

The background of the cover is a red-tinted photograph showing a large group of graduates in caps and gowns walking in front of a building. The graduates are arranged in several rows, moving from left to right. The building in the background has classical architectural features like columns and arches.

The Little Booklet of Advice

FOR THE CLASS OF 2019 AND THE CLASS OF 1969

To the Class of 1969 and the Class of 2019

As the 50th reunion of the Class of '69 was approaching, the Reunion Committee thought about ways of making this milestone moment meaningful for you, as well as fun for us.

So we invited members of our class to reflect on what Oberlin has meant to them and what our 50 years of living since leaving Oberlin has taught us about life. We've collected these reflections into this booklet of advice—wisdom, counsel, bon mots, if you will—and are offering it to you (both newly minted members of the Alumni Association and perhaps reluctant inductees into the Half-Century Club) as our gift.

Of course, because we are Obies, we wouldn't dream of doing this the same way other colleges have. We decided to add a twist of our own. On our trips back to Oberlin to plan the reunion, we met with students who convinced us that this year's graduates have a lot to tell us, too. So, we asked some members of this year's class to send us advice. Some are students we met on trips to campus. Some are student leaders. Some are top college or conservatory students. Some are 2019-style activists. Some have been studying subjects that didn't exist in the days before our hair color was challenged. All, however, are interesting young individuals.

The result of that effort is what you now have in front of you—a booklet incorporating our advice to the Class of 2019, as well as advice from the members of that class back to us. Many of these offerings are thoughtful reflections, while others are tongue in cheek. Some are short. Some are funny. There is a rant or two. Some focus on careers and others on life, love, and everything in between. Most address the importance of attending Oberlin—and how Oberlin followed us all into the real world.

This was done as much for the members of the Class of 1969 as for the Class of 2019. We who graduated in '69 are at a turning point in our lives. There is a lot of taking stock and examining what we have learned over the years. Honest self-scrutiny is the word of the day, and we hope this little book of reflection provokes more of the same for our classmates, too.

For you in the Class of '19 who are embarking on what we are told is adult life, we may have come up with a few ideas that may save you some missteps and help you along in your journey. We will also take your advice to heart. This is our present to both classes, graduates 50 years apart, and we hope something in it inspires all of you to go forth and change the world.

We wish both the Class of 1969 and the Class of 2019 the very best, always.

The Class of 1969 Reunion Committee

SUSAN CAPERTON ALESSI '69

"To be, rather than to seem." For 50 years, I have kept that on my refrigerator and thought it was Oberlin's motto! I recently found out I was wrong! (It is from Cicero.) But, it could be Oberlin's motto, or Oberlin's gift to us all. If you graduated from Oberlin, you are a good person. So trust yourself. Follow your passion. Take risks. Make mistakes. Forgive yourself.

Exercise. (Consider yoga: in 50 years your body will thank you!) Laugh a lot and have fun!

And through all the years and days ahead, be grateful...actively...no matter what.

ANONYMOUS

Don't follow leaders, watch the parking meters.

ANONYMOUS

This is what would probably have saved me the most pain if I had learned it many years earlier: to pay attention to the full range of my feelings, especially those that cause me discomfort; to examine them, with help as needed from people whose judgment I trust, until I gain some clarity; to speak and act that clarity, with respect and compassion for everyone involved, including myself.

ANONYMOUS

Always have a mentor, my friend, always have a mentor.

ANONYMOUS

Advice from 50 years out:

- Your friends are precious—keep them.
- Your values are your life guide—live by them.
- Be a positive force for social justice wherever you are.
- The arts sustain you—nourish them.
- Travel, both physical and intellectual, opens the mind.
- Listen before you speak, try to understand before you act.
- Keep your bike and use it often.

ANONYMOUS

Usually I avoid giving advice, but I appreciate it from others, so I'll send this thought to you as you approach the end of your adventures as an Obie: Experiences—good

or bad—are the windows and doors that you need to find your paths, next steps, or detours. Embrace the mistakes you will inevitably make—they show you what you otherwise may not discover.

BILL BALIN '69

Don't take yourself too seriously, but take your emotions seriously. In my experience, it's important to identify and honor my emotions and to learn to express them in ways that do not assign the blame or responsibility for them to others. I can't expect others to be responsible for my emotions. This means that I am not the hub of the wheel but somewhere on the rim, with everybody else. I can therefore acknowledge my own foibles and learn to laugh at them.

In forming relationships, find others who don't take themselves too seriously, too.

Learn to recognize serendipity in life's events. Like when my wife and I and two friends went to a restaurant in San Miguel de Allende in Mexico last year, we sat in a covered, dirt-floor area outside the indoor part of the restaurant. We were the only customers there. A young man with a saxophone was playing 1940s big band jazz with recorded backgrounds. He was really good. He spoke minimal English, we spoke minimal Spanish, and we got to know him somewhat. I could have just passed it off as a coincidence, which scientifically, it may have been, but I have learned to appreciate such moments as the dessert of life—special times that allowed me and possibly only a few others to enjoy something I would not have gotten to witness other than I happened to be at the right place at the right time.

You are not alone. During our 20th reunion, we had a group session and the leader had asked me to bring up a topic to lead off the discussion. I mentioned that I had always felt inferior as a person—talent-wise, experience-wise, intelligence-wise, etc., while at Oberlin. To my shock and relief, many others in the group raised their hands and said, “Well, Bill, it wasn't only you. I felt that way, too.” So, I have learned that whatever your shortcomings, whatever your feelings of insecurity, there are plenty of others who feel that way as well. It makes it much easier to be in a group, and it helps with not taking yourself so seriously (see number 1, above).

