

Voices of the Class of '14 1/2

Ryan Cioffi

Anthropology Major, Art History Minor

What led you to graduate in December? Do you have plans for the future?

I found out last spring that I could graduate early, and I was like, "Why would I not do that?" considering the amount of money it is for an entire semester here. And I'm actually living off-campus, so I won't be kicked out of my home. I have some time to figure things out. ... I'd like to go back abroad again: I studied abroad in India for a semester. I don't know how, when or why I am going to do that, but I would like to. The other thing I'm looking into is becoming a registered dietician, which requires significantly more school, which I'm not excited about at this moment.

What comes to mind as one of the best things you've done at Oberlin?

I would say, definitely, if you haven't gone, you should go to an aerialists' show because they're literally amazing. I kept trying to get my friends to go all the time, and they were like, "Eh, I don't know." I'm like, "No, your mind's going to be blown. You should definitely go."

One of the most fun nights I've had here was [when] my friend Robert set up hide-and-seek in Mudd ... and it was literally so fun. You have your own team that you could make, and you're competing against other teams, and no one's in Mudd. You get to run around and be kind of crazy. There's tons of sugary snacks, which is awesome.

Is there any advice you would give other students?

The first thing that comes to mind is go to more events. But, obviously, everyone is so busy that it's really, really hard to do that. So I guess my second piece of advice — which I've stuck to — is don't get sucked into the world of coffee, because it's bad. ... It's really bad.

Matt Young

Classical Piano and Creative Writing Major

What led you to graduate in December? Do you have plans for the future?

I found out last semester [that I could finish early] ... so I'm graduating in nine semesters instead of ten. ... Last semester, I was really sad because a lot of my really close friends were leaving. But this semester, coming back, it's been great ... meeting new people and making new communities ... which I thought would be a lot harder than it was. ... It's been my best semester, almost. It's been awesome.

One of my friends that I met

here [and I] started a music project together last year, and we worked on it all summer, and we're going to continue working on it in the spring. We're a duo. It's like a pop music project, so we're going to be in Chicago for a little bit, writing and recording and stuff, and then we're going to probably move to New York in February to try to perform and play and write some more work [and] record an album.

What comes to mind as one of the best things you've done at Oberlin?

I think the people I've met here, the late nights spent hanging out with people listening to music [and] talking about music. All the creative people I've met have been so influential to me. I took that for granted while being here, and I think that's going to be hard to find again in the future.

Is there any advice you would give other students?

I think it's a really hard place to be; this is a really hard school to be at. It's stressful, it can be hard to make friends; when I was a freshman, I had a really hard time making friends. Even though it's small, communities can seem really exclusive, and it can be hard to get your voice heard. ... So I'd just tell people to trust themselves, and just get out there and get involved.

I just think people pigeonhole themselves too soon here. And that's not the point of the education structure; it's to let you try as many things as you can, and you should take advantage of that.

Sara Harris

Biology Major

What led you to graduate in December? Do you have plans for the future?

I wasn't actually planning on [graduating early] at the beginning of this semester. I knew that I could, but I figured I would stay. ... But then I met with the dean, and she was like, "You can graduate early," and I was like, "Cool, I don't think I am." And then I met with another dean, and she was like, "Wait, why aren't you graduating early?" And I was like, "Well, that's a good question." ... I'm graduating with a bio major, but my plans are to get my master's in architecture. [Laughs.] What is undergrad?

I want to take time off before [graduate school]. I'm thinking of going to do a craft furniture-making program for a little bit in Asheville, NC. ... I feel like that's also a more unique way to come at getting stuff for a portfolio.

What's something that comes to mind as one of the best things you've done at Oberlin?

I was in OSCA my first year; I lived in Keep. And so the very first night I

was on campus, our [Housing Loose Ends Coordinators] took us to the Arb. None of us had ever been to the Arb. It was night; it was dark. They even took us a convoluted way to get there so even if we'd been to the Arb, we wouldn't know where we were going. And there was a bunch of people around a campfire playing music, singing songs, drinking. I mean, that was the night when I was like, "Yeah, I'm really glad I came to Oberlin."

What led you to graduate in December? Do you have plans for the future?

Everyone is always like, "You need to connect with professors," and I think partially because I was convincing myself that I was super interested in bio, I never did that. It's not like you have to do it with everyone, but specific professors that you really like — actually do go to their office hours and chill with them. Because there's a lot of really great professors on this campus, and they literally block off time to talk to you. That's something I wish I had done more of.

Abigail Barr

Theater Major, Sociology Minor

What led you to graduate in December? Do you have plans for the future?

