
Time to Assess the Banowsky Years

The president's three-year record at OU is good, but the best may be ahead as we turn to Chapter Four.

Universities, like governments, chapter their histories by administrations, shaped by the times and influenced by circumstance, but also reflecting the personality, abilities and interests of the president — i.e. the Brooks Years, the Bizzell Years, the Cross Years, the Sharp Years. This fall the University of Oklahoma could look back on three Banowsky years and draw the inescapable conclusion that after generations of preparation, the "time of the Sooner" in higher education may be at hand.

Communicating is what William S. Banowsky does best, and his first efforts were devoted to improving the University's communications with those groups whose support is vital to the progress of the institution — the citizens of Oklahoma, the State Regents for Higher Education, the chancellor, the legislature, alumni and private donors. Now, after three years of explaining, cajoling, enlightening, and arguing, Banowsky feels that the message is getting through, both to the public and to the private audience.

On the state level, larger appropriations are enabling the administration to address basic concerns, such as salary and wages, maintenance and operations, instruction and research. State support for the Norman campus, the Law Center and the Oklahoma Geological Survey has increased 70 per cent over the past three years, providing \$2.2 million in enrichment funds (over and above the budgetary requirements) for OU's traditionally strong programs in engineering, business administration, fine arts, the arts and sciences, geology and geophysics, and a \$900,000 bonus for library acquisitions of books and materials.

At the same time the Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City, its Tulsa Medical College and family practice clinics elsewhere in the state have received a 43.5 per cent appropriations increase.

In faculty salaries, the HSC has experienced a 26 per cent increase over the past 36 months, while the Norman campus faculty averaged a 33 per cent pay hike, a record matched by few universities in the nation and none in the Big Eight. In terms of salary paid a full professor, the University has gone from eighth to second in the Big Eight in three years, and is less than \$100 behind the leading University of Kansas.

To take full advantage of the broad base of financial support being provided by the state, Banowsky has strengthened the public/private partnership by seeking substantial individual and corporate funding. During the first year of his administration, the University raised \$10.8 million in private contributions, followed the next two years with \$13.1 million and \$14 million.

The most remarkably successful large scale private funding program to be initiated at OU is the University of Oklahoma Associates, started with a goal of 300 members in 1979 and expected to reach 1,800 by the end of 1981. Each Associate contributes \$1,000 annually to be used exclusively for academic enrichment; this year alternative long-term memberships — corporate, life, endowed and deferred gifts — also are available.

Although the president reports to the OU regents on the use of Associates money, the fund is largely discretionary, enabling Banowsky to channel support quickly to areas where unusual opportunities occur or

emergencies must be met — to purchase instructional and research equipment, to bring noted scholars to the campus, to provide seed money for research, to reward teaching excellence and to add needed faculty or teaching assistants in specific areas. Most Associates grants are on a one-time basis for non-reoccurring expenses, to hold the line until advance planning can absorb the project into the regular University budget or to attract outside support that often becomes available when a new project has shown signs of success.

Encouraged by the response to the Associates, Banowsky last fall revamped the \$52 million Gift of Quality campaign initiated by President Emeritus Paul F. Sharp, upped the ante to \$103 million over five years, christened the effort the Campaign for Academic Excellence and included virtually every area of the University in a grand design to bring the institution to national prominence by 1990. Although the capstone of the campaign, the monumental Energy Center (discussed at length elsewhere in this issue) is only one of many projects with emphasis on the health professions, library, endowed chairs and named professorships.

Signs of progress are not hidden on the OU campuses; many are rising in brick and mortar as part of \$116 million in new or renovated facilities in some stage of planning or actual construction — more ongoing capital improvements than ever before in the history of the University.

The Norman campus has \$90 million in such projects under way or just completed, including the \$6.4 million Huston Huffman Physical Fitness Center, the \$13 million Doris W. Neustadt wing of Bizzell Memorial Library, the \$45 million Energy Center, the proposed \$11 million music building, the \$1.3 million L. Dale Mitchell Baseball Park, the \$770,000 gymnastics practice facility, an expansion of the south end zone of the Oklahoma Memorial Stadium, parking facilities at the Lloyd Noble Center, and renovation of numerous buildings, including DeBarr, Burton and Nielsen halls, and in Oklahoma City, the new pharmacy building and the College of Health building renovation and others.

Along with the construction projects, more attention is being paid to the general appearance of the campus — landscaping, the David Ross Boyd tree planting project, devising a comprehensive physical development master plan, irrigation system for the University Golf Course.