It is never too late to be silly. Sometimes, bathroom humor, ridiculousness, and juvenile behavior has its place. Let yourself go. Goof off. Get a laugh from someone else. Laugh at yourself.

DAN CAMPBELL '69

- Live in another language.
- Don't be afraid to travel solely by smiles and gestures.
- To get a real perspective on our sheltered lives, live in another country or two or three.
- Don't be afraid of marrying into a new culture (mine was/is Native American).
- Listen to world music, order liner notes, translate the lyrics, and understand the emotions you're hearing.
- Stare at nature! Stalk outdoor experiences everywhere you go.
- Play a lot with children, become their favorite "funcler."
- Give things away—at least as much as you take in. Hold potlatch parties.

STU EDWARDS '69

Find a career you love! Work your ass off! Find someone to share your life with and love them like crazy! Take all of your vacations!

NOEL EVANS '69

A vague memory of Socrates saying something like "nothing" when asked what he KNEW just before the hemlock at the end. So my advice to the 2019s is, "I can't tell you a damn thing." If there were any doubt about that, Donnie Downer has made it all the more clear—in a big, new, different way.

Maybe this is my advice...(It's not a witticism, that's for sure. And it's probably a far cry from wisdom. So must be advice.): If things seem unusually bad now, they are. You're not confused that the prospect of a heinous despot causing the earth's climate death is an unusually insidious challenge. WWII, Vietnam, ongoing racism and other abuses were tough, but Donnie Darko is maniacally pulling the plug on the whole mud ball.

I hope you can figure out a way to turn things around.

In a less hopeless vein, finishing up at Oberlin is a great time to gather your strengths around you. Gird your loins. Speaking of which, don't be afraid to take relationships away from Oberlin and out into the real world. They may not survive out there—as my college sweetheart and first wife and I did not, as a couple. But I wouldn't have missed it. Launching beyond Oberlin with a partner and friend who shared the same Obie Valuepak was great. Maybe you all only do things by yourselves now. Co-dependence has become very unpopular, I know, though I remain a closet practitioner.

So I don't have anything less hopeless to say after all.

Just don't think you're crazy if it seems like a monster of Hitlerian proportions is

raging loose in the world just when you're trying to launch post-collegiately. You're not hallucinating. This is not the way the world is for anyone graduating from college, at any time. Vietnam was horrifying, but if DT gives you the DTs, that's appropriate. You got dealt a very nasty hand. It will translate into mass loss of life very soon, the way Vietnam did, but this time including all flora and fauna. And I really don't know what to say.

Don't give up. As one contemporary said of her opiate-addicted son, "There's nothing you can do, but you have to keep trying."

Tough times, tough times. Probably no good reason not to give up—but don't give up anyway.

WENDY FORBUSH '69

- Keep in touch with your Oberlin friends.
- Do figure out how to make enough money to support yourself.
- Don't focus on making money as much as you do on creating a life that fits you.
- Spend time with people who did not go to college and learn to appreciate how smart they are. It will help you not be elitist.
- Be aware that class bias is as alive and well as racism in the U.S. Become aware of your own.
- Spend time living in a different community or country.
- Contrary to conventional wisdom, you really do not have to change much as you age; you just need to grow.

WALT GALLOWAY '69

Wondering? Do it!

Though a chemistry major, I did my senior research in the geology department using an x-ray diffractometer. Unknown to me when I applied for grad school, it was the instrument I was destined to use in my first assistantship!

With no plan in mind, I took a Winter Term course in which I learned to use a Perkin-Elmer 303 Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer. When I walked into the lab for my first real job (as a chemist, no less, for USEPA), that was the instrument I was hired to use! I stayed for 38 years doing many other things, all driven by a wonder vs. a plan.

For many years I wished I'd studied abroad and had taken a gap year before grad school. I recently realized I did both without thinking of it that way—I served in Ethiopia in the Peace Corps for two years between Oberlin and grad school! I came away with way more than I brought.

For me, what we say about a liberal arts education was eminently true—it gave me many and varied skills, way beyond academics, that came into play frequently in my life and work. Take advantage of all your Oberlin experience whether or not it seemed important or even pertinent at the time.

Be open and follow your heart.

From one of my 100+ t-shirts:

Advice From a Largemouth Bass

- Find a new angle
- Know when to keep your mouth shut
- Don't take the bait
- Prize clean water
- Be lively and swift
- Don't give up without a fight
- Be a good catch!

ROBERT GOERTZ '69

What did I learn at Oberlin (and after)?

- Changing the world is serious business, but that doesn't mean being serious all the time.
- "Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on."
- Nurture relationships. This takes work, and I have not been particularly good at it.
- Exposure to other cultures expands the mind, but not all other cultures are outside the U.S.
- Forgiveness and grace are theological concepts that deserve more attention in the secular world.
- We were taught to think critically and write lucidly, skills that are not universally acquired.
- "Follow your dream" is an empty aphorism. What if one doesn't have one right now? Or it changes? Flexibility in the face of change, both personal and global, might be a better mantra.
- Correlation does not necessarily equate to causation.

In a different vein, the best thing that happened to me at Oberlin was meeting a junior resident, Peg Eckel, at May Cottage on perhaps my first day and persuading her to marry me. Happy 50th to my fellow classmates and to Peg.

Blame those that went before. You have every right to look at my generation and say, "WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?" Just be assured that your children and grandchildren will do the same to you.

Congratulations to the Class of 2019. Now be good citizens and go forth!

