Dear former Co-Oper:

This is the first of what we hope will be many, and may even be regular, reports to our distinguished alumni about what’s going on around the Oberlin Co-ops. Not that we’re going to tell you all that’s going on — you knew what went on when you were here, and such things are not usually contained in official reports. You will have to content yourself then with hearing what is officially going on.

If you have been in communication with Oberlin of late, you probably know that the very existence of co-ops, like that of language houses and other small dorms, has been in question in the eyes of the administration. A few weeks ago we were given an encouraging sign when President Carr spoke of co-ops as having a continuing place on this campus. As the man said, “that was good,” but our crisis is not over. -May 3, 1962

Despite those apocalyptic warnings, OSCA continues to be a strong and vital organization 42 years after sending out its first dire alumni newsletter. But as alumni of OSCA should know, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Again OSCA is starting an alumni network and newsletter tradition, and again OSCA faces institution-shaking challenges from the College. Again we call on our alums for moral and tactical support.

There is plenty of good news to share with you all this year. We hope that you can share in our recent successes, such as the legalization of OSCA’s long-covert co-ed rooming policies. You should all participate in our hopes for the future as well, such as OSCA’s new plan to acquire off-campus property for use as office space and an educational center.

Our newsletter contains information about these and other developments, as well as plans for an exciting and revitalized set of alumni outreach programs that we hope you will be a part of. It also offers the latest on the strained relationship between OSCA and Oberlin College in this crucial rent negotiation year, and provides tools and suggestions on what you as alums can do to help your organization in its hour of need.

Most of all, though, this newsletter is a gesture of appreciation: You ran OSCA, you passed on its traditions, you created and maintained the spirit and community that students own today. We thank you for OSCA, and invite you to stop in for a meal or contact the Alumni Coordinator any time you have the opportunity.

President: Ann Sorich asorich@oberlin.edu
Treasurer: Adam Sorkin asorkin@oberlin.edu
Membership: Maggie Raife mraife@oberlin.edu
Alumni Coordinators: Keith Griffith kagrieff@oberlin.edu
Janine Heiser janine.he

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Help OSCA form an official Alumni Affiliate Group!

OSCA cannot be a self-identified group on ObieWeb until we are an official Affiliate Group of the Oberlin Alumni Council. As an Affiliate Group, our alumni outreach would also be subsidized by the College, which would help us build a stronger alumni network. The Office of Alumni Affairs relies on alumni participation in forming affiliate groups. If you are interested in helping, contact kagrieff@oberlin.edu.
OSCA still does not own its buildings. OSCA still has a rent contract with the College. The contract lasts for three years, and during the third year, OSCA and the College negotiate the next three-year contract. This is year three of our contract, and the OSCA contract team has been meeting with the College since last spring. Negotiations officially began in late September, and are starting to approach the final, difficult details. One major victory for OSCA is the College’s official recognition of its gender-neutral room policy. As usual, finances are the major frustration between OSCA and the College. Currently, Oberlin College is requesting that OSCA’s rent increase 5% annually, whereas in the past, rent has increased an average of 2.5%. For this increase, no new services will be available, as well as no guarantee of renovations. The only way the College proposes OSCA can decrease its rent is by dropping a co-op or decreasing membership. As an added frustration, the finances of the rent contract have become completely non-transparent—OSCA has no idea where the rent money is spent. OSCA’s rent contract negotiation team does not think a 5% increase in rent per year is fair. This increase could raise board bills over $100 per year. In a time when the cost of higher education has sky-rocketed, it is more important than ever to offer affordable, at-cost dining and housing options to students. OSCA refuses to be charged for Oberlin College’s financial mis-management. Your support is legendary among Oberlin College officials and is one of our most effective bargaining chips. Please write/email/call the College officials listed below and express how much you believe OSCA contributes to the Oberlin community and your dismay at the requested rent increase.

Please consider donating to OSCA instead of Oberlin College this year. Donations are tax deductible, and the money donated to OSCA can go toward the inception of the alumni council and the distribution of more than one newsletter per year. Furthermore, it there’s anything Oberlin College is afraid of, it’s alumni donations walking out the door. Let’s let them know that pushing OSCA around is never profitable.

Contact the following people to express your dissatisfaction with the College’s demands. Remember, your voice as an alum carries a lot of weight with the College, so use it!

