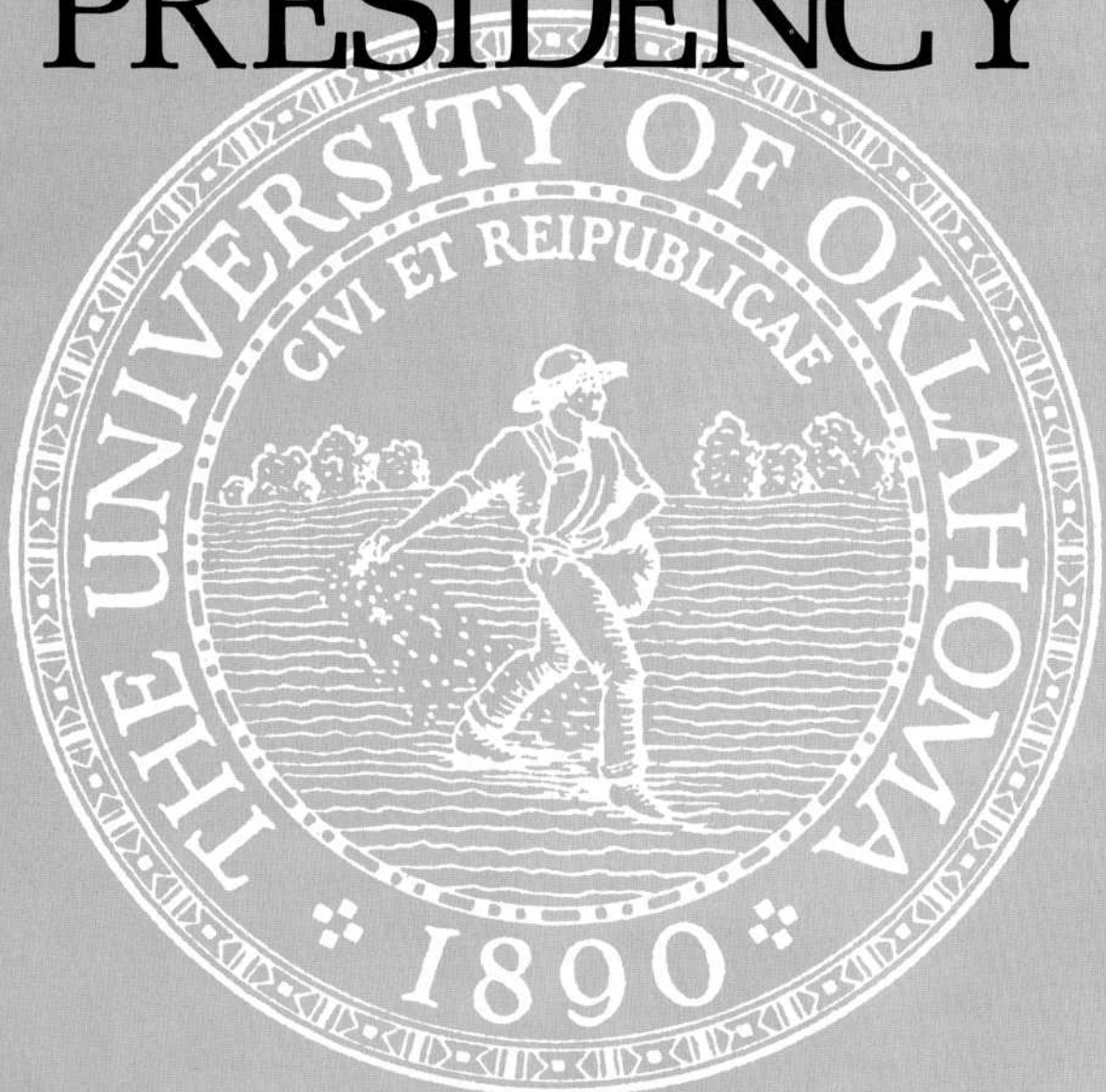


THE PRESIDENCY



6

by Connie Burke Ruggles

Humor columnists and cartoonists have found the college presidency a fruitful source of material. The job that used to be one of sedate academic serenity now sits in the middle of perpetual controversy. The first year of John Herbert Hollomon has been no different. In some ways it has been even worse. He came to the University as an outsider, someone unschooled in the ways of the Southwest. He took the post of a man who had endeared himself to huge numbers of people during his 25-year tenure. He set about bringing change to the University in a rather grandiose

manner. Herb Hollomon rubs a lot of people the wrong way. He is blunt, seldom the picture of sartorial elegance, sometimes shocking to those who expect their college presidents to be mild of manner. To his advocates the president is a breath of fresh air, an innovative mind, a man unafraid to confront the most sacred of cows. The result is a man of controversy, a man not totally believed, not totally trusted, not totally liked, but a man who must be respected for upholding what he believes and for fighting to move the University of Oklahoma constantly forward.

