
Those Students Look Vaguely Familiar

Part II

In Part I today's Sooner students took a look at themselves. Part II seeks the views of those who deal with students on a day-to-day basis — the staff of Vice Provost Jack Stout's Office of Student Affairs.

By CAROLYN G. HART

Today's OU students range from freshmen just out of high school to middle-aged adults seeking to upgrade their skills. But regardless of age, students have a common goal: they are eager to learn and job-hungry. Also they are: conservative, concerned about their futures, gung ho for campus activities and fond of their university. They no longer seek alternatives to campus housing. Students — upperclassmen included — are returning in droves to the residential halls, while Greek houses are attracting more and more members. Most students are increasingly interested in keeping fit and participating in some kind of sports program.

It wasn't that way in the '60s.

Bill Audas is director of Career Planning and Placement Services. "In the late '60s, you saw an alienation of students from their parents, from the University administrators, from their country," he recalls. "There has been

a dramatic change in emphasis from saving the world to a concern with individual goals. Today's students evaluate why they are in college. They have a very strong work ethic and religious and family values. Once students tried to run business recruiters off the campus; today they welcome corporate recruiters with open arms."

Audas reports significant shifts, too, in what students are studying.

"In the late '60s," he explains, "they majored in sociology, ecology, natural sciences. They flooded the law schools, wanting to be storefront lawyers, and the journalism schools, wanting to be investigative reporters. Now the fastest growth is in the College of Business Administration and

the College of Engineering — and forty per cent of the students enrolled in business and law are women."

Chris Purcell directs the Student Development Programs, which cover a host of services to students, including all kinds of academic support, aid to non-traditional students and liaison with sororities. She has seen major changes in attitude among women students.

"Women are looking at both career and marriage. They accept the reality that they are going to be working, and they want to be well-equipped."

Anona Adair, associate vice provost for Student Affairs, agrees. "We went through a time when women felt it was an either/or situation; they had to choose between marriage and a career. Now, they look to a combination of marriage and career. Part of



this is due to the acceptance by college men of this life view. Men now expect women to have careers."

Purcell emphasizes, "You have to look at the economics — they expect to *have* to work. But, they also want to *do* something."

Audas sees the results of these life-style decisions. "Women students come to my office seriously looking for jobs."

They find them.

"Society is opening up for women," Audas reports. "Women are going into all areas. In accounting for example, women are excelling, and this is leading to opportunities to become involved in management."

Audas' office has seen a lot of fluctuations in attitude on the part of recruiters. At one time they weren't interested in women or minority students. Then, feeling the pinch of affirmative action, recruiters sought out women and minority applicants. Now Audas anticipates a time when recruiters will be looking only at ability and will be indifferent to race or sex.

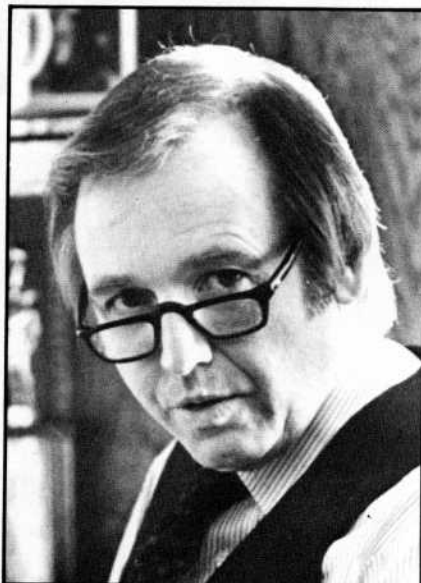
Perhaps altered attitudes by women in higher education are a natural outgrowth of their substantial increase in numbers over the years. Ten years ago, men outnumbered women students three to two. During the '70s, the enrollment of women increased at every academic level four times as fast as the enrollment of men and, in graduate schools, five times as fast. Now men make up 54 per cent of the OU student body, women 46 per cent. Women are continuing to gain.

Male or female, students are serious about their studies. One of the services offered by Purcell's office is accessibility to copies of tests given previously. The test file is growing at a fast clip.

"File usage is up dramatically," Purcell notes. "We have added tests from another 200 courses in just the past year, bringing the number of courses covered to 700. Both students and faculty have helped gather the tests. Students are intensely interested in doing well in their courses. They believe that good grades will help them land good jobs."

