Exporting the Oxford Model

When Oxford alumni gather, they often use the term life-changing to describe their education. There is a common notion that the faculty and staff are on to something at Oxford, that they are doing something here that is simply not done at other colleges.

Well, could it be?

What if a way were found to export the Oxford experience? Where else might it work and which students would benefit most? These questions were on the table this past June at a national conference held on the Oxford campus, a conference that focused on Oxford itself and what was referred to as the Oxford Model.

Entitled “Transformative Models of Higher Education,” the conference was the brainchild of Emory Provost Earl Lewis and the University of Michigan’s Center for Advancing Research and Solutions for Society (CARSS). Funding for the conference was provided by the Ford Foundation. The twenty invitees came from across the country for the two-day meeting and included education researchers, higher education administrators, and representatives from prominent foundations with a commitment to education. Derek Bok, president emeritus of Harvard University and the most-cited commentator on American higher education, attended and gave the keynote address.

Programs from the University of North Carolina, Texas’s Lone Star College, and the Posse Foundation were also presented at the conference, but Oxford and the Oxford experience were the primary focus, with the first full day devoted to participants’ experiencing Oxford firsthand. The meeting was held in Seney Hall, where a comprehensive overview was presented, detailing students’ backgrounds, experiences, and achievements in scholarship, leadership, and service. Participants learned that Oxford successfully educates students from underrepresented groups as well as majority students without ever having had a minority recruiting initiative. Furthermore, both minority and majority students who begin their Emory careers at Oxford complete their baccalaureate degrees and go on to post-baccalaureate programs at rates comparable to students who begin on the Atlanta campus.

This analytical/statistical approach was complemented over lunch with the human touch, when three Oxford graduates, Paula Zwillich’08Ox, John Bottley’07Ox, and Munir Meghjani’08Ox described their time at Oxford and answered questions from participants that helped paint a picture of the Oxford Model from a student’s perspective. A tour of the campus led by Dean of Campus Life Joe Moon gave historic and architectural background on Oxford along with observations gleaned from his twenty years at the college. The grand finale for these Oxford guests, most of whom were from other parts of the country, was a real Southern meal featuring barbecue and all the right fixings, served in Phi Gamma Hall.

The following morning, the group gathered on the Emory campus for a wrap-up session and discussion of how the Oxford Model could be implemented elsewhere. In his remarks to the group, President James Wagner eliminated any possible ambiguity, saying that Oxford is essential to Emory in realizing its vision of being “a destination university internationally recognized as an inquiry-driven, ethically engaged, and diverse community, whose members work collaboratively for positive transformation in the world.”

Many of the conference participants felt that while the Oxford model might not be the only answer to the need of 23 million students from underrepresented groups for college education, it is still a very compelling model for research universities that could adopt it outright or adapt it to their own particular circumstances. Continuing this discussion will be a strategic priority for Oxford in the time ahead, spreading to higher education the good news that Oxford alumni have known all along.

—Cathy Wooten
Satchsquash and Tomatoes: 
Oxford students help tend community gardens

Wearing bandanas, old clothes, sun hats and gardening gloves, Oxford students turned out in force to dig in the dirt this spring to create Gardens of Hope, and vines bursting with ripe fruits and vegetables come summer were their reward.

The students worked with other community groups and master gardeners to create two community gardens—one in raised beds at Turner Lake Recreation Area, and the other in a more traditional lot on Turner Lake Circle, next to the Community Food Pantry in Covington.

Chelsey Carter 10Ox planted green beans, lima beans, and watermelon for her first up-close gardening experience.

“My friends were actually laughing at me because I am not the one to dig my hands in dirt,” she says. “The Garden of Hope has been my favorite community service project to date. I looked forward to returning to school this year to see the garden fully harvested. It was exciting to know that my efforts grew into this amazing garden that feeds people in Newton County.”

The volunteers named the boxes at the Turner Lake complex “Satchsquash,” “Veg-to-table,” and “Lett-Uce-Give,” showing a propensity for puns as well as produce.

“It’s so nice out here—you have a forest grove that opens to a clearing with the garden boxes,” says Cathy Wooten, director of communications at Oxford. “The exciting part is that so many groups are involved, including the master gardeners.”

Community volunteers and Oxford students, including members of Volunteer Oxford and Bonner Leaders, built the gardens on January 19 as part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. “Because the garden soil needed to be heavily amended, the students had to remove the existing mulch mixed with crush and run, helped to spread the top soil, shoveled the horse manure, and worked it into the soil,” says Ferah Withrow, Newton County master gardener. “That is a lot of sweat!”

