

Seeing Is Believing

The University calls on her alumni for assistance in recruiting students. That's right. Students, not football players.

Don, a senior in a Lawton high school, had spent the better part of a Saturday at the University of Oklahoma. It was his first visit, and he had been impressed with what he had heard and seen. "This really beats reading about it," he said to one of his hosts as he held up a bulletin OU provides prospective students.

Don's statement is precisely why he was on the campus and why the pilot program of "OU Days" held this spring for high-school seniors from Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Lawton will be expanded next year. Eventually every qualified high-school student in Oklahoma interested in attending the University of Oklahoma will be able to visit the campus as part of an organized program designed especially for prospective students. The premise is that the best way to inform and at the same time remove misconceptions is to have students see the campus for themselves, ask questions, look around, and talk with OU students, faculty, and staff members.

Much of the success for an effective recruiting program depends on University alumni. In recent years graduates and former students have played an increasing and an increasingly important part in attracting the best students to OU. Alumni can be an effective source of aid for a number of reasons. First, they are familiar with the subject, having attended OU. Second, they are generally supporters of their alma mater and thus possess a commitment to go along with their knowledge. Third, because they live in the same city and are usually available to and often acquainted with the students, they can have real influence in helping them to reach decisions.

The primary recruiting arm of the University is the high school relations department. The director, Paul Massad, is presently its only full-time member. He is assisted by Jack Cochran, a graduate student who works part-time in the department, and occasionally by volunteer members of

the President's Leadership Class. Massad and Cochran travel throughout the state, visiting high schools and interviewing interested students. Because of obvious limitations, they are unable to spend much time in each school, they seldom reach potential students in neighboring states, and often their visits can best be described as "fleeting." Though the department's size will probably be increased, alumni are still essential in supplying the vital long-term assistance that a total recruitment program requires.

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The OU Alumni Association is encouraging its members to assign recruiting as a top priority in local organizations, and a year and a half ago the Alumnae Advisory Council was organized by the Association to enlist the aid of women graduates and former students as student recruiters. Its director is Mrs. Inez Ivy.

She is enthusiastic about what alumnae and alumni can do for the University. "An OU degree is the best degree in the state," says Mrs. Ivy. "Everyone knows this, and every bright high-school student in this area deserves the opportunity to gain some first-hand knowledge about the University. I believe alumni have the obligation to see that the qualified high-school students in their particular cities have the chance to visit the campus at least once. This is absolutely the best way to learn about OU."

The recently inaugurated organized tours of the campus are unquestionably the most ambitious recruiting project in which the Alumnae Advisory Council is engaged. "We learned a lot from the three large bus tours we had in March and April," says Mrs. Ivy. "There are fourteen cities in Oklahoma with potential for similar bus trips, and we hope to move into each of these as soon as we can. The smaller towns which are unable to participate in the bus program will provide car tours, so that eventually we can reach everyone."

One of the things that was learned this spring was that the tours should be held earlier in the school year, preferably by December 1. "By spring," says Mrs. Ivy, "most of the students have made up their minds about which college they'll attend."

Almost three hundred seniors from high schools in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Lawton participated in the OU Days on three Saturdays in March and April. The visits were coordinated between the Alumni Association, more specifically the Alumnae Advisory Council under Mrs. Ivy, and the high school relations department. Most of the work in the three metropolitan cities was done by alumni, chiefly through alumni clubs in those cities. In Oklahoma City the Council organized the high schools under the chairmanship of Mrs. Bryan Arnn, who arranged for sponsors for each high school in the metropolitan area. More than 2,000 personal invitations were issued. Marvin Emerson, president of the OU Club of Oklahoma City; Sam Cerney, vice president of the club, and Mrs. Mary Ann Reno, a former president, raised money for the four buses. Accompanying the Oklahoma City students who represented more than twenty high schools, were the Bob Burnses, the John Kilpatrick Jrs., the Jim Caylor, the Ed Berrys, the Milt Farleys, the Marvin Emersons, the Jim Machens, the Jack Richardsons, and the Ken Barhams, who served as alumni chaperones.