Sooner — Do you have plans for reaching greater numbers of alumni and increasing their involvement with the University?

Hollomon — one of the most important problems of any university these days is to inform and involve as many of its constituents as possible. Everybody, in one way or another, feels, and properly so, that his university belongs to him.

Alumni are concerned because the reputation of the university from which they graduated, or where they spent part of their time, affects in one way or another their own reputations. Further, alumni are concerned in the same way that people are concerned about their families. They are concerned about the problems and opportunities of the place and the people they knew when they were young.

Professionals are concerned about the quality of the professional schools from which they graduated. Doctors wish to insure the medical education of youngsters with whom they will associate is not only adequate but superior.

Citizens are concerned with the university because they pay taxes to support it, and fathers and mothers of potential students are concerned.

The difficulty is that there are so many people to inform and to become involved, and we've done so very little in the past, that the task is enormous. Furthermore, there's been a long tradition among college and university administrators that the less the public knows, the better. My own view of the matter is just the contrary. The more the public knows, in my opinion, the better the university will be served by the public and the better it will do its job for the students for whom it is responsible.

We have a number of plans for a greater involvement of alumni. A very large number of our alumni are now participating in the board of visitors and visiting committees to the various departments and schools of the University. By the end of this year it is our hope to have some 1,500 people on visiting committees to be helpful to and critical of the various academic units of the University. Most but not all of these visitors will be alumni.

We also have plans to encourage, develop and make more effective the alumni clubs throughout the country, particularly those in the Southwest region.

As this is done, we hope to provide those people particularly with information about the Alumni Association and about the University.

As I understand it, you are improving and developing the alumni publications to more effectively present the facts and hopes and prospects of the University to the alumni.

We also are developing an improved public relations program so that we will, from time to time, publish documents and stories which describe such things as the financial plight of the University, the student hopes and aspirations, new academic programs.

None of these things will be enough in and of themselves, but I think the most important factor is the attitude of the people here at the University. I hope we will become open and able to provide the kind of information to all our publics that they need to have to make wise decisions about the University.

Sooner — I am sure you are aware that many of the alumni are not pleased with the kind of job they think you have been doing. Particularly there is dissatisfaction with the way they think you are handling the Greek system and the athletic program. Could you address yourself to this problem?

Hollomon — You say the alumni are not pleased with the job that I am doing, and in a sense I'd say, "Move over. Neither am I." I also might make the comment that whenever everybody is pleased with the job I am doing, it's time for me to leave. It's not possible in this very controversial time, or perhaps it never was possible, for a university president who stands in the middle among the public, the students, the legislature, the faculty, the administration, the regents and others, ever to please them all because there are differences in views of various people as to what properly should be done at the university.

Students have one view; alumni have another, and faculty have another view. As a matter of fact there are almost as many different views amongst the faculty as to how and what the university should be doing as there are amongst the several publics such as the alumni. So I don't think it's possible ever to please everybody in the sense of having people agree with what we're doing. If we did, we would be surely mediocre because we would then be trying to develop a university having the lowest common denominator — only do those things which are so accepted by everyone that they are appreciated. Therefore, new programs or changes would hardly ever take place, and we would not attract the outstanding faculty or outstanding students that clearly we must have.

There are some issues on which a president of a university, or any man, must stand. These, for example, have to do with the freedom of faculty to express themselves. They have to do with the freedom of students to participate in some of the decisions of the university while not running the university. There are some moral and ethical principles that also must be maintained.

Neither students nor faculty nor administrators should be punished arbitrarily without due process and fair hearing. Not only must justice be maintained in the university but the university also must be a place which teaches the nature of law and justice to youngsters who will then go out into the world to become more effective citizens.

The president of a university also must try to be above prejudice whether that prejudice is one having to do with race or religion or whatever. He cannot be partisan nor can he permit prejudicial actions to be harmful to members of the university community.

Some people, I'm sure, will disagree with even these rather elementary issues and principles. This is not only their right, but it would be my desire that they express their disagreement.

There are some matters, however, about which people are disturbed because they have so little information, and sometimes the information they have is wrong.

One of the questions you asked related to the Greek system. I spent two years saying the follow-

ing, and I will say it again. The fraternity and sorority system at the University of Oklahoma can make a substantial contribution to the University. There is nothing that I intend to do as an individual to harm, reduce, or do anything else to the fraternities and sororities. I think there are a number of things, however, which need improvement.

