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## PROLOGUE

# You Don't Like Oklahoma Weather? Nonsense. It's Money in the Bank.

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A few weeks ago members of the University of Oklahoma Associates received a modest little mailing containing a photocopy of a newspaper article and an announcement card from the interim OU president, David Swank. The article concerned a \$4.9 million grant from the National Science Foundation to establish the Center for the Analysis and Prediction of Storms (hereafter to be known as CAPS) at the University. The card was a thank-you note to the Associates, who in 1986 made available a \$22,000 seed grant, "which played a major role in positioning OU for this prestigious selection."

Investing \$22,000 for a return of \$4.9 million is good business in anyone's book. But that is just the beginning. Over the next 10 years research funding generated by CAPS could total \$25 to \$30 million. The grant will result in the establishment of new faculty positions in mathematics, electrical engineering and computer science; a fully endowed professorial chair also will be created.

More post-doctoral scientists and graduate students will be attracted to Norman, which already is host to the National Severe Storms Laboratory, the National Weather Service, the Next Generation Radar (NEXRAD) Operational Support Facility and the Cooperative Institute for Mesoscale Meteorological Studies (CIMMS), all working in close cooperation with what is becoming the premier academic program in meteorology in the country.

As the technology of weather forecasting develops here over the next decade, we are told, a strong possibility even exists for creation of satellite computer and hardware jobs in the private sector.

All this for \$22,000? Not exactly. All this comes from years of quietly assembling a faculty, building an exemplary research record, competing for grants. It comes from attracting the

wide range of facilities to the Weather Center on OU's North Campus, the birthplace of operational Doppler meteorology technology and site of the world's first NEXRAD. But without the \$22,000 in unrestricted private gifts available at exactly the right time, it would have been difficult to get the CAPS proposal off the ground.

Certainly no clearer illustration could be found of the validity of the Associates concept, in which donors give annually to a discretionary fund that allows the University to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities beyond the scope of routine budgeting. Carving out a quick \$22,000 from an already tight academic budget to allow gifted researchers to pursue an opportunity like CAPS is asking a lot. Likewise difficult is finding just the right private donor with a special interest in such a project, willing and able to lend support on the spur of the moment. The existence of an unrestricted Associates fund is a godsend.

Only 11 such Science and Technology Centers were selected nationwide to share in the \$25 million National Science Foundation program. With 330 proposals submitted a year ago, competition among institutions was fierce. To have finished on top signals a new era in OU's status as a research university.

OU officials stress that in CAPS the word "center" refers to bringing together the efforts of a number of disciplines throughout the campus in pursuit of common objectives. "Brainpower and creativity," not "bricks and mortar."

While some Oklahomans love to complain about their weather, OU meteorologists just love it period. They have taken the laboratory nature provided, combined it with the curiosity, imagination and expertise of the scientific scholar and pulled off an academic coup for the University with potential economic fallout for the state.

—CJB