

By anyone's standards 1968-69 was the year of the student at the University of Oklahoma. While changes occurred throughout the institution bringing academic programs and administrative operation to a greater level of efficiency, it was in the area of students that the greatest changes occurred.

At the heart of these innovations is the University Community concept — an idea that is as fluid as the people who make up the community.

The scope of the University community is a constantly changing entity unto itself. In some respects the community includes everyone affected in any way by the University from the most far flung alumnus to the most remote television football fan. At other times the community includes the state and the vast influence of higher education on the economic development of Oklahoma.

The City of Norman and its relationship to the University forms another community concept. But in the day-to-day campus life, the community deals most directly with the students, for whom the University exists, and the thousands of faculty members and University employees.

It has taken a vice presidency to pull the community together into some kind of organized action — a central office where activities are channeled, problems are solved, and the student's life out of class receives some kind of direction. The man in that office is David Burr, former editor of the Sooner magazine, once acting director of the Alumni Association, long time assistant to President Emeritus George L. Cross, and now vice president for the University community.

Few alumni who graduated as little as five years ago would find much to reminisce about in the housing area. Things have changed. The old concept of in loco parentis when the University acted as a substitute parent for the student is fading fast. Students are more mature, more aware and less willing to live that kind of restricted life.

Several years ago the first experiments in adult housing were tried. Students over 21 were allowed to live in University housing with none of the usual restrictions. The University said to them, "You are adults. You may live as you please within the confines of local state and federal law. We will impose no regulations, give no advice."

Adult housing worked. People who never before would have considered living in University housing now were willing, even eager to live there.

Housing has long been a sore point with almost everyone at the University. Bonded indebtedness hangs like an albatross around the necks of the regents. There is no other way to build housing except through revenue bonds, and no way to pay off the bonds except to force students to live in the housing once it's built. When there isn't enough housing, students complain bitterly. When there is too much, the complaints are just as loud.

Complicating the housing picture is the existence of World War II vintage relics like Wilson Center. The University would like to get rid of Wilson Center, but its financing is tied up in bonds that mature more than 20 years away.

Officials are working on re-financing those bonds, but the prospects have been dim since the bond market fell apart some months ago.

On the plus side, Wilson Center is cheap, the rooms are big, it's close to the classroom area, and this year the housing officials have said, "It's your room. We know it doesn't look like much, so if you want to paint it and fix it up, have at it."

This year for the first time women are living in every housing center including Cross and Wilson, traditional provinces of men. There are some 400 women assigned to houses in Cross and more than 200 assigned to Wilson. Men have been living in Cate Center houses for several semesters, and the tower units have always been divided among the men and the women. Such an arrangement provides the broad-

# The Community

By Connie Burke Ruggles

est possible choices of housing in all price ranges for both men and women.

Also this year the University was able to lower its compulsory housing age so that students over 21 or who have senior status may live outside University housing if they wish. This was made possible largely through the lease of Couch Center South to the Postal Service Institute.

Housing itself has improved a great deal through the years. The latest most modern units feature two-room suites with connecting bath, air conditioning, meeting rooms, fancy lounges and all the appurtenances of high rise, high class rooming houses.

The University's representatives there have changed too. Most alumni remember when the deans of students, the housing director and almost everyone connected with student activities were located in the administration building.

Last year Burr and his staff moved to Couch Center North (Walker Tower) to set up shop. This year still further changes have been instituted.

The old dean of men and dean of women concept has been revised to provide a director of residential programs. The title is held by personable former assistant dean of University College, Dr. Stephen Sutherland. Sutherland is the chief coordinator for all student life outside the classroom with the exception of activities.

Activities come under the purview of the director of special programs, James F. Paschal, and the director of student activities, Anona Adair.

Working under Sutherland are eight assistant directors who each have charge of a housing center: (1) Adams, (2) Cate, (3) Couch, (4) Cross, (5) Wilson (including Hester-Robertson, Whitehead and Franklin Houses), (6) commuters and married students, (7) fraternity house residents, and (8) sorority house residents.

The new organization is part and parcel of the decentralization of the administrative structure — bringing the administration and the students closer together.

The upshot is a host of University offices literally awash in students. The offices are in the housing area, the University officials are readily accessible to student visitors, and the result is a happy blending of the two.

To provide more recreational space, a game room with ping pong tables and billiards was installed last year. Plans are ready for an outdoor pool in the area. A branch of the University bookstore dealing primarily in paperbacks, snack foods and sundries was opened in Walker Tower.

To combat the usual complaints about institutional food, innovations are being tried in food service. The centers offer specialty meals — Italian night with checkered tablecloths, candles and spaghetti; Chinese night; Mexican night. An experiment is under way to allow students to eat as much as they want at any meal. Cafeterias are open for meals throughout the day so there are no conflicts between meals and classes.

Transportation was an increasing problem as new housing was built farther and farther from the class-



The trams, slow and steady, but the best way to travel

room areas, so last year the University purchased two trams, trackless trains that make the rounds of the housing areas to the main campus each hour. Rides are free on the open air trams, and they are crowded nearly every trip.

At the July regents' meeting approval was given to leasing a quantity of small refrigerators which are being rented to students for use in their rooms.

The highly controversial room visitation policy has worked out beautifully. In fact, many of the women flatly refused to take advantage of the opportunity to have men visit in their rooms. It was too much work to clean up the room or take down their hair for the occasion. But the opportunity is there if the house government votes to do it.

Government itself is becoming more participatory. Most houses have a system of self government. Last year the students approved a student constitution, and the new government begins operation in full this fall.

Throughout the University there is more opportunity for a student to learn at his own pace. There are more seminar programs, more independent study,

directed readings, courses available on a pass-fail basis. The barriers between colleges are beginning to be lowered so that a student has more opportunity to sample courses in a variety of areas.

As in any community of people there is still division in some areas. There are still many rules. There are still complaints. There are still people who balk at new ideas. There are still those who believe the old way was best. But more and more every day the University is becoming a real community with more people taking an active part in its growth.

To some it may seem that an inordinate amount of time, energy and money has been spent on so-called frill areas. But it has been done on the premise that education is more than a classroom experience. The very fact of living—eating, sleeping, playing—on a University campus is part of a student's educational development.

When University of Oklahoma students leave this community for another one, hopefully their experience here will make them intelligent participants in another community not totally unlike the one they found at OU.