Nancy S. Dye, President
Cox Administration Building
70 North Professor Street
Oberlin, OH 44074-1090
(440)-775-8400
email: nancy.dye@oberlin.edu

Kim LaFond, Associate Dean, Director of Residential Life and Dining Services
Peters Hall 8/10G
50 North Professor Street
Oberlin, OH 44074-1091
(440)-775-8472
email: kim.lafond@oberlin.edu

Michele Gross, Associate Director of Residential Life and Dining Services, Business/Marketing
Peters Hall 8/10G
50 North Professor Street
Oberlin, OH 44074-1091
(440)-775-8472
email: Michele.gross@oberlin.edu

William Stackman, Acting Dean of Students
Wilder Hall 105
135 West Lorain Street
Oberlin, OH 44074-1078
(440)-775-8462
email: William.stackman@oberlin.edu

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OSCA’s non-profit status means that donations are tax deductible!

Check One:
- I am donating to OSCA instead of Oberlin College.
- I am donating to OSCA in addition to donating to Oberlin College.
- I am donating to OSCA, I already gave Oberlin College too much money.

My contribution is for:
- The Alumni Newsletter  __ Scholarship Fund  __ General Operating Fund  __ Gift Fund  __ Other:

Send the donation and this card to:
Oberlin Student Cooperative Association - Wilder Hall, Box 86 - 135 West Lorain Street - Oberlin, OH 44074-1078

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Brown Bag Co-op
OSCA’s newest co-op offers older students more options.

By Evan Smith

One of the hottest pieces of OSCA-news this year has been the opening of a new co-op, the Brown Bag Co-op, called the “BBC”. Although The Oberlin Review and The Oberlin Alumni Magazine wrote feature articles about the BBC, confusion still exists ranging from the simple “What’s it actually called?” to the slightly more complex “How does it work?” question.

During the spring semester of 2001, the Long Range Planning committee began discussing the possibility of a “no-meals co-op” that would exist within Fairchild. As the name implied, the “no-meals co-op” would not serve meals but instead provide at-cost bulk foods to OSCA members desiring an alternative to the traditional co-op. This idea was met with disdain from the members of Fairchild. But after the lottery of Spring 2003, few people requested membership in Fairchild, so the idea of a “no-meals co-op” quickly morphed into “Fivekid”, in reference to the College’s five-meal plan, and was swiftly approved by the OSCA board on a one-year trial basis. Soon after the co-op’s first meeting in fall 2003, the members decided to change the name to the Brown Bag Co-op, or BBC.

The logistics of the co-op are simple. BBC has 48 members, and each member works from 1-2 hours per week portioning food, working cashier shifts, cleaning, or performing administrative tasks. The co-op meets twice weekly for dinner, discussion, and decision-making. Each co-op member has $90 to spend on groceries per month, and any money not spent goes into the end-of-semester refund.

BBC’s first semester was a little rocky at times, (hey, do you remember what your first semester was like?) but now that the norms of the co-op are becoming established, it’s becoming a fine tuned precision machine. While the first perk of the co-op might have been the captivating price-gun, now members get to enjoy a supply of cheap groceries AND a price gun. Not bad for a meal plan, eh?

OSCA Considers
Off-Campus Purchase

In light of concerns about the accessibility, visibility, and practicality of its current offices in Wilder, OSCA is now debating the acquisition of an off-campus property for use as an office, meeting, and educational center. Sites under consideration include a house on Elm St. and one on E. College, right next to Tank.

Since its earliest days, OSCA has had a special fund dedicated to purchasing property and weaning the organization from dependence on buildings rented from Oberlin College. OSCA used the money to purchase Fuller house in 1985 and Langston-Bliss house in 1986. When OSCA Properties was formed in 1997 (as a sister corporation to OSCA), it created its own fund for purchasing property. Since the sale of Langston-Bliss in 2002, the property fund has surplus money.

The central mission of OSCA Properties remains one of providing at-cost housing for students and community members, but Oberlin College policies threaten to diminish the market for these services in the near future. A ban by the City of Oberlin on all off-campus rooming houses makes purchasing another house for student and community housing unfeasible, so OSCA Properties has been investigating other ways to invest the substantial properties fund. One proposal under consideration is to purchase a house, or other properly zoned property, for use as an office space and educational center. OSCA proper would rent the office and meeting space from OSCA Properties, trading its now overcrowded offices on the fourth floor of Wilder for the off-campus space and perhaps a smaller office on the first floor of Wilder.

The move off-campus would afford more space for the development of OSCA’s now-paltry library, as well as for committee meetings and social gatherings. In a recent caucus discussion, the Board of Directors seemed generally in favor of the idea, though concerns were raised about the suitability of the location on Elm Street. Final approval of the project is pending financial reports and re-zoning of the site.
Help OSCA Re-Establish its Alumni Council!

