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## PROLOGUE

# Never a Better Time For Creative Leadership



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**T**he latest fads and fashions from the Coasts always take some time to work their way inland to Oklahoma. In the past we've had to wait anxiously — and often in ignorance — for mini-skirts and maxi-coats, bouffant hairdos, ladies' fashion boots, punk rock and disco. Some current and choice trends even die out before reaching our borders, leaving us the backward and styleless victims of the time lag.

One import from our more progressive neighbors, however, we could have done without forever — the economic downturn which finally caught up with Oklahoma this fall after ravaging other states for many months.

The word from the state capitol is not encouraging. The governor and the legislature talk budget cutbacks of three percent, four to five percent, even six or seven — and not just for the remainder of this year, but for fiscal 1983-84 as well.

Gone are those wonderfully euphoric years when allocation of the unanticipated surplus was a routine legislative pastime, when the University of Oklahoma could play fiscal catch-up as never before — in salaries, in research support, in bricks and mortar. A healthy state economy, coupled with the shared prosperity of our private donors, fueled the kind of academic progress that was only a pipe dream a few years ago.

The man who received a large share of the credit for those prosperous years was OU President William S.

Banowsky. He could have taken his achievement record and run. He had a job in California (*Sooner Magazine*, Fall 1982); the goodbyes had been said; the move made. But after just six weeks out of Oklahoma and out of higher education, he severed his West Coast connections and returned to confront the crisis which was building at OU.

At first glance, Bill Banowsky's sense of timing, so superb when he caught OU on the upswing in 1978, might seem to have deserted him on his return. Whatever his past accomplishments, he will be judged by "what-have-you-done-for-me-lately?" Banowsky thrives on challenge, however, and prides himself on the sort of creative, imaginative leadership which will be required to hang onto the University's recent gains until the state can regain its momentum.

It won't be easy. No one likes salary and hiring freezes, tuition hikes and short ration budgets. But the president may find an unexpected resource in the strength and understanding of veteran faculty and staff members who have been there before. They remember cutback budgets when there had been no preceding years of prosperity, when only personal commitment kept them from opportunities elsewhere.

Banowsky sees the coming months as a test of character. It is also a time for renewed commitment of the sort that historically has given Oklahomans a better university than they were paying for. —CAROL J. BURR

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