On April 25, the volunteers planted seeds and starter plants along with groups such as Hands On Newton, Georgia Perimeter College, and the Department of Juvenile Justice. Newton County high school students helped out with the planting as well, and local high school agricultural classes donated the bedding plants for the gardens.

In the Turner Circle plot, corn, okra, watermelon, and green beans were seeded, pepper and squash seedlings were planted, and a tomato patch was created. “So many Oxford students have participated in the transformation of this desolate and abandoned lot that ended up becoming a beautiful and productive garden,” says Withrow.

More than 250 pounds of vegetables were given to the Community Food Pantry, the Homeless Shelter, and the Senior Center to feed their clientele, says Doug Bolton, director of Hands On Newton.

“Oxford College and their students helped to improve our community through their volunteer-ism,” says Bolton. “Their work helped to provide fresh vegetables to groups of people in our community who needed them the most.”

The Garden of Hope has been my favorite community service project to date. I looked forward to returning to school this year to see the garden fully harvested. It was exciting to know that my efforts grew into this amazing garden that feeds people in Newton County. —Chelsey Carter

Crystal McLaughlin, Oxford College director of student development, says the project has been so successful that “it has been embraced by county leaders, and we are likely to have an even bigger garden next year.

“Our students have bright minds and big hearts,” adds McLaughlin. “Now, some of them are also knowledgeable gardeners.” —Mary Loftus

Oxford Entering Class Profile

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Oxford College students are exceptional when it comes to community service. Last year, with a campus of only 750 students, they completed more than 13,000 hours of service. Nationally, about one third of college students are engaged in service each year but at Oxford, that number is more than 78 percent.
We want the leaders in higher education to know about Emory’s Oxford College. They may well benefit from the knowledge. Essentially every institution would like to achieve on their campus the strong, supportive community that we enjoy at Oxford. They would like to make the experience of human difference the enriching community asset it is at Oxford. They would like their students to develop the leadership skills and the self-motivated scholarly curiosity that distinguish Oxford’s graduates. The Oxford Model may help them achieve some of these goals. —Dean Stephen H. Bowen

A fundamental precept of teaching is that in order for students to acquire new knowledge, they must be able to connect that new knowledge to something they already know—an idea, an experience, an emotion—that anchors the new information in memory. This is a challenge when we try to educate our colleagues in higher education about Oxford College. Oxford is unlike any other institution they know.

Oxford is not an honors college. We have our share of very highly credentialed students but the range of board scores and GPAs in Oxford College is about the same as the rest of the University. Oxford is certainly not a remedial campus. We take pride in discovering a few “diamonds in the rough,” but all Oxford students have to be ready for college-level study from day one. We don’t have specialized degrees or curricula, yet we are arguably the most distinctive academic division within Emory. So it is not surprising to be asked by colleagues at professional meetings: “Oxford College, Emory. So it is not surprising to be asked by colleagues at professional meetings: “Oxford College, what exactly is that?”

We want the leaders in higher education to know about Emory’s Oxford College. They may well benefit from the knowledge. Essentially every institution would like to achieve on their campus the strong, supportive community that we enjoy at Oxford. They would like to make the experience of human difference the enriching community asset it is at Oxford. They would like their students to develop the leadership skills and the self-motivated scholarly curiosity that distinguish Oxford’s graduates. The Oxford Model may help them achieve some of these goals.

Oxford Welcomes Wooten

Cathy Wooten joined Oxford College as director of communications in February 2009. In this capacity, she is responsible for public relations on behalf of Oxford, promoting its messages, special events, and unique qualities to local, regional, and national media, as well as to Oxford and Emory Atlanta audiences.

Prior to joining Oxford College, Wooten was director of communications with Novare Group, a real estate development company based in Midtown Atlanta. Wooten also served as director of communications for Novare Group’s TWELVE Hotels and Residences subsidiary during its launch in 2006. She has also done extensive freelance writing and editing, and her articles and book reviews have appeared in local and regional publications.

Wooten earned a bachelor of arts in English from Carson-Newman College and a master of library science from the University of Tennessee.

She and her husband Dave live in Atlanta and have three adult children.

“To paraphrase a Texas bumper sticker, I didn’t start out at Oxford, but I got here as fast as I could,” says Wooten. “I feel supremely fortunate to be working in a place where academic excellence, service and leadership are guiding principles wrapped in a warm community. What a privilege it is to tell the story of Oxford to the wider world.”

New Chaplain Joins Oxford

Oxford College recently welcomed a new chaplain to campus. Rev. Lyn Pace 02T was named to the role following an extensive search; he began his duties on July 1. He succeeds Rev. Judy Shema, who served Oxford for six years and was its first woman chaplain. Shema left Oxford this past February to assume the pastorate of a Methodist church in Lubbock, Texas.

