

THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

The old ATO house at 1005 South Jenkins sure isn't what it used to be — no more fraternal meetings, weekend shindigs or rush parties. However, the house isn't sitting idle.

For six years, people passing the landmark have wondered who was using the building and why so much activity was occurring there. Well, no one need wonder anymore. A new, long-awaited sign, occupying a strategic position on the front lawn, proclaims to all who pass that this is the University of Oklahoma School of Social Work.

As early as 1917, courses in social work were offered through the University's Department of Sociology, and in 1935 the School of Social Work was established. In 1952 the two-year graduate professional program was fully accredited, and accreditation was reaffirmed by the Council on Social Work Education in 1957 and 1971. In the fall, 1971, a complete baccalaureate degree program was established.

The OU School offers the only master's-level program in social work in the state and is one of the few in the region. But this alone is not what makes the School unusual. In contrast to the majority of social work schools, which orient their programs to a national focus, the primary purpose of the OU School is to educate professional social work practitioners for service in Oklahoma and the Southwest. Particular concentration is given to developing competent skills in service to the changing and developing areas of small towns and rural communities as well as the urban communities.

All social workers are committed to helping the social casualties of our society. They want to know why these people get hurt and what they can do to prevent further damage.

"We are in a different situation than a school located in Chicago, New York or Los Angeles and must relate to our particular social group. As a state university, I think our involvement in serving the citizens of this state is highly appropriate," explained Dr. Francis J. Peirce, director of the School of Social Work.



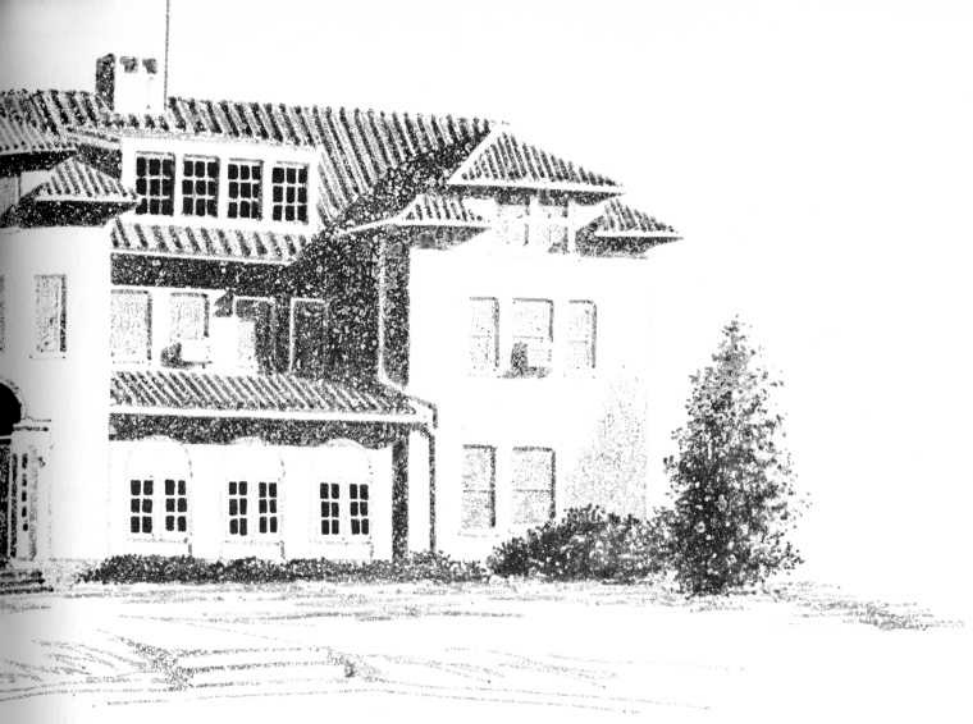
"The Curriculum Policy Statement of the Council on Social Work Education now states that a school of social work should determine its own mission as it reflects the needs of the state and region. This should be done in terms of the particular resources available and the origin of social problems presented."

This local and regional focus is also reflected by the graduate enrollment of which 80% of the students are native Oklahomans. According to Peirce, approximately the same percentage of MSW graduates stay in this area to deliver social services in rural and urban areas.

A quality of uniqueness does indeed seem embodied in the School. Two new programs and one proposed program will provide the OU School of Social Work with an orientation even more strongly focused on service to the people of Oklahoma.

A social work drug abuse training program is in the proposal stage. An application for a drug abuse grant has been submitted by the Department of Mental Health of the State of Oklahoma. The OU School of Social Work project will be tied in with this.

As planned, a series of centers will be established throughout the state to work with drug users and abusers. Working through these centers, students would be doing research on the differing life styles of the drug abuser from the urban ghetto, the small college town and the rural community. From this



From what has followed one might be led to believe that the School of Social work is exclusively a graduate school. It is not. A full BA and MSW continuum is offered. "In the past," Peirce explained, "we gave greater emphasis to the master's degree as the first professional degree, and so ignored the fact that the majority of social workers were practicing with a bachelor's degree. Over the years we have come to realize that the first professional degree is the bachelor's degree. Consequently, schools of social work are very insistent that bachelor's programs in social work initially prepare people for skilled service."

The basic focus of the OU bachelor's program is to develop practitioners for private and public service oriented programs. In addition to a liberal arts background, the bachelor's program offers a field practicum experience which prepares the student to provide direct service in public assistance, child welfare, programs for the aged, rehabilitative services for the handicapped and various institutional programs for delinquent, retarded and disturbed children. The School also has the mission of preparing the undergraduates for graduate work.

