, which you can register for if you are interested). Peer Listeners can also direct you to other resources on campus that might be of service to you.

Location: Wilder 304
Open: Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday 8:00p – 10:00p

Sexual Misconduct Policy
The OSCA Sexual Misconduct Policy outlines the way in which OSCA as an organization will respond to sexualized violence within the OSCA community. It provides for three Sexual Harm Information Liaisons (SHILs) to ensure adherence to the policy and to support OSCAns who have experienced violence, need more support resources, or have any questions. Finally, OSCA’s Sexual Misconduct Policy exists to aid in the prevention of sexualized violence and to provide support for persons involved in sexualized violence.

Conference Subsidies
Do you know of a great conference that you would love to attend but can’t afford? OSCA will pay up to $100 for you to attend conferences that are specifically relevant to the OSCA community. Email osca@oberlin.edu to apply for
the subsidy. You will be required to submit a report on the conference to the monthly OSCA publication so that everyone can benefit from what you’ve learned.

**Co-oper of the Month Award**

The Co-oper of the Month Award is given to members who go above and beyond what their job(s) requires. If you know a fellow co-oper that you would like to nominate for this award, submit a statement about them to the OSCA email account explaining why you think they should win. The monthly winner receives a $25 gift certificate.

**Staffer of the Month Award**

Many all-OSCA staff put in countless hours to keep OSCA operations running smoothly. The Staffer of the Month Award is given to staff who go above and beyond what their job(s) requires. If you know an all-OSCA staff person that you would like to nominate for this award, submit a statement about them to the OSCA email account explaining why you think they should win. The monthly winner receives a $50 gift certificate.

**Rights and Responsibilities**

As a member of OSCA you have many rights, but you also have responsibilities. You are part of a cooperative organization in which everyone is expected to contribute towards the community. You are expected to:

- Participate in organizational decisions. This means paying attention during co-op discussions, giving your input on proposals, participating in all-OSCA votes.
- Keep the co-op clean and safe. Clean up garbage when you see it, make sure food is properly stored, follow proper cleanliness procedures and Health Code (!!!). If you’re sick, get a substitute for your shift so that you don’t infect everyone in the co-op. If you’re not sure of something, ask!
- Do your part to help OSCA help the environment. Wash out recyclable containers, re-use them (for personal use only), and recycle them when they’re no longer re-usable. Compost anything that is compostable.
- Do your jobs! The functioning of the co-op depends on everyone doing all their work. If you miss your cooking shift, the co-op doesn’t eat. If you miss your crew, your fellow co-opers must pick up your slack and your co-op may get shut down for being too dirty. Making others pick up after you is the opposite of what co-opers are all about and only creates an atmosphere of resentment and bitterness.
- Make sure that others are doing their jobs as well. Writing members up for missed jobs or confronting them for habitually slacking off isn’t mean or “uncooperative”—it is simply trying to help your community work.
- Educate yourself and others. Check out the member services we provide. Visit the OSCA library in Wilder. Ask a financial staff person where your board bill payment goes, or look it up yourself in the Board Manual. Learn as much as you can about OSCA and teach other co-opers what you’ve learned.
- Get involved! Try an elected position. Run for OSCA President. Start a new program. Help keep your co-op clean. Entertain your co-op with an a capella rendition of your favorite song. Your fellow co-opers will appreciate it, and might even be inspired to get involved themselves.
Privilege

Dynamics of privilege are inherently entwined in food and cleaning related jobs. Women, people of color, trans and low income folks, and other minority groups have long been expected to clean up after others and have been put in societal roles to serve others. It is very important to do your part as a member of the co-op. Often when not all members are pulling their weight, it can easily fall on these groups of people once again to pick up the slack. When you miss a shift, everyone in the co-op is negatively affected. This also means that is is extremely important to clean up after yourself and leave the space as clean (or cleaner) as it was when you got there. Messes will not clean themselves. If you leave dirty dishes in the sink, someone is going to have to clean them for you, and it is likely that it will be a person who feels like they have to clean up the mess, and that person will likely be someone on whom, historically, the burden of cleaning has always fallen upon.

