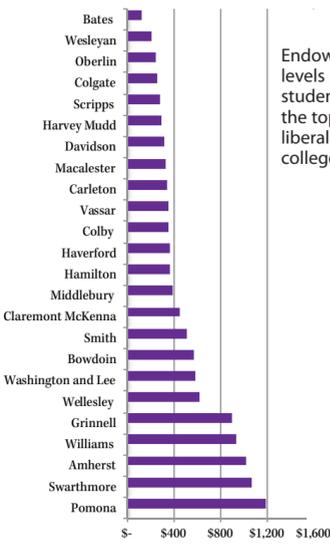


This section is seeking writers for the spring semester!

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* This figure has been adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, which gives an indication of value based on then-consumer purchasing power. Values are equivalent to 2014 dollars.

** These figures have been adjusted for inflation using the Higher Education Price Index, which takes into consideration the cost drivers in higher education and tends to increase faster than the CPI. Values are equivalent to 2014 dollars.



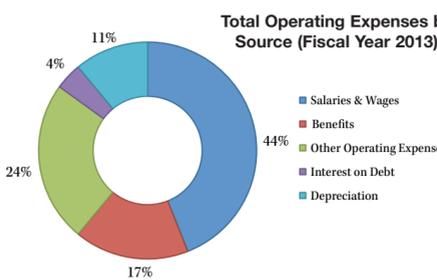
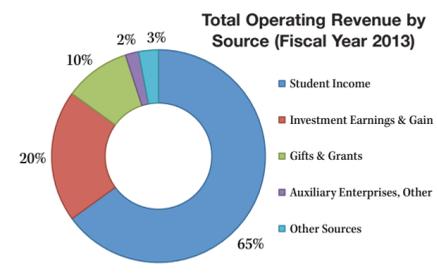
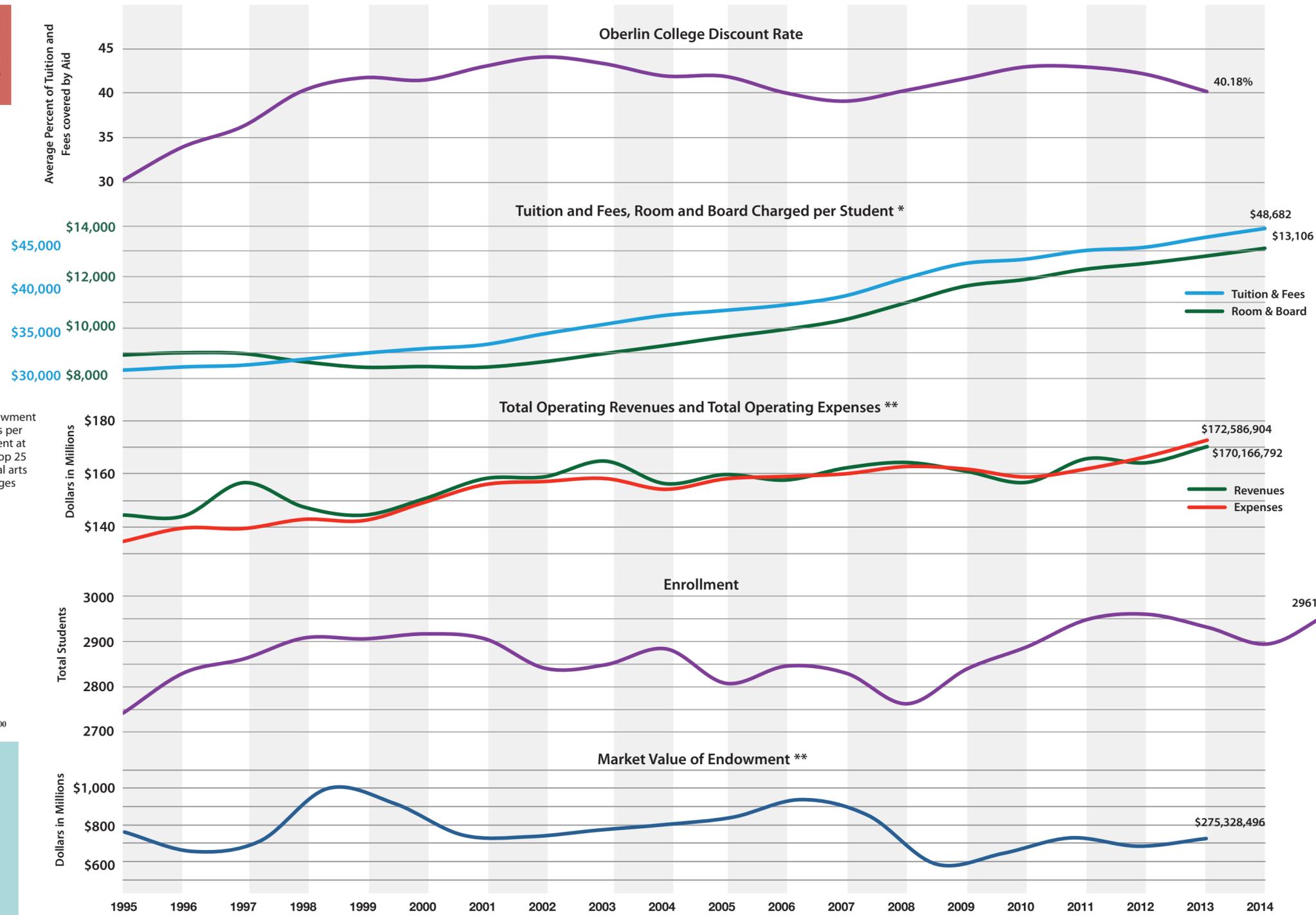
“Our continued review has made clear that any changes to financial aid policy must be considered as part of the broader strategic planning process that began in June.”