I have sort of had one foot out the door of Oberlin since second semester freshman year. I have a lot of stuff happening at home in New York. I took the maximum number of credits for about five semesters, and because I'm a senior, the course credit system ended up working in my favor. ... I decided that this would make the most sense financially as well — just to graduate and get out there. ... I have an internship in New York. I grew up in New York; I have friends [there]. Hopefully [in the future] applying to more internships, maybe getting a full job somewhere, working on shows, that kind of stuff.

What comes to mind as one of the best things you've done at Oberlin?

Directing my senior capstone show was a really big thing for me. It was *4,000 Miles*; it went up in October in Little Theater. For me, I mean honestly, I've had a lot of ups and downs. ... I've had as mixed a relationship to Oberlin as anyone else could have.

Is there any advice you would give other students?

In terms of why I was able to do this, it was because I got everything out of the way. ... So if you're a freshman, you should be taking classes in diverse things. Act like you're still in high school when they made you take math, and they made you take English, and all these things, because that's the only way that you discover what you like. I mean, I was a [Sociology] minor; I did not walk into Oberlin thinking,

"Oh, I want to minor in Sociology." ... So if you don't actually do the liberal arts exploration like they want you to do, you won't be able to figure out that you might like something that you didn't think you were going to coming in.

Claire Yeske

English Major

What led you to graduate in December? Do you have plans for the future?

I hadn't actually considered graduating early until the beginning of the semester when I found out that I even could. ... It just seemed like the right decision to make for me. I went abroad last semester, and was really happy to have the opportunity to be out in the real world, outside of the Oberlin bubble. As much as I love the Oberlin bubble, and as great as it is, I'm kind of looking forward to get jumping on the opportunity to get out of it. I'm in off-campus housing, so I still have my house available — my housemates are still living there — so I might be coming back and forth to Oberlin a little bit. ... I'm probably going to be studying for grad school exams, potentially getting a job part-time, full-time, not sure yet.

What comes to mind as one of the best things you've done at Oberlin?

I was on the field hockey team for three years while I was here, and I'm not on it now; this is my first and only year not playing field hockey. And so I would simultaneously say that playing field hockey for three years and then not playing field hockey this year were two of the best things that I did while I was at Oberlin.

Is there any advice you would give other students?