Another responsibility of Purcell's office is overseeing the welfare of non-traditional students, those who haven't followed the old pattern of starting college at age 18, fresh out of high school.

Working with Purcell as coordinator of Commuter and Adult Services is Rich Coberg, who serves a substantial portion of the student body. Last fall 43 per cent of OU's students were 22 years of age or older — about 2,500 men and 2,500 women. Approximately one-fourth of the older students are returnees from the '60s.



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The most popular study areas for older students include business, interior design, education, psychology and journalism. Purcell notes that most of the older women are not venturing far beyond the careers long considered open to women.

Purcell and Coberg agree that these older students are as conservative as their younger counterparts and that their primary interest is in career preparation.

"Ninety-five per cent of them are here for job skills," Coberg stresses, "but not all are seeking degrees.

Many have returned for specific courses that will help in their careers, such as accounting, interior design and child development. But degree candidates or not, older students experience a high degree of success. They've gone through so much to get here, they are determined to do well."

Many of them do exceedingly well. Annually the Dad's Association presents awards to the outstanding senior man and woman and to the top student in each college. This fall, three of the honorees were older students.

Coberg believes older students are enriching the campus. "They are making a difference in the student body. They bring a lot of life experience to their classes, and this is a learning experience for the younger students."

"They've been there," Purcell points out, "and this gives a different perspective to their classwork."

Both Purcell and Coberg see a difference in priorities for the older students.

"For a traditional, resident student," Purcell explains, "school is his whole vocation. For an adult, school work has to be the second or third priority. Many of them are working and have family responsibilities. Other parts of their lives compete for their time."

"The whole thing is time," Coberg emphasizes. "They don't have any extra time."

Purcell cites the solution reached by an older woman student who was hard put to find time to study yet perform all her other tasks. After dinner every night, the dishes done, the family content, she would don her son's red baseball cap and settle down to study. Only an emergency was acceptable reason to disturb her if the baseball cap were in place.

Older students are extremely interested in career planning and placement. They often need financial aid, advice on day care and information about Advanced Standing Tests. Often their work and life experiences qualify them to pass these tests, and time is money.

Both Purcell and Coberg believe the proportion of older students will continue to increase.

"This is the peak year for 19-year-olds," Coberg explains. "They will decrease over the next 10 years. The student population will continue to get older." (The U.S. Bureau of the Census predicts that the nation's 18-year-olds will decline by 19 per cent by the end of this decade, and 23 per cent by 1990.)

Serious, conservative, intent upon their futures, these qualities are repeated over and over by the professionals who work with students. But college is still fun, too, and Joe E. Johnson, director of Student Information and Activities, describes the increasing interest in Sooner Scandals, the variety show that OU students have staged each spring since 1944. One of OU's older traditions, Scandals waned in popularity in the late '60s and early '70s.