ELIZABETH "BIZ" GLENN HARRALSON '69

When I graduated from Oberlin, I had only a vague idea of my desired career path. Graduate school enabled me to get my first job, which turned out fortuitously—I loved the unusual Episcopal convent school staff where I taught. Met and married my husband. We moved around—to Turkey in the Air Force, and back to the U.S., settling in college town Lexington, Virginia. Over the years, the thing that I have learned (sometimes the hard way), is that we CONTROL only the things we have choice in. What shall we have for dinner? Shall we invite the neighbors Friday night? Shall we take that job offer and move to a new state? What is much more challenging, though, are the EXTERNALS over which we have no control. How will we cope with a cancer diagnosis? How will we deal with the loss of beloved parents, or even more difficult, the loss of a child? How do we handle losing a job? I learned that I was stronger than I thought, that I could still function while grieving, or celebrating, or mulling important decisions. I learned to keep balance in my life—physically, socially, intellectually, and spiritually. These areas DO involve choices, and choices we make affect the parts of our lives over which we have no choices. I send my best wishes to the young men and women who are leaving Oberlin this May.

CHIP HAUSS '69

Moore's Law.

Sometime during our freshman year, Gordon Moore issued the law that bears his name. Every 18 months or two years, the power of computer chips would double, though the cost of the computer itself would halve. Moore's law anticipates a world of accelerating change. Not just in computers. But everything.

At Oberlin, very few of us knew where the computer center was. Now, we all have a more powerful computer in our pockets.

My suggestion is not about computers, however. Rather, Moore's law describes our lives. And it will define yours even more.

Frankly, my generation did a lousy job of dealing with its lessons, if Donald Trump, Bill and Hillary Clinton, and George W. Bush are any indication. Well, they are a year older than I am.

Seriously, our generation did a crappy job of anticipating and adapting to world of accelerating change.

Yours will have more change occurring at faster speeds.

Get ready.

ELLEN HILL '69

One of my favorite bits of wisdom comes from John Muir, who said, "Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt." (I like this quote so much, in fact, that I became the chair of the Sierra Club Outings Group in the D.C. metropolitan area.)

PENNY HOWELL JOLLY '69

My best advice is that you find something you LOVE and then figure out how you can turn it into a job. I realize one has to be practical: have enough income to enjoy life.

But you don't want to be stuck doing something for the sake of a paycheck. Take time following graduation to figure out what you want to do and then pursue it!

DAVID KURKOWSKI '69

When I was a child, I was told to try the spinach, which I refused until I was in my 30s, then discovered I love it. So my advice is while you're at Oberlin, try the spinach. Try debate, running the radio station, working on a play, writing for the paper, joining a chorus, doing meditation, tutor. This list is incomplete, I know, but you get the point. When I look back at my Obie days, I'm grateful for what I did, but gosh, I wish I had tried more.

ALICE KURTZ '69

Immersion in a different culture: One of the most meaningful experiences I had after Oberlin was living for several months with a family in a different culture outside the U.S. If you can find an opportunity to be immersed in a different culture, not only will you get to know people who have a completely different outlook on the world, but it will provide you with a reference point for the rest of your life.

Career paths: One thing that I find interesting is the trajectory of people's career paths. Often a job or a summer program or a class will lead to another opportunity. The path is not necessarily linear. I'm always amazed when I ask someone how they made their career choices and decisions. Often they had an experience in a summer program or in a class they took for fun, or through traveling, or when participating in

community projects—that led them to a particular job, career, or life experience. So cast your net wide and be open to as many different experiences as possible.

Right after graduation from Oberlin I was fortunate to find a translation job directly related to my major—Russian. After one year on the job, I took the next “logical” step and applied to PhD programs in Russian, got accepted, deferred my acceptance, and finally decided that was not the career path I wanted to pursue. In my early 20s, I thought that I would have three careers in my lifetime, in succession: law, social work, and public health (not necessarily in that order). I thought I would go to graduate school in one of these areas, work in that area for 10 or so years; then go to graduate school in the next area, work another 10 years; and then go on to another graduate program and another 10 years of work in the third area. In the early 1970s the comparative cost of graduate school was nothing like it is today, so it was possible to contemplate going through three professional graduate programs without being delusional. I actually ended up pursuing only one of these areas (law), without going to graduate programs in the other two areas. Things like the reality of having a family to support, career satisfaction, and the realization that the investment of time and energy in a profession was something I didn’t want to repeat. But I think it was helpful to me that I was able to “dream big” and keep an open mind about career possibilities.

MIMI LAM '69

The most important lesson that Oberlin taught me was that it’s OK to be different. After spending my formative teenage years in a conservative southern city, I did not realize until I got here that it was alright to be a young woman and not wear makeup! Over the years I have continued to learn that it is OK to go places by myself if I feel like it, or to be an unashamed introvert, to prefer reading to parties, classical music to professional sports, and sometimes dogs to people.

The advice that I have for you is:

Listen carefully to others and give them your undivided attention: most of the time, this is more important than talking! Listen to your students, colleagues, teachers, patients; listen to your spouse/partner, your friends, your kids—and listen to those who can’t talk, like babies and pets. Listen to others’ concerns, worries, and stories about what makes them happy or sad. Try to discern what their unspoken questions and fears are, and what you can do to help.

Keep asking yourself: what can I do to make the world a better place? What can I do to help someone else, to ease their load, to make them feel accepted and cared about, to give them confidence and help them accomplish something? I see this as the real key to the meaning of life.

But no matter what happens: don't take yourself too seriously! Keep a sense of humor and always be ready to laugh at yourself, and to laugh with those around you.

Very best wishes to you, Class of 2019—and remember to take good care of each other!

RHODA LISS '69

You can listen to the advice of friends and family, but in the end you've got to follow your own gut. In life and in love, things can always go wrong, but don't settle for less than you deserve and know your own worth. Romantic love, if you're lucky, becomes mature love with a deepening friendship and companionship. But if your love doesn't grow, it might be best to move on. Whatever happens, don't see it as a personal failure. Keep chasing your dreams and giving all you've got every day, but know your limits, accept them, and be satisfied with all you still have.

