
PROLOGUE

Just in case someone should ask, “What’s so special about OU?”

The word “excellence” is a godsend to those of us charged with promoting the cause of higher learning. “Excellence” goes together so nicely with “academic” or “education”—a single word that implies everything to which we aspire. We want to be exceptionally good at what we do. We want to have the best faculty, the best classrooms, the best teaching and research laboratories, the best qualified students. And yes, “excellence” also goes well with “athletic,” so we strive to be the best in that arena as well.

At the University of Oklahoma, we have applied “excellence,” with all its connotations, to several of our most important endeavors. Of the five comprehensive private funding campaigns, three were excellent—the Plan for Excellence in the ’60s, the Campaign for Academic Excellence in the early ’80s and the newly launched Reach for Excellence Campaign. With the University having planned, campaigned and reached for this elusive quality called excellence for at least 35 years, a professor friend of mine suggests that the time has come to stop talking in the future tense and start advertising our successes.

This particular fellow, a long-time OU veteran, is in the business of training opera singers, and he measures success one professional appearance at a time. His former students are singing with opera companies all over the world or teaching others to do so. My faculty friend does not feel that his program is merely reaching for excellence; he feels it is already there. Quite a number of his colleagues echo similar sentiments about their own programs.

They will get no argument from OU President David Boren. Any car that tarries too long at a stop sign in

Norman is apt to drive away bearing a crimson bumper sticker proclaiming “OU Excellence: Don’t Keep It a Secret.” In one form or another, the list of bragging points printed below will reappear regularly over the next few years. In any discussion of alma maters’ relative merits, the University wants its friends and supporters to be well-armed with snappy comebacks.

Speaking of Excellence . . .

❖OU ranks first per capita among all comprehensive public universities in the number of National Merit Scholars in the student body.

❖Nearly 700 National Scholars—National Merit, African-American National Achievement and National Hispanic—enrolled at OU in 1994-95.

❖More than 21 percent of College of Engineering freshmen in 1994-95 were National Scholars.

❖The Minority Engineering Program is ranked in the top three among public universities in the United States in the enrollment of African-American National Achievement and National Hispanic Scholars.

❖OU has produced 24 Rhodes Scholars.

❖*U.S. News and World Report* ranks OU’s petroleum engineering program among the top three in the nation.

❖The School of Petroleum and Geological Engineering has graduated more petroleum engineers than any other program of its kind in the world.

❖The OU College of Engineering has produced more than 700 corporate presidents, vice presidents and CEOs.

❖*U.S