Along with this, many individuals need to eat in co-ops for financial or dietary reasons. When co-opers do not fulfil their responsibilities and there is a possibility that a meal will be canceled, the work can easily fall onto low-income individuals and people who need to eat in the co-op for other reasons (such as dietary restrictions), as they may not be able to afford the alternative (buying food elsewhere) or may not be able to eat elsewhere for some other reason. Within the co-op be aware of your privilege and do not let your responsibilities fall onto the shoulders of others, especially those who may feel obligated to clean up after your mess.

All-OSCA Structure

The All-OSCA Staff

All members of OSCA equally own and participate in running OSCA. However, there are certain individual leadership roles that function on an all-OSCA level (rather than on an individual co-op level) and take on larger operational and non-operational roles. These jobs include four "officer" positions, and several all-OSCA student staff positions. Students in these roles oversee different aspects of OSCA.

OSCA OFFICER POSITIONS
- President
- Treasurer
- Membership Secretary
- Chair of the Board

ALL-OSCA STAFF POSITIONS
- Accessibility Committee Coordinator (x2)
- Cleanliness & Maintenance Coordinator (x2)
- Education & History Coordinator
- Education & Training Coordinator
- Environmental Concerns Coordinator
- Food Coordinator (x2)
- Housing Operations Manager
- Operations Manager (x2)
- Nutrition Coordinator
- Sexual Harm Information Liaison (x3)
- Nicaragua Sister Partnership Coordinator (x2)
- OSCA-College Liaison (every three years)
- Student Administration Assistant (x2)

**EMPLOYEES**

OSCA employs five non-student staff members in full-time management and oversight positions.

- Business Manager
- Financial Manager
- Financial Assistant
- Food Safety Advisor
- Office Assistant
Membership: Some Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Q: IF I AM NOT A NEW STUDENT, HOW DO I GET INTO “X” CO-OP?
A: Every spring there is a co-op Upperclass Lottery for students returning to Oberlin College. Students are assigned a random lottery number, and then receive co-op assignments based on that lottery number, their co-op preferences, and available space. Returning students also need to sign a membership contract and pay a $75 advance deposit to reserve the co-op space for the following year. This deposit is applied to the Fall semester board bill. If you do not turn in this check on time, you lose your spot in OSCA and will need to sign up for the wait list. If you decide you don’t want to be in a co-op, you must fill out the co-op release form online and request your deposit refund in writing no later than August 1st. If you are not assigned to a co-op, or not assigned to your most preferred co-op, or want to get into a co-op at a time other than during the spring lottery, just sign up on the wait list on OSCA’s website (http://oberlin.edu/osca). When it is your turn, you will be placed into a preferred co-op but you will remain on the wait list until you are placed into your first-choice co-op, or until you remove yourself from the wait list.

Q: WHAT DOES “OCMR” ON THE MEMBERSHIP CONTRACT MEAN?
A: “OCMR” is the number of your mailbox in the Oberlin College Mail Room. If you are a new student and do not yet have an OCMR number, you can just put “0000”

Q: IF I AM A NEW STUDENT, HOW DO I GET INTO “X” CO-OP?
A: New students must participate in the New Student Lottery by going to OSCA’s website and filling out the New Student Application. The new student lottery is held in mid-June. New students may sign up on the wait list once the school year begins if they do not get into their first-choice co-op during the new student lottery or if they apply after the deadline. Third World dining, Third World Social Justice and Old Barrows housing co-ops have an additional application process, so be sure to fill out an application online if any are your desired co-op.

Q: HOW GOOD ARE MY CHANCES OF GETTING INTO THE CO-OP I WANT?
A: Depends where you are on the wait list and which co-op(s) you want to get into. Contrary to popular belief, expensive gifts and marinated tofu won’t move you up the wait list any faster. You can email the Membership Secretary (one of the four OSCA Officers at osca@oberlin.edu) who can tell you what number you are on each co-op’s respective wait list.

