Pardee environmental

September 28, 2022

To: Nicole Chase, OSCA President

From: John Pardee, President
PARDEE ENVIRONMENTAL

Re: Mold screening inspection report:
Tank Hall, Keep Cottage and Harkness House
Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio

Ms. Chase,

Due to the concerns raised by students, Pardee Environmental was retained by the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association (OSCA) to conduct a mold screening inspection of the above listed buildings. This inspection was conducted on Sept. 25, 2022. Below and attached are the findings of this study along with recommended response actions.

Scope of work:

- **Mold screening inspection**: I was escorted by three members of the OSCA who directed me to the areas that have raised the most concern as it relates to suspected mold growth in the three buildings in this scope of work. This inspection was limited to accessible areas only so this study was not a comprehensive assessment. We did not collect any samples (air, swab or tape lift) for analysis. This screening was strictly a visual assessment relying upon my many years of mold screening inspections and understanding of building defects or operational shortcomings that often lead to indoor mold growth.

Findings:

- **Tank Hall**: Visible suspected mold growth was identified primarily in the basement, with some likely mold growth seen on the ceiling in one of the bathrooms. Some stored items in the basement (headboards and a bookshelf) exhibited clear evidence of mold growth. Although there was not a significant amount of suspected visible mold growth observed in this building, I did note that standard drywall was used throughout the basement which is not recommended for areas prone to elevated humidity or water intrusion. The college facilities managers should make a point of using mold-resistant products in spaces susceptible to humidity and episodic flooding. That being said, the drywall in the basement in several areas exhibited staining and signs of persistent moisture intrusion (softened) to the point that mold growth behind the walls in the basement is highly likely and should be addressed by removing and replacing the drywall with mold resistant products. The removal of the moldy materials should only be done by trained professionals using proper hygienic techniques.
- **Keep Cottage**: The mold growth in the Keep Cottage basement was significantly more pronounced and obvious than what was found in Tank Hall. Both stairwells to the basement in Keep Cottage exhibited clear evidence of mold growth and mold was observed on doors and shelving in the hallway. Most of the rooms in the basement were inaccessible due to being locked which prevented a fuller assessment of this space, but what was observed indicates this space needs a full assessment by a trained mold assessor followed immediately by a

professional remedial response. Also observed was evidence of persistent wetness in the air handler/mop room on the main level. The flooring has rotted which is likely contributing to mold growth and the proximity of the mop sink and wet mops to the air handler is suboptimal. Repairs and a redesign of this space is recommended. Furthermore, due to the presence of significant and persistent mold growth, I recommend the HVAC system be professionally cleaned at the conclusion of the mold abatement effort.

- **Harkness House**: Again, like Keep Cottage, we found significant evidence of mold growth in Harkness Hall. Using a moisture meter, I found significant moisture behind the wallboard on the underside of the main east side stairs to the basement. Mold growth behind this wallboard is highly likely. The dining hall wood wainscotting exhibited some mold growth in the corners and based on this wall boarding system being used in a subgrade application, it is highly likely that ground moisture has migrated into the interstitial space behind the wall boarding which would be an ideal environment for mold growth. I would recommend that a properly trained mold assessor conduct an exploratory exam to look behind the wainscotting and determine if mold growth is, in fact occurring, and if so, I would recommend the removal and replacement of the wainscotting with a more mold resistant wall product. The underside of the lower shelving in the air handler room was fully involved with mold growth as was the carpet remnant in the adjacent storage room. These items need to be abated and, as with Keep Cottage, the HVAC system should be properly and fully cleaned at the conclusion of the mold abatement effort. The double doors to the office of Barbie Thompson, the Food Safety & Operational Advisor, were found to exhibit mold growth and the stairwell leading to her office exhibits persistent water intrusion which should be addressed by the facilities office. The observed/likely mold growth in the kitchen food storage areas is particularly concerning due to the proximity of the food stored in these areas. Several of these areas are cladded with fiberglass paneling but the wood behind the fiberglass panels (where observable) appeared to exhibit evidence of mold growth. As with the dining hall wainscotting, a trained mold assessor should conduct an exploratory exam behind these panels and any mold found should be abated, including and up to the removal and replacement of moldy or rotted wood components. In the upper floors, I observed mold growth on stored items in a hall storage closet as well as finding exposed presumed asbestos (PACM) pipe insulation in a utility closet. Lastly, the bathrooms on the first and second floors exhibited evidence of persistent plumbing leaks and water damage. It appears that the stop-gap response to this persistent leaking was the application of fiberglass laminates to the water damaged ceilings. I would suspect that the existing plumbing system is beyond its useful/functional lifespan and the remedy for this would involve replacing the plumbing system in the bathroom areas and repairing the water damaged walls and ceilings with water/mold resistant products.