(BARBARA) ELAINE MCHUGH '69

I didn't think I had any original words of wisdom to offer, but then remembered these words from an orientation that I have given annually over the past many years to adult volunteers (mostly college-age) who will be working with youth with disabilities in activity settings—and I think they apply to us all!

ATTITUDE is more important than ... EXPERIENCE.

PARTICIPATION is more important than ... PERFORMANCE.

RELATIONSHIPS are more important than ... ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

FUN is more important than ... WINNING.

I don't know that I have achieved applying all of these successfully and consistently in my life, but I think they are worth keeping in mind as we super-achiever types go through our lives.

POLLY MOORE '69

I collect quotes. Here are a few that have lasted:

"If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

(African proverb)

"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." (Dalai Lama)

"There is in you something that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself. It is the only true guide you will ever have." (Howard Thurman)

"Whatever you're meant to do, do it now. The conditions are always impossible."

(Doris Lessing)

"Never lose a holy curiosity." (Albert Einstein)

"Do you know what has astonished me the most in this world? The inability of force to create anything. In the long run, the sword is always beaten by the spirit."

(Napoleon Bonaparte)

"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'thank you,' that will suffice."

(Meister Eckhart)

"There is a power in the universe forever on the side of those brave enough to trust it."

(Michel de Montaigne)

"I know what I have given you. I do not know what you have received."

(Antonio Porchia)

CONNIE FLEISCHER MUTEL '69

1969 was both a horrible and a heady time to be graduating from Oberlin. Our college years had been dotted with multiple assassinations and Vietnam war protests.

Yet good things were also happening. The year after we graduated, the modern environmental movement was launched with the first Earth Day, passage of the National Environmental Policy (NEPA) and Clean Air Acts, and establishment of the Environmental Policy Agency. I helped put myself through grad school in ecology by completing the plant portions of the Environmental Impact Statements mandated by NEPA. I went on to write about the ecosystems I was studying and developed a career writing and teaching at the University of Iowa about environmental problems, natural history, and ecological restoration.

Now, a half-century out, I am saddened to realize that despite my generation's dedication to environmental and conservation efforts, our planet in some ways is worse off than it was when I graduated: the human population continues to rise, as does consumption of natural resources and loss of biodiversity, and these problems are now overshadowed by the existential threat of climate change—a problem barely recognized in 1969.

In the last few years, I have presented dozens of talks on climate change across Iowa,

many at colleges and universities. Doing so, I have seen students' fears for our planet and their own futures, fears that I assume you might share. I now work to address the emotional toll of climate change in my talks and describe ways that we might address our fears, techniques I have learned during my 50 years of passionate dedication to the natural world. As my graduation gift to you, I'd like to share some of these points:

Now, as much as any time in our history, we need minds that seek novel solutions. Continue to seek your unique voice and to think outside the box.

Continue to speak out—about your ideas and knowledge, and your concerns and fears. The first step toward dealing with our problems is to put them into words addressed to others.

Rather than thinking of climate change as a depressing curse, address it as an exciting opportunity to improve our economy, reduce health risks, address water and air pollution, and move toward social justice. Regardless of your choice of field or profession, you will be able to creatively discover ways to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Your life can really make a difference.

Live hope. Adopt hope as a verb—as something that your actions bring into being every day that you live.

Develop a vision for the future, an image of how you want the earth to look and act in the distant future. This will give you a focal point so you will not lose track of where you are going.

Climate change may rob us of things that we love—gentle springtimes, soothing rains, certain migrating birds, etc. Learn to accept changes we cannot evade. And remember to focus on things that remain. Recognize the earth's natural systems' amazing ability to rebound and restore themselves, when given half a chance.

You may at times feel that you are walking alone into a dark future. At those times, stop and consider that you are one of millions of others who care passionately about the planet's future and are devoted to creatively improving its options. I sometimes imagine myself as part of a circle of hand-holding humans extending around the globe, each sharing our concerns and energy.

Don't forget to take care of yourself. Take time off to relax with friends or seek solitude where you can meditate and rediscover your core. Go out into the natural world or other places that renew you.

Looking back, I feel that my four years at Oberlin were a gift that toned me for a life dedicated to education and caring activism. I hope that you, too, now see your college years as a special gift, a time when you found your voice and engaged in your own unique way of “changing the world.” We now need that Oberlin activism as much as

at any time in the past. Whatever you do in coming years, wherever you wander, do remember that your life is a single stream of energy and motion, a gift to you—and to others and the planet. Live it fully and without fear. Enjoy the ride!

BILL NATALE '69

Two batons that have been handed off to me over the years, that I will now pass to the Class of 2019:

Flexibility is the only reliable path to satisfaction and happiness, albeit a circuitous one. The direct pursuit of happiness is most often a fool's errand. Strive for flexibility instead, in both career and personal life. No one really knows what big and little surprises the future will bring; with confidence you can predict only unpredictability. Do whatever it takes to prepare yourself to ride out the unwelcome turns in life and to be in the best possible position to take full advantage of the inevitable good fortune that will also come your way.

Die young, as late as possible.

BARBARA OSTWALD '69

I've spent the last 30 years living in Germany, where everyone can tag me as a foreigner the minute I open my mouth. It turns out that being a foreigner, with an obvious accent and a tendency to dance several steps out of the line, can be a rewarding and surprisingly comfortable habitat. I think it comes down to learning where we can grow and be useful by assimilating, and where we should cherish our oddities—and realizing that we won't always get it right. But keep dancing!

