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FREE, AS IN BEER

Behind The Curtain

Ian Hill
Contributor

What is the role of students at Olin? Are we the customers? Are we the product? In a meeting with college leaders last week, I was reminded that the administration sees Olin as a laboratory for engineering education where students are partners rather than guinea pigs. However, I suspect that the student body, myself included, has somewhat forgotten about the laboratory, mission-centered mindset that was once universal across the Olin Community.

But that's not everything I learned. While we focus on our studies, our clubs, and our teams, the administration is hard at work building the college in ways we don't always see. Last week, I represented the students in a meeting of the Academic Affairs and Student Life (AASL) Committee of the Board of Trustees, and I'd like to share with you my experience and what I learned.

Dressed to the nines in a black suit proudly bearing my CORE badge on its lapel, I walked briskly up the stairs to the second floor of Milas Hall, my dress shoes clicking

against the stone steps and a leather business folder in my right hand. Admittedly, I was somewhat nervous. I had spent the entire morning drafting, revising, and tweaking a brief handout summarizing the current concerns and initiatives of Olin's student body, and in minutes, I had to be prepared to present it to some of the most powerful leaders of the college.

"I began to wonder if the laboratory mindset has been somewhat forgotten by the student body."

At the threshold to Milas Hall 212, I paused to survey the room. In the center was a long wooden table, tapered in such a way that its shape was almost halfway between a rectangle and an oval. Emily Roper-Doten, our Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, sat at the end of the table - with her computer open - reviewing her presentation one last time. Sherwin

Greenblatt, an Olin Trustee, MIT grad, and avid wearer of suspenders, sat in the middle of the far side of the table chatting with Dr. Robert McBurney, another Trustee who sat opposite. While Mr. Greenblatt enjoys mentoring new ventures, Dr. McBurney loves everything biomedical and has long been a proponent of expanding Olin's biomedical engineering curriculum.

Susan Fredholm Murphy, an Olin partner and the first ever alumni Trustee on the Board, sat with Jessica Townsend on the near side of the table. Both looked over their notes and occasionally chimed in the pre-meeting table banter.

I prepared myself a cup of tea from the spread which had been laid out at the side of the room, and took a seat at the table. We were soon joined by a few more trustees - Dr. Paul Jennings, chair of the committee and former Provost of Caltech, Dr. James Plummer, trustee and former Dean of the Engineering School at Stanford, Mr. Ken Stokes, parent of a 2012 graduate and the new Chair of the Board - and nearly half of Olin's senior admin-

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istrators - Rick Miller, Vin Manno, Rae-Anne Butera, Sarah Spence Adams, and Lynn Andrea Stein.

Even though these administrators and I were invited to sit around this table, we all knew it was still the Trustees' meeting. We were there to present and keep the Board informed. This was one of the few venues where even Vice Presidents and Deans waited to be called upon to speak.

Once everyone had sat down, Dr. Jennings wasted no time calling the meeting to order. The trustees present quickly approved the minutes of the last meeting of the committee, and Dr. Jennings asked Vin, Olin's Provost and Dean of Faculty, to present the committee's Top Concerns list.

For context, the AASL Committee keeps a list of top concerns organized into "red lights" - things that are clearly not going in the right direction - and "yellow lights" - things that are OK now, but appear to be going in the wrong direction, or things that are so complicated or uncertain that they could easily go wrong. This October, the Committee had no red light concerns but had a few yellow light concerns largely centered around growing the capacity of the faculty and how Academic Life organizational structures would change with a larger faculty and increased levels of both curriculum innovation and Collaboratory activity. As Vin unpacked each concern, it was clear that the college considers it-

self in "growth mode" when it comes to the faculty.

Emily Roper-Doten was the next to present. She explained how the Admissions and Financial Aid offices had been combined into the Office for Admission and Financial Aid. She highlighted how she and her new staff have been able to travel more and recruit from areas of the country where Olin hadn't previously. Emily also described how her office was making a special effort this year to ensure that Olin's next incoming class represents a "rich diversity of backgrounds, creativity, and personality."

"Qualitative Analysis Stream, a three-year-long pilot to introduce integrated modeling and analysis courses."