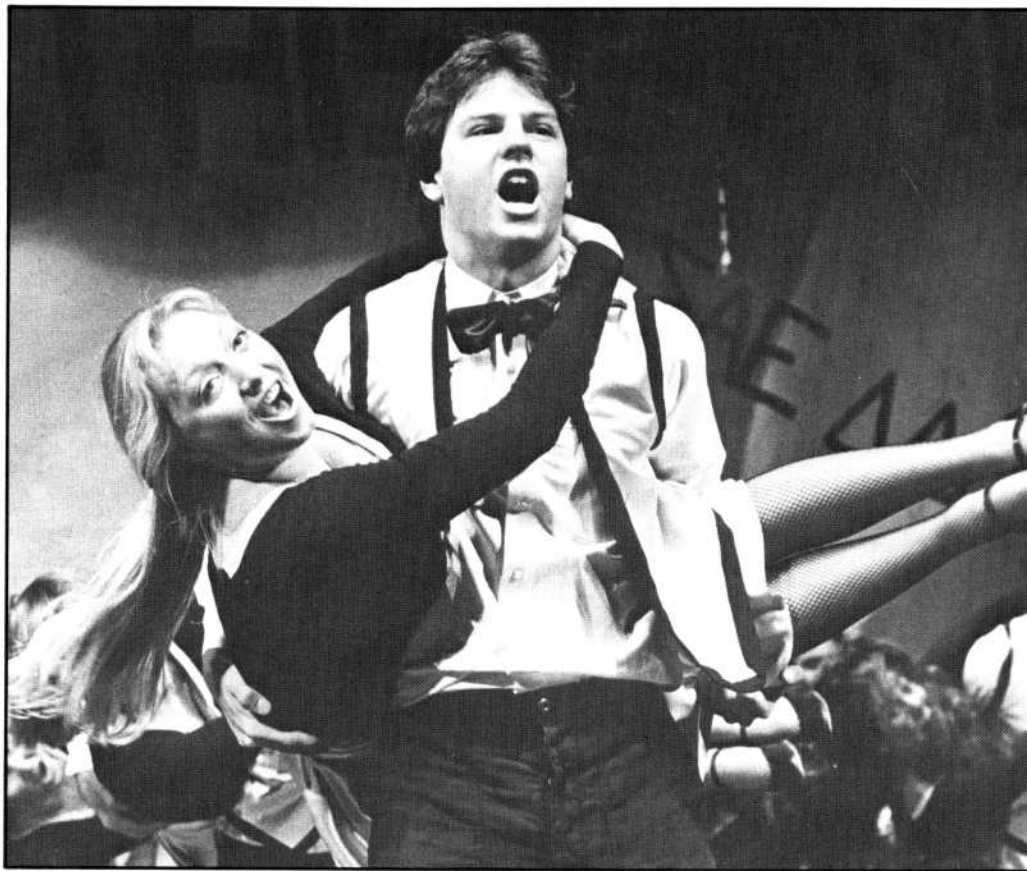
"Originally, Scandals acts were lampoons, heavily satirical of the campus," Johnson explains. "The focus of the acts, however, was always campus life and foibles until the late '60s when students moved away from the lighthearted jests into the heavy message approach. But, starting about three years ago, the acts began to reflect today's students.

"Instead of the serious shows or even acts poking fun, Scandals began to reflect pride in the University and love for the campus. They have become very upbeat and complimentary. So much so, in fact, that two years ago one act was used at a major recruitment banquet for high school students and their parents. It was so positive about OU that it was a natural to take out into the state, because it told how wonderful OU was and reflected such pride in the University."

Participation in Scandals has grown so much that the number of acts is up from six to nine, and demand to see the show is so heavy that for the past two years an additional performance had to be added for a total of six.

The upsurge in student interest in Scandals and the change in its flavor underline the closer union between students and the University that is beginning to characterize the '80s.

During the alienated years, Mom's Day and Dad's Day celebrations al-



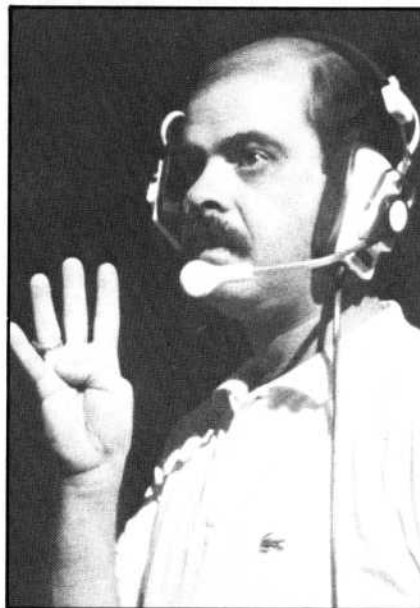
Bobby Malish

most fell into disuse. Homecoming did go under. Now student support of Mom's Day and Dad's Day is on the upswing, and students revived Homecoming five years ago, complete with house decorations and a parade.

Another dramatic evidence of student closeness to the University is the return to campus housing, either residential or Greek.

At one time, OU was in the frustrating position of trying to pull students into empty dorms which had been built when future enrollment was projected to reach 30,000. (Enrollment last fall as 21,703, an increase of 600 from the fall of '79.) All those expected students didn't materialize, and those who did were opting for apartments in town. The University filled part of its extra space by renting units to federal departments, such as the post office and FAA.