RON RAPOPORT '69

I have no sage advice to offer, but the way that Oberlin most shaped what I have done since then is by the model of openness and accessibility that professors showed me while a student. Large amounts of time spent outside of class with them (particularly Professors Sherrill, Bruner, and Dawson) totally influenced how I have approached my own students, yielding close relationships and friendships long after graduation (which I also enjoyed with my undergraduate mentors), which has made teaching so rewarding for me and my family (who got to know many of them).

MATTHEW RINALDI '69

Never do harm in the name of “business.”

As a kid, I knew of Mafia members in Brooklyn who killed and cheated while soothing themselves with the words “it’s only business.” As an adult, I’ve seen bad behavior among lawyers, investors, chemical companies, landlords, and many others who justify destructive behavior because “it’s only business.” It’s not just business, it’s a measure of how we live our lives.

Try to build a world based on cooperation, not based on competition.

If you find reciprocal love or friendship, nurture that relationship as best as you can. Be forgiving of yourself and others.

Before following the advice of others, check your source!

DEBBY HORN ROOSEVELT '69

You might have heard of growth vs. fixed mindset. If you haven’t, I highly recommend looking up some of Carol Dweck’s work. Being open to new thoughts and ways of doing things is so important, and as you launch into the real world keep your life open to new possibilities and adventures. Set aside accumulated preconceptions of what your life should be and who the people in your life should be. You might experience some life-changing experiences. Be accepting of new thoughts, people who might be different from you, and make teamwork a way of life. Continue to reexamine your own beliefs and tenants. You’re an Obie; you have probably been doing this already—keep it up!

MICHAEL RYCHENER '69

People with lower intelligence can get ahead with more hard work, but the converse is not necessarily true.

Emotional intelligence is just as important as intellectual intelligence. Perhaps wisdom could be defined as a combination of the two.

An excellent choice for a post-retirement career is to start a future-oriented nonprofit organization.

Electric cars are cleaner, quieter, and more fun than fossil-burning cars—cheaper to operate, too.

Climate catastrophe is technically avoidable now if we can find a way to stop burning stuff. As of 2017, renewable power sources can provide all our needs and are cheaper than fossil and nuclear power, per added kilowatt.

BOB SHAY '69

You have a strong foundation when the winds of change shift.

I went to Oberlin knowing that I wanted to be a historian. I graduated as a history major, went on to get a PhD in history, and published a book, but at age 27 found that there were no decent jobs. So, after getting an MBA, I wound up having a 20-year career in electronic banking, then after retiring spent another 18 years working with small nonprofits and foundations.

The lesson I've taken from this is that life has unexpected twists and turns, but that the strong foundation my Oberlin liberal arts education gave me enabled me to succeed in fields I never would have imagined I'd be interested, much less successful, in.

JANET "JAN" HYDE SHIBLEY '69

Assuming that Oberlin provided you with the same kind of education that I had 50 years ago is probably silly, but it seems necessary for this advice exercise.

I continue to believe that a liberal arts education is the best education there is, and that a top-tier small liberal arts college does the best job at delivering that education. I believe it so much that I paid for my own two kids to attend similar institutions—in one case Carleton and the other Williams—and they would say the same about their education. Feel gratitude for the education you have had. Speak well of Oberlin.

I have spent the last 33 years teaching PhD students in psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and I have seen how well the students from small liberal arts colleges perform compared with students from large state universities. In fact, on two different occasions, I accepted Oberlin grads into the PhD program at Wisconsin. Both of them were stars and have had exceptional careers in academia. Oberlin has given you the skills needed for success in almost all fields: writing, speaking, and thinking.

Oberlin has a tradition of turning out superb critics who can find the flaw in anything. That's a useful skill, but you can't make a career out of it, nor can you make a family out of it. Temper the critical skills with a positive approach. Criticism is actually pretty easy. Creating something wonderful is difficult.

The conservatory is the element that none of the other great liberal arts colleges have. While majoring in math, I took organ lessons and a music theory course in the conservatory. Those experiences fostered my lifelong love of classical music and enriched my life immeasurably. And, of course, conservatory graduates have had magnificent careers in music. Feel gratitude for the conservatory.

Go out there and have a productive career and a wonderful life!

BOBBIE SPROAT '69

My advice to new Oberlin grads is to try not to worry as much as we Obies are wont to do—especially about trying to live your life by planned steps toward a particular goal. Life happens! If you are really committed to a particular field of work, certainly go for it. But if you feel unsure about what you really want to do, as you graduate and go out into the world, don't feel like you're a failure if you can't force your life into a particular mold that someone (even you) has said you "should."

I worked at jobs that kind of came along for most of my working life, and for the most part, it's worked out just fine for me. By the end of five years of mostly research jobs after graduation, I felt like I was drifting and had no definable professional identity—so I went to law school. Turns out I wasn't very well suited to the lawyer's life—so I ended up doing legal research and writing, kind of like the other research and writing I'd been doing before law school. When I had my first child, it was easy to leave law behind, at least temporarily. I got lots of experience during my child-rearing years, doing all sorts of volunteer work, from organizing speaker series, doing publicity, fundraising, to bringing arts and science enrichment programs into the schools. I also was able to explore artistic pursuits for my own enrichment. When I was ready for gainful employment again, law did not call to me, but libraries did. I became a college reference librarian for my last 10-ish years before retirement. Again I found myself in the research-and-writing world, adding teaching students those skills to the mix.

I never could have predicted that work journey for myself when I graduated from Oberlin. Looking back on it, it all makes sense for the person I am—but I couldn't have foreseen it. The lesson for me, and the one I share with you, is that it's not necessary to "know what you want to do" at this point in your life, in order to lead a rewarding, productive life. Don't do what your parents expect you to do, unless you love that work! Beware of anyone telling you what you "should" do with your life. Allow yourself to drift a little, if that's what you feel like doing, and try things out. You will find yourself in the right place eventually, and you'll have many adventures along the way.