After Emily fielded a few questions from the Trustees, Dr. Jennings called upon Rae-Anne, our Dean of Student Life, to give her update about Student Affairs and Resources (StAR). Rae-Anne explained how StAR had invited MIT's Title IX coordinator to lead a workshop on the basics of Title IX and related legislation and how StAR has been working with the Honor Board to review the policies and procedures that govern

our student judicial process. She also said that StAR is reviewing Olin's current student exchange relationships and potentially looking for new partnerships.

As President of CORE, I was slated to present after Rae-Anne, so I passed around the handout I had made summarizing the concerns and initiative of the student body. I informed the Trustees of the Sexual Respect Project, a joint initiative between CORE, the Honor Board, the PAs, and the R2s. The Sexual Respect Team has been holding workshops and feedback discussions with the ultimate goal of presenting recommendations for improvement to the administration and Honor Board about our policies around sexual misconduct. I also made them aware of CORE's efforts to improve institutional memory, redesign course registration, and add more artwork around campus.

Unfortunately, I was in the dangerous position of being between thirteen people and lunch, so as soon as I had finished my last thought, Dr. Jennings called a break for lunch, and we each snagged a sandwich from the catering which had been set up on a side table.

Jessica Townsend, our Associate Dean for Curriculum and Academic Programs, ate her lunch quickly and was called upon to discuss Olin's new curricular innovations. She enlightened us all on the new Quantitative Analysis Stream experiment, a three-year long

pilot to introduce integrated modeling and analysis courses. It's currently under development and will be offered for the first time this coming spring. Jessica also expressed that Olin is working to improve assessment methods and data collection to better evaluate curricular experiments.

Sarah Spence Adams, our Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Development, spoke next. She explained how we're excited to welcome several new faculty members this year and how Olin is continuing to grow the faculty. Apparently, we expect to add four to five more professors in the next year! One of the trustees, Mr. Stokes, asked how Olin's hiring process differed from other institu-

tions, and Sarah commented that our process includes far more student involvement and group activities than most other hiring processes. She affirmed that candidates always left having a better understanding of what Olin is like.

"We expect to add four to five more professors next year!"

In the final segment of the meeting, Lynn Andrea Stein, Director of the Collaboratory and our Associate Dean for External Engagement and Initiatives, reported on Olin's off campus activities. In day to day college life,

I sometimes forget Olin's larger mission of revolutionizing engineering education, but through Lynn's discussion, I was reminded that Olin is a sort of national laboratory. She pointed out that students are not the customers or the products but rather partners in a larger project. As she spoke, it seemed apparent that the entire administration was on the same page about our mission, but I began to wonder if the laboratory mindset has been somewhat forgotten by the student body over the years.

Lynn had been the final presenter, and the Trustees had no other business to discuss. The meeting soon concluded, and I was left wondering how I might share my experience with other students.

The Literal Olin Story

Kai Austin
Contributor

tl;dr: Help write a multi-auto-biography memoir of life as an Olin student.

When I was at the Boston Book fair (which you should all go to next year), I was talking with an author about Olin and she suggested I do what most writers suggest people do: write about it. But with all the current discussion of diversity, "what is the typical Oliner," and my poor memory in general, I thought - why should it just be my point of view? A lot of things at Olin are made by students for students, collaboration which has led

to things like the renovation of the library, Build Day, Frankly Speaking, the Foundry, REVO, etc. Why not an "auto-biography" of a "typical" Oliner?

How I am currently imaging the book plays out is something like the movie "Life in a Day." If you have not seen this movie, we will never be friends. The book though will be a mix of different types of writings in a diary/scrapbook feel over the course of a year. They could be straight up "what I did today" journal entries. They could be rants and thoughts about important issues to you. They could be to-do lists, facebook posts, reflections you submitted

to OIE, Frankly Speaking articles, etc. They can be almost anything.

Right now I am mostly looking for a gauge of interest. Would you be interested in writing? Do you have submission ideas? Would you be willing to help put this book together? If you are at all interested in being part of this (historical) project, have question or concerns, etc. contact me via email (dotkaimail@gmail.com), my alumni email (kai.austin@alumni.olin.edu), facebook, or slack (@kai).

Rules, FAQ, and other random thoughts as to the structure of the book are listed here: <http://dotkai.com/whosawake.html>

No School For Elections

Anne Loverso
Contributor

I want to propose that Olin give students and faculty a day off classes on Election Day.

“What are you talking about, Anne?” you demand, “I don’t want to have to miss my classes for something that doesn’t even matter that much anyways.”