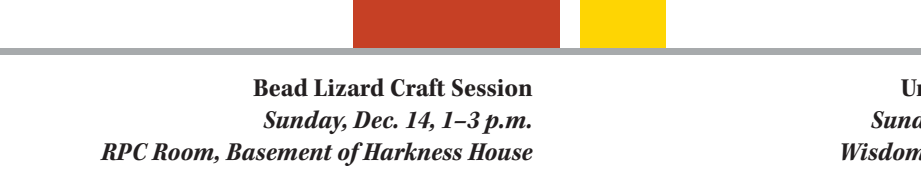
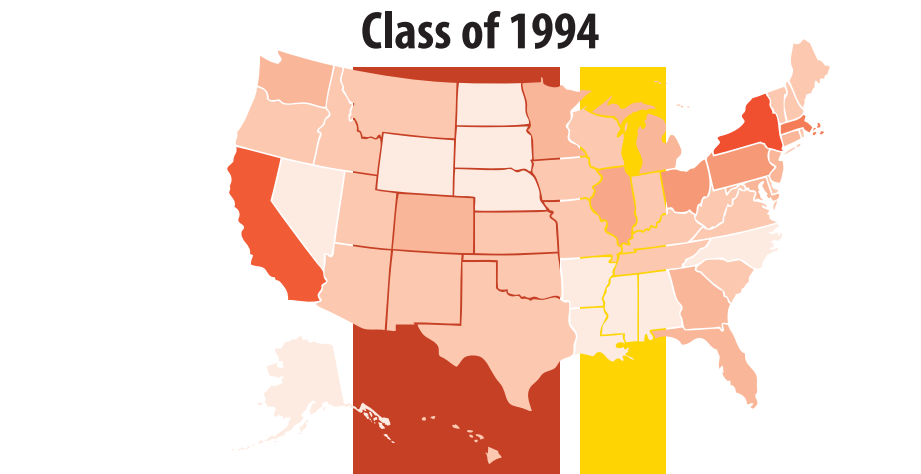
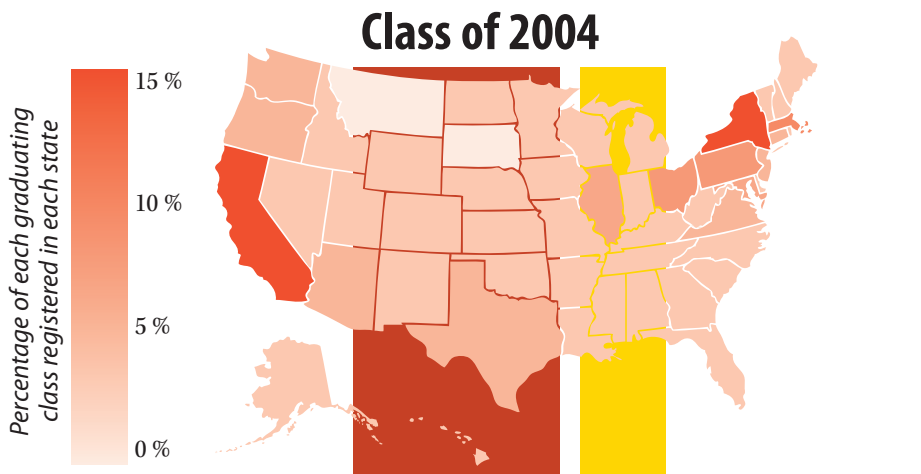
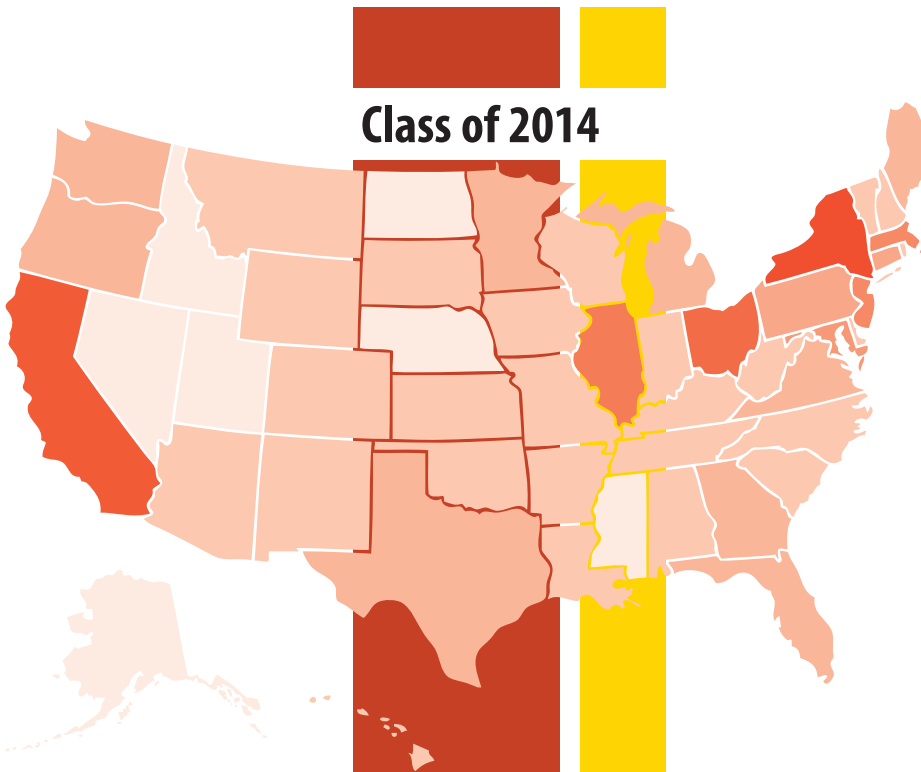
I think that Oberlin is a place where a lot of people feel a lot of pressure to overextend themselves as much as possible. It's like we have the stress Olympics constantly, where it's like, "I'm more stressed than you because of this." And I think that people just need to remember that it's not something that you have to do, and that self-care is really important, and it's OK to just do one or two things and do them really, really well, rather than doing eight million things and feeling overextended and like you can't give 100 percent to all of them.

The other piece of advice I would probably give is to definitely, at some point before you graduate, go skinny-dipping in the Arb. Just do it. It's liberating and it's fun and it's great, and when it's really hot outside, it's a really good way to cool off!

Midyear graduates fulfill their requirements and finish their degrees with little of the pomp and circumstance afforded to those that finish in May. We asked a group of December graduates to reflect on the path that led them here and the wisdom they've collected along the way.

Where do grads go?

OBIEWeb, the alumni office's database of past students, contains 23,839 registered community members. Of those, 363 live in Oberlin, constituting 4.3 percent of the town's total population. Approximately 4.4 percent of registered alumni currently live in New York City, while 2.1 percent live in Chicago. There are 36 Obies in Australia, 20 in Switzerland and one in Iraq. The maps below plot the whereabouts of alumni in the U.S. from last year's graduating class against those who graduated 10 and 20 years ago.