Q: HOW DO THE LOTTERY & CO-OP PLACEMENT WORK?
A: In the Spring, students returning to Oberlin fill out an OSCA Upperclass Lottery Form (online) listing all their co-op preferences (as well as checking off OSCA as a preference on the Residential Education housing and dining forms). Each student is assigned a random lottery number, so everyone has an equal chance of getting into a co-op, regardless of seniority. The two exceptions are co-opers holding all-OSCA positions and new students, for whom 100 spaces are saved for the summer New Student Lottery.

Q: ONCE I GET INTO OSCA FOR THE FALL, AM I IN FOR THE YEAR?
A: Yes, you will receive a Spring return confirmation form by email in November. Be sure to return it so that we know you plan to return as a member in the Spring.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF I'M GOING TO BE AWAY FROM OBERLIN IN THE FALL? CAN I STILL ENTER THE LOTTERY?
A: Yes. If you know you will be LOA (leave of absence) for the Fall semester, you still need to sign up for the lottery to obtain a lottery number. Once the lottery is over, remember to put yourself on the Spring semester wait list no later than Commencement Day (extended deadline for students who will be away) to keep your current lottery number. You do not need to pay a deposit if you will be away Fall semester because OSCA cannot guarantee you a spot for Spring.
Q: HOW DOES THE WAIT LIST WORK?
A: The Membership Secretary places students in co-ops according to their indicated preferences. If you get into any co-op other than your 1st choice, you remain on the wait list until you are assigned to your 1st choice co-op. This means that if you are dining in co-op X because your 1st choice was not available, you will automatically be switched into your 1st choice co-op when a space opens up. You will be emailed notification of this change. So, if you get into your second, third, fourth, etc. choice dining co-op, and you like it, go online and take yourself off the wait list to avoid being switched into another co-op. You will be removed from the wait list if you are assigned to your first choice co-op or if you remove yourself from the wait list on OSCA’s website.

Q: WHAT IS “SPLITTING-IN”?
A: Splitting-in is not officially recognized by OSCA. It is an informal agreement between you and a member of another co-op that allows each of you to eat some of your meals in one co-op and some meals in another. Sometimes splitting-in involves sharing co-op jobs. Sometimes you each do your assigned jobs in your original co-ops. (Be sure to let the Work-Chart Coordinators know about the split-in if you will not be doing your original co-op job.) To split-in, find someone in the co-op in which you want to eat and ask them if they would like to split-in with you. From there, you two work out an agreement. Your official co-op will continue to be the one to which you were assigned by OSCA.

Finances
OSCA’s finances are amazingly complex. OSCA, like all other organizations, task itself with generating income and paying expenses at both the all-OSCA level and at the individual co-op level. The organization generates its income from board bills, room bills, and bank account interest, as well as contributions and returns on interest. Income is distributed to all other co-ops based on membership size. OSCA is responsible for paying many expenses, including rent to Oberlin College, food costs, employee and student staff payroll, cleaning supplies and toiletries, etc. Individual co-ops also manage their own budgets and use fund allocations to pay off operational expenses, which include food, kitchen supplies, toiletries and cleaning supplies, and linens.

OSCA also gives out loans to other organizations who would not otherwise qualify for them. OSCA prides itself in strengthening local and cooperative ties with other non-profits and local organizations as well as engage in transactions with other communities that share the same political and social values. The Finance Committee is responsible for making loan decisions to organizations in the greatest need of assistance. Currently, OSCA has loans out to four organizations.