In 2014, 19.9% of 18-29 year-olds cast ballots, the lowest youth voting turnout ever recorded. In the 2012 presidential election, 45% of voters aged 18-29 voted. Young people make up 21% of the overall voting populace and have a greater subset of electorate than seniors (46 million young people, 39 million seniors). The youth vote matters – if no young people had voted in 2012, Ohio, Florida, Virginia, and Pennsylvania would have flipped from Blue to Red – a sufficient enough portion of electoral votes that we would now be talking about President Romney. But it doesn’t matter what party you support – it matters that you have the chance to make your voice heard.

“Okay, Anne, we get it, stop throwing statistics at us – we get that young people voting matters,” you say. “Why does that mean Olin should give us a day off class for it?”

Well, Olin’s mission statement (according to the ‘14-‘15 student handbook)

is to “prepare students to become exemplary engineering innovators who recognize needs, design solutions, and engage in creative enterprises for the good of the world.” To me, that means that Olin should prepare students not just to be exemplary engineers, but exemplary citizens who can take advantage of the democratic enterprises already instilled in our society for the good of the world.

Not only that, but voting falls heavily under the “do something” clause – striving to better yourself and the community. The whole clause encourages us to take responsibility for what happens within Olin and take control of our educational experience if we see something that should be changed. It only makes sense that we apply this philosophy to outside the Olin bubble as well. See things happening in politics that you don’t like? Do something about it – make your voice heard by voting!

“Okay, Anne, we get it, voting is part of our civic duty which Olin should be encouraging,” you say. “Why do we need a day off class for it?”

A few weeks ago, I sent a survey out to Olin students to get an idea of how they vote. Turnout was low (like youth voting rates!), but of the 36 replies, 27% of students indicated that they planned to vote by going to

a physical voting location, as opposed to mail-in or absentee ballot. Additionally, we can presume that since faculty and staff generally live in the area around Olin, they will also need to visit a physical location as opposed to absentee ballot.

These are large numbers of people who need time on Election Day to get to and from the voting location, which can be extremely hard for the average Olin student or faculty member to fit into their daily schedule around classes and meetings. A day off classes would give greater flexibility for students to visit voting booths.

Also, this could potentially allow time for more civic discussion to go on at Olin. I for one would love to see more alleyways for discussion of political and current events – a way for us to expand and hear more about what’s going on outside the Bubble. Even students who are absentee voting would benefit from this.

“Okay, Anne, we get it,” you say. And I hope you do! I want to bring this issue out to the community, and if enough people agree with me, I’d like for us to bring it to the administration and work towards actually getting this implemented in time for the 2016 election. It would be amazing to see a greater youth voter turnout, and even though Olin is small, it’s still important for our voices to be heard.

Banter: Expand Your Olin Family!

Larissa Little
Contributor

It's almost here! You may have seen a few emails about Banter and wondered what it was all about and whether or not you have the time/interest/ability to sign up.

Well. We're here to answer your questions.

The Banter program has been active for four years now, connecting students with alumni they wouldn't have met at Olin. We started the program as a way for the Olin community to stay connected on a personal level as the number of past- and present- Oliners grows. Can you get advice on professional decisions through banter? Sure! Is it a mentorship program? If you want! But first and foremost it's a way to get the chance to meet an awesome person you wouldn't have otherwise- to share Olin (and life) stories with someone who has a different perspective.

Many alumni are still interested in what's going at Olin these days, and as a student, you have this unique insight! Conversely - it can be easy to get sucked up into the Olin bubble while you're a student here, and getting the chance to glimpse life after Olin can be really interesting and helpful.

We pair students with alumni who have been out

of Olin for several years. You can meet every week, every month, every other month - however frequently you want. You can Skype, hangout, meetup in real life, write letters, send each other messages in bottles - whatever you want. Our team will provide interesting prompts every month that you can take or leave as you see fit. Our goal is just to help people connect!

"It's been easy and fun- just a Skype call with my Banter partner every two weeks."