— Email sent to the student body on Nov. 14

In the two weeks that have elapsed since the student body received the latest update to the College’s proposed financial aid changes, student attention to the school’s finances has grown. The Student Labor Action Coalition has hung posters in dorms and academic buildings, and the College responded Monday with a presentation and question-and-answer session by Mike Frandsen, Oberlin’s vice president for the Office of Finance and Administration. A separate panel on Thursday night, hosted by the Strategic Planning Committee, aimed to address rising costs of higher education.

Not only does the issue generate a strong reaction among the many students committed to supporting equitable access to education, but ever-increasing tuition is difficult to ignore. Over the past decade, the cost of an Oberlin education has increased at more than twice the rate of median household incomes — and once adjusted for inflation, income among the families of most college students is actually falling.

The conclusions on financial aid and other policies reached by the Strategic Planning Committee will impact the College’s finances for years to come. However, an understanding of Oberlin’s recent financial history is vital to understanding its future. These figures reflect data filed in College financial statements going back almost two decades.



Data gathered from forms published on the website of the Office of the Controller. Endowment data courtesy of the College Board. Dates indicated represent fiscal years, which end on June 30.

This Week editor: Hazel Galloway

COLLEGE FINANCE

The Oberlin Review spoke with Mike Frandsen, the new vice president for the Office of Finance and Administration, about these data and his outlook on the College’s financial future.

Something that stands out when you look at these trends is how the discount rate has decreased over recent years. What are the factors behind this trend?

One of the things that was cited in a Review article last week was the previous Strategic Plan, which had as one of its goals increasing revenue per student. Carrying out that plan is certainly part of this. And it’s also a function of generating revenue to match the cost [of delivering] the education we want to deliver.

Considering your office’s prediction that the College will be running a deficit beginning next year, how do you view Oberlin’s financial outlook?

That’s predicting, but I think we’ll make whatever changes are necessary to have that not be the persistent situation. It’s something that the College can work through.

What changes will be necessary?

I think that’s part of what the strategic planning process will resolve: really thinking about prioritization of things and addressing where those opportunities make sense for Oberlin. It’s going to have to be a combination of changes on both the revenue and the costs side.

Some observers have blamed administrative growth for contributing to increases in the cost of higher education. Has this been the case at Oberlin?

Our administrative size has been basically flat [over the past five years] and in about the middle of the peer group that’s part of the survey. ... Over a 20-year period, there’s certainly been administrative growth in higher education. Part of it is federal government compliance matters — and even as a private institution, there’s some of those for us. Part of it is change in expectations of those coming to college. Part of it is providing support services for more and more students who need special support services as they come to college. ... I haven’t been here long enough to learn about Oberlin specifically, but those are some things driving the general trend.