Gael Schwertman Treesiwin '69

First, congratulations on graduating from Oberlin—no small accomplishment! My Oberlin College friends, the college, and its community have played a central and inspiring role in my life since graduation. Here is my advice to the Class of 2019.

Stay connected to your friends and the college wherever you end up living. One group of my Oberlin friends has been meeting once a year for a long weekend for over 30 years—an event we all look forward to every year. Attend all local Oberlin graduate

events. Some of my current best friends are Oberlin graduates who I met after Oberlin.

Stay politically aware (and active if possible). These are hard times, and we all need to contribute and help out. Find common ground with people who don't agree with you, make connections and dialogue. Building on your common ground, you can then talk about political issues that are more controversial. For example, in the last eight years, I have been involved with hunger relief organizations in the rural northeast Washington tri-county area. We have healthy dialogue while boxing up food for hungry people.

Find time—no matter what—for activities that are fun and meaningful for you! I suspect many Oberlin graduates—like myself—are “workaholics” dedicated to our work. If you don't take time for yourself, it will take a negative toll on your life.

Consider non-mainstream ways of living. For example, in 1973, my Oberlin husband, Tom Drake '68, and I paired up with another couple and bought 120 acres in rural northeast Washington. We are approaching 50 years of history and have grown from our original four to six senior adults, nine adult children, and seven grandchildren. I have come and gone from this community, called Stranger Creek. It has been an anchor in a safe harbor for me as I traveled all over the USA and overseas for work.

Finally, stay healthy—or it catches up to you as you grow older. Go the dentist and doctor regularly. Eat healthy—garden if possible—then preserve this good, healthy food for the winter season. Invest in a freezer and drying racks.

Enjoy life as much as possible! I wish you all well! See you at an OC reunion, maybe.

TOM THOMAS '69

Find a career in a field that will make you happy! It doesn't have to be the field in which you majored.

DIANE VANNAIS '69

My first advice is that if you get a chance to live abroad, go.

I lived in Japan for five years, where I learned five lessons in life from a Zen master:

- Don't give up.
- Don't be lazy.
- Don't be arrogant.
- Don't get angry.
- Don't rush.

The sixth lesson is implied. There are many things in life that cannot be ranked.

Good luck, and have fun!

RUSS VERNON-JONES '69

Take the risk to be more alive, more passionate about the causes you care about, more open-hearted, than our society seems to approve of. Be generous and compassionate. Play with children. Take chances. Go for building the world you want. Plan to be even more radical and more playful at 70 than you are now.

What I didn't realize until a few years ago, but you already know, is that climate change is the great challenge facing our species now. The future of the planet may depend on what we do in the next decade. Let's keep an international, multiracial perspective, remember that everyone matters, and do whatever it takes. Young people are powerful. Only a massive people's movement can bring about the changes we need.

I hope you will commit to helping to dismantle all systems of oppression, regardless of your identities. This goes best when we remember that our minds have all been colonized by unconscious bias. My experience is that combining personal work to free our minds with collective work to change the system is the most effective way forward. Make friends with people who are different from you and learn from everyone.

Notice what you are feeling. Allow yourself to feel your feelings, rather than numbing yourself, distracting yourself, or drugging yourself. Feeling strong emotions is part of being alive. A good cry, an angry venting, trembling with fear, or a good laugh, in a safe space, will free your mind and lighten your load.

Enjoy! It's great to be alive!

DON WELCH '69

Dear friends from the Class of 2019,

I live in Western New York, in a little country town between Rochester and Buffalo. I am pleasantly semi-retired with the Oberlin girl I met in 1968 and our adopted granddaughter. So here is some advice, unsolicited though it may be:

Put more effort into love than money. The wonderful things you will soon be able to acquire are still just stuff. Sure, they make our lives more comfortable, but ultimately they are not nearly as valuable as the people you will come to know, and make. I have operated a hydraulic shop for many years, and I'm always amused when someone says: "It's too bad you didn't use your college education." The ability to learn, and to teach oneself, is priceless. As is the ability to understand from another's point of view. Read, learn, see the world. Treasure your Oberlin experience. Learn to love life—"the days are long, but the years are short!"

BONNIE WISHNE '69

Most of the advice I have to give is of the “Everything I Learned in Kindergarten” variety. Be kind and generous to others, because, really, why not? Don’t be too focused on accumulating stuff. When you reach your 50th reunion, you’ll be wondering how to get rid of most of it. Take very good care of your body. Nothing puts a crimp your ability to enjoy or be great at whatever you’re doing more than your body breaking down. Listen radically. Yes, you are very smart and have many good ideas, but listening deeply to others will enrich your understandings, improve your relationships, and help you get things done. And then others will listen to you.

Thinking back, however, to my own self at your age, I would add:

Travel. Get out of your comfort zone and live for a time in a non-Western culture. I spent an incredibly eye-opening, transformative year following graduation teaching preschool in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and traveling around East Africa. I cannot imagine a better way to learn about yourself and to begin to understand the limited view of humanity and the world that growing up in America gives you. The opportunity to experience another’s culture is an amazing, mind-opening gift.

Don’t be in too big a hurry to start your adult life. When his Peace Corps stint ended, my then-husband and I hurried home from Addis so that I could start graduate school. The alternative would have been to take time to travel home slowly and see more of Africa and the world. Graduate school could have waited.

Be a confident risk-taker (this is from the mission statement of a school I ran for many years).

