

FRANKLY SPEAKING

Olin's unofficial, student-run news source.

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FREE, AS IN BEER

Major Distributions of Oliners

Geoff Pleiss

Guest Contributor

Earlier this month, a survey was sent out to Olin students asking about choice of major and involvement in Olin clubs and organizations. For this issue, we focused on the distribution of students' current majors, as well as what students' intended majors were prior to starting Olin.

A total of 209 people responded to the survey. 55% percent of respondents were female, 44% were male, and 1% identified as other. There was a relatively equal response rate from each class year.

Figure 1 shows a distribution of students' majors. ME appears to be the most popular major at Olin, followed by ECE. Of the E:Concentration majors, E:C and E:Bio are the most popular concentrations. Excluding the 7% of respondents who are currently undecided, 54% of respondents identify with the "traditional" majors (ME or ECE), 34% are doing a well-defined concentration major (E:Bio, E:C, E:Design, E:Sys, E:MatSci, E:Robo), and 12% have chosen a self-designed major.

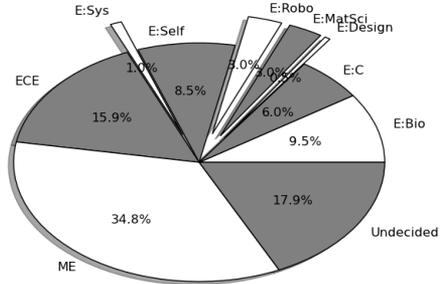


Fig. 1: Distribution of Students' Intended Majors

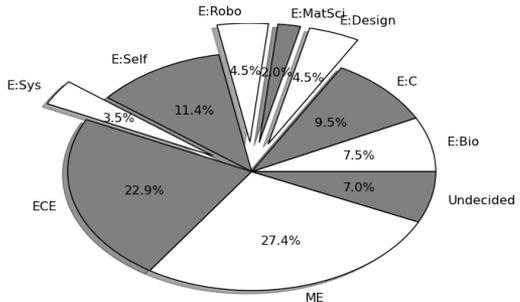


Fig. 2: Distribution of Students' Current Majors

Figure 2 shows the distribution of what respondents intended to study before entering Olin. Compared with the current distribution of majors, presented above, we see some interesting trends – particularly with the two “traditional” majors. There is a significant increase in the number of people who intended to be an ECE compared with the number who currently are pursuing this major – from 16% to 23%.

Conversely, 35% percent of respondents intended to be mechanical engineers, compared with the 28% who currently identify as ME. Although the number of students undecided dropped from 18% before entering Olin to 7% currently, number of people identifying as ME decreased by seven percentage points. This suggests a trend of students switching out of ME into

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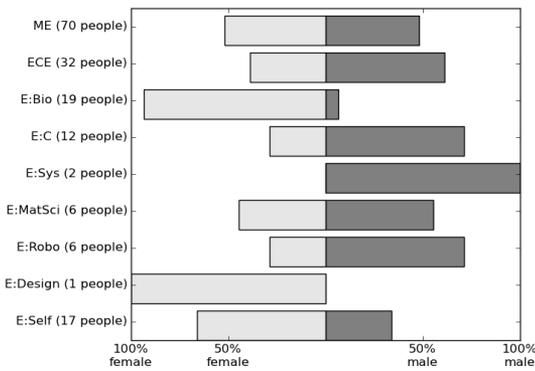


Fig. 3: Gender Distribution of Students' Intended Majors

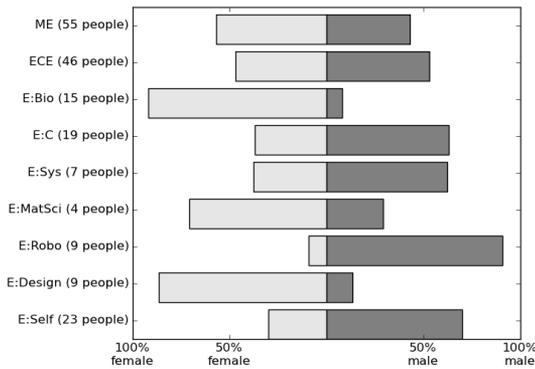


Fig. 4: Gender Distribution of Students' Current Majors

ECE and other majors. The p-value of this change in mechanical engineering majors is 0.02, showing that this result is statistically significant.

Why are people leaving mechanical engineering for other majors? Perhaps people had perceptions of mechanical engineering before entering Olin that did not align with their experience at Olin. Some may have been inspired to become an engineer by doing work on mechanical projects in high school, but found a passion for a different field after being exposed to other types of work. It is also possible that the reason could have to do with the Olin mechanical engineering curriculum,

or with the availability of jobs in other fields after Olin. This survey did not ask respondents why they switched from their intended majors, so all of these potential reasons are just hypotheses.

We then tested for differences in major choice between female and male students. (The 1% who identified as “other” in gender were not statistically significant and therefore not considered). Because more females than males responded to the survey than male students, results were normalized to match Olin’s current gender distribution. Figure 3 shows the percentage distribution of each major by gender. Be-

tween the two “traditional” majors, no significant gender trends emerge. Both ME and ECE are roughly 50% male and 50% female. However, trends emerge with some of the E:concentration majors. E:Bio and E:Design are significantly female heavy, while E:Robo is significantly male heavy. E:C and E:Sys also present some male bias.

There are two possible explanations for this data: either some aspects of the Olin curriculum/culture are creating this bias, or the bias exists before students come to Olin. To determine which hypothesis is correct, we examine the gender distributions of students’ intended majors before coming to Olin.

From Figure 4 it appears that the distribution of students’ intended majors is roughly the same as the distribution of students’ current majors. Significantly more females than males wanted to major in bioengineering, and more males than females wanted to be robotics majors. Some majors became less gendered – both ECE and E:C are currently less gendered than students’ intended majors made them out to be. It is possible, however, that Olin is creating the gender bias in E:Design. This is evident because a biased gender distribution emerged, even though only one respondent intended to be a design engineer. Due to the small data set, it is impossible to tell whether these results are significant.