Tom Rathe

Environmental Studies Major

What led you to graduate in December? Do you have plans for the future?

I'm graduating this semester because I took a semester off in the spring of my junior year. As it stood originally, it was looking like I would need every semester to graduate, so it made the most sense to take an extra semester, rather than trying to cram extra courses in. I'm moving back to Virginia. As of now, I'm going to just work for a little while and save up some money doing landscaping and gardening, which I've done in the summers before ... and just kind of see what happens in the next year.

What comes to mind as one of the best things you've done at Oberlin?

I would say being part of student organizations in general. In my case, it was playing with Oberlin Steel. I joined as a freshman, and it was a really good experience — not only in being part of a performing group and playing shows and going on tour over spring break, but also just making friends with people in all different years throughout the time I was in the group.

Is there any advice you would give other students?

As someone who took a semester off, there's absolutely nothing wrong with doing that. The advice I would give is just don't hesitate to reach out. I had a really good experience talking to my class dean, who was just extremely helpful and accommodating [in] a difficult situation that led me to take a semester off. ... I felt like faculty advisors were pretty supportive in the personal leave process, so by all means, if it feels like something you need to do, there's precedent to it.

Josh Curtis

Piano Performance and Math Major

What led you to graduate in December? Do you have plans for the future?

For me, it's actually [graduating] on time, because I took a semester off for knee surgery once. I'm finishing my 10th semester — five years — double-degree. I'm applying to graduate school for piano; that would start in the fall. So I'd still be in Oberlin in the spring, hopefully working somehow and practicing for auditions.

What comes to mind as one of the best things you've done at Oberlin?

Just sort of opening my mind to different perspectives in a way that wasn't really possible for me in high school. Not that Oberlin is that diverse of a place compared to the rest of the world, but I think there's more emphasis on the responsibility to educate yourself about different viewpoints, and just really having the chance to hear some of those viewpoints, and to hear people

open up about that, and get a better understanding of other people's experiences.

Is there any advice you would give other students?

My first year, I was very closed off. I was focused on doing what I had to do for my classes — you know, practicing piano and stuff — so I didn't take advantage of all the amazing things that were going on: all the performances in the Conservatory, other music performances, theater, dance ... all sorts of student organizations, rallies, protests. I was very not aware of this whole giant melting pot of things that are happening on campus. I guess, [take] advantage of that richness that I don't think is going to be present elsewhere in the same way for the rest of life. ... Be receptive to all the ideas that are coming at you and all the opportunities to see different things and hear different things.

Laura Gray

Biology Major, Geology Minor

What led you to graduate in December? Do you have plans for the future?

I hadn't planned on graduating early, but then I got here this semester and found out I "only" needed 19 credits to graduate. So, instead of taking a half course load each semester, or one class next semester or something, I decided to cram it all in and then save a lot of money on not being a student next semester. ... My plans for next semester involve a lot of research. I'll be traveling to Spain for part of it, because I did some research over the summer, and for that project, I'm being sent to present that work at an international science conference in Spain and then extending my trip for fun. ... I felt like faculty advisors were pretty supportive in the personal leave process, so by all means, if it feels like something you need to do, there's precedent to it.

What comes to mind as one of the best things you've done at Oberlin?

Being an RA in Hebrew Heritage House was without a shadow of a doubt the most wonderful thing I got to do on campus. I did that for a year and a half, and I found that extremely rewarding and meaningful; and before that I did some interfaith works. I helped plan a longest night service, an interfaith Thanksgiving celebration, and doing that was really nice too.

Is there any advice you would give other students?

Don't take a class with a terrible professor, ever. Even if you like the class, or you think you will like the class, you probably won't if there was a bad professor. So pick your classes based on a good professor, and talk to your friends about who those professors are. Another bit of advice I would give is make an effort to learn from your fellow Obies. I think a lot of the learning I have done at this school has been outside of the classroom, and the learning I value the most has been outside of the classroom, from my peers.

What comes to mind as one of the best things you've done at Oberlin?

I'm one of those people who has been probably the happiest ever with Oberlin. I know there's a lot of disillusionment on this campus sometimes with what happened on campus, and things about the political climate, social climate, etc. But as an academic institution, it's provided me with the opportunity to do everything I've wanted to do — oftentimes a lot of support and funding to do everything I wanted to do. I've formed incredible relationships with my peers and my professors [and] faculty alike. Coming out of Oberlin, I'm really just thankful

and happy about the way the entire three and a half years turned out.