Conclusions, recommendations, case law and state standards:

- Based on the inspections it is clear that mold growth has been allowed to take hold in all three of the buildings I inspected, to varying degrees of severity. It is incumbent on the college facilities office to respond, with appropriate urgency, to the students repeated requests for a professional investigative response and remediation.
- It will be important going forward to maintain indoor humidity levels at or below 50% RH. This effort will require a “team approach” between the facilities office and the students who live in these buildings. Any and all water loss events (i.e. flooding or pipe breaks) should be responded to as quickly and completely as possible, preferably using the services of a professional water loss/restoration contractor.

- Due to the presence of likely and significant indoor mold growth in both Keep Cottage and Harkness Hall, I would recommend that the HVAC Systems in these buildings, including the air handlers, cooling coils, condensate pans, ducts and diffusers, be cleaned at the conclusion of the mold abatement following NADCA Standards.
- Case law that underpins the need for immediate redress of these areas of concern: Waugh v. Lynch, 8th Dist. Cuyahoga No. 100432, 2014-Ohio-1087, ¶ 10 *(In order to show that a landlord (i.e. OC facilities department) had constructive notice, an injured plaintiff has the burden of showing that the defect in question must have existed for such a length of time that the landlord, by exercising reasonable care, should have discovered it).*
- Ohio Revised Code 5321.04(A)(2) *A landlord who is a party to a rental agreement shall make all repairs and do whatever is reasonably necessary to put and keep the premises in a fit and habitable condition.*

Thank you for allowing Pardee Environmental the opportunity to provide our services. Please let me know if I can be of service to you going forward in representing the interests of the OSCA and the students who inhabit these buildings to help ensure that the college facilities office responds in a timely and appropriate manner.

Warmest regards,

John P. Pardee, President
Pardee Environmental

PROFESSIONAL MOLD INSPECTOR

Attachments: Inspection photos

Tank Hall Inspection Photos

Mold on headboards in basement

Mold on shelf in basement

Water damaged drywall in basement with likely mold behind it

Water damaged drywall in basement with likely mold behind it

Mold on decking in basement storage room

Water damaged drywall in basement with likely mold behind it

Likely mold on joists in basement storage room

Water damaged drywall in basement with likely mold behind it

Likely mold in drywall in laundry room in basement

Likely mold on ceiling in bathroom

Keep Cottage Inspection Photos

Mold growth under northwest stairs to the basement

Mold growth under northwest stairs to the basement

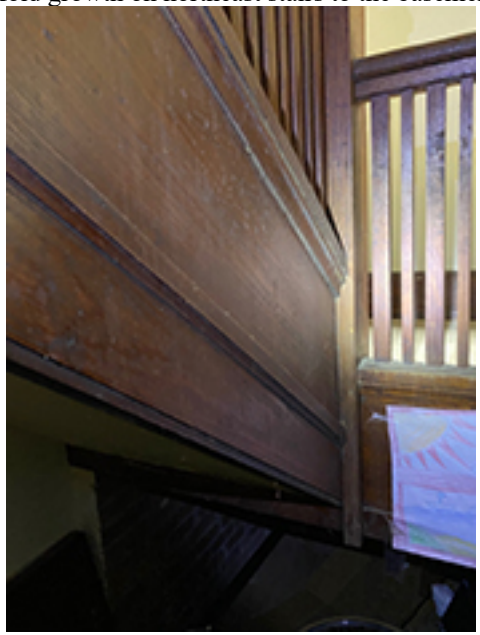
Mold growth on door by northwest stairs to the basement