The master's program, with 84 students, has the primary purpose of developing a variety of professional social workers. As a result, the curriculum enables a student to specialize in two general areas — advanced service skills to individuals, families and groups or societal and organizational services. The program is designed with orderly precision, yet is flexible enough that eventual specialization doesn't hold the student within restrictive bonds.

research it is hoped that variations in treatment and preventive patterns corresponding to different environments can be established.

Since Oklahoma has the largest Indian population of any state in the nation, the new Cherokee Nation project should become a vital part of the OU School. Only recently approved, the project is designed to recruit, educate and support American Indians as social workers dedicated to service and involvement with American Indians in achieving their goals and to develop educational materials and processes relevant to the education of Indian and non-Indian social workers. The project also has a primary community health focus with the goal of prevention of mental illness and emotional problems through positive programs of community participation and service within the Cherokee Nation.

The initial project will be located in Sallisaw, Stilwell and Tahlequah. Social work students, staff and other professional personnel will serve as technicians dedicated to helping the community find and manage its own destiny. This is to be accomplished through the

community participation of Native Americans in the development and improvement of mental health, social welfare, employment, health, education, recreational and other vital programs. If the project is a success it could eventually be enlarged to also cover western Oklahoma.

In conjunction with the Native American and minority group studies, Peirce emphasized that the School is devoting a great amount of effort to the recruiting of minority students. "We want very much to increase the number of Blacks, Native Americans and Chicanos in our program. Although the School has traditionally had ethnic minority students enrolled, we recognize that the number is much lower than that required to fill the need for professionally trained social workers in the state and region."

Faculty, students and alumni of the School have all played major roles in the recruiting program. Visits to colleges, junior colleges and high school groups are only part of the effort. Scholarships have been established, workshops organized and a special learning skill enrichment program established.

A foundation knowledge of values and skills basic to all social work practice is developed in the first year of the graduate program. Required courses dealing with research and human, social and political structure are reinforced by parallel field experience. The remaining hours are filled by electives covering such areas as the legal aspects of social work and the ecology of health.

It's in the second year of the graduate program that specialization begins in the general areas of personal services or societal services with further specialization available within these disciplines. Through work in such fields as child guidance and therapy, family counseling and parent education, the objective of the personal services is achieved. That objective is to enable the individual, family and small group to realize their fullest potential in society.

Traditionally a casework program, the emphasis now is upon integrated methods which provide service to individuals or families and groups or to the communities related to these problems. The personal services area also allows a student the option of concentrating on supervisory, administrative and consultative skills.

The second area of specialization, societal services, deals with helping communities and institutions handle problems and effect improvements in the social structure. In this area the focus is on planning, policy development, community organization and social advocacy.

All social workers, those with personal service orientation and societal service orientation, are

committed to helping the social casualties of our society. They want to know why these people get hurt and what they can do to prevent further damage. Involvement in programs to prevent social problems has become a focal point in social work.

Students in graduate social work may individualize their studies further within this framework. Individual goals may include social work with minority groups or work with the planning and provision of social services in small cities and towns as in this state and region which are typified by many such rural areas with large expanses of open and sparsely populated areas.

In order to integrate classroom instruction with the realities of practice, the School offers a field practicum at the undergraduate and graduate level. Field opportunities are available to

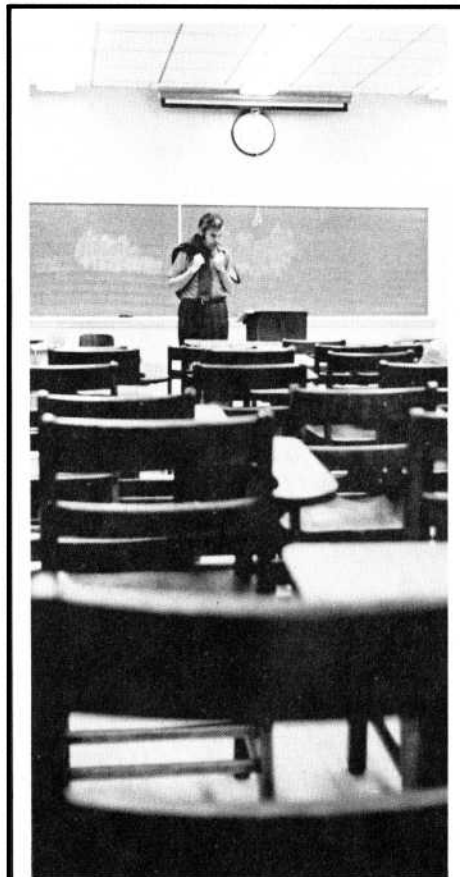
students through various statewide agencies. The practicum is required for all undergraduate and graduate students and offers field experience including services to the handicapped, low-income families, children and their families and in the comprehensive organization and delivery of social and rehabilitative services.

A few of the practicum agencies involved are the Neighborhood Services Organization, Oklahoma City; the Bureau of Services to Families and Children, Norman; the Edmond Guidance Center, Edmond; the Oklahoma County Juvenile Court, Oklahoma City; the Family and Children's Agency, Tulsa; Girls' Town, Tecumseh; and the Legal Aid Society, Oklahoma City.

The School of Social Work has always maintained an alumni association separate from the University of Oklahoma Association. However, this arrangement has not proved satisfactory in terms of services offered to alumni, communication and involvement. Due to the efforts of Dr. Peirce and LeRoy Smith, coordinator of juvenile services in the District Court of Cleveland County, the School's alumni organization will soon become an integral part of the OU Alumni Association. Peirce feels this will be a positive step which will redevelop the School's alumni, provide support and involve their professional constituency in the School's growth.

So you can surely say that the old ATO house isn't what it used to be. It's much more. It is a place devoted to helping people help others to help themselves.

MEB



Dr. Francis J. Peirce, director of the School of Social Work: Helping people help others to help themselves.