Among other things that make OSCA impressive, it also gives back any unused dollars to its members! Because of its 501(c)(7) tax status, OSCA operates at cost, meaning that it charges its members housing and dining rates that match the cost of its operations. After the end of each fiscal year (June 30th), the Finance Committee reviews the refund numbers prepared by the Financial Manager. Some members may receive a refund, others a bill, and still others neither, depending on the co-op(s) they were in the previous year.
The Financial Staff

TREASURER
One of OSCA’s four officers. Manages policy side of things. They are a general coordinator; facilitates Finance Committee (FinCo, if you’re hip!) meetings; meets with College people on related matters; sits on the board; writes proposals and educational materials; eats, drinks, and breathes OSCA finances.

FINANCIAL MANAGER
Manages OSCA accounting, bookkeeping, payroll, Accounts Receivables, and Accounts Payables. This person manages billing, prepares financial reports, sits on various committees, prepares for OSCA’s annual audit, serves as a resource of financial knowledge for OSCA staff and members, and prepares annual budgets, and just about a million other things!

FINANCIAL ASSISTANT
This newly created employee position primarily assists the Financial Manager with performing the duties of the Financial Manager. Other job responsibilities include helping the documentation and creation of a financial procedures manual and cross-training with other OSCA office positions.

CO-OP TREASURERS
Elected in each housing and dining co-op separately. They manage individual budgets and work to ensure that co-ops do not overspend. They are informational resource for co-op members for finances. They manage members’ Accounts Receivables, set up standard payment plans, and help the all-OSCA Treasurer create financial policies. They also sit on the OSCA/OF Finance Committee and serve as OSCA’s decision-making body for all things related to the organization’s finances.

Frequently Asked Financial Questions

Q: HOW MUCH IS MY OSCA BILL?
A: For the 2018-2019 school year, OSCA dining costs $1,950 per semester. Living in OSCA costs an additional $2,415 for a double or $3,000 for a single per semester. OSCA bills are sent directly by OSCA, not through Oberlin College, and will not appear on your College term bill account. Invoices are mailed to both the home address and sent to the member’s email address.

Q: HOW MUCH DO I SAVE BY BEING IN OSCA?
A: Lots! In accordance with the advertised prices of Oberlin College housing and dining, the up-front annual savings for dining-only members is $4,330 (53%) per year over Campus Dining Services (CDS). Housing and dining members save an additional $7,608 (46%) per year over dorm doubles or $6,438 (39%) over dorm singles. The final savings depends on the year-end refunds or bills (based on co-op spending).

Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF I CAN’T MAKE A PAYMENT?
A: OSCA offers payment plans and $500 and $1,000 demonstrated financial need scholarships. Tell the Treasurer in advance if you’re having problems paying on time, and we can almost always work something out! If a member has neither paid their semester bill nor notified OSCA, they will have 30 days before expulsion procedures begin. If you are expelled, you cannot join OSCA until overdue balance is paid, and your name may be turned over to a collection agency.

Q: I’M WAITING ON LOANS AND SCHOLARSHIPS TO PAY MY SEMESTER BILL. WHAT DO I DO?
A: Be aware that loans and scholarships are applied directly to your account at the Oberlin College's Office of Student Accounts. If you are in a co-op, your College account will have surplus funds because you are billed directly by OSCA. You will need to request a credit refund from the Student Accounts Office in
Carnegie Hall. If the loans or scholarships will not be available until after the due date of your OSCA bill, you will also need to sign a payment plan form with the OSCA Treasurer at the OSCA office, which will delay your payment due date and avoid finance charges. Note that your College account credit refund check will be made out directly to you, so you will need to stop by the OSCA office and endorse your check over to OSCA.

Q: DID I GET THE $75 ADVANCE DEPOSIT BACK?
A: No. It’s applied to your Fall semester bill unless you notify OSCA by August 1st that you will not be in OSCA for the Fall.

Q: WHAT IF I JOIN OR LEAVE OSCA MID-SEMESTER?
A: You will be charged or refunded for the number of whole weeks remaining in the semester on the effective date of your co-op departure. Any year-end refunds or bills will be calculated based on the number of weeks you were an OSCA member. You will not, however, be refunded if you do not notify OSCA that you want to leave your co-op by the Wednesday, 4PM, before the final semester changes in November (for Fall) and in April (for Spring). This policy is in place to deter students from switching to Campus Dining Services (CDS) just for finals (because no one will take your place, which puts a lot of extra work on everyone else during a stressful academic time).