We have had three committee recommendations, all of them I believe unanimous, from three different sets of people who looked at the fraternity and sorority systems suggesting that the rushing that takes place should be deferred until sometime like the middle of the first year. The reason for these recommendations was that a youngster coming here at the beginning is in no position, they believe, to make a wise decision as to which fraternity or sorority or whether he should join a fraternity or sorority.

Deferred rushing takes place on many college campuses, works, is effective and does not cost a great deal more money than the present system.

Now, I don't intend to do anything about that either. In my view the fraternities and sororities, if they are going to survive and develop and improve, will in fact have to change themselves. I think the fraternities and sororities need to do a great deal more to encourage academic and cultural activities within their own houses. I think they need to be more open with respect to diversity of membership. But what I think doesn't affect anything because the problem is theirs, not mine, and it's a problem for students and the student government and the fraternities and sororities to decide how they wish to develop.

The fact of the matter is that on almost all college campuses that I know anything about, fraternities and sororities are decreasing in their influence, not because anybody's doing anything to them but because they have failed to develop their own institutions to be attractive to the relatively more mature students who are coming to the college campuses.

The fraction of youngsters here on this campus who join fraternities and sororities has been declining for the past 15 years. I think that the fraction of youngsters interested in fraternities and sororities will continue to decline unless the fraternities and sororities become more interesting, more vital and more attractive to the increasingly interested, vital student who's coming to the campus.

I don't intend to do anything about the fraternities and sororities. If anything happens to them, they'll do it to themselves.

I guess the way to describe how I feel about athletics is to say precisely how I feel. I believe that both competitive and intramural athletics are extremely important to a large university. I think that intramural athletics develop not only the body but a sense of competition and a sense of fairness and sportsmanship among the students.

Competitive athletics also add an interest and a spirit to the campus for which I don't think anything else substitutes. They add a sense of competition and participation which unifies both the campus and its many publics.

Particularly in this region football, and to a some-

what lesser degree wrestling, attracts an interest in the public and the alumni, and I believe they in turn make a greater contribution to the University. The other sports also have their devotees and make a similar contribution.

I do not believe, however, that competitive athletics should in any way affect the quality or the nature of the educational program at the University, for that is our prime function. We should be sure, therefore, that the athletic program is operated consistently with the general principles which govern the educational program and that the two are operated cooperatively.

'Not satisfied?
Move over.
Neither am I'

My own personal interest in sports has always been real, and I've been particularly impressed here as to the role competitive athletics play to permit certain students to obtain an education that they could never have obtained in any other way. But I also believe that the president of a university must also express his interest in artistic, literary and other fields as well as in competitive athletics. Therefore, I have this year encouraged our choir to go to Europe, where it was a smashing success, and helped our drama school to send the prize winning play "Lysistrata" to Washington.

The problem with respect to competitive athletics is not one of the administration's attitude. We are supportive and encouraging. The problem in competitive athletics is rather a financial problem, and this financial problem is becoming critical with all schools that participate largely in this sort of competition.

What is happening is that the costs of the competitive athletic program are rising faster than the present or potential income is rising. All of us are concerned to do everything we can to obtain the additional financial support which will become necessary if we are to maintain our relative status in these fields.

My principle is the following: if we are going to engage in any activity, we should do as well as we know how. We shouldn't undertake activities which we know in advance will be done poorly.

If we are to continue to excel in competitive athletics, it will be necessary, in my opinion, to find some additional sources of income. I think this is true at the University of Oklahoma, I think it's also true in all institutions in the Big Eight and in most large schools that have programs of any significance.

I do not feel, however, that money allocated to us from the state for academic purposes or money paid by students for academic programs should be diverted to the competitive athletic program. I think

such a diversion, which some other schools engage in, is not only unwise but would be a dereliction of responsibility on the part of the administration. Put it very simply: I like football. I don't understand what the problem is.

Sooner: The University is communicating with the public on a multitude of levels. Are you satisfied with the amount and substance of the information fed back?

Hollomon: I am not satisfied with either the amount of information that we are providing or the response to that information on the part of the several publics. Sometimes I get too much response, particularly on controversial issues, but much of this turns out really to be emotional outburst rather than suggestions and criticisms on which we can act.

We are doing a number of things to improve this situation, one of them I've already discussed, which is the board of visitors and visiting committee. I also have asked to have established a faculty advisory committee which I will meet with once a week as I now do with students, and I've also asked the new executive director of the Alumni Association, Mr. McDaniel, to arrange an advisory group of alumni, probably derived from the Association board of directors, so that I would meet regularly with alumni representatives to discuss and listen to criticisms from this public.

The regents themselves furnish a great deal of information and suggestions and criticisms derived from the general public. During the forthcoming session of the Legislature I will meet regularly with different members of the Legislature in informal sessions not only to listen to their suggestions but hopefully to have them have a better understanding of the nature of the University and its problems.

