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Editor

PAUL GALLOWAY

Executive Editor

R. BOYD GUNNING

Editorial Assistant

JUDITH FREYER

Photographer

MARK MILLER

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THE COVER: The girl is Ellen Feaver, a senior in Norman High School. The photographer was Larry McDade; Jim Billingsley designed the cover.

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Sooner Scene

by R. Boyd Gunning

In recent years the University of Oklahoma has made a concerted effort to encourage bright and talented young high-school seniors to attend OU, and a number of programs have been created to attract such students. In 1963 the University Scholars program was started by the late Dean Glenn C. Couch. This program gives a limited number of entering freshmen, about 50 each year, an opportunity to pursue individually planned studies fitted to each scholar's personal talents and aspirations. The University Scholars are encouraged to explore new dimensions of abilities and aptitudes through honors courses, special seminars, advanced standing credit examinations, as well as through informal discussions and personal relationships with fellow scholars. They are encouraged to depart from fixed curricula to explore new ideas of learning. For example, an engineering student might take courses in art and philosophy. A student majoring in history might venture into languages or computer programming. A student of physics might explore the classics, and so on.

The challenges presented by the University Scholars program are dramatic and attract the attention and interest of other outstanding students, who take advantage of them also.

Efforts to provide better opportunities for talented students have a marked influence on the student body. The national test score averages of OU students have gradually risen since such special programs were begun.

Another student is being given special consideration also. Studies have been and are being made to find out how to reduce the percentage of dropouts in the freshman classes. Thirty-five percent of last year's University freshmen failed to return to the campus this fall, though not exclusively because of academic failure. This compares with a 40 percent dropout rate on state university campuses throughout the country. It is also the lowest percentage of dropouts in any college or university in the Oklahoma state system.

Even so, people on the campus are concerned about this and are working to improve the situation. With this in mind "Project Threshold" has been created by Dr. J. R. Morris, dean of University College, and will be inaugurated this summer during the regular session (June 7 to August 2).

Project Threshold is a special summer program for college bound high-school graduates who wish to strengthen their skills in areas of composition, basic mathematics, reading, vocabulary development, and study techniques. Says Dean Morris, "Many students face their initial year of college uncertain about their basic academic preparation and with certain of their skills not fully developed. Their ability to communicate in basic English, the knowledge of basic mathematical concepts, the ability to read well and rapidly, and the knowledge of effective methods of study are all valuable—basically necessary—to sound scholarship at the college level."

Here more specifically is how these general topics will be covered: English composition will consist of the study of a components of effective writing with regular practice and close individual assistance and will satisfy the first semester English composite requirement. A student may receive three hours of college credit upon completion of the course. In basic math will be a review of beginning algebra through intermediate algebra. The level of study will depend upon the individual student's preparation, and he may accumulate from one to three hours of college credit in math.

The other three areas are designed to assist the student in his freshman year regardless of what his ultimate course of study may be. The first is to improve his reading ability. This program will be planned to increase the reading rate as well as the ability to comprehend. The student will also receive training and techniques in developing his vocabulary and concepts. The main objective in vocabulary development is to impress upon the student the importance of acquiring techniques. The final section will develop the skills essential to effective study. For further information, see page 32.