Q: WHEN WILL I GET MY ANNUAL REFUND? HOW BIG WILL IT BE?
A: Assuming your co-op stayed under budget throughout the fiscal year, you will receive a refund check at least a couple months after the end of the prior year fiscal year (June 30th). Over the past couple of years, they have ranged from a $400 check for members of some co-ops to an $80 bill for others.

Q: WHERE DO I GO TO ASK OTHER QUESTIONS?
A: For payment questions, refer to your dining co-op treasurer, who will reach out to memberships early on at the beginning of each semester. You can always email the all-OSCA Treasurer at osca@oberlin.edu and visit them in the OSCA office (Wilder 402) for any other questions. Regarding policy, dining treasurers, board representatives, and the all-OSCA Treasurer are all great resources. For everything you’d ever want to know about all-OSCA policy and finances, look in the OSCA Board Manual and “Understanding OSCA’s Finances” which are posted in your co-op.

The Board of Directors

The OSCA Board of Directors is responsible for enacting policies that affect all co-ops.

The Board is made up of two representatives elected from each co-op (or one from smaller co-ops), the Officers and any at-Large Board members. Board meetings are held weekly, and the location rotates among the co-ops. All OSCA members are encouraged to attend Board meetings to engage in discussions on various proposals or further educate themselves on the structure and functions of the Board.

The OSCA Bylaws mandate the Board to regulate areas like membership policy, finances, and agreements between OSCA and the College or other organizations. However, the Board may not direct any policy changes of other internal operations of individual co-ops (except for matters of safety and health code). This aspect of OSCA policy is critical to the autonomy of each co-op as a small but distinctive membership in and of itself.

The OSCA Board spends a lot of time and energy writing, discussing, and presenting a wide variety of proposals. Proposals concern all OSCA policies, the allotment of money or all-OSCA credit, the development of new programs, etc. Proposals considered may include next year’s budget, all-OSCA staff positions, and much more. Any member of OSCA may write a proposal and bring it to the Board or attend a Proposal Planning Committee meeting, which are held weekly in the OSCA office, to suggest a proposal.
To make proposals easy to read, they are written in a standard format that include a title, a date, the author’s name, and a statement of the proposed action. Proposals also include relevant background information, as well as “considerations,” or questions that might affect how one feels about the proposal, and short lists of pros and cons. If you want to write a proposal, you may choose to ask your Board Reps or the OSCA Chair of the Board for help. You should then submit your proposal to the Chair of the Board by the Monday before the Board meeting at which it will be discussed.

Much of how the Board functions is dependent on OSCA’s committees, which write proposals and work independently on other projects. Committees are open to all members of OSCA, and members receive work credit for sitting on them. They are an informative but less intense introduction to the world of all-OSCA.

It is through all-OSCA that members exert their most direct control over important issues facing OSCA. All-OSCA votes range from determining the following year’s Officers to donating money to the Nicaragua Sister Partnership. All-OSCA votes are conducted with paper ballots over six consecutive meals (or 72-hour period). It is very important for all OSCA members to take the time to inform themselves about the ballot issue and then make sure to vote. Ask your Board Rep(s) or DLECs if you have any questions about the Board or any of its functions.

The Cooperative Movement

The Cooperative Principles

OSCA isn’t just a “housing and dining alternative” on campus; we are part of a worldwide cooperative movement with 800 million members worldwide. Co-ops are everywhere helping people help themselves in many ways. Aside from the student co-ops, there are co-ops that provide insurance, banking, farm supplies, housing, electricity, telephone service, health care, transportation, and countless other goods and services.

So then... What is a co-op?