"But now we have a nice problem," explained David Schrage, director of Housing Programs. "We have too many kids for available rooms. Two years ago we began to experience an



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increase in upperclass and freshmen applications for residence halls. Now we have 99 per cent occupancy."

Schrage ticks off the reasons:

1. It is cheaper to live on campus than off.
2. It saves time (no need to cook or shop for food.)
3. It puts a student where the action is. (Plays, speakers, programs, seminars.)
4. Cars are increasingly expensive to own and operate, and you don't need a car if you live on the campus.

Associate Vice Provost Adair sees another reason for residence hall popularity. "A few years ago, it wasn't *in* to live in the dorms. Now it is. In addition, the staff has done so

Once again, the dormitories are an "in" place to live. Below, housing programs director David Schrage, left, Vice Provost Jack Stout and Associate Vice Provost Anona Adair consider a "no vacancy" sign for OU's Walker Tower, the high-rise dormitory.



much to improve the dorms, to make them a good place to live."

Schrage explains that four years ago, he and Dr. Myrna L. Carney, director of Student Affairs Research, designed a student survey aimed at finding out what students thought about the dorms and what improvements they wanted.

The survey revealed that students wanted physical improvements, less noise and better food service.

"Last year we completed a \$3 million renovation in the residence halls, which included carpeting to try to lower the noise level," Schrage continues.

Schrage's office also schedules meetings to encourage less noise and puts out flyers and hangs posters stressing the value of quiet to everyone. "We have also instituted a citation program where offenders receive tickets, just as they would for illegal parking."

The student response on food services resulted in the establishment of a student food service committee, the addition of quick foods lines in the cafeterias and more self-service and salad bars.

The return to the campus also has sparked greater interest in sororities and fraternities.

Johnson points out that fraternities at OU didn't experience huge drops in numbers in the late '60s and early '70s but did have lowered visibility.

Wilson: There has been a long tradition of intramural competition between Greek houses. Now that same tradition has grown up in residential housing.

"But, in the last six years, three new fraternities have been chartered. In the ten years before that, only one new fraternity was chartered. Two years ago, OU had the largest increase in fraternity members of any university in the United States except for one new school where all the members were new."

Purcell reports that for the past seven years there has been a gradual



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increase in the number of sorority members. "About 20 per cent of our undergraduate women are in sororities, and every year we have more taking part in rush and pledging. Students who join sororities have a definite desire to feel that they are a part of the University. They want to be involved."

The previous heyday of Greek life was in 1960 when 3,072 men and women belonged to Greek groups. After falling to 2,729 members in 1970, membership was back to 3,221 last fall. The success of OU students in creating strong Greek units is demonstrated by the selection of OU's Panhellenic Association in 1979 as the best in the nation and by the selection of the Interfraternity Council in two of the last three years as the best in a 15-state area.

Today's students see themselves as an integral part of the University, and they expect the University to make it possible for them to structure well-rounded lives, not only by providing good food and comfortable places to live, but also by making



Anyone for tennis, weight-lifting, jogging, or exercise in any other form? Physical fitness has become a major campus preoccupation while intramurals "have just gone bonkers." At left competitors for the intramural mixed doubles title square off on the OU tennis courts.



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available intellectual and creative programs, including films and speakers and, very definitely, a well-rounded exercise program.

Associate Vice Provost Adair smiles happily. "Intramurals have just gone bonkers the last few years." Paul Wilson is director of Recreational Services. Although hampered for many years by aged and outdated facilities, his 1980-81 intramural program involved more than 12,000 students. Completion of the \$6.1 million Huston Huffman Physical Fitness Center this summer, added to the nearby Murray K. Sells swim complex, promises a golden age of recreation just around the corner.

Wilson attributes the increasing interest by students in physical recreation to the growing preoccupation of all Americans with health and vigor.

"By the time students get here," Wilson points out, "they have already developed sports skills, and they want to continue that participation."

Both men and women are involved in intramurals. Wilson believes the

participation of women has been encouraged greatly by the Title IX law in 1974 that required men's and women's sports to be funded equally. At that time, men's intramurals at OU merged with the women's recreation program to form the Department of Intramural Sports and Recreation.

"Physical fitness and recreation are as vital now to women as to men," Wilson insists.