Prior to coming to Oxford, Pace was the associate chaplain, director of service learning, and director of the Bonner Scholars Program at Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He earned his bachelor’s degree in religion and history from Wofford in 1999 and received a master of divinity degree from Candler School of Theology in 2002. A lifelong United Methodist, Pace was ordained an elder in the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church in 2005.

“Being a Candler graduate, I feel that this return to the Emory community is a personal homecoming,” says Pace. He and wife Ami Hernandez reside in the city of Oxford. —Cathy Wooten
Reflections on the Journeys of Reconciliation Trip to Cuba

Cuban Magic

Only one day following the conclusion of the commencement ceremony this May, a small group of Emory students, faculty, and staff landed at José Martí International Airport in Havana, Cuba. This group, including students from Oxford College, Emory College and Candler School of Theology, began meeting in January to get to know each other, to make travel plans, and most importantly, to learn about all aspects of Cuban life. This Journey of Reconciliation, sponsored by the dean of the chapel and religious life, Susan Henry-Crowe, was organized as a two-week immersion experience into Cuban life, with an emphasis on religious expression.

Early in our journey, students inquired about some inconsistencies between what our Cuban guide described to be government policy in contrast to the realities “on the ground.” For example, while Cuban people are not permitted to own their own businesses (or, only rarely with narrow restrictions), there were successful family restaurants throughout Havana. In response, our guide smiled and replied, “Ah, Cuban magic!”

“Cuban magic” became a kind of group mantra for this nine-day journey with its densely scheduled itinerary. The Emory group visited the Methodist Seminary and Ecumenical Council of Churches in Havana and, also, the Presbyterian Seminary in Matanzas. We met with a Muslim family, attended a Shabbat service, toured a Yoruba place of worship, and attended a Catholic mass. We enjoyed a lively conversation with the Methodist bishop, an imam, a priest, and several protestant ministers.

While in Havana, the Journeys group toured old town and enjoyed walking along the colorful streets, viewing the beautiful eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architecture and admiring the vintage automobiles. Outside of Havana, we toured the Bay of Pigs (Playa Giron), the scenic Varadero Beach, and enjoyed observing the rural, agricultural areas. Each day in Cuba was long, but deeply satisfying.

Many evenings the Journeys group concluded the day with a time set aside for reflection. The more time we spent in Cuba, the more we began to understand the complexities of Cuban life. The Cuban people are proud of their high rates of literacy, their free system of education, and accessible health care, but frustrated by the absence of a free press, the lack of affordable consumer goods, and the restrictions on private ownership of homes and businesses. As U.S. citizens, we were greeted warmly and openly by the Cuban people, and we sensed that Cubans were hopeful that Cuban/U.S. relations were improving.

As our journey drew to a close, we all felt privileged to be experiencing life in Cuba during this time of social change and hope that relationships between Emory and our Cuban friends will be created, nurtured, and strengthened as a result of our brief visit and perhaps also a sprinkling of Cuban magic.

—Joe Moon, Dean for Campus Life, Oxford College

Oxford Outlook • Oxford College

Are you connected?

If not, you should visit the online community launched by the Emory Alumni Association last fall. So far, hundreds of alumni are using the website to link professionally and personally with each other. Through E-Connection, Oxford alumni can reconnect with old friends and colleagues, meet alumni in their area, network with alumni around the world, share photos and special interests, and search for jobs. To register with E-Connection, visit www.Emory.emory.edu and look for the heading “Are you Connected?”

Remembering John Keller

On August 22, 2008, John Keller 040x 07C, a former student at Oxford and Emory and a friend of many, lost his battle with cancer. Those who knew him remember him for his sense of humor, his caring and considerate nature, and his strength and courage.

Keller was an exceptionally committed student who, from the time he was young, battled severe dyslexia and attention deficit disorder. He worked valiantly to cope with these disorders, working twice as hard as his peers to meet the same academic goals. When he was fifteen, he was diagnosed with Crohn’s disease, and where many would complain, he went on, even taking the SAT with an IV in his arm and fluids in his backpack. Despite these hurdles, he worked hard and was successful in high school and attended Oxford and then Emory, majoring in English and minorinng in sociology.

A week after graduating from Emory, Keller was told that a mole, recently removed from his shoulder, was a malignant melanoma. Throughout his illness and treatment, Keller showed his characteristic courage and determination, and was strengthened by his Oxford sweetheart, Clelia Pezzi 040x 06C 11PH, whom he married on July 19, 2008. After a brave battle with cancer, Keller died at the age of twenty-five.

In his memory, Keller’s family created the John Lewis Keller Memorial Fund, which will be used to award a deserving Oxford sophomore—one who has shown excellence in participation and endurance in working through his or her disabilities—with a scholarship every year. To learn more about the scholarship and lend your support, visit www.johnlewiskeller.com.