According to the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), a cooperative is “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically controlled enterprise.” The principles were formulated in 1844 by a group of poor textile workers from Rochdale, England. They are known, appropriately enough, as the Rochdale Principles. Here they are in the 1995 ICA version (adapted by OSCA):

1: VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP
Anyone enrolled at Oberlin College can apply to be a member of OSCA. OSCA’s membership is based on a random lottery system and does not discriminate against any person because of gender, social, racial, political or religious reasons.

2: DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL
OSCA uses a modified form of consensus to make most of its decisions, a system that not only seeks the agreement of most participants, but also tries to resolve the objections of the minority to achieve the most agreeable decision for everyone involved.

3: MEMBER ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION
Everyone contributes an equal amount of money and has an equal voice in how our money is spent. Any money that OSCA does not spend during the year is refunded to its members.
4: AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE
OSCA is controlled by its members and not by Oberlin College. Each of the co-ops is semi-autonomous form OSCA as well. ALL-OSCA can only determine issues affecting all of OSCA such as membership, finances and agreements with the College. OSCA only makes decisions concerning an individual co-op in matters of health or safety.

5: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION
Any person can run for any position in OSCA without fearing they won’t know what to do. Everyone elected to a position is trained by OSCA. Co-opers are always ready to help or inform. If you don’t know something, just ask!

6: COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES
OSCA keeps close ties with other student co-ops through North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO), an association of approximately 50 student cooperatives in the U.S. and Canada. We have money invested in the Kagawa Fund, which funds students who want to start new co-ops. We also donate money each year to our sister co-op in Nicaragua. More locally, we support other co-ops on campus such as the Bike Co-op (in Keep’s basement) by providing them with free space.

7: CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY
OSCAns are very concerned for the wellbeing of OSCA’s community and the world. Most of food we buy is organic, local, fair-trade or some combination of the three above. The Environmental Concerns Committee keeps tabs on OSCA’s impact on the environment. Any co-op, voting together, can approve to donate funds to any non-profit cause that the co-op feels is important.
A History of OSCA and the Cooperative Movement in Oberlin

1930s
Women’s co-op at Pyle Inn on West College Street. Not successful; existed sporadically.

1938
Oberlin Consumers Cooperative (OCC) begins forming.

1940
OCC opens.

1949
Students are dissatisfied with the College dining system. Some junior women revive the idea of forming a co-op at Pyle. OCC hires Bill Long as manager.

1950
The Dormitory Council officially proposes a women’s co-op, and the General Faculty (GF) approves the proposal. Pyle Inn opens in September with 28 women residents and 28 male residents (co-ed dining was rare at the time).

1951
Students petition for and GF approves of a second co-op. Grey Gables opens across the street from Pyle Inn. The two co-ops form an inter-Cooperative Council (ICC) and the Co-op Educational and Social Committee.

1952
GF turns down an ICC request for a third co-op.

1962
The ICC becomes the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association (OSCA) and files for incorporation and non-profit status. After incorporation, OSCA enters a new rent agreement with the College and the co-ops become dorm buildings.

1963
Grey Gables is torn down and Tank replaces it.

1965
Keep is approved as the third co-op.

1966
Keep opens!

1967
GF approves Harkness as the fourth co-op for the fall of the following year.

1971
Pyle Inn becomes the Eco-Co-op, primarily serving vegetarian and natural foods.

1972
Old Barrows (only women residents) replaces Pyle Inn. Keep becomes co-ed (for living). Students begin to do all the cooking and meal preparation.

1973
Baldwin becomes the first dining-only co-op.

1977
Fairchild opens as a dining-only co-op.

1979
The OSCA Board begins to run completely by consensus.

1983
Sax Route 58, an OSCA-funded cooperative retail store opens in Keep basement.

1984
Bill long retires after 35 years.
1985
OSCA buys its first property, Fuller, across from Tank.

1986
OSCA buys another property, Langston-Bliss house.
OSCA hires a part-time Bookkeeper.

1987
Kosher Co-op becomes part of OSCA.

New bookkeeper discovers that critical financial records are missing; the organization is on the verge of bankruptcy.
OSCA is audited by the IRS and nearly loses its tax-exempt status.