Several years ago, OSCA attempted to establish an Alumni Council, a noble effort that failed for somewhat unclear reasons. There has not been an Alumni Coordinator for some time now, and so the initiative was probably waylaid by apathy and discontinuity in the organization. Ironically, those institutional problems are the type that an Alumni Council would help correct.

So we're giving it another go. The new Alumni Council will consist of six alumni serving 4 year terms, with staggered appointments of groups of three every two years. Confused? That makes all of us.

So could you be on the Alumni Council? Probably so. OSCA needs the advice of alums with a variety of experience both in and after OSCA, as well as from people who were co-ops at different times in the organization's history. As a member of the AC, you'd be expected to:

- Stay in periodic touch with the Council and the OSCA Officers via email to advise and support the activity of the Board of Directors.
- Advise the Theory and History Coordinator as needed.
- Stay in close contact with the Long Range Planning Committee to support strategizing, campaigning, and fundraising.
- Attend a yearly weekend retreat in mid-February to advise the Officers and Board and help set the year's agenda.

Members of the Council would be non-voting members of OSCA for the duration of their term. Room and board expenses for the annual council retreat, to take place in the luxuriously appointed cabins of Mohican State Park, will be covered by OSCA.

Aside from those meager perks, consider the service you would be performing for OSCA. The coming years will likely try OSCA more than any in recent history, as the College unilaterally pursues admissions and housing policies that may edge us out of the market. Make no mistake, OSCA has outlived its usefulness to the powers that be, and students are going to need the support of alumni to help keep our organization alive.

To be considered for service on the Alumni Council, please fill out the attached application, and mail it to:

OSCA
Wilder Box 86
135 W. Lorain Street
Oberlin, OH 44074

Applicants may be contacted for a brief phone interview. OSCA's personnel committee will appoint the Council. Thanks for your interest!

Co-Ed Rooming Legalized

Cheers erupted in the dining room of Tank on March 11, as Membership Secretary Maggie Raife reported to the Board of Directors that OSCA would at last have legal co-ed rooming. At a meeting with the College only hours before, Raife and the other officers had secured the College's guarantee that mixed gender rooms would no longer be considered illegal.

For years, OSCA has quietly and unofficially allowed its members to share mixed gender rooms upon request. At least since the early 90s, OSCA has had a double-reporting policy for housing: co-ed rooms were on an "actual" list for internal use, but did not appear on the "official" list provided to ResLife.

This policy made OSCA the lone haven in Oberlin for those who, for whatever reason, wanted to live with a roommate of the opposite sex. It also created paperwork nightmares for OSCA staff and raised safety concerns about evacuation procedures.

OSCA has long been willing to put up with the paperwork hassle created by the double reporting, but has increasingly put pressure on the College to legalize its unofficial co-ed policy over safety concerns. OSCA staffers have worried that the College would not have the right room list in the event of a fire.

After bowing to these concerns, the College is following suit with co-ed rooms in Noah.
Housing and Internships

Yes! I am an OSCA alum or OSCA supporter who wants to help current and former Co-ops by providing housing and/or internships during winter term or summer.

Name______________________________________________________

Address__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Phone number_________________________ Email address________________________________

I can provide housing:

___ for summer dates____________________

___ for winter term dates____________________

___ for how many people? Cost (if any)____________________

Housing address: _____________________________________________

Street

City State Zip

Comments:

I can provide internships/jobs:

___ for summer dates____________________

___ for winter term dates____________________

___ for how many people? Paid or unpaid?____________________

Please give a brief description of the internship(s):

Sponsoring individual/ organization____________________________________________________

Address____________________________________________________

Street

City State Zip

Phone number_________________________ Email address____________________

Additional information:
Alumni Council Application

OSCA has a great resource: you the Alumni. Apply for the Alumni Council to use your perspectives and experiences to help make OSCA a larger and stronger organization.

Name_____________________________ Email address_____________________________

Address_____________________________

Street__________________________________ City__________________________ State Zip

Phone: ________________________________

Questions:
What years were you in OSCA, and in what co-ops?

What positions did you hold during that time? (if you don’t remember that’s fine)

Have you done anything in the co-op movement since graduation?

What jobs have you held and how do they make you a better candidate?

What skills or connections do you have that recommend you? i.e. are you a lawyer or accountant who is willing to work pro bono or at a reduced rate?

