

Staff Volunteers Help First-Time Students Make Sooner Connections

The group gathered in an Oklahoma Memorial Union meeting room this spring was a diverse one—a financial aids counselor, a professor, a ROTC instructor, a campus policeman, a news service writer, representatives of dozens of University departments. They had come together for a half-day orientation to brush up on the OU facts and procedures that would enable each of them to serve as a special friend to a group of first-time Sooner students. They were about to go beyond their regular duties to become “Sooner Connections.”

Volunteers for this new service to

spring and summer pre-enrollees must be willing to attend the orientation session, spend a day talking to approximately 30 new students and their parents and then serve during the coming year as a source of information, advice and reassurance.

“No one was assigned to this new program,” Vice President for Student Affairs Anona Adair insists. “Sooner Connections is an extra-duty activity, and we wanted only those OU faculty and staff who sincerely want to help smooth over the rough spots of University life for our new students.”

When making their pre-enrollment appointments, new students are asked if they would like to be given a Sooner Connection. Then during the pre-enrollment process, the students and their parents are invited to a 1½ hour

session to make their special connections with the University. With the assistance of one of OU’s top senior students, the staff volunteer fields questions, offers survival tips, schedules campus tours, helps the students arrange for special needs, such as housing, financial aid, counseling, etc.

The students and parents are encouraged to ask anything and everything, from where to do their laundry to where to park—or attempt to park—their cars. Most importantly, perhaps, they are given the business card of their Sooner Connection and urged to “Call me if you have a problem—or just want to talk.”

“Whether we like it or not, the University of Oklahoma is a bureaucracy,” Adair explains, “and these students will be dealing with bureaucracies for the rest of their lives. We not only want to help them adjust to the University but to teach them how to deal with the system, how to make it work for them, not against them.”

Knowing that a familiar face with a familiar name is just a phone call away when they return to the University in the fall is also a psychological advantage for strangers to the campus. Although each of them will acquire friends in various peer groups and be assigned an academic counselor and, in most cases, a residence counselor, the student affairs staff feels that many students will be reassured by the presence of a fall-back friend, a University employee who knows the ropes and could run interference if life gets complicated.

“They may never need to call on their Sooner Connections,” Adair says, “and if they do, most of their questions will be pretty routine. But just knowing that someone is there if needed is comforting in itself. We don’t expect our volunteers to know all the answers, but they will know where to help their students find the answers they need.”

The Sooner Connections have been charged with personalizing OU, making certain that new students and their parents leave the campus after pre-enrollment feeling happy, relieved and satisfied with their choice of the University of Oklahoma, where they already have a friend with their special interests at heart.

L E T T E R S

E. E. Dale’s Book Located

The Sooner Spotlight on Arrell Gibson in the Fall/Winter copy of the *Sooner Magazine* mentioned the autobiography of Dr. Edward Everett Dale, *The West Wind Blows*. My local bookstore does not show a listing for that book. Also, they checked the Oklahoma Press catalogue and found no listing.

Please assist me in finding how I might obtain a copy of *The West Wind Blows*.

Stanley G. Childers, '42 B.A., '45 M.D.
Pueblo, Colorado

Editor’s Note: The *West Wind Blows* was published by the Oklahoma Historical Society and is available for \$19.95 plus \$1.00 postage through the Museum Store, Historical Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105.

A Living Tribute to Ewing

Lynn Grigsby’s article in the Fall/Winter issue of *Sooner Magazine* entitled “A Capital Summer,” recalled memories of the efforts of a number of persons who, over a decade ago, brought to life a vision of student education and experience which has created a living tribute to Professor Ewing which no monument could match.

Marcus Cohn’s support and leader-

ship, of course, cannot be underscored enough. My first impression of Mr. Cohn during our 1970 discussions was of a man who was almost reverent about the impact Professor Ewing had had on his life, and who in some measure, wished to preserve Ewing’s zeal for life and teaching.

Additionally, Dr. John Wood has, through the years, contributed his persistence and organizational skills to the program, which have guaranteed its continued success.

Now, in a concerted effort to perpetuate the Ewing Fellowships, financial contributions to the OU Foundation, earmarked for the Ewing Fellowship program, are being solicited. Certainly this program ranks among the very finest educational missions of the University.

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Editor’s note: With massive federal budget cuts, the availability of student internships in the nation’s capital are being severely curtailed. For OU students, the Ewing Fellowships become even more coveted. Building the endowment to full self-sustaining status has become imperative to continuation of the program. Those wishing to participate may do so through the University of Oklahoma Foundation, 100 Timberdell Road, Norman, Oklahoma 73019.