1988
Students publish a report on OSCA’s food sources and the possibility of buying foods more locally.

1989
OSCA starts the Local Foods program, purchasing (mostly) organic foods from local farmers.

A NASCO financial consultant is hired to advise OSCA. They recommend that OSCA hire a Financial Manager.

1990
OSCA hires a Financial Manager.

1993
The College closes Old Barrows co-op, citing structural and life-safety hazards. It is temporarily replaced by the Asia House kitchen, dubbed “Pyle Inn” after the original OSCA co-op.

OCC Opens co-op book store.

1994
Old B dining re-opens, but the dorm remains closed.

Despite intense lobbying for an 8th dining co-op, OSCA is rebuffed and Pyle Inn closes its doors.

Third World Co-op opens in Baldwin.

1995
The College agrees to give OSCA Asia House as an 8th Co-op starting in the Spring of 1996.

1996
Asia Co-op re-opens in the spring.

Old B re-opens as home to 15 upper class women.
OSCA decides to split into two corporations

OSCA members help start the Oberlin Sustainable Agriculture Project, bringing a community supported farm to Oberlin.

1997
OSCA Properties is granted a 501(c)3 tax exempt status, providing low-income housing for the community at large and scholarships for students with financial need.

1998
Asia Co-op changes its name to Pyle Inn Co-op (in honor of Oberlin’s first dining co-op)

1999
Co-op Book Store closes.

2002
OSCA begins mass-producing its own tofu for its co-ops with a tofu kitchen in Harkness Co-op.
OSCA quits being a member of NASCO.

2003
Brown Bag Co-op opens as a new dining co-op (in Fairchild) providing members with bulk food and supplies for their off-campus homes.

2004
OSCA hires a Food Safety Advisor to assist co-ops in maintaining Health Code.

2005
OSCA sponsors its 1st Local Foods Conference connecting students with local farmers.

2006
OSCA rejoins NASCO.

2010
OSCA hires a part-time Business Coordinator to assist staff.

OSCA Financial Manager, Iris Hunt, is inducted into the NASCO Hall of Fame, a lifetime achievement award for 25 years of service to OSCA.

2011
OSCA Properties sells its last remaining off-campus house and changes the organization’s name to the OSCA Foundation.
2013
OSCA co-opers decrease to eight with the parting of Kosher Halal Co-op.
OSCA re-opens a book co-op as a textbook exchange.

2015
OSCA stops producing its own tofu
OSCA sponsors its first local foods conference, connecting students with farmers.

2016
OSCA celebrates 66 years of co-ops on campus!

2017
Old B closes for dining due to structural issues, but remains as women and trans safe space housing, becoming the first co-op where members dine in a co-op separate from where they live.
BBC moves to use the former Old B kitchen.

2018
Third World Social Justice Co-op opens in third floor of Harkness as a special interest house for People of Color and low-income students.

Circle Pines: The Co-op Symbol

“The pine tree is the ancient symbol of endurance, fecundity, and immorality. These are the qualities that we see in Cooperation. In the old Egyptian, Persian, and Indian mythology, the pine tree and its symbol the pine cone are found typifying life and the perpetuation of life. The hardy pine symbolizes the enduring quality of cooperation. More than one pine tree is used to represent the mutual cooperation necessary. The trunks of the pine trees are continued into the roots which form a circle. The circle is another ancient symbol of eternal life. It typifies that which has no end. The circle in this emblem also represents the world, the all-embracing cosmos of which cooperation is a part and which depends for its existence upon cooperation.

“The color of the two pine trees and the circle is dark green; this is the color of chlorophyll, which is the life principle in nature. The background within the circle is golden yellow, typifying the sun, the giver of light and life.”