If you could give a message to Oberlin students about how to look at the College’s financial position and how it impacts them, what would it be?

There’s a cost to the things we have here and that we do here, and for every thing that one person might think we could give up, there’s another person who would cling to that absolutely. It comes down to a matter of tradeoffs and making the best use of our resources. ... This is a unique point in Oberlin history because of the strategic planning process. And that’s going to have a big impact on what happens for around the next decade at Oberlin. Because you’re here now, you have a chance to engage in that process that someone who’s here three years from now won’t have. So it’s incumbent on you to take advantage of that opportunity and engage with the process, but do so maturely, recognizing that it’s going to be about tradeoffs. We can’t probably have everything we want. There are going to be more good ideas than there are resources to implement them.

CALENDAR

Bad Writing
Friday, Dec. 5–Sunday, Dec. 7
Wilder Hall

Rent
Friday, Dec. 5 and Saturday, Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m.
Wilder Main

Collegium Musicum Oberliniense
Friday, Dec. 5, 8–10 p.m.
Fairchild Chapel

OCTaiko & ExCo Final Show
Saturday, Dec. 6, 4:30–6 p.m.
Hales Gymnasium

Indonesian Gong Concert
Sunday, Dec. 7, 2 p.m.
Shipherd Lounge, Asia House

Oberlin Poetry Group Reading
Sunday, Dec. 7, 7 p.m.
The Slow Train Café

“The Song is You”: An Evening of Jerome Kern Music
Thursday, Dec. 11, 10–11:15 p.m.
The Cat in the Cream

This three-day series of discussions, readings and workshops will feature three acclaimed poets: Tarfia Faizullah, Jaswinder Bolina and Richard Siken. With its provocative title, the event’s organizers hope to acknowledge and even celebrate the inevitability of occasional bad writing while allowing all students a chance to critique each other and think about their own work. The festival opens with a gala dinner Friday in Wilder 115 at 6 p.m., followed by a poetry reading from Bolina. For a full schedule, see the Oberlin events calendar.

Oberlin students will bring this classic rock musical, set in the 1990s in the bohemian East Village of Manhattan, to the Wilder stage this weekend. The plot follows a small group of artist friends over the course of a year as they make their way in a world troubled with poverty, prejudice, gentrification, the AIDS epidemic and, naturally, the rent.

This 40-voice choir performs ethereal medieval, Renaissance and early baroque vocal music, both at its biannual campus concerts and at performances at the Cleveland Museum of Art and elsewhere. Its Christmas- and Advent-themed program will feature seven selections from 16th-century composers as well as a work by 20th-century German composer Hugo Distler.

The vaulted ceiling of Hales Gymnasium may not be able to contain the resounding rhythmic commotion produced by two groups performing in this traditional style of Japanese drumming. Members of OCTaiko will take the floor following a performance by participants in this semester’s ExCo. Donations and proceeds from baked goods sold at the event will benefit OCTaiko’s Winter Term trip to Hawaii to study under taiko master Kenny Endo.

This concert will unite the arts of Javanese gamelan and West Sumatran talempong in a single program, said to be the only such conjuncture anywhere in the country. Gamelan, a native Indonesian music form at least eight centuries old, involves a percussion ensemble of gongs and drums. Small brass talempong drums lend their name to music typically played in a smaller group that also involves drums and gongs.

Nine junior and senior student poets will take the stage at the Slow Train Café for a reading of their recent works, the culmination of an informal poets’ workshop that has met weekly over the semester. Although the café has hosted a number of readings and other showings of student work, this marks the first student group poetry reading of the semester.

Jerome Kern earned two Oscars for his Broadway and Hollywood composing; his most beloved songs include “The Way You Look Tonight,” “Smoke Gets In Your Eyes” and “All the Things You Are.” The Oberlin Musical Theater Association production features a cast of stage and screen actors, jazz singers, nurses and sailors to set the scene at a USO Holiday Camp show in 1944. The production’s second night will open at 7:15 p.m. at Kendal at Oberlin, followed by a Saturday showing at 6:30 p.m. in Conservatory Central 25.