After I completed my education degree, we had the opportunity to spend a year in Quito, Ecuador. My husband had an unpaid internship, and working from Chicago, I had not found a job. Not sure how we would support ourselves, we didn’t go. Now, I feel certain that had we taken the risk, we would have found a way to live, and who knows how our lives might have been different? At a minimum, I would now speak Spanish. (See *Don’t be in too big a hurry to start your adult life*, above.)

And finally, be an advocate for justice wherever you find yourself. Big or small, it’s how you can make the world a better place.

Have a remarkable life!

RAY ZEPP '69

Yes, I do have some comments on how my Oberlin experience affected my life.

First, Oberlin taught me that there are a whole lot of people who are smarter and more talented than I am. And this includes people of all races and backgrounds. Oberlin's inclusion of diversity led me from a small, all-white rural high school to an international arena. Since then, I have spent the past 40 years living in the most far-flung countries around the world and can appreciate talented people from the most diverse cultures imaginable.

Secondly, my Oberlin teachers took an active interest in my education. An indelible moment was when I was walking down a street and my advisor, Dave Kelly, pulled his car over and said, "Hey Ray, want to come learn some math?" I have tried to incorporate that spirit into my role as educator around the world. I went on to found Dewey International University in Cambodia, dedicated to the American educator John Dewey, whose philosophy was based on "Learning by Doing." I made that the motto of my university, which appears on our logo and documents.

Advice from the Class of 2019

RUBY ANDERSON '19

Comparative American Studies major, Sociology minor

Go to as many of your friends' presentations/performances/games, etc., as possible!

CHARLOTTE ANDREWS '19

Biochemistry major, Dance minor

This is advice I try to remind myself of, and I hope will still be useful to me in 50 years.

Keep dancing or start dancing! Seriously, in your kitchen, in your yard, at a concert, in the grocery store, in line, in the car, or even—what the heck!!—sign up for a dance class! I think it is important to seek out forms of community, movement, and touch, and I know so many people stop feeling like we have the right to do that.

Play with lots of little kids, maybe volunteer at a day care if that's allowed? We have so much to learn from each different generation. I learned so much from the older adults I had in my life growing up, and I learn so much from the kids I babysit, and my friends at Kendal, and my parents and their friends.

Reevaluate what you know and be honest with yourself about what you don't know and learn more about it.

OLIVIA ERCILLA ANTROBUS '19

Environmental Studies major, Economics minor

One of the most poignant lessons that Oberlin has taught me is the value of exploring many different activities and subjects, regardless of aptitude or self-image. I never thought of myself as the type of person to take an economics course, but I am now about to graduate with an economics minor. While in high school, many adults told me that I was the type of person who would not enjoy the nightlife aspects of college, but I have enjoyed working at the 'Sco all four years of my time at Oberlin. Try new things, especially if they seem out of character.

ALISON BADIN '19

Psychology major, Environmental Studies minor

Don't invest in people who don't invest in you.

MATT BANDA '19

Computer Science and Mathematics double major

Prioritize eating good food, even if it means changing your budget. Food is 50 percent of life, and you'll be happier every day with better food!

EMMA BLACKFORD '19

Environmental Studies and English double major

One of the most important things I learned while at Oberlin is to communicate my needs to others! If you don't tell people what you need in order to be happy or fulfilled in a relationship, then unintentional pain is more likely to occur. My advice is to always be communicative, in both academic and social settings, and not to let your needs go unheard or unacknowledged. We all deserve respect and care, and if you aren't receiving that then you should speak up (if possible, given the circumstances)!

OLIVIA CANNIN '19

Psychology and Sociology double major, Anthropology minor

People will always have something to say about your actions. Better to live with their judgments than to live with your regrets.

IMANI COOK-GIST '19

English and Cinema Studies double major

Take time to sleep!

SHIRA COHEN '19

History major, Jewish Studies and Religion minors

You're never too old to stop learning! Ask questions!

AVA DISHIAN '19

Cinema Studies and Psychology double major

Be open to change, because you never know where it will take you.

HAYLEY DRAPKIN '19

Politics major, Computer Science and English minors

It is better to live with other people's judgments than your own regrets.

ALANA BARRINGTON DYE '19

English major, Religion and Politics minors

I've recently realized how important it is to find time to do "unproductive" things that make me happy, especially when I'm feeling overwhelmed and am not sure I have the time. I try to read for pleasure every night, if only for a couple minutes.

JULIA DEININGER '19

Psychology major, Hispanic Studies minor

Never stop being curious! Just as young people have so much to learn from those who came before them, older folks should not underestimate the passion and power of youth! We live in an ever-changing world, and I believe the strongest and healthiest communities are those with an intergenerational focus. If we all take the time to really be present and open-minded with each other, our world will be better for it!

IFY EZIMORA '19

Psychology and Environmental Studies double major

Keeping breathing. In everything you do, always picture what keeps you grounded so you don't falter.

KIRA FELSENFELD '19

History and Comparative American Studies double major

Make sure you end your day by thinking about five things you are grateful for. I still struggle to do this, but I think it is important.

KIRA FINDLING '19

Comparative American Studies and Cinema Studies double major, Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies minor

You never know who your words will touch. A tiny kind action has the potential to change the course of someone's day, or even their life. While I've been at Oberlin, these small moments have been some of the most special. The security guard at the art museum asking me how I was doing on a truly bad day, the person who stopped their car to give me a ride when I was carrying a heavy box, the acquaintance who took a few minutes to tell me that they always appreciated my contributions in class—

I remember them all, and the memories pick me up when I'm feeling down. I love the saying that "you'll never regret being kind." It's so true, and it has the power to change our communities and our relationships. Keep spreading love!

EMMA GORDON '19

Economics and Studio Art double major

Don't waste your time doing things that don't feel right.