We've gotten great feedback on the program last year and are always looking to improve it. Here's some of the things pairs enjoyed last year:

"It's fun to remember what being in school was like, see how things have changed (or stayed the same), and share some of my post-college experiences. The semester seems so short when you're following along from the outside! I have no concept of when "summer break" is anymore!" -Sean McBride ('07), Product Manager

It's been easy and fun -

just an informal Skype call with my Banter partner once every two weeks. We talk about everything from Olin lore to neat travel destinations... it just feels really useful to share the experience I've acquired in the 8 years since graduating. I've built a career overseas working on strange projects, which is what I always wanted to do. ... I wish Banter had existed when I was a student - would have been amazing to be able to chat with someone who had already accomplished what my goals were. -Laura Stupin ('07), Senior Process Engineer

"Most of our talks have been about life and happiness and philosophy and Olin and a bit about getting into international development work (I'm in Zambia right now) ...I've loved chatting with Laura, it's been great to get a nice out-in-the-world-post-Olin-like-a-real-human-being perspective and we've had such great conversations." -Maire Keene ('17)

It might seem difficult to squeeze yet another thing into your schedule, so we've worked to make sure everything is simple and easy. Spare a little time now and make a friend for years!

- Larissa Little ('14) and the rest of the Banter Team!

Service Updates at Olin

Kelly Brennan on Behalf of SERV

Contributor

SERV Auction: Led by Shane Skikne, Amanda Sutherland & Jennifer Wei

All SERV Auction proceeds will be going to Cradle to Crayons, a small local charity that helps provide children (from birth to 12 years) who are low-income or homeless with the supplies they need to thrive - at home, at school & play. Please donate your SERV auction item by Wednesday, November 4th! Email or talk with the SERV committee to brainstorm ideas if you are stuck! Or visit the Ideation Sheet in the SERV Auction Item Donation Form email. The auction will run in the DH hallway from November 9th - 13th and the live auction will be held on November 13th during lunch from 12:30 - 1:30.

eDisco:

eDisco has been undergoing a lot of changes recently. We reorganized how our leadership is structured and are focusing more on creating great content for K-12 lessons. We are now leading workshops weekly about how to teach and how to make curriculum, and in the spring we will be bringing the newly created classes to schools and workshops. During this fall semester, we will still be doing our annual Bottle Rockets Workshop on November 14th as well as some experimental classes at a local el-

ementary school. We are always open to new members, so if anyone is interested in education or wants to run fun workshops with kids, we would love to have you!

The Daily Table: Organization led by Emily Yeh

This November, Olin plans to start a volunteering partnership with Daily Table in Dorchester, MA! Daily Table is a non-profit organization, founded by Doug Rauch, Olin Trustee and former CEO of Trader Joe's, that aims to provide delicious, wholesome and affordable food in a respectful manner. The organization offers "grab-and-go" meals and a variety of grocery items that compete with fast-food prices to keep the food affordable for all customers. If you would like more information or are interested in volunteering, please contact the Student Leader, Emily Yeh.

The Food Recovery Network: Led by Mackenzie Frackleton with GROW

Made their first delivery on Oct. 21st! They will be recovering the untouched food from the dining hall every two weeks. Please contact Isaac Vandor or Mackenzie to get involved.

Big Brother Big Sister College Campus Program: Olin and Babson College

Max Wei and Justin Kunitz have been matched with their Littles this October! In November, the Littles

will be brought to Babson's Campus to meet with their Big for on-campus activities every other Saturday.

Red Cross Blood Drive: Organized by Michael Resnick

With a total of 49 registered donors, the Red Cross collected 50 units of lifesaving blood!

Stop Hunger Now: Held by the Wellesley Rotary Club

Two Oliners participated in Wellesley Rotary Club's "Stop Hunger Now" event on October 17th, in which twenty thousand meals were packaged to be sent to areas experiencing chronic or emergency malnourishment. Volunteers assembled bags each containing rice, soy protein, dehydrated vegetables, and vitamin supplements, then sealed, packed, and loaded the meals onto a truck to be sent to hunger-stricken areas. Great participation from the community allowed these 20k meals to be packaged in just two hours!

"Universal Access" Adaptive Biking Program: Led by Mary Martin as part of Sara Hendren's Assistive Adaptive Work

Sara and Mary are helping with the proposal of a new adaptive biking program in Cambridge on Memorial Drive next summer to make the current weekly "Riverbend Park"—which closes all four lanes on Sundays

from 12-6 in the summer—more accessible to people with disabilities who want to use adaptive biking gear and other "universal" wheeled mobility. The future volunteer program will connect people who couldn't ride bikes on their own with volunteers who can assist, creating both a fun activity for the people involved and raising awareness about accessibility. The work involves creating a volunteer training

and schedule, working with accessibility experts and the park district, getting donated or funded bikes of all kinds arranged, etc. Please talk to Mary Martin or Sara Hendren if you would like to learn more about the proposal and development of the program.