Mold growth under storage shelves by northwest stairs to the basement

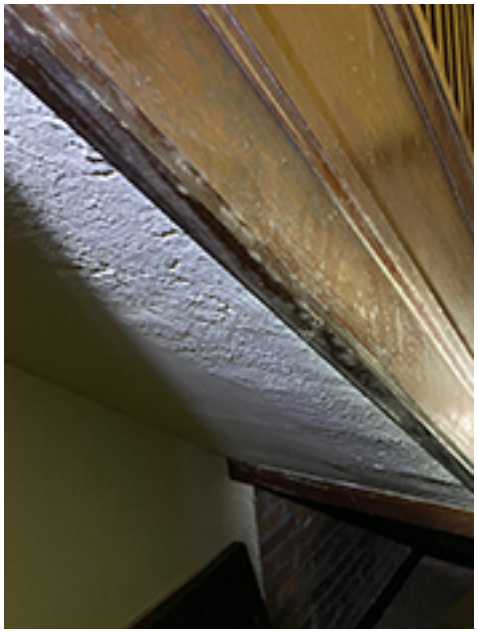
Mold growth on northeast stairs to the basement

Mold growth on northeast stairs to the basement

Mold growth on fire line valve box in northeast stairwell to the basement

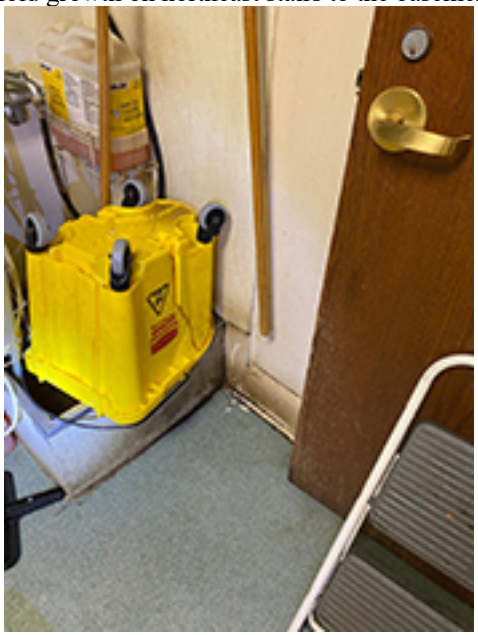


Mold growth on northeast stairs to the basement



Mold growth on northeast stairs to the basement

Student note regarding unhealthy conditions in the northeast basement stairwell



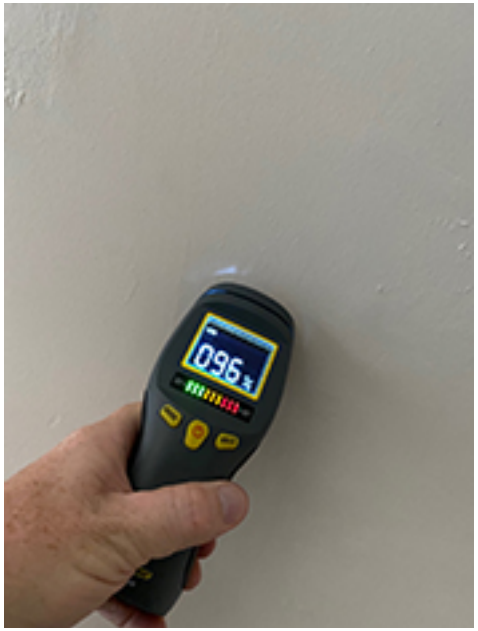
Water damage to drywall by mop sink in HVAC room

Water damage to drywall by mop sink in HVAC room

Water damage to wood floor in HVAC room

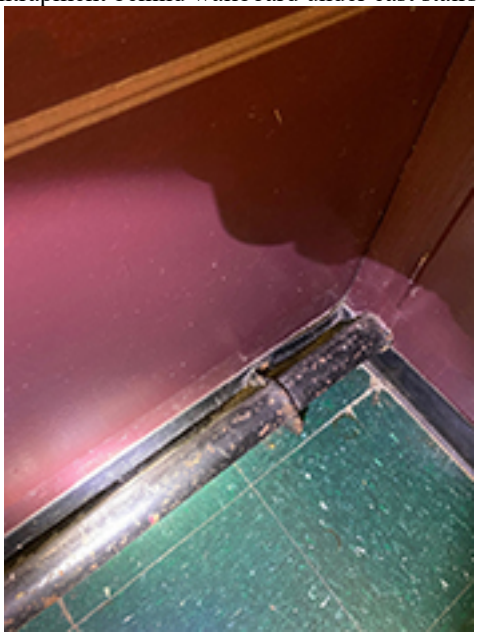
Water damage to wood floor in utility closet