Resources for Alumni

Are you looking for a job? The Emory Alumni Association’s Career Services Program can help. Visit www.alumni.emory.edu/careers/counseling and arrange a shoot, or to view the video collection and commission a video, go to www.photo.emory.edu/.
Members of the Oxford Class of 1959 celebrated their fiftieth reunion with flair, tossing their hats in front of Phi Gamma.

**Warren Brook, Penny England, and Marilyn Kirk support the college through planned giving.**

**Warren Brook ’70Ox 72B knows this much for sure:** “You are going to die one day.” And people who don’t plan for what happens to their income and assets after they’re gone—whether due to fears of their own mortality or family conflict over an estate—are not doing their loved ones any favors. “My father died without a will, and I got to see what happens when the state gets involved,” Brook says. Besides, he adds, “it’s the one point in your life when you can actually make a decision that sticks.”

Like Brook, a parent’s decision made Penny England consider her own will more carefully. But in England’s case, her mother left a will. “Having a will is a gift in itself to your family,” she says. Her mother’s thoughtfulness made England, a longtime professor of physical education at Oxford, think about not only whom she wanted to include as beneficiaries, but who needed her assets the most. “As far as needs and wants, [my family] can figure out how to do their wants. I’m more interested in if my family needs something after I’m gone,” she says.

Both Brook and England both made the decision to include Oxford College in their wills by planning their gifts. “If my family needs something, then I want them to have it all, but then Oxford can have whatever’s left,” says England, who considers her Oxford colleagues and students her “other family.”

Brook and his wife, Kathy, who is not an alumna of Oxford but has been an enthusiastic supporter of the college for much of their marriage, made the decision together. “Our gift is pretty much what’s left of our estate after we’re gone. We don’t have any children, my siblings and their families are all in decent shape,” says Brook. “I’d like to see Oxford College continue on as long as it can based on what’s done for me and for other alums.”

There are many types of planned, or deferred, gifts, but it broadly means that a personal or couple has made the terms of their wills known to beneficiaries—and families—before their deaths. “We know that there are people who care for the college and have shown us this by providing for the college in their estate planning,” says Kevin Smyrl, associate dean for development and alumni relations. Planned gifts are good for the college because they allow Oxford to plan as well. “Few people who make planned gifts change their minds,” says Smyrl, “even with irrevocable trusts.”

Marilyn Kirk, who works with Smyrl as a fundraiser, says, “It’s something that anybody can do, no matter what your financial situation or where you are in life—with small children or headed to retirement.” When she and her husband were creating their wills, she told him, “I also want to give a percentage to Oxford, because I work in fund-raising and I know what the needs are.”

The Brooks want their gift to ensure the physical preservation of Oxford’s historic buildings. “I’ve always been interested in antiques and history,” says Brook. “Those are the things I thought important—more so than maintaining a library or naming a building after myself.”

For more information about planned giving at Oxford, contact Marilyn Kirk at 770.784.8447.

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**Commemoration Weekend 2009**

Oxford graduated 351 students at Commencement Weekend this May. Family members, alumni, and graduates enjoyed the words of keynote speaker President Emeritus James Laney who encouraged graduates “to give their caps in front of Phi Gamma.”

The Class of 1959 Celebrates

The Class of 1959 has made its mark at Oxford in many ways. There are many types of planned, or deferred, gifts, but it broadly means that a personal or couple has made the terms of their wills known to beneficiaries—and families—before their deaths. “We know that there are people who care for the college and have shown us this by providing for the college in their estate planning,” says Kevin Smyrl, associate dean for development and alumni relations. Planned gifts are good for the college because they allow Oxford to plan as well. “Few people who make planned gifts change their minds,” says Smyrl, “even with irrevocable trusts.”

Warren Brook, Penny England, and Marilyn Kirk support the college through planned giving.

**Warren Brook, Penny England, and Marilyn Kirk support the college through planned giving.**

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**Oxford Alumni Board News**

Kip Hart 94Ox 96C will serve as president of the Oxford College Alumni Board (OCAB) for the 2009–2011 term. Hart, from Lyons, Georgia, is a high school science teacher and also runs a photography business with his family.

Barbara Carter Rivers 65Ox was named the first female OCAB president elect, and she will serve a two-year term beginning in 2011. Rivers is retired from a health career, married to an Oxford alumnus (Al Rivers 64Ox), has two children (one of whom is daughter Maggie Rivers Cato 90Ox), grand—

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**Total Goal $40 Million**

**Campaign Oxford Progress**

$19.9 Million

To support Campaign Oxford, visit www.oxford.emory.edu.