If you want access to the data set or have suggestions for further analysis, email geoff@students.olin.edu.

The Biology Requirement is Broken

Kendall Pletcher
Editor

I chose to study bioengineering. I love biology, but I did not love Modern Biology. It had nothing to do with the teacher (she was awesome) or the subject. It was simply that I was bored. I'd just taken the AP bio exam and the SAT II in biology. Everything we learned in Modern Biology, besides specific interests of the professor, was a review for me.

This is a situation faced by many Olin students, and it needs to change. Modern Biology should be a class which a student can pass out of by taking a comprehensive exam, giving students a choice to take four credits of another biology-related class. There is precedent for this among other Olin classes, it allows for more in-depth study, and it increases engagement in biology at Olin.

First, there is a precedent for this. Math requirements feature pass-out exams which allow students to proceed to more advanced classes. There are three physics requirements to choose from: modeling E&M, traditional E&M, and mechanics. Similarly, there are two chemistry options to choose from. All of these are core sciences, like biology, but none of them require that you take one specific class.

Second, enabling students with a background in biology to pass out of the class allows for more in-

depth study. Many of the students who would or could pass out of the Modern Biology requirement plan to study bioengineering regardless; a pass-out exam would allow interested students to take more bio-related classes during their time at Olin.

Finally, allowing students to pass out of Modern Biology would increase engagement in the biology program at Olin. Repetition is boring and taking a class comprised primarily of material you've already covered is disengaging. This hurts more than just the individual student; it hurts the entire biology program at Olin.

For example, a student hears that Modern Biology is boring and avoids taking it until junior or senior year. As a result, that student is unable to take many courses for which Modern Biology is a prerequisite, like Microbial Diversity, and Cancer. The advanced biology classes are engaging for students in many majors, but all of them require basic biology as a prerequisite, and all of them are hurt by disengagement in Modern Biology.

In addition, professors face the dual dilemma of teaching students from a wide variety of experience levels. As long as Modern Biology is the only option to fulfill the biology requirement, professors will always either leave some students bored or some behind.

I am aware of two arguments against this proposed change. The first is that a

test cannot assess biological knowledge. However, if a test cannot accurately measure biological knowledge, then how can the AP, SAT or SAT II exams? Furthermore, then how can our professors' examinations, midterms, or quizzes? What can test biological knowledge if not an exam? Any answer can provide an alternative; the exam could manifest as an oral or practical exam, a project, or involvement in research.

The second argument is that many high-school biology classes do not cover lab practices or at least not to the extent necessary in a research environment such as Olin's labs. The solution is to have a two-credit lab course which can also be passed out of given evidence of significant prior lab experience, for which there is also a precedent.

Olin is frequently described as innovative, and there is nothing more essential to innovation than change. I call upon Olin to live up to this attribute --- be flexible. Entertain alternatives. The current system can be improved upon. Unless a convincing argument is made against these points, it is against the concept of Olin and one of the founding precepts of our community (openness to change) to refuse to consider an alternative to Modern Biology.

What do you think?

*Submit a letter to the editors:
submit@franklyspeakingnews.com*

Ripped from the Headlines: May Edition

4/1 Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy declared it had easily won the by-elections in Myanmar. This was supported by a later official announcement.

4/2 A 43-year-old former student of Oikos University in Oakland, CA, goes on a shooting rampage at the college, killing seven people.

4/3 General Services Administration chief Martha Johnson quit after it emerged \$820,000 was spent on a training conference near Las Vegas.

4/4 The Chilean Supreme Court ruled in favor of building a dam in the Patagonian wilderness. The project still needs government approval.

4/5 Scientists released research indicating that the resistance to the front-line treatments for malaria is increasing.

4/6 Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, a human rights activist in Bahrain, was moved to a hospital clinic after a 58-day hunger strike.

4/7 Joyce Banda became southern Africa's first female head of state after being sworn in as Malawi's President upon the death of Bingu wa Mutharika.

4/8 Thirty-eight people died in a car bombing in the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna.

4/9 South Korea's police chief resigned after a woman was raped and

murdered despite calling the police for help and telling them where she was.

4/10 Rick Santorum ends his bid for the White House.

4/11 George Zimmerman, the man who shot the unarmed teenager Trayvon Martin, was arrested and charged with murder.

4/12 A shaky ceasefire went into effect in Syria.

4/13 North Korea confirmed the failure of their attempted rocket launch on the twelfth of April.

4/14 South Sudan accused Sudan of launching bombing raids on its territory, specifically the capital city of Bentiu and in the oil-producing Heglig region.

4/15 100-year anniversary of the Titanic sinking. People celebrated the death of more than 1500 people by watching Titanic in 3D.

4/16 Allegations were made that Secret Service agents and military personnel hired prostitutes while in Colombia.

4/17 The Popocatepetl volcano outside of Mexico City began spewing ash and steam, causing the National Disaster Prevention Centre to raise the alert level.

4/18 A kindergartner in Missouri was denied a bathroom break during state testing and as a result was forced to sit in her own diarrhea for a half hour.

4/19 Sixteen Amish women and men charged with beard- and haircutting attacks against fellow Amish pleaded not guilty in an Ohio court.

4/20 A plane carrying 127 people crashed in a residential area near the Islamabad International Airport in Pakistan. There were no survivors.

4/21 A law requiring microchipping for dogs was introduced in the UK.

4/22 A cargo ship carrying fresh supplies, fuel, and research equipment successfully docked with the International Space Station.

4/23 The Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte resigned after losing the support of the populist party over budget disagreements.

4/24 Kofi Annan, the UN special envoy in Syria, said that there was an unacceptable amount of violence in the country despite the ceasefire.

