



**A VIEW  
from the  
Union**

**higher education:  
expansion and depression**

by Ronald T. McDaniel executive director of the University of Oklahoma Association

The OU campus in springtime is a remarkably pretty place. The numerous fruit trees are in bloom, and the advent of spring brings the students out in a variety of cheerful and, oftentimes, peculiar outfits. All in all, it is pleasant to be in Norman this time of the year.

Yet, underlying the more enjoyable expressions of the season, a discernible aura of pessimism prevails at the University of Oklahoma.

One asks, "Why?" The football team had an extraordinary season culminating with the great OU-Nebraska game. President Paul Sharp has been well received throughout the state by both alumni and friends of the University. His administrative capacities as well as personal characteristics are a strong addition to the University. There seems to be much that would create a real sense of optimism.

There are, however, two fundamental problems of utmost gravity facing the University. First, the financial crisis in higher education has gripped the school with unrelenting pressure. The recently adjourned legislature provided \$2.4 million in new funds for the entire educational system in the state of Oklahoma, and the State Regents allocated only \$259,740 of this for the Norman campus. This means that fixed cost increases over which we have no control, such as telephone charges, social security and unemployment compensation, exceed

the appropriation by \$88,000. These fixed expenditures and salary needs must be met in part by funds from other sources such as revenue from grants and contracts as well as from enrollment growth.

Unfortunately, another and ultimately more critical problem confronts the University. Simply stated, the problem deals with an incredibly rapid expansion of community colleges and junior colleges in the state.

There is nothing inherently wrong with a junior college system. Serious problems inevitably arise, however, when an expanded junior college and community college system is added to a higher educational program that is already faced with financial difficulties.

The tax base for the state of Oklahoma has barely been adequate to support the nine four-year colleges and three universities in our state. Now with the creation of numerous new state junior colleges and the incorporation of community colleges into the state system, the Regents for Higher Education must also provide much of the funding for 14 two-year colleges.

It is difficult to understand why the State Regents would embark upon such a program. The state's major universities have been consistently underfinanced during the past decade, and in recent years the lack of new state funds has reached a crisis proportion. The addition of new institutions for higher education can only intensify the problem.

Although the University of Oklahoma has not yet felt the full impact of this educational overexpansion, our day is not far off. Already much needed capital improvements are being shunted because of lacking state funds. Incredibly enough, new buildings cannot be built at OU because of this lack of funds, still approval is being granted for the development of entire junior college campuses elsewhere.

Capital improvements is only one example of the problems of institutional proliferation. The number of academic administrators must be increased as well as faculty and staff.

This fragmentation of state higher educational funds is rapidly approaching a point where it seriously threatens the abilities of OU and OSU to fulfill their "university role." If this proliferation of small colleges does not soon end, the crisis facing our University will reach proportions even more severe, resulting in the departure of some of our faculty members to states which pursue rational educational policies and leaving the citizens of Oklahoma without a university of national repute.

The consequences of the present situation could be tragic for those of us who are alumni, but more significantly, the people of the state could lose indefinitely what has taken our educational leaders years to build.

Oklahoma Memorial Union Inc.

# 1972 Election of Board Trustees

Every paid member of the OU Alumni Association is entitled to vote for four nominees. Ballots must be postmarked by May 1st and should be sent to the office of the secretary, Board of Trustees, Oklahoma Memorial Union, 900 Asp, Norman, 73069. Each ballot must be signed to be valid. Both husband and wife, if paid members, are entitled to vote. Both may use this ballot, showing a double vote, but both must sign.

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Joseph Culp  
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Ardmore

Charles Engleman  
Publisher  
Clinton

Wallace Kidd  
Publisher  
Anadarko

John M. Luttrell  
Attorney  
Norman

T. H. McCasland  
Investments  
Duncan

Lee Roy West  
Judge  
Ada

Raymond White  
Professor of Education  
Norman

Signature

**Deadline May 24**

Signature

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**“It was the best of times,  
it was the worst of times,  
it was the age of wisdom,  
it was the age of foolishness . . .  
it was the season of light,  
it was the season of darkness,  
it was the spring of hope,  
it was the winter of despair . . .”**

The quote from Dickens' Tale of Two Cities comes very close to describing the past controversial decade for higher education. Unfortunately, like most things controversial, there has been an imbalance of unfavorable publicity, and it has overshadowed the wisdom, the light and the hope. The result is a threatening loss of public faith.

In the pages that follow are thirteen questions about the issues which have created the controversies, and it is these questions which prompted the one on the cover, “Is the Thirteenth Hour Approaching?”

It seems appropriate to suggest that time is running short on restoring public confidence in the nation's colleges and universities. It's running short because we've spent too much time attempting to explain today in terms of yesterday. The entire character of higher education has changed, and university relations and publicity staffs (the alumni magazine included) must take a candid lead in interpreting this change as it reflects a changing social order. The “good old days” were great—maybe—but today is greater in terms of significant programs which benefit more people—inside and outside the university. It's time to emphasize these programs.

The task of restoration includes others. It includes the faculty, the administration, and the students who must demonstrate more responsible and disciplined commitments to the business of educating and becoming educated, and it includes one of our most vital publics—the alumni.

Through communication with a legislator or the parent of a prospective student or a disillusioned citizen, the alumnus can do much to challenge and correct misinformation and misconceptions. According to OU President Sharp: “It is alumni who, when properly informed and part of the total program, can be the most effective interpreters of the university in a society where we desperately need interpretation.”

JF