DUSAN GRUBISIC '19

Voice Performance major

Start going to Oberlin when you are 23 years or older because you will be able to save so much money living off-campus, like me!

JENNA GYIMESI '19

Politics and Law & Society double major, Philosophy minor

Never assume that anyone is stupid and always ask questions.

CHARLOTTE HALIFAX '19

Economics and Hispanic Studies double major

A hot cup of tea will fix most woes, and being kind is the most important thing you can be!

IMKE HART '19

Psychology major, Africana Studies minor

Don't get stuck in a routine, breaking rules is okay!

AMELIA HUANG '19

Geology major

Handwritten letters are a great way to make people smile!

JULIAN IRELAND '19

Art History major, French minor

Don't be afraid to go to events on your own! It's not worth missing out on something just because your friends aren't going.

SADIE KELLER '19

Politics major, Hispanic Studies and Law & Society minors

Never let the facts get in the way of a good story!

HAVEN KING-NOBLES '19

Philosophy and Computer Science double major

The best way to live the optimal life is to not try to live optimally.

KAT LADOUCEUR '19

Economics major, East Asian Studies and Politics minors

We want to hear your stories of how you paved the way for us; tell them proudly and loudly!

ANDREW MACPHAIL '19

Politics major, English minor

Never underestimate the pleasure of buying a book (or five) at your local bookstore.

ZANE MARKOSIAN '19

Politics and History double major

Tip service workers, help young people find jobs, rent your extra rooms—be nice to the little people.

JESUS MARTINEZ '19

Economics major, Math minor

Navigating through my early years so far, I've found that leaving a space better than you found it makes all the difference.

NATALIE MATTSOHN '19

East Asian Studies and Politics double major

In my last year at Oberlin I've learned a lot more about the history of student activism. It truly has inspired me so much and made me realize how incredibly impactful a place like this can be. It also showed me the importance of preserving the work that students do, so that future students are able to learn about the past actions taken on this campus. It's important not only to preserve the memory, but also ensure that mistakes are not repeated.

KYLE MILLER '19

Vocal Performance major

There's no point in rushing.

CAMERON MOSS '19

Biology and Sociology double major, Creative Writing minor, Pre-med track

Don't be afraid to reach out to your professors, advisors, and friends during times of need! Everyone at Oberlin really does care and wants the best for their students, and I've never received this honest, truly helpful kind of support that can last a lifetime from anywhere else. Ask for advice, and don't be afraid to make mistakes and learn from them; that is what college is for!

DAN NERENHAUSEN '19

Politics major, History minor

It is always okay to be whimsical.

CHU PAN '19

Math and East Asian Studies double major

Oh, math majors, please make sure you take some computer science courses early in college. They are gonna help tremendously in the future.

MEG PARKER '19

Politics and History double major, Comparative American Studies minor

Sometimes when you're having a bad day, taking time to be outside and/or with someone you care about is the best remedy. Taking a moment to find the simple beauties in our world and relish the simplicity of little loves is one of life's greatest pleasures. During my time at Oberlin, I have found that sometimes, when things seem exceptionally stressful or lonely, finding joy in a fresh snow, an early daffodil blossom, or a glass of wine with an acquaintance can make everything else less overwhelming.

NINA PULLEY '19

Africana Studies major

Love your neighbor. Don't apologize to your enemies; pray for them. Be yourself, always! Give thanks in all things!

LIAM RUSSO '19

Anthropology and Studio Art double major

- 1) Never change your style to match the hipster elite, they're desperately trying to emulate a poor "aesthetic" of your small hometown anyway.
- 2) Make sure you step into every building, every basement, and onto every walkway in Oberlin. You don't want to miss anything! Especially the secret staircases...
- 3) Go to the Oberlin Heritage Center and get some knowledge about the history of not only the college, but the town too. You should know which ghosts are lurking around your dorm...they're chill, though.
- 4) Find a way to get involved in the community before you graduate. There are some GREAT characters in this town.
- 5) People might make fun of you if you get an albino squirrel at the Local.
- 6) Know the entire geography and niche terminology of New York and the Bay area. They'll quiz you on it.
- 7) Lupitas' soup when it rains.
- 8) Shower and moisturize regularly even if fellow peers don't...want to?

CHARLIE RYAN '19

Trumpet and Neuroscience double major

Every time a performer plays a show, most people who talk to them afterwards say thank you and tell them how much they love it. Instead I advise you to think of a question about a specific moment from the show. You'll learn a lot more that way.

JULIE SCHREIBER '19

Politics and Hispanic Studies double major

Share what you love with people that you love!

HANNA SHYKIND '19

Theater and Neuroscience double major

Always be your own biggest fan! If you aren't on your own side, who will be?

JOSEPHINE STOCKWELL '19

Viola Performance major

Live your dreams, take a chance, and never be afraid to dance! For me, no matter what I'm focused on in my life, moving and dancing always makes me feel better.

ANDREA WANG '19

Economics major

Always keep the radio on the news and talk channels so you are never alone with your own thoughts.

JAHKEEM WHEATLEY '19

Sociology and Law & Society double major

“Keep ya head on a swivel!” (You never know when an opportunity will knock.)

LE'PRIYA WHITE '19

Sociology major

Learning is reciprocal. Teach and learn together.

HANNE WILLIAMS-BARON '19

Comparative American Studies and Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies double major

Be direct when you're angry! Embrace your queerness! Have fun every day! Eat pancakes! Take no bullshit! Call home more!

RACHEL VALES '19

Anthropology and Classical Civilization double major

What may be difficult for one person may be easy for three. Communicating openly with your friends and family about your needs means they don't have to guess and can give you as much or as little help as you need. Just because you feel like you can do something alone doesn't mean that you have to.