4/25 Poachers massacred twenty-two elephants in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

4/26 10 killed and 15 wounded from two explosions in a popular cafe in Babquba, a mainly Sunni village in one of the most volatile Iraqi regions.

Jackie Rose
Guest Contributor

Oliners Compete in Tae Kwon Do

Hari Iyer

Guest Contributor

This year, five Olin students competed in the National Collegiate Taekwondo Championship held at MIT. Stephanie Northway, Chaz Gwennap, Sasha Sproch, Mark-Robin Giolando, and Hari Iyer trained under Professor Shan-Yuan Ho, a former Taekwondo champion, Master Instructor of Olympic-style TKD, and Visiting Assistant Professor of Mathematics from MIT.

The team formed in February when first-year Stephanie Northway, a third degree black belt in TKD, had the idea of starting a general martial arts club: "I had wanted to revive Olin's martial arts club since I got here, and when I found out that Nationals was in Boston this year, I started recruiting everyone I could to form an Olin Taekwondo team."

From the first day, the practices were intense, and Prof. Ho's coaching was designed to get everyone up to speed quickly, including nonstop kicking drills, careful practice of footwork, and several rounds of sparring, even for newcomers.

"I joined because I wanted to exercise more, and I figure everyone ought to know some self-defense," says Sasha. "I really liked that I was learning useful (and sometimes complicated) blocks and attacks from day one, but I didn't expect to be sparring so soon! Actually kicking another person,

even though they had protective gear, was strange and frightening."

As the tournament drew closer, Coach HoHo (as she's affectionately known) took the Oliners to practice with her coach, Grandmaster Joseph Pina, Olympic coach in 2000 and 2004. "Practicing with his students was really valuable," said Hari. "It was really at that time that I learned the importance of timing. We'd be sparring and those kids would calmly stand there and suddenly reach up and place their feet on your head. It was humbling."

On Saturday, the team went out to support Mark, Sasha, and Hari in colored belt sparring. Mark was known for rattling his opponents with bursts of three fast kicks, and he put up a great fight. Hari's first opponent started off scoring many points, but by the third round, Hari was landing several blows, including a direct kick to his opponent's forehead, ultimately losing by a point.

Soon before Sasha began her match, she twisted her ankle, hardly able to walk. Despite that, she chose to fight, and after several spectacular kicks to her opponent's head, her opponents could not touch her. This happened round after round, and Sasha kicked her way to a bronze medal.

Sunday was black belt forms and sparring, and Steph began with an awesome display of forms. Soon

it was time for sparring, and Chaz went up first. The level of intensity was much higher in black belt sparring, and Chaz tripped up his opponent by messing with his distance and angle of attack. Despite a solid effort, he was unable to defeat his more experienced opponent.

Steph began later, and she completely dominated her first and second rounds with her impeccable calm, timing, and technique. As opponents would rush towards her, throwing crazy kicks, she would wait and almost casually stick her leg into their chest or face, completely stopping them and leaving them dazed. She advanced to the quarterfinals, only losing to an opponent who was an eventual finalist.

Coach HoHo commented, "Olin's inaugural team put in a fantastic performance, given that we just started training at the beginning of February, and Sasha and Mark had never even kicked before. Every member scored, everyone put in 100% until the final bell, and no one lost mentally. I am very proud of our Olin team."

What's the future of the club, now that Professor Ho will be returning to MIT?

"We'll definitely keep recruiting more members, training and practicing amongst ourselves," says Steph, "We also hope to compete at more local tournaments, so there will be many opportunities to come!"

Do Something: Register to Vote

Elizabeth Mahon
Guest Contributor

Hey, you. Yeah, you, with the U.S. citizenship. I heard you're over 18. Have you registered to vote yet? No? Why not?

There's no difference between the politicians!

What may seem like a minuscule difference in positions to you can make a difference to millions of people when it's played out over an entire country. While you may not care about, for instance, whether the federal or state government decides how Medicaid money is spent now, in fifty years when you're eligible for Medicaid, you probably will care. And if you can make a difference, and decide not to, you really have no right to complain about the result.

So what? Politicians never follow through on their campaign promises anyway.

While a popular sentiment, politicians actually do tend to carry through on their campaign promises. Or try to, anyway. Our system of checks and balances makes it relatively hard for anyone to push their agenda through, but in general, campaign promises are broken because there was too much opposition to the idea, not because the politician didn't try to follow through on their promise.

I don't know how to!

I can help you there. College students are allowed to register either at their

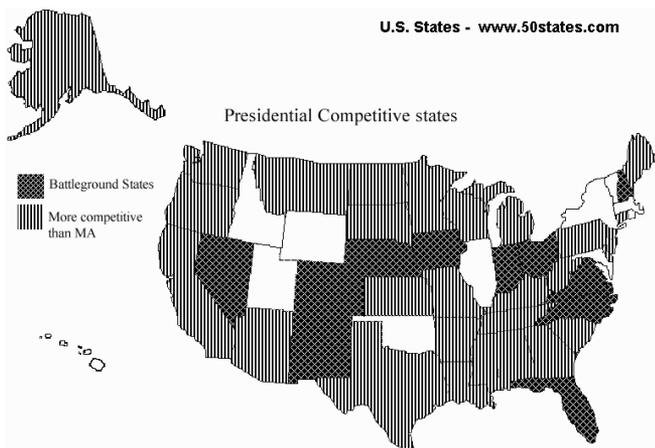
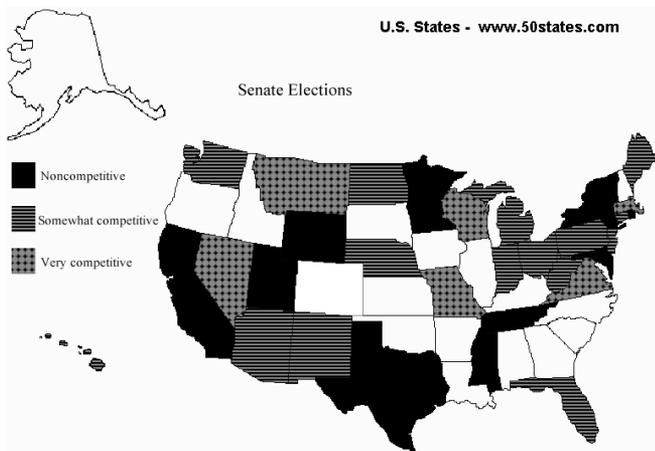
college or where they consider home. Every state is somewhat different in their requirements, which they generally list on their website. In general, you fill out a form, attach a copy of something that proves you live where you say you do, and mail it to the local election authority.