Harkness House Inspection Photos

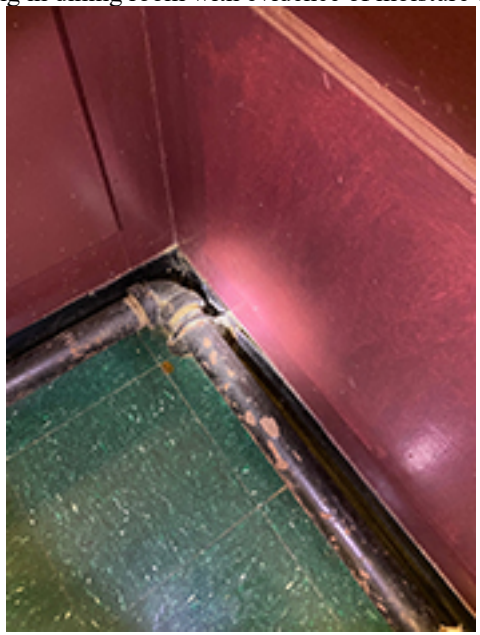


High moisture entrapment behind wallboard under east stairs to the basement

Wainscoting in dining room with evidence of moisture entrapment



Some visible mold growth on dining room wainscot



Some visible mold growth on dining room wainscot

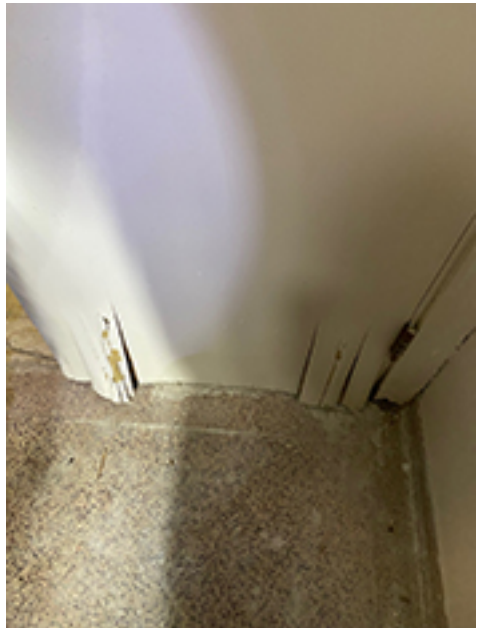
Mold carper remnant in basement mechanical room

Mold growth on walls in basement mechanical room

Mold growth on shelves in basement mechanical room

Mold growth on shelves in basement mechanical room

Mold growth on shelves in basement mechanical room



Water damage on door by to Barbie Thompson's office

Mold growth on door by to Barbie Thompson's office

Mold growth on wall in kitchen food storage area

Mold growth on wall in kitchen food storage area

Mold growth on wall in kitchen food storage area

Fungi growing from ceiling in food storage cooler

Mold on wood in ceiling in food storage cooler

Water damged ceiling at east entrance to Harkness House

Water damged wall at east entrance to Harkness House

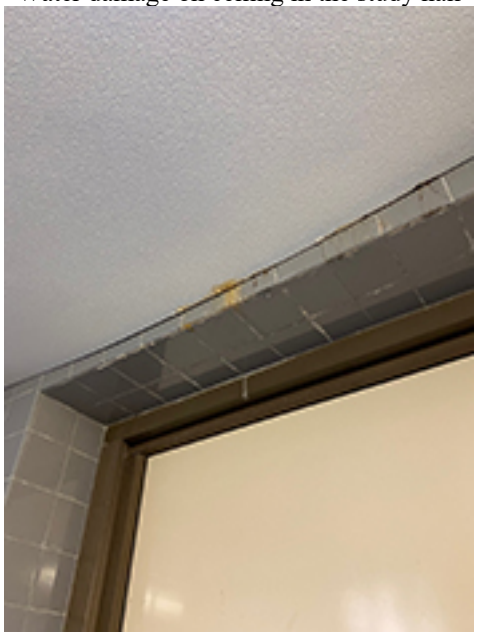
Water damged partition at east entrance to Harkness House