-JAMES PETER WARBASE, FOUNDER OF THE COOPERATIVE LEAGUE, USA
Relationship between OSCA and Oberlin College

OSCA is an important part of the Oberlin College housing and dining system. Approximately 25% of Oberlin’s students eat in OSCA, making OSCA by far the largest student-run organization on campus. This puts us in a unique relationship with the College.

Being a part of the College system sets OSCA apart from many other student co-ops and gives us less room to pursue all the policies that we might like (such as expanding capacity to meet demand or renovating what we want when we want). Nevertheless, there are advantages to being considered on-campus and on-board. Our close connection also means that we can share knowledge and experience with the Residential Education & Dining Services staff.

We rent all the co-op spaces from the College as well as most of the equipment and furniture in them. This saves OSCA the cost and hassle of maintenance but also limits OSCA’s autonomy and makes for long and difficult rent contract negotiations every three years. These rent contracts specify not only how much we have to pay the College each year, but also statement of both parties’ responsibilities. In addition to us paying rent, the college has responsibilities to OSCA. The college uses their funds to buy OSCA major kitchen equipment, and co-ops may request these purchases at any time. (If you have a request, talk to your non-foods purchaser). Campus Dining Services (CDS) also allows co-op members to eat one meal per week in specific dining halls and provides meal swipes to co-opers when we need them (for example at the end of each semester once the co-ops are closed or if major kitchen equipment breaks).

OSCA Lingo

Names of Co-ops

BBC: Brown Bag Co-op
Fairkid: Fairchild Co-op
Hark: Harkness Co-op
Old B: Old Barrows Co-op
TWC: Third World Co-op
TWSJ: Third World Social Justice Co-op
All-OSCA Staff

CMT: Co-op Management Team
GMT: OSCA General Management Team
CMCs: Cleanliness and Maintenance Coordinators
FSCs: Food Safety Coordinators
KitchCos: Kitchen Coordinators
AccessCos: Accessibility Coordinators/Advocates
NicSis: Nicaragua Sister Partnership (a partnership that OSCA has with a women’s farm collective in Nicaragua).
EdCo: Education Coordinators, and Education Committee
Fab Five: A committee consisting of the Operations Managers, Cleanliness and Maintenance Coordinators, and the Food Safety Advisor.

Stack: The order in which people will speak during a discussion. When you raise your hand in a discussion, a DLEC will “put you on stack,” which means they will write your name down and then tell you when it is your turn to speak. If something “jumps stack” this means it is addressed immediately, before the discussion continues.

Proposal: A proposal concerns a change in existing policy, to establishment of new policy or any situation that needs to be addressed.

Clarifying Question: A question which is related to a fact related clarification. Questions about opinions are not clarifying questions. An example of a clarifying question might be: “When you say CMT, what does that mean?” Clarifying Questions jump stack, and so are answered right away before the co-op continues the discussion.

Direct Response: A person raises their hand, making a sign language “D.” This signifies that they have a response to the clarifying question. The person who asked the question will then choose whether to accept the direct response.

Friendly Amendments: Discussion is also the time for people to offer amendments which would alter the goal or implementation of the proposal. If the amendment is considered “friendly” by the proposers, then it becomes incorporated into the proposal. Otherwise, it may be dropped or offered as an alternative proposal.

Procedural Pinkie: when a person raises their pinkie in a discussion, this means the co-op has broken some part of procedure, and the person corrects the mistake.

Factual Correction: A person in the co-op raises their hand, making a sign language “F.” This means they have a correction to something that has been incorrectly stated as a fact.

Co-op Knock: The “Co-op Knock” (the sign language motion for “yes”) is a way that members can express their agreement or support of something another member has said, without having to repeat that person or make noise over them as they’re speaking.
Welcome to OSCA!!

This Manual was written by Maia Ross Trupin and OSCAns past,
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Special thanks to OSCAns past who created the original version of the
Owners Manual and wrote original co-op descriptions.