SERV can make transportation more accessible for people doing service activi-

ties off-campus! Please contact us for more information on transportation methods and support. To answer any service related questions, you can attend SERV office hours during SLAC or contact Kelly Brennan or Michael Searing.

Do you know of an upcoming service event or activity? Send an email to out to the carpeSERV email list at: carpeSERV@olin.edu

the
ACRONYM
free pop-up pour-over coffee and tea shop



NOVEMBER HOURS
Tuesdays
2-4pm
Milas Hall Lobby

Service, Food, and Olin

Mackenzie Frackleton
Contributor

I'm excited to announce that Olin is launching its own chapter of the Food Recovery Network.

Over the past two semesters, we've been working to file permits and sign agreements to organize food collection from Sodexo to Framingham's Salvation Army.

You might wonder what the Food Recovery Network is; We're the largest student movement against food waste and hunger in America. FRN was founded by 3 students at the University of Maryland, College Park in 2011. During the Spring

2012 semester, the second FRN chapter was founded at Brown University, University of California, Berkeley, and Pomona College. May 2013, FRN gained funding to hire a full-time staff and transition to a professional nonprofit. There are currently 153 chapters across 37 states that have gathered a cumulative total of 944,224 pounds of food since 2011.

We're going to be the 154th chapter after our second recovery this Wednesday, November 4th. So far, we recover every second Wednesday from our dining hall and have recovered about 28 pounds of food. We're going to keep recovering with Sodexo here

at Olin, and once we establish we're going to look for additional partner organizations who will work with us to recover food. We've built up a great leadership team with Manik Sethi (Salvation Army Main Contact), Anisha Nakagawa (Sodexo and Grow Contact), Aaron Greiner (Sodexo and Grow Contact), Isaac Vandor (Volunteer Coordination), and me, Mackenzie Frackleton (Lead Coordinator).

If you ever want to help out as a volunteer, suggest a new venue for recovering food, or even start a chapter with another school, email us and let's make something happen!

Pass No Recording Olin

Aaron Greiner
Contributor

At Olin, we strive to be motivated by our interest in learning, and our desire to do our best work. Yet all too often, we are instead encouraged to be motivated by a single number that we are conditioned to think is an accurate representation of how well we are learning.

This is why I have not once looked at my grades since coming to Olin.

The idea of “Pass No Recording” Olin is to stay motivated by our interest to learn and our desire to do our best work by simply not looking at our grades. With this mindset, we can continue the motivation we all had during our first semester, where we would go above and beyond on a project not because our professor would give us a good grade, but because we had a passion that we were excited to work for.

Once we start to look at and internalize letter grades and GPA’s, we slip into the

mindset of distributing our time and effort in order to receive that maximum number of points, even if that means spending less time on a project we are passionate about since we know that if we go above and beyond, it won’t make a difference on our transcript. When we do this, we start to lose that passion that makes Olin different.

Not looking at grades, however, is only one side to “Pass No Recording” Olin. The other, equally (or more) important side comes in the form of a reflection. While a letter grade cannot attempt to distill all the work you have done over a semester, a written reflection (written by the student or professor) can get much closer.

A written reflection can highlight the project you went above and beyond on, your contributions in class, and how much you have progressed over a semester. It can also show your weak points and how you can improve.

When collected, these re-

lections, or evaluations, provide a comprehensive picture of your journey through Olin. They allow you to take pride in your successes and learn from your failures. These are attributes that a number cannot even start to encompass.

Deciding to not look at your grades is not without its challenges though. When my parents asked me to send in my transcript so they could get the good student discount from the car insurance company, I physically covered up my screen so I could only see the download button, attached the document in an email, and immediately deleted it from my computer. I am still unsure what I will do when an employer asks for my GPA in an application.

It may not be realistic for you to not look at your grades, and that’s fine. Even if you don’t write it down, reflect on your work for the semester. Feel pride in your triumphs, and work to fix your weaknesses. Try to think about what really motivates you, and use that to guide you.

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