But all the magnificent buildings in the world can't provide quality education without the people to man them. Several major administrative and academic vacancies existed when Banowsky arrived; attrition and reorganization created several others. Following national searches, careful review by search committees and the scrutiny of the president and the regents, new appointments were approved for provosts of the Norman and HSC campuses; deans for the colleges of law, arts and sciences, engineering, graduate college, university libraries and the Tulsa Medical College; directors of the schools of music, meteorology, home economics, chemical engineering and materials science, and journalism and mass communications. Holders of named professorships and chairs also have been named in humanities, geology, banking, history, English composition, oncology and oil and gas law.

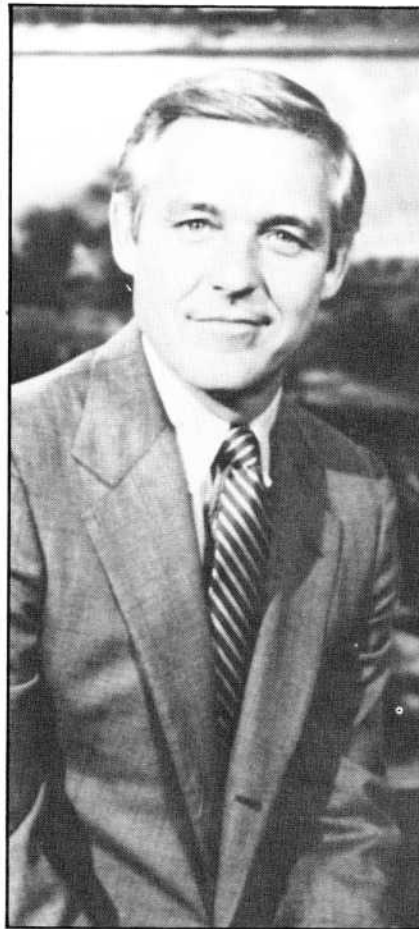
In the area of teaching excellence, Banowsky's administration has been able to bring both improved public and private financial assistance to several academic departments hardest pressed by the University's phenomenal enrollment picture, such as freshman English, mathematics, business administration, engineering, meteorology and others. In 1981-82 alone, 25 new faculty positions were added to the regular budget to reduce faculty/student ratios and ease the dependence on graduate teaching assistants.

OU enrollment hit an all-time high in the fall of 1981, 21,850 for the Norman campus, with the HSC campus remaining constant at approximately 3,000 for each of the past three years. Quality as well as quantity is represented in these numbers. Statistics indicate that OU attracts one-third of all state high school graduates scoring 30 or above on the American College Test.

In the face of declining enrollments elsewhere, OU's growing student

body is heartening. However, the distribution of these added students has overloaded areas such as business administration and engineering, necessitating the tightening of admissions requirements.

By their nature, universities are never finished. Some new challenge always awaits even the most success-



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ful president. The University of Oklahoma is just getting started. Banowsky drew up a list of goals for 1981-82 this fall on the anniversary of his arrival in Norman. Included were the completion of various phases of projects already mentioned here — securing one-third of the financing for the music building; completing the

financial package for the pharmacy building; improving faculty salaries to the average for public universities in the Association of American Universities; increasing endowed chairs and named professorships from 29 to 35; adding 50 new faculty positions in Norman and 35 at the HSC; pursuing private funding through the Campaign for Academic Excellence and the University Associates; completing construction under way; continuing campus beautification.

He also listed the expansion of computer facilities for both campuses and the enhancement of educational opportunities for superior students through merit scholarships, enriched curriculum and completion of plans for an Honors College. His timetable for the Energy Center, then one-third of a \$30 million building project, is now all of a \$65 million building and endowment project, a living example of the wonders that enthusiasm for the well-timed idea can generate.

If a single accomplishment had to be drawn from the record of the past three years, it would have to be one of attitude. The University community and the people of Oklahoma are beginning to believe that what may have seemed like rhetoric three years ago is becoming reality today with great promise for tomorrow.

“We have suffered for so long from a cultural inferiority complex,” Banowsky contends, “that most of us have come to settle for academic mediocrity, even in our best university. For all those years we have thought it ludicrous to seek to be as good as Michigan, Texas, Wisconsin, the University of California at Berkeley. But if we believe we can, we can!”

Banowsky gave fair warning of his ambitions for the University in his inaugural address on November 18, 1978, when he set as his goal membership in the prestigious Association of American Universities. Qualifying for such consideration lurks behind administrative decisions, strategies and the application of resources for the past three years, and the objective is still a long way off. But as Norman Provost J. R. Morris has commented, the real value of this quest may not be in the destination but in the journey.

—CAROL J. BURR