If you can register to vote in two places, there are two

important considerations:

Absentee voting: If you register to vote in your home state, you probably won't be able to get to the polls there on election day, and even if you register to vote here, it may be difficult to get to the polls. States vary widely in how restrictive they are about absentee or mail-in voting. In general, western states are more permissive.

Wikipedia, conveniently, has compiled the predictions of several respected predicting groups for the senatorial competitiveness.



Massachusetts allows you to vote by mail if you will be absent from your city or town during normal polling hours.

Competitiveness of the state: Contrary to “all men are created equal”, some votes really do count more than others. For instance, because of the electoral college, a vote in Florida is more likely to change the result of a presidential election than a vote in Massachusetts. A guide to help you decide:

Battleground states are defined as states that have voted both Democratic and Republican within the last three elections. In general, these are the states that will decide who wins, and will

get the most visits by the candidates, as well as have the most ad money spent in them. Massachusetts split 25% McCain, 75% Obama in the last election, so any state where the winner’s margin of victory was less than 25% of the vote is defined as more competitive than Massachusetts.

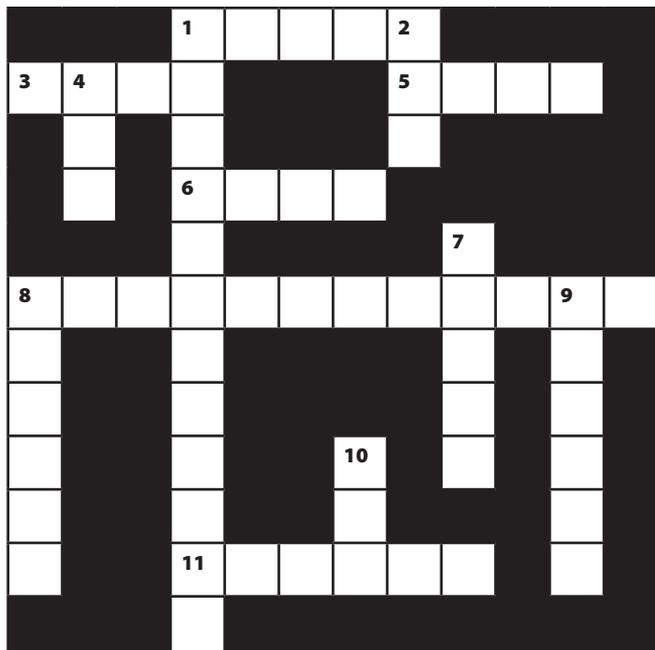
Going down the ballot, thirty-three Senators are up for election this year. Not all the races are competitive, of course. However, it’s harder to quantify ‘competitive’ for senate elections, since they only happen every six years. Going back three elections for the Senate would put us back in 1994, a very different election.

Of course, there are more

elections this year than just for the Senate and the White House. Eleven governors will be chosen this year. All 435 seats in the House of Representatives are up for election, some of which are brand-new and many of which have to answer to voters for the first time. And, last but not least, there are innumerate local elections.

Indeed, in several states, voters themselves – not just their representatives – can vote on the law. Space constraints preclude me from delving into these issues, but it’s safe to say that no matter where you register to vote, there will be something interesting and worthwhile for you to vote on. What are you waiting for?

CROSSWORD



DOWN

- Forty-five strokes wasn't enough for Nick to join this
- Suffix used in Galla to denote a bastard daughter
- Acronym for the “underground” organization which Holly was the first female officer
- Female king who loves cherries jubilee
- The tallest dwarf in Ankh Morpork
- Nickname for Lyra’s soul

ACROSS

- Members of the Long Patrol
- Color of Gonturan, sword of Harimad-Sol and Lady Aerin
- Restore the belt with Diamond, Emerald, Lapis lazuli, Topaz, Opal, _____, and Amethyst
- Nickname of Arrakis, the Atreides’ planet
- A nine-lived enchanter
- Home to Miraz, Rilian, Shasta, and Jadis

FRANKLY INTERVIEW: URSULA WOLZ

A candid conversation with Ursula Wolz about game design, the Olin Bubble, and making sure we stay in control of the machines.

Ursula Wolz is a visiting professor from The College of New Jersey (TCNJ). She began her education in Linguistics, Philosophy, and Psychology, then transitioned over to a master's in Computing Education and finally a Ph.D. in Computer Science at Columbia University. It is no wonder, then, that her experience and acclaim are in computer science education, interdisciplinary computer science, and "interactive storytelling," all of which involve combining narrative with computer programming.

She is teaching two sections of Software Design and one of Game design this semester at Olin.

FRANKLY: Could you talk a little bit about your background in game design?

WOLZ: Thirty years ago I was one of the first game designers. I worked for Children's Television Workshop. At the College of New Jersey we founded an interactive multimedia major 10 years ago. I had an option of building an HCI [human-computer interfaces] course, but received Microsoft funding to create an interdisciplinary two semester games course.