Is there any advice you would give other students?

Only take classes you love; that's my best advice I can give. Because there's always graduate school if you want to specialize; there are always other opportunities to get the skills you need. But the reason we all came to a liberal arts school is so we could take all the classes that we love in all the different divisions. And if you're doing that every semester, that's all the passion and motivation you need to enjoy your educational experience here. And that informs all the rest.

Rachel Davidson

Psychology Major

What led you to graduate in December? Do you have plans for the future?

I knew coming into Oberlin that I was going to have to graduate a semester early or go down to very, very, very part-time if I was doing honors, because my family didn't have money for the last semester. I brought in a ton of AP credits because I knew I was going to have to do that. I'm not [going to stay on campus], but I live on the east side of Cleveland, and so I'll probably be visiting sometimes. ... I just got a job interview, so that's good! ... Primarily, I'm looking at direct service nonprofit work, so I've been applying for a lot of positions.

What comes to mind as one of the best things you've done at Oberlin?

Being an RA in Hebrew Heritage House was without a shadow of a doubt the most wonderful thing I got to do on campus. I did that for a year and a half, and I found that extremely rewarding and meaningful; and before that I did some interfaith works. I helped plan a longest night service, an interfaith Thanksgiving celebration, and doing that was really nice too.

Is there any advice you would give other students?

Don't take a class with a terrible professor, ever. Even if you like the class, or you think you will like the class, you probably won't if there was a bad professor. So pick your classes based on a good professor, and talk to your friends about who those professors are. Another bit of advice I would give is make an effort to learn from your fellow Obies. I think a lot of the learning I have done at this school has been outside of the classroom, and the learning I value the most has been outside of the classroom, from my peers.

The *Review* congratulates all students graduating this semester, and regrets that it is unable to recognize all graduates, as the College considers their names confidential.

This Week editor: Hazel Galloway

CALENDAR

Work It! A Fundraiser for Preterm Abortion Access Fund
Friday, Dec. 12, 10 p.m.–1 a.m. The 'Sco

Opera Scenes I & II
Saturday, Dec. 13, 4–6 p.m. and 8–10 p.m. Kulas Recital Hall, Conservatory Central

Unravel
Saturday, Dec. 13, 7–7:45 p.m. Fairchild Chapel

Bead Lizard Craft Session
Sunday, Dec. 14, 1–3 p.m. RPC Room, Basement of Harkness House

Unsilent Night 2014
Sunday, Dec. 14, 7 p.m. Wisdom Tree, North Quad

Pancakes with the President
Monday, Dec. 15, 10–11:30 p.m. Dascomb Dining Hall

Empty Bowls Holiday Brass & Organ Spectacular
Tuesday, Dec. 16, 7–9 p.m. First Church in Oberlin

Students United for Reproductive Freedom wraps up a busy semester with a benefit concert at the 'Sco. Proceeds from the show will be contributed to a fund that aims to help disadvantaged women overcome the financial and legal barriers to abortion. And What!? will also perform at the show.

Conservatory students in the Voice and Opera Theater programs will present 12 short scenes from operas spanning three centuries. The most contemporary of the selections, Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Old Maid and the Thief*, was first produced for radio in 1939 and afterwards adapted for theater to great acclaim. The performance will be staged in two halves separated by two hours.

Oberlin's new contemporary vocal ensemble, ocoVoco, will be holding its second concert featuring selections from 20th- and 21st-century artists. The songs will span four languages and three countries of origin, encompassing both secular and religious works.

The Recycled Products Co-op and Oberlin Animal Rights join to offer a break from finals stress in the form of carefree crafting. Beads, beading guidance, string and tea will all be provided at this casual gathering. Look for signs with directions to the Recycled Products Co-op room in Harkness's basement.

Bring any kind of portable sound-playing device for this annual work of art, performed worldwide by groups of participants carrying speakers and walking together through cities and towns. The Oberlin walk will gather at 6:50 p.m. and progress through the streets of Oberlin to the Arb. Those wishing to participate should download the sound file in advance from www.unsilentlynight.com.

President Marvin Krislov and Dean of Students Eric Estes will be making an appearance at the final Monday fourth meal of the semester, open to all students free of charge. Come early to beat the crowds as what promises to be a packed pancake experience.

This holiday extravaganza will feature Conservatory brass and organ players along with members of the Northern Ohio Youth Orchestras and Oberlin Choristers. Although admission and beverages are free, over 1,000 handcrafted ceramic bowls will be for sale to benefit Oberlin Community Services.