Do you have experience locating and writing grants?

Are you a business consultant who could help us with restructuring?

Do you have connections at the college to try to get us better treatment?

Do you have access to an Elite Commander Unit or other military personnel?

Anything else you’d like to add that you feel makes you the right person for the job?
OSCA Supports Sister Co-op

By Liz Johnson '07

Each year, OSCA votes on whether to send $2,000 to a co-operative in Nicaragua called UNAG—
the National Union of Agriculturalists and Ranchers. This January, five OSCA students traveled to Estelí,
Nicaragua to visit OSCA's sister co-operative. This delegation went with the intention of obtaining first-
hand information about how the money that OSCA sends to this co-op almost every year gets spent, and
what direct effects it is having on the community. This year, OSCA overwhelmingly approved a donation of
$4,000. This money is specifically earmarked for a revolving loan fund in one small community in the
department of Estelí.

On January 6, five Oberlin students arrived in the
city of Estelí and were invited to meetings with local
women where UNAG's structure and function was
explained. UNAG gives aid to farmers and women
through a revolving loan fund. This system is a posi-
tive way to bring aid to communities that would other-
wise not have access to it, while at the same time,
avoids charity. The loans from the revolving loan fund
come in the form of specific material aid: a woman
can request a loan for a cow, or seeds, and if she is
approved, UNAG will give her these items. There is a
definite price set for each of the items that a woman
can obtain through a loan, and she is expected to pay
back that amount with 8% annual interest over the
course of 2 or 3 years. Eight percent seems like a very
high interest rate, but is manageable compared to the
25% interest the Nicaraguan banks charge. In addi-
tion, banks only give loans to people with a certain
amount of land and money, so the subsistence farm-
ers and women being served by UNAG would have no
chance of obtaining a loan from a bank.

On January 9, the OSCA representatives visited
the municipio of San Juan de Limay, the municipality
to which OSCA's money gets sent. Limay, is the
hottest, driest, poorest section of Estelí. Whereas
most of the women we interviewed in the other com-
munities had received upward of 3 loans and had paid
them all back, the women in Limay had received fewer
loans, and many women were still struggling to pay
them back. Since the conditions of life are extremely
harsh in this region, the occurrence of livestock and
crops dying was much higher. This made it much more
difficult for the women to pay back their loans.

OSCA became involved with San Juan de Limay's
revolving loan fund through a co-operative in Vermont
which was donating to this fund yearly. Now, however,
OSCA is the only international organization, and
therefore the only organization at all, that donates
specifically to Limay. OSCA's donation enables women
to continue to struggle against a harsh climate and an
apathetic government in a land where very few options
remain.
What’s news with you?

New address? New job? Want to get in touch with other OSCA alums? Just want to say hello? We’d love to hear from you...

Name: ________________________________________________

Co-op(s) & years: ______________________________________

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)

OSCA Joins the Bill Long Foundation

At the December 11, 2003 meeting of OSCA's Board of Directors, OSCA voted to join the Bill Long Foundation (BLF). The BLF was founded by members of the late Co-op Bookstore, and is a public community foundation run on cooperative principles.

On Thursday, February 26, 2004, OSCA members attended their first BLF annual meeting, where they listened to community organizations present their requests. They then discussed and voted on how to distribute the year's grants. The foundation gave over $11,000 to local nonprofits, offering services dealing with hunger, affordable child-care and arts and education.

OSCA’s 2004 Reunion Activities!

For a full schedule of Oberlin reunion events, check the Oberlin website. OSCA's events will be held on Saturday, May 29.

10:30 am: Tour of James F. “Bill” Long Nature Preserve
Noon: Alumni Picnic at Tank
2:00 pm: Panel discussion, “The Future of OSCA”
3:50 pm: Open house, OSCA office
9:00 pm: Porch Party at Tank (byob)

OSCA still needs panel members for “The Future of OSCA” discussion. If you are a former officer and plan on attending this year's reunion activities, please contact kagriffi@oberlin.edu to participate!
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VISIT OUR WEBSITE!
http://osca.wilder oberlin.edu/
E-mail osca@oberlin.edu
- for information on current osca happenings
- for information on upcoming alumni events
- to update your contact information
- to offer summer or winter term internships and housing
- for links to other cooperative websites
- and more!

OSCA Alumni Picnic!
You are all invited to the annual OSCA Alumni Picnic where there is always plenty of good company, delicious food, and stories to be shared.
Please come by Saturday, May 27, at Noon on the front lawn of Tank Co-op.