

Alumni Letter

The past five years have seen an enormous change in the institutions of higher education across the nation. Concepts of learning that went unchallenged for generations have been questioned and in far too many cases found to be inadequate. The roles of the administration, the faculty and the student have alternately been condemned and praised, but in almost all cases they have changed.

The net result of much of the turmoil of the past years is not yet entirely clear. But one thing is certain—the University of Oklahoma has not been immune to this period of change and neither has the Alumni Association. Whether we like it or not, the role of our Alumni Association will be altered greatly in the 1970s. Our contributions to the growth of the University will have to be even greater than they have been in the past. No areas will be more crucial to the University's growth or require more alumni assistance than academic recruitment and private financial assistance.

Competition for outstanding high school students has never been greater than it is today. Every university must have substantial assistance from its alumni in finding these top students. The University of Oklahoma is no exception. Even though we now possess the strongest school relations department the University has ever had, we cannot begin to reach all of the good students that might be interested in OU. This can be done only through the efforts of alumni clubs and interested individual alumni from all across the nation.

Our organized alumni clubs now are developing scholastic programs that will render great assistance in this area. Many groups hold receptions for outstanding high school students from the junior and senior classes over the Christmas holidays. Other clubs are securing the names of those juniors who are selected to their high school honor societies and are forwarding those names to our office. The names we receive are turned over to our school relations department, and letters of congratulations are sent out. This correspondence is effective in establishing a basis for future communication from the University to these young persons.

The University also is attempting to develop a summer program that will bring high school leaders to the campus between their junior and senior years. This too could be an influential factor in determining where a student will choose to pursue his higher education. However, none of these programs can be effective unless our alumni have provided us with the names of these top students. I hope these few illustrations indicate the vital contribution that alumni must make in the area of student recruiting.

One of the most common statements I hear from alumni is, "I never hear from the University except when they want money." In my opinion this is a legitimate complaint, and it is unquestionably the obligation of the Alumni Association and the University to inform all our alumni and friends of the current activities and plans of the University. This must be done without always adding a plea for funds.

On the other hand, we must understand that the University of Oklahoma is no different from any other major university in the United States. The University must have substantial financial support from alumni and friends if it is to achieve and maintain a satisfactory level of academic excellence. Whether it be through the Alumni Development Fund, the University Foundation, the Touchdown Club or the President's Club, the University of Oklahoma cannot be an effective institution of higher education without major financial support of a private nature.

For the academic year 1969-70 the University has set a goal of \$7 million in donations and grants from the private sector. If we are able to achieve this goal, we will see a marked increase in the achievements of the University from the classrooms to the football field. As in academic recruiting, much of the responsibility for the development of this support rests with our alumni clubs, concerned individuals and the Alumni Association itself.

In discussing both alumni recruiting and private financial support, the point I wish to emphasize is that the Alumni Association must move with increasing speed in the direction of being a vital factor in meeting the needs of the University.

We can no longer view the Alumni Association as a predominately social organization that provides intermittent service to our alumni. We must serve effectively the real needs of both the alumni and the University. Above all, we must inform and involve our alumni in University affairs to a far greater degree than we have in the past.

Your support, your criticisms, and your participation in the University of Oklahoma will largely determine whether the University realizes its goals of excellence in the seventies.

Don McDaniel