

The Bulletin

Oberlin's Time-Honored Tradition, Long Island Night

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"Desperation. Yeah, I'd say desperation."

That is how double-degree fifth-year Martin Kent would describe Oberlin's seemingly unbreakable bond with The Feve's weekly Long Island Night.

Oh, Long Island Night.

At a school of 3,000 students, in a town with just one bar and a diligent force of Campus Safety officers, there is bound to be a nightlife-sized hole in the hearts of many. In hopes of filling this void, some Oberlin students turn to The Feve, and The Feve is there waiting, with open arms, and themed weekday specials catered to broke college students. A fan favorite is Long Island Night, where Long Island iced teas are only \$6 and the bar is packed from 10 p.m. to closing.

While Long Island Night is always well-attended, students seem to have a somewhat complicated relationship with it. A relationship that consists of an endless cycle of mildly enjoying it, complaining that it isn't more fun, remembering that there's nothing else to do, and returning the following Wednesday. Long Island Night is notorious for bringing people from all corners of the Oberlin community into one small room where friendships are born, people are introduced, gossip is exchanged, and suspiciously strong drinks are had.

"Feve culture has changed over time," Kent said. "The first time I came here was 'cause I played in a senior recital of fifth-years when I was a freshman and they were like, 'We're having a birthday party. You should come. ... They have this thing called Long Island Night.' ... It was like an underground thing."

"People [have] caught on," double-degree fifth-year Lyric Anderson jumped in. "Perhaps younger generations of Oberlin students have caught on too quickly. My first time at Long Island Night was the second week of my first year. And now, as a

second-year, I'm shocked at how many first-years are in attendance each week. The bar is packed. So much so that at about 11 p.m., if you ever intend to move from one part of the bar to another, you'll first have to push by an entire sports team, your old lab partner, your first-year friend group, a pack of polka dots and cigarettes, and the guy that works at Umami. It's hard to think of a time when Long Island Night could have been underground.

"Two Dollar Tuesday was unheard of," Kent said. Two Dollar Tuesday, The Feve's weekly \$2 off mixed drinks special, is another popular night at The Feve, although not nearly as well-established as Long Island Night.

"That was not a thing," Kent said, thinking back on his first few years at Oberlin.

"Yeah, unheard of," Anderson added.

Kent and Anderson's fifth-year wisdom of Long Island Night is not to be dismissed; with five years comes great Oberlin knowledge, but they are also not the first to declare a shift in Oberlin Feve culture. As long as Long Island Night has been around, there has been a battle over who has claim over the small, dimly lit college bar come Wednesday evening.

"When I was a first-year, Wednesday night at The Feve felt like some mythical mirage of upperclassmen heaven," Lilyanna D'Amato, OC '22, wrote in an article for *The Oberlin Review* in 2022. "It was exclusive, a forbidden wonderland, a place my friends and I dared not enter for fear of expulsion or the sideways grimace of some cool, tattooed fourth-year ('Long Island Night Overcrowded, Sweaty, Not Fun Anymore,' *The Oberlin Review*, Mar. 18, 2022)."

Perhaps this allure has become a thing of the past, and younger students are fearlessly laying claim to the college bar.

"I think the younger people should stick to parties," Anderson pleaded. "Stick to the parties!"

The Feve and its infamous Long Island Nights have long been featured in *The Oberlin Review*, *The Grape*, and other student publications due to their prevalence in the social network of the school. However, in the most recent features, Long Island Night has been

regarded less as a social haven and more of a last resort for students looking to kick back during the week.

"Coupled with the enforcement of ObieSafe policies at Splitchers, once the most popular destination on Wednesday nights, Long Island Night has now become the only place to grab a midweek drink with friends," D'Amato wrote. "While The Feve may have represented a sophisticated upperclassmen haven in years past, now it feels like the entire campus is vying for a table ('Long Island Night Overcrowded, Sweaty, Not Fun Anymore,' *The Oberlin Review*, Mar. 18, 2022)."

Students have witnessed an increased loss of social spaces since Oberlin's return from the pandemic, and despite early attempts to bring back prepandemic attendance to on-campus events, the loss of community spaces has made this a challenging task.

"The Feve is an important third-party space to the Oberlin community," College second-year Emmi Beemer said. "It's hard for people to find a place to socialize that's not school-sanctioned, and I think that The Feve is an important place for everyone to come together."

Underlying the disappointment that some Oberlin students have with The Feve is the larger frustration with the lack of social activity on campus. Mobile ordering has changed campus dining and transformed places like The Rathskeller and Azariah's Café into grab-and-go hubs. Increased patrol over underage drinking at Splitchers, simply put, means that fewer students are there. The continued streamlining of dining and drinking at Oberlin leaves more students in search of places to just hang out.

"Aside from the debauchery and rumors, there's something magical about the routine of Long Island Night," Aly Fogel, OC '20, wrote in an article for *The Oberlin Review* in 2019, expressing one of the benefits of limited nightlife options. "The fact that there's only one late-night bar in town and one dance club on campus may seem detrimental to partying, but it actually pushes people in the community together ('Secrets from Seventeen

Years of Long Island Night," *The Oberlin Review*, Oct. 4, 2019)."

Even before the pandemic, Oberlin students felt confined in their social spaces. It seems to be a universal experience of current students, along with alumni. Until students find themselves with the variety of nightlife they so desire, The Feve will remain a staple, unaffected by occasional grievances, and inevitably bringing the campus community together.

"I think if you come here, you should get food," College second-year Leyla Cooke said when asked how she would recommend enjoying Long Island Night. "[The] food is good. ... You can get wings — wings are good with a drink."

Another student emphasized the importance of talking to new people and using The Feve as a place to get out of your comfort zone.

"We need to start talking to people," College second-year Sebastian Dalisay-Hockett expressed. "Just talk to each other!"

Long Island Night regulars are equipped with their Wednesday routines: food, drink, cards, and a cigarette. The overflowing bar spills out into the parking lot behind The Feve where groups of students chat, laugh, and mingle. Bikes are chained to lamp posts, and cards are dealt on the asphalt. Long Island iced teas are shared and finished quickly, a trail of empty glasses left on the stairs. As the night dies down, students part, untroubled by how much fun they did or did not have because one thing is certain: everyone will be back next Wednesday.

Illustrations by Theo Preston,
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