Water damage above windows in study hall, west side, main floor

Industrial drying fan in study hall suggesting attempts to resolve water intrustion

Water damage on ceiling in the study hall

Exposed presumed asbestos pipe insulation in utility closet

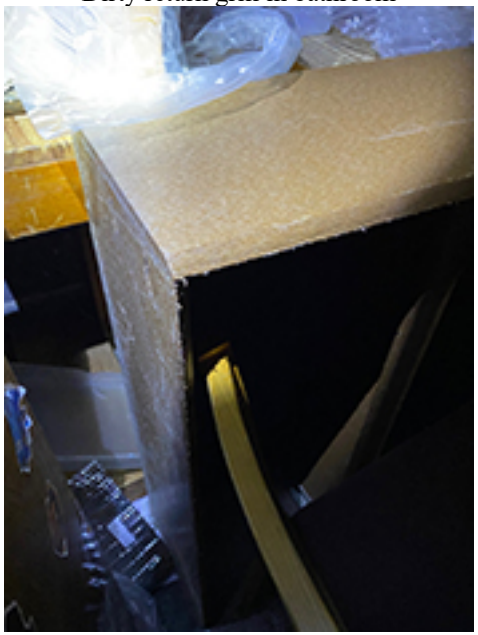


Active water leak in bathroom hidden by fiberglass panel

Active water leak in bathroom hidden by fiberglass panel

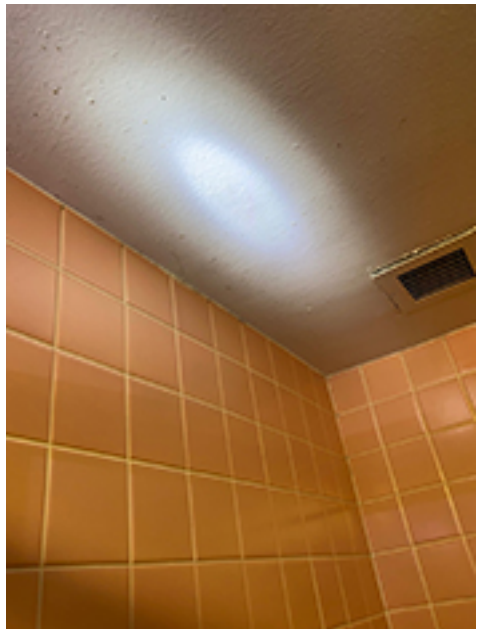
Dirty return grill in bathroom

Moldy furniture in hallway storage closet



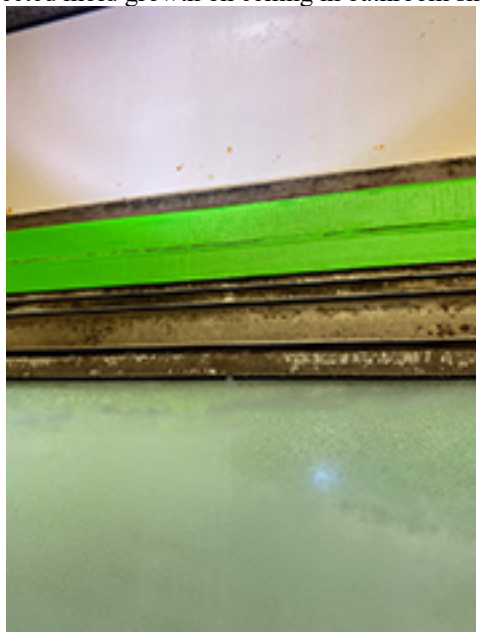
Moldy furniture in hallway storage closet

Insulating foam attempt to control water leak



Suspected mold growth on ceiling in bathroom shower

Another improvised patch of ceiling in bathroom to mask water leak



Mold growth on window frame in bathroom

Student note in an attempt to help control odors resulting from trapped moisture