We did that for about six years. I brought it here, but we had to make some compromises— we could only do it in one semester, and it's primarily a computing course. In the TCNJ course

you could take it as a writer or a musician or an artist or a programmer. It's more Olin-esque here, which is probably the best way to put it.

FRANKLY: In your faculty profile, you mention that you're interested in interactive storytelling. What is "interactive storytelling," and how does that relate to this?

WOLZ: One of my collaborators in the interactive multimedia program at TCNJ is Kim Pearson. She's a journalist, and she and I started talking about interactive storytelling before we designed the games curriculum.

We have collaborated on the notion of interactive storytelling and suggest that games are a kind of interac-



"How do mere mortals learn a formal programming language?"

"It's those small communities that seem to make a big difference."

"How do you empower people with the data that they need?"

tive storytelling. The idea is like that Clinton slogan... "It's the story, stupid."

Pick your favorite board game without a storyline?

FRANKLY: Probably Scrabble, maybe Settlers of Catan.

WOLZ: Well, Settlers of Catan definitely has a storyline!

FRANKLY: Yeah, I see what you mean.

WOLZ: But Scrabble...hmm. A lot of people say chess. Scrabble's a good one...I'll find a story there.

I'm passionate about making programming and computing accessible to people: how do mere mortals learn a formal programming language?

In class, I try to create a game workshop environment. I don't enjoy lock stepping through the curriculum. At TCNJ, everyone, about twenty-two students, would all be working on the same project. At Olin, it's teams of two or three students each.

FRANKLY: What are some of the differences between [teaching at] a college like Olin and a college like TCNJ?

WOLZ: A lot of what I can do here is stuff that I've really had to defend in the past: Project-based courses, a lot of collaboration, student-initiated work...it's just wonderful to be able to do that here.

It's been a good year. It's been really enjoyable to be immersed in this kind of innovative culture. I think small is good; strong community is good; self-initiated, you know...self-motivated. Curious. Articulate.

I think I've been an Olin professor all my life, and it's kind of neat to be someplace

where that's really nurtured. I should also tell you that I do a lot of work at the national level in computer science education.

And there are a lot of people struggling with this: how do you prevent plagiarism? How do you motivate students? How do you get them to do their homework? How do you get them to read?

Allen Downey calls it the "secret sauce." Whatever it is, I've found it. I haven't decomposed the method, the recipe altogether, but... [laughs]

I'm passionate about the fact that we need to be in control of the machines, that the machines not be in control of us. What's been fun in Software Design is that all the projects are in the service of people. There are two of them that are for the Olin community. One group is reviving the Olin Directory so that it includes alums.

The other one is called Sleep-stalker. The idea is that you can very quickly input your sleep patterns, so you can understand when you're under a lot of pressure and when you aren't. We've been teasing each other; I'm making sure that there are no spikes in people's sleep deprivation right before my final is due.

It's those kind of things: how do you empower people with the data that they need, rather than creating systems that look at people as data?

FRANKLY: Anything else that you want to throw out there? Anything that you've observed about Olin or teaching or programming—anything else you want to talk about?

WOLZ: I think the thing that I like best about Olin—I've been in about six or seven different academic communities as a student or as a teacher, and what I love about Olin is that people are genuinely nice here. It's been a lot of fun.

I keep teasing people that you should just move the college to New Jersey.

FRANKLY: Do you find the Olin Bubble to be a special place?

WOLZ: Yes.. And we tease about it all the time, I mean every so often I take students and I pull them out of the Bubble for a minute. Sometimes it surprises Olin students, for example, when I talk about students at TCNJ who work fulltime, or even work halftime. Or live at home because they can't afford to live on-campus.

There are other small schools, but they're primarily liberal arts schools. Harvey Mudd, Grinnell, Bennington College—where my son is—and the place that was really intriguing was Marlboro College, which is tiny [total average enrollment, 330 students].

And the difference is that you guys can at least get to a city; from Marlboro it takes you a shuttle and a train and a bus and a plane to get anywhere. But again, it's those really small communities that seem to make a big difference. It's that intimacy that students have in the community.

Harold Jaffe

Staff Writer

Kelsey Breseman

Editor-in-Chief

The Honor Code: Think About It

Jeffrey Holzgrafe
Guest Contributor

I sent out an all students email a few weeks ago about a movement to rethink, revise, and rewrite the Honor Code. Some things were left off from that email for the sake of brevity. I want to use this article to fill in any gaps and answer some common questions.

The idea to rethink the Honor Code started a month ago in CORE. Your class representatives felt that the Code had become stagnant. It is not that it is failing, or that the student body does not follow it, but that the student body as a whole does not feel ownership over the Code in the way that it once did.

Our Honor Code was drafted by the Olin Partners, and was intended to be a living document that reflected the values of Olin students. To reaffirm its relevance to Olin's current student body, CORE wanted to start a discussion about rewriting the Honor Code.

The purpose of this discussion is to involve the student body in critically considering the Code, its efficacy, and its place in the community. If we go through an extensive process of discussion and ideation involving a large part of the community, and the consensus is that nothing should be changed, that is still a success. The primary purpose of this rethinking is

simply to get the community passionate about the values we live by, and to make the Honor Code a larger part of our cultural identity.

Certainly, everyone does not agree the Honor Code should be rethought, but by and large, we have heard from members of the community that this is a process they wish to undertake. If you want your voice to be heard, come to one of the discussions during dinner this week. You can find us seated around the dining hall with heart-shaped signs reading "Honor Board Discussion."

Scott Thomson proposed a sunset clause last week. The sunset clause states that if a new Honor Code is not ratified by April 26th, then the Honor Code will be abolished, and OSL will institute policies to deliver the same function. This is not meant to happen. No one wants the Honor Code to be abolished, meaning that the sunset clause will act as a motivator toward affecting change.

A town hall meeting is planned for Tuesday, May 1st, at which time the student body (you) will vote on this sunset clause. Even if the clause is not passed, we will work next year to rethink the Honor Code.