I intend to visit alumni clubs around the state and region and listen and hear, hopefully hear, what people have to say.

Really, I would like suggestions as to how we can at the University be more responsive to suggestions and also obtain more information and ideas from people concerned about the University.

Sooner: Are you satisfied with what has been done so far to implement the recommendations in the Future of the University?

Hollomon: I've always been told that an administrator should never be satisfied with anything, and I'm not satisfied with what we've done so far.

But on the other hand there's a relatively amazing circumstance growing up. There are some people who believe that we have moved much too rapidly in implementing some of the recommendations of the plan. And some of these people are quite vocal. There are others, however, who believe that we've been dragging our feet, and these people are quite vocal.

And since I hear almost an equal amount of noise from both sides, I get the general impression that we're moving at about the right speed. If we were moving much too fast, we would have more reaction to counter it, and if we were moving much too slowly, we'd have more reaction to counter that. So I, sort of as a generalization, feel that the changes

which we would hope to make at the University are proceeding at about the right rate.

That part of the plan which deals with resources, for which the Legislature of this state is directly responsible, and the people of the state indirectly responsible, has not been implemented in the way I believe is absolutely essential.

Put bluntly, last year our request to the State Regents for Higher Education was for an additional amount of money for both the Norman campus and the Oklahoma City campus of about \$10 million. We received less than \$2 million. Now there's an \$8 million difference, and that \$8 million difference was what was necessary to implement plans for the improvement of the University.

We cannot do for \$2 million what was contemplated to be done with \$10 million, and until that problem is rectified, we cannot implement that part of the plan which deals with the necessary improvement in the quality of the education at the University of Oklahoma.

This year there is danger that we will have to curtail certain of the hospital services on the Oklahoma City campus if we don't obtain additional funds, and we also will not be able on the Norman campus to hire the new faculty which is necessary to decrease the size of classes and to give more people contact with faculty than with graduate assistants as teachers. This is a financial problem which is increasingly becoming critical.

In the area of organization I think we're moving at about the right rate. In our public relations program we need to be more effective. Our fund raising program for the University is just getting off the ground. The concept of the University Community and changes in residential arrangements are just getting started. We are in the planning stages of several small

'I'm not doing
anything
about the Greeks'

new colleges. Attitudes of students and faculty and administration are I think now becoming increasingly supportive of well thought out and carefully carried out new programs.

Sooner: Last year was, by and large, devoted to improvements for the students. What will the primary emphasis area be this year?

Hollomon: I will devote my primary emphasis this year to three areas. One having to do with academic matters and faculty. The second having to do with public relations and information. The third having to do with fund raising.

(Please see page 18)

THE PRESIDENCY

(Continued from page 9)

That does not mean to say that I intend to neglect students or employees of the University, but these are the three things upon which I will spend the majority of my time.

I felt when I first came here with student unrest about the country, with students believing that they had no substantial connection with faculty and administrators that the best thing to do was to emphasize relations with students and to attempt to understand students.

I don't regret that decision in the least. Though I spent a lot of time traveling and meeting with alumni and citizens of the region, it did require somewhat less attention to matters having to do with the educational program and, to some extent, our public relations program.

This year's emphasis will attempt to redress that balance, and I would hope that we can successfully invigorate academic improvement, provide more information to our

public and begin to obtain the necessary increased funds that the University requires.

Sooner—The University seems to be reaching out to more and more far flung areas of the world. Does this outreach harm the educational effectiveness for the regular students?

Hollomon—You know, an interesting thing about a university is that one of the things that it must do is provide to students and faculty the knowledge and understanding that we Americans live in one large interrelated world.

For a student to come to a college or university and not learn something about other cultures is reprehensible. For a university to believe that it can, by restricting its activities to its own backyard, be vital and interesting enough to help students understand the nature of the world in which we live is hiding its head in the sand.

Any university, in my view, has a responsibility to carry on activities throughout the whole of the world not only to provide some of its own students with contact with

the rest of the world but also to provide the faculty and the administration an opportunity to see and understand other countries, other people and other cultures.

We have a number of continuing education programs throughout the world in cooperation with the Air Force, for example; we have a center for Russian studies that we operate in Munich; we've now received a number of grants to help develop teachers and teaching methods in several Central and South American countries.

These are just a few of the activities that we undertake in other lands.

I see no decline in the effectiveness of the education for the regular students on the campus. Rather, by participating in programs off campus our faculty and administrators, I believe, bring a great deal more to our own students here, but more importantly, off campus activities provide a means of informing a very large number of people of the nature and quality of the University of Oklahoma.

IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS.

A paper copy of this issue is available at call number LH 1 .0686 in Bizzell Memorial Library.