Another boost to intramurals has been the involvement of residential halls in team competition. "There has been a long tradition of intramural competition between Greek houses," Wilson says. "Now that same tradition has grown up in residential housing."

Most of the characterizations by Student Affairs staff apply equally to all OU students, but minority coordinators possess some special insights.

Norris Williams is coordinator of Black Student Services. "Conservatism is on the rise," Williams agrees. "In the '60s, black students were caught up in the world situa-



Soloist Carmen Pettie, Tulsa, and accompanist Cleo Parks, Lawton, warm up for a performance of the black students' Gospel Choir.

tion, in the war and with concern for civil liberties. They were not very interested in religion. Today's black students are more committed to religion, and they are concerned with their future. They are keying in on careers in engineering and business."

Williams does see a legacy from the activist years. "Black students have retained a sensitivity toward civil liberties, and they are still involved in outreach programs for disadvantaged children. They do believe in community service."

There are 17 organizations on the campus to serve black students.

Williams and Dr. Carney surveyed black students to determine how the University could assist them and to gain a picture of how they judged the University.

Most of the black students were satisfied with the quality of instruction and with the academic assistance available. Forty-six per cent felt the black student services were meeting their needs. Their primary unhappiness was with what they saw as a lack of financial assistance. Most did not feel they faced discrimination.

Black freshmen enrollment has grown 45 per cent from 1975. Last fall there are 779 black students at OU.

Oklahoma's native American students are, Coordinator Glenn Solomon claims "the most conservative, the most religious and the poorest students on the campus."

Solomon sees a tremendous difference between the situation of Indian students today and 20 years ago. "Back in the early '60s, Indians were invisible. They had no support system at the University. They were strictly on their own."

He points to 1970 as a watershed year. "That's when Indians got a place to meet, set up a recognized student Indian organization and got rid of Little Red."

Solomon explains Indian antipathy to Little Red, the one-time Sooner mascot who war-whooped up and down the sidelines at football games, as a rejection of a cartoon-type image that hid the reality of Indian existence.

Indians, he insists, are intensely committed to their cultural background but they don't want it reduced to a stereotype. "Indians are from

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close-knit families. They see themselves as part of a family network. They have a strong tribal orientation. Their goals often are to receive an education, then to use it in working for the Indian community. They are so serious."

Solomon is excited by the growing willingness of Indian students to work toward group goals. "Indians are beginning to think that they can have a role in campus activities."

Solomon glows with delight in discussing the Homecoming Powwow at Lloyd Noble arena last November. "We were famous in the Indian world the week after that powwow. Almost 1,000 people came, and a lot of families told us they felt so welcome, they saw such an open atmosphere — and Indians aren't gushy. They came

from all over the state, family members, former students, a lot of parents. There was one family from Muskogee with 19 members. We had three to four hundred dancers in different categories. It was a three-drum powwow."

Solomon's pride shines, too, in his report on a picnic held last fall at the Indian House. "The previous year, seven people came. Last year 160 Indian students came." He paused. "Everything went like a dream last year."

Millie Audas coordinates Mexican-American Student Services. She, too, finds the students she serves to be career-oriented and conservative. The perspective of Mexican-American students differs, she believes, from that of the other minority groups because the number of Hispanic students is so small. Enrollment last fall reached its highest point ever, 180 on the Norman campus and 23 at the Health Sciences Center. In terms of entering Hispanic freshmen, the increase has been dramatic. There were 12 Hispanic freshmen in 1975, 41 last year.

Mrs. Audas stresses that Hispanic students are proud of their cultural heritage. "They are very strong in their cultural beliefs and values, and their family units are something to be admired. They receive tremendous encouragement and emotional support, and I think that accounts for their exceedingly strong motivation to succeed. Hispanic students have a minimal drop-out rate, and the majority of them are enrolled in professional studies — pre-law, pre-medicine, pre-dentistry."

The three minority coordinators, in common with the other Student Affairs personnel, are enthusiastic about the future. They see a growing commonality of purpose between students and administrators.

Administrators still have problems with students and vice versa. But there are few remnants of the campus scene of ten years ago — when all authority was suspect and student gatherings were punctuated with shouts, not smiles. Perhaps the setting is less exciting for the people-watchers, but for the people themselves, it's more productive. 