A definitive plan for the process next year will be discussed and presented at the beginning of next year, but the tentative plan is as follows:

At the beginning of the year, the student body will form a committee of students who will organize the rethinking process next year. This committee will facilitate discussions, ideation sessions, and one-on-one conversations with the student body. Before Thanksgiving, The committee will collate the ideas and work to formulate a version of the Honor Code which is consistent with the values of the community. This draft version will then be brought back to discussion, and reworked. Sometime in the spring, the new version of the Honor Code will be proposed, and the community will vote on it.

There are different ways that you can be involved in the rethinking, all of which is valuable. If you want to help organize things or hold discussions during what is left of this semester, you can contact Larissa or me.

However, you do not need to be organizing things in order to have an impact on this project. We want the whole to community to have a say in what shape this takes. Come to the discussions, come to the Town Hall on May 1st, talk about your views, and help us renew the Honor Code, and turn it into a living, meaningful reflection of who we are as a school. The Honor Code belongs to the entire Olin community, and the spirit of our effort depends on community involvement.

A Perfectly Polite Proposal

Harold Jaffe
Staff Writer

No doubt you are familiar with the tragedy of the commons¹—the idea that multiple individuals with access to an unregulated public resource will gradually use it up or ruin it². It is with great sadness, increasing cynicism, and frequent exclamations of profanities³ that I have come to the conclusion that the East Hall kitchen constitutes one such situation.

In the hope that positive change might yet be effected in this state of affairs, I propose the institution of a set of kitchen training procedures, akin to the training anyone who wishes to access and use the machine shops must undergo⁴. The primary reason for such a training program would of course be the safety of all kitchen users; but, as is the case with the machine shops, an important secondary concern is the maintenance of clean, well-organized facilities. Relevant to this situation are no fewer than three core values of the Honor Code—Integrity⁵, Respect for Others, and Passion for the Welfare of the College—though I am sure arguments could be made relating it to the other principles as well.

If at some point I believed that anyone able to attend and progress through engineering school would naturally also be able to make use of an oven; a

stove; a microwave; a blender; an electric mixer; or a drying rack; consider me disillusioned. If I thought the process of washing a dish so that food would not still be stuck to it was common knowledge, I now realize I was flabbergastingly naïve. But just as we have learned to take integrals and derivatives, to design from nature and for users, I believe it is within the power of every student at Olin to master the skills of proper kitchen use.

The kitchen training procedures I would propose need not be complicated or time-consuming. At the outside, I envision the current kitchen czar demonstrating, for the interested individual, the proper use of the aforementioned devices and giving a general description of what the kitchen should look like when clean, while at the same time impressing upon them the shared responsibility of keeping it that way. However, more than any training, the key to keeping the kitchens safe, clean, and in working order is a principle Carter Chang or Ben Tatar could easily understand and explain:

Clean up after yourself.

Perhaps it is optimistic to the point of foolishness to imagine that we might implement, in the kitchen, the machine shops' ideal of leaving the area nicer than when you came in; but surely cleaning up our own messes is not beyond a group of college-trained engineers.

¹ Not to be confused with my Harry Potter fan fiction detailing Charlie Weasley's adventures in Romania, *The Comedy of the Dragons*.

² As Wikipedia puts it, "a dilemma arising from the situation in which multiple individuals, acting independently and rationally consulting their own self-interest, will ultimately deplete a shared limited resource, even when it is clear that it is not in anyone's long-term interest for this to happen."

³ Mostly invocations of the male offspring of female dogs

⁴ Indeed, people can and have hurt themselves pretty badly in the kitchen because they didn't know how to properly use the equipment therein.

⁵ "Each member of the college community will *accept responsibility for* and represent accurately and completely oneself, one's work, and *one's actions*." [emphasis added]

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With Love, Nicholas Monje

Nick Monje

Guest Contributor

I, along with Gwyn Davidoff, recently directed The Laramie Project here at Olin. For those of you who didn't come to see the show, it deals with the beating and death of Matthew Shepard, a gay college student, in Laramie, Wyoming. This article is a highly abbreviated version of my director's note. If you'd like to read the original note, please email me at nicholas.monje@gmail.com.

Matthew Shepard was beaten to death in Laramie, Wyoming in 1998, but not a lot has changed. To be sure, some things have gotten better. Don't Ask, Don't Tell has ended, there's same-sex marriage in six states, and legal protections are increasing. General attitudes have been improving, and positive representations of queer people are becoming more common. But for every success, there's a Tennessee "Don't Say Gay" Bill, or yet another state defining marriage as "one man, one woman" in their constitution. Queer-related crimes have fallen out of public attention, but still happen far too frequently. Not to mention the alarming rate of queer, especially teen, suicide. As a self-identified queer myself, I find it really difficult not to absorb all the hate that is out there in the world.

The impact of this hatred is clear. Suicide amongst

queer-identified people is at tragic proportions. Accurate statistics are hard to find, and usually contested, but there's no doubt that the numbers are staggering. In the media frenzy after the tragic suicide of Rutgers student Tyler Clementi, over a dozen news stories of youth succumbing to gay-related suicide came out that month alone, and, while focus shifted, they haven't stopped. I will omit listing them here.

I do, however, wish to expand on a particular example. In *Prayers for Bobby*, Leroy Aarons explores the story of Bobby Griffith, a gay male who committed suicide at the age of 20. It was back in 1983, but it still rings true today.

It's the story of a gay male, growing up in a deeply fundamentalist Christian household, surrounded from birth by condemnation of homosexuality. When he came out, his family responded by trying to get him to turn back to God, who would save his soul from this sexual deviation. They surrounded him with choice Bible verses. They waxed on about the unhappiness of his future as a gay male - a life of loneliness and exclusion. The effect was devastating. He spiraled further and further downward, into darker and darker places, filled with self-hatred.

