
PROLOGUE

Private Support Is Alive, Well And Making Things Happen

The fall issue of *Sooner Magazine* will feature a moving story —“moving” in the sense of physically occupying new quarters and “moving” as in calling forth deeply felt emotion.

In this coming article we will take our readers on a pictorial trip down the corridors and into the classrooms and laboratories of the completed first half of the new Energy Center, then into the rehearsal halls, library and classrooms of the first phase of the new Catlett Music Center. This is “moving” in the physical sense. The emotional element can be found both in the survival of these two projects against all odds and in what such success means to the University of Oklahoma at this point in its history.

Yes, the Energy Center project is alive and well and on schedule. Yes, the Music Center project is going ahead as planned, and slowly but surely, they both will be completed. Yes, scholarships are being funded, professorships established, equipment purchased and support obtained for dozens of academic projects beyond regular budgetary means. How is this possible when the economic condition of Oklahoma and Texas is being described as the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s? In two words: private support.

During fiscal year 1985-86, ending June 30, the University of Oklahoma received a total of \$17,435,354.21 in private support. This is the second-highest year in the history of the institution, second only to the \$18.8 million contributed in 1982-83 during the height of the state's financial prosperity. That \$17.4 million total, donated through the University of Oklahoma Foundation Inc. or directly to the University, represents an increase of nearly \$3.9 million over 1984-85.

More than \$15.67 million of the total contributions came in the form

of cash gifts, while the additional \$1.76 million was in gifts of property. Of the total, \$15.1 million was for strictly academic purposes and the remaining \$2.3 designated for athletic programs.

This remarkable demonstration of faith in the ability of the University to endure and ultimately prosper may be surprising to the faint hearted. To a student of history, however, such dedication is in the Sooner tradition. The first Oklahomans, struggling during the Depression of 1893 to find \$28,000 to construct the University's first building, would relate to the effort required to complete the Energy Center. President William Bennett Bizzell, as he dedicated in 1930 the library that would bear his name, would understand the need to build for the future even while the present seems bleak.

When better times returned, President Bizzell was ready. The University had held its faculty together; the nucleus of an outstanding medical center had been maintained; both undergraduate and graduate education had been strengthened. Interestingly, as the trying economic times of the 1930s were ending, the University was anticipating its semi-centennial celebration, as today the institution is approaching its centennial observance.

No doubt with his recent hardships in mind, Bizzell first broached the idea of major private endowment funds for the University, which led eventually to the establishment of the University of Oklahoma Foundation. No great state university, he pointed out, ever was developed without large endowments to supplement legislative appropriations.

That Bizzell had the right idea has been proven time and again in subsequent years but never more than in 1986. Private support not only is staying the course at OU but also is leading the way.

—CJB