In Tulsa Mrs. Jacque Vincent was chairman of the high school coordination. Serving as alumni chaperones on the three Tulsa buses were the Ronald T. (Buz) McDonalds, the Don W. Fitzgeralds, Mrs. Robert S. Wheeler, and Mrs. Daryl F. Southard. (Supporters of the tour were City National Bank, First National Bank, Francis Oil and Gas Co., Guaranty National Bank, James G. Davidson, John F. Y. Stambaugh, McDaniel's Traditional House, National Bank of Tulsa, Sunray DX Oil Co., and Utica Square National Bank.)

In Lawton Bill Crawford was tour

coordinator, and the James Coxes were alumni chaperones.

The format for all three tours was generally the same. After arrival and registration at about 9 a.m., the groups assembled in the Botany-Microbiology Building auditorium for a briefing session and panel discussion involving OU students, usually members of the President's Leadership Class, and representatives from University College, the office of student services, housing, the Alumni Association, and the high school relations department. After a panel discussion about what prospective students should know about OU, the floor was usually thrown open to questions.

From about 11 a.m. until noon, smaller group sessions were held on subjects like admissions, advanced placement, business, education, engineering, financial aids, science, and University College for those with particular areas of interest. Each session lasted about fifteen minutes, enabling a student to attend four before a lunch provided by the high school relations department in the cafeteria at Couch Center (the new Towers).

From 1:15 p.m. until almost three, members of the President's Leadership Class conducted campus tours for groups of from ten to fifteen students. (About 150 attended from Oklahoma City, 100 from Tulsa, and 25 from Lawton.)

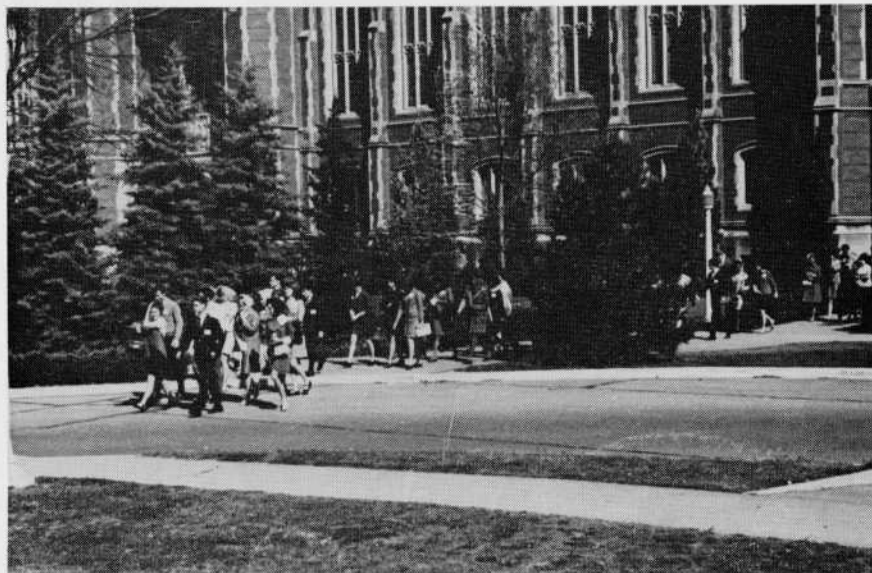
The buses left Norman shortly after three in the afternoon. Chaperones solicited comments from the students on the return trips to see what criticisms they had and what improvements they suggested. These were assembled in follow-up reports which were mailed to Mrs. Ivy, who now, she says, has a better idea of how to schedule next year's tours.

The alumni who participated were optimistic about the possibilities of the tours and eager to be of service to the University through recruiting. Next year the bus trips will be escalated. Alumni interested in arranging an organized campus tour for the qualified high-school seniors in their cities should write Mrs. Inez Ivy, Alumni Association, OU, Norman 73069.

She and other graduates and former students agree with Don—seeing OU really beats reading about it. ●



Twenty-five students from Lawton disembark from their bus for a one-day campus visit.



Tours of the University were conducted by members of the President's Leadership Class.



Dean J. R. Morris of University College answers questions for a group from Tulsa schools.