He moved out and tried to make a new start, but could not find one. Finally, he jumped off a bridge onto

a freeway overpass, into the path of a truck.

His family's intentions were in the right place. They firmly believed that they were saving Bobby, that this was the best way they could love him. This is, perhaps, the most tragic part - the people who so deeply wounded Bobby were his loving family. They were not terrible people, but rather deeply caring, wonderful people.

I want to reiterate that point once more. Homophobic people are not monsters. They are as deeply human as the queer people they are persecuting. They firmly believe that they are doing the right thing, and are doing it out of their own sense of love. It is one of the most confounding and tragic aspects of the human condition.

To her credit, Bobby Griffith's mother, Mary Griffith, had a change of heart after her son's suicide. She went on a long spiritual journey, and after much soul-searching, she came to the conclusion that "[God] had not healed Bobby because there was nothing wrong with him." She changed churches, to a gay-friendly denomination, and began telling her story to anyone who would listen. And people listened.

She has gone on to be a leader in organizations such as GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network). The impact of her work is inestimable, but

it is safe to say that she has personally saved the lives of countless young men and women in this country, and around the world.

I want to believe that I don't have to say this, but on the off-chance that it'll make a difference, I feel somewhat obligated to. I know all too well how dangerously tenuous your hold on life can be, and how easy it is to hide that from those around you. If you need to talk, please reach out to someone. I've already included my email address, but keep in mind I am not a trained therapist or an emergency hotline. You can contact The Trevor Project at 1-866-488-7386 or Colony Care at (781) 431-1177.

With that, it's time for me to make my proposal, and to not-so-humbly ask you, dear

reader, to help me make the world a better place.

First, we need more awareness to these issues - to queer identities, to struggle, and to hatred. I'm not just talking about more publicity, though that's certainly part of it. I want everybody to be more aware of the people around them. Be aware of what you're saying and who might be listening. I don't just mean in terms of queer sensibility; it's far too easy to miss the humanity of the person right in front of you, whoever they are. Reach out to those around you, and try to understand them, all of them. Empathy is the most powerful tool we have to combat the hatred around us.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, I want to see stronger, more complicated queer identities. It

seems that the best we can ask for, as queer people, is indifference. It is not enough to tolerate, or even to accept, those different from ourselves. I want to see sexual and gender variance - and all other diversity - being celebrated.

Furthermore, I want to see more of that sexual and gender deviation. Labels like "gay" and "lesbian" are great for simplicity and forming communities, but are terrible representations of the actual range of possibilities. I want to see the whole range of human expression, and I want to see it everywhere. I want to see it on television, and in my friends, and in Congress, and as I walk down the street. It is not what's the same between us that makes us human, it's what's different.

Summer Reading for You Punks

Kelsey Breseman
Editor-in-Chief

None of these are light reading. They're not fluffy; they're not "beach reads". But each piece of writing is short, so you can dip in and out of the books between your summer adventures.

***The Second Tree from the Corner* (E. B. White)**

This is a collection of essays and fictions from the man who brought you Charlotte's Web. Most are satire; others are meaningful on a more personal lev-

el. Favorites include: Mrs. Wienckus; Two Letters, Both Open; The Second Tree from the Corner

***I, Robot* (Isaac Asimov)**

Asimov uses the concept of sentient, ethically bound robots to describe the politics and philosophy of human constructs and behavior. The stories are all science fiction. My favorite: Reason.

***Welcome to the Monkey House* (Kurt Vonnegut)**

This collection of short stories is widely ranged, but largely satirical and

all beautifully written. My pick is the eponymous Welcome to the Monkey House.

***Labyrinths* (Jorge Luis Borges)**

Definitely the most dense of these collections, but worth your while. Borges is a master of literary technique. His stories can seem quite dry if you're not into the wordplay, but even if you skim, some perspective-altering concepts will filter into your reading. Favorites: The Witness; The Lottery in Babylon; Inferno, 1, 32

Be a Partner Somewhere Else

Eric Schneider

Shane Skikne

Guest Contributors

Last month Shane and I attended President Miller's dessert social, where we talked about Olin's relationships with other engineering schools. He explained that more and more schools are coming to Olin asking for help. Some want to innovate how they teach, while others are new schools that hope to build upon the Olin model. The problem is, our teachers are stretched ridiculously thin as it is. So we thought: can students take this on?

I don't know about you, but to the writers the idea of being a partner sounds fascinating. Though Olin remains dedicated to innovation, the flurry of activity and creativity that got Olin off the ground is no longer necessary.

What if Oliners today could start from scratch, though, travelling to help build a school? What if Olin set up an attractive study away or LOA program at the schools approaching us - could we give a group of dedicated, creative students a semester or a year at another school, learning and helping this school innovate and grow?

There is such a wide range of schools visiting Olin that your LOA-partnership experience could be widely variable. One possibility is immersion - you could build relationships with faculty at

one of our partner schools in India, Korea, or Brazil, dive into the classes you'd like to explore, and have IS time for feedback and ideas. If your interests lie in other areas, you could work on the side to help develop an honor code, interdisciplinary classes, or a more collaborative student culture.

Ananya Kejriwal, an Olin Senior, told us about a program she helped organize where Oliners work after graduation at a new India Institute of Technology in Ghandinagar. The school was particularly interested in Olin's our "work-play continuum". Here at Olin we have an intense passion for our hobbies and our academics, and we often mix the two together. In this program, a few graduates are going to the IIT as teachers and consultants.

Under the hood Olin experiences, like CORE or SAC, the Honor Board, Teaching and Learning, etc., would be of particular value - if a student has really delved deeply into Olin culture, they might have an easier time gaining insight about other schools. Some of the schools visiting us are doing amazing things - like the effort to establish a brand new engineering school in New Orleans - and you might even bring an idea or two back to Olin.

Olin already has a program to build relations with visiting schools, and it would be a great place to

find universities interested in Olin students. The Initiative for Innovation in Engineering Education is a group of Olin staff, faculty, and students that helps organize faculty exchanges, workshops for visiting professors and administrators, student-led tours, and customized consultations to help these schools find their own path forward.

As schools around the world visit Olin, we have a chance to create relationships with officials and professors, paving the way for future contact and collaboration. If you want to find a way to travel to a school and partner with them, we encourage you to join I2E2 - several schools have approached students in I2E2 asking whether they would be interested in visiting.

Part of Olin's mission is to become a leader in undergraduate engineering education, and Olin students can and should find ways to make their mark. By giving a semester or two of your time to another university, you could have significant positive impact.

What would you do with an opportunity like this? Come spend lunch with us on Thursday the 3rd under the clocks and we'll try and come with cool ideas and ways to make them happen - or send us awesome ideas you have to eric.schneider@students.olin.edu and shane.skikne@students.olin.edu.

What it Means to Be an Oliner

James Nee

Guest Contributor

As a child, I had one really special toy. It wasn't pretty, or the most interesting, but it was special to me. It was a little wooden action figure that I had cobbled together from bits of scrap wood I found in the garage. The joints were pipe cleaners, the face scribbled on in pencil, and the torso a rough bit of scrap wood from some 2x4 that had broken off the house.

Yet I treated this toy better than anything else I owned; I would even sleep with it like a teddy bear at times. I had a deep connection with this conglomeration of misfit bits. This object won my affection by being solely of my own creation, a physical item forged by my imagination and labor. Looking back I realize that this is love. Not a romantic love, but a passion for building and creating that burns just as bright.

Olin is the embodiment of this love of building. I

chose to come here because I have an incessant need to build. If it's not building physical structures, its building ideas, concepts, dreams. I am just as happy milling a part as I am discussing the tenets of American legal realism and its applications to our lives today. The driving force behind this passion is the potential to effect change.

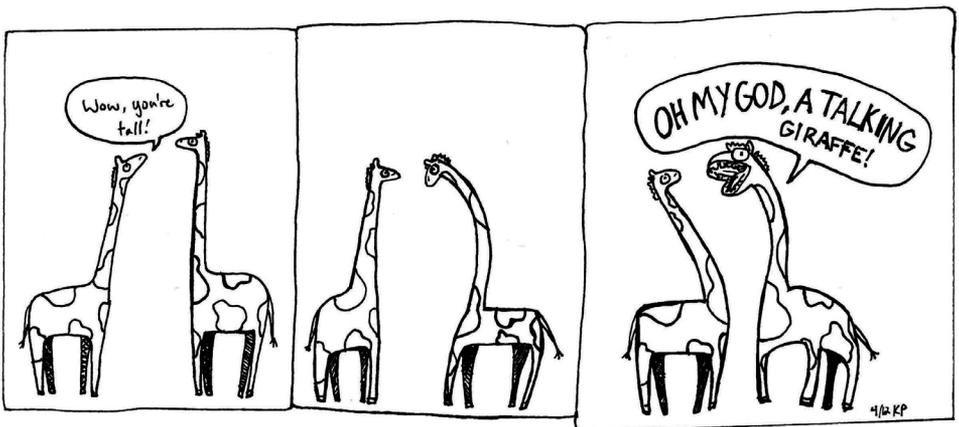
Projects have a much greater appeal to me if they have can benefit others. Olin to me was the sum of all these things, and more.

Hopefully you also chose Olin because it offered an opportunity no other college in the world does: the chance to build classes, to build a school, to build a brighter future. That's Olin's vision and the Olin community, faculty, staff, students and all are taking part in this race. We as students have the greatest strength, both in numbers and time, but we are far from the driving force at Olin. That needs to change. The path ahead is

neither easy nor short, but it only gets easier with more people pushing forward.

We are all part of something momentous, especially now as we enter the tween years of Olin. Olin will undergo some awkward times as it tries to fill its growing role in the world, but just as we grew into our gangly arms and lost that "baby fat", Olin also has the potential to blossom into a mature institution leading the charge in shaping the future. We are pioneers in a new land, working together to clear a path that others cannot or will not do.

Fight for her, this beautiful place and hold on to this opportunity. Look around you and see what needs doing, then proceed to do it. From repairing services like HALP to rewriting the Honor Code, there is something for everyone, and enough to keep you more than busy. This chance to effect so much change is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Don't waste it. Do something.



DOCTOR · LIU

Disclaimer: This month's edition will be more off-color, because, well, the questions I got were more off-color. Ask and you shall receive.

Dear Dr. Liu,

Though my roommate and I both have significant others, sometimes I feel like they get way more action. How can I assuage my bitter jealousy over their sexual antics?

Thanks,

To o-m-a-n-y-o-f-t-h-e-deadly-sins

Dear deadly,

Ooh, there are too many ideas to fit in this column...Here's some though. 1: Replace lube with icy-hot. 2: Hang up pictures of your roommate's parents, grandparents, etc. 3: <http://xkcd.com/316/>

(or replace with sound sample of choice)

Or you could just get some (more).

Dear Dr. Liu

What is your advice for people who are just now thinking about lofts? If you want to sexile your roommate, what about just moving them down to the lower level? How dangerous are lofted 'activities'?

Thanks,

Sky-high

Dear high,

While it's definitely possible do the nasty in the top level without waking your co-inhabitants (depending on how light of a sleeper they are/how awesomely raucous your bonking may be), I wouldn't recommend it unless you are comfortable with your roommate feigning sleep to listen in on your activities. And with relation to the dangers of lofts: if it's creaking too much, don't do it! (this would also apply in general situations, if you know what I mean...)



Write to Dr. Liu by sending a scan of your question via one of the campus printers to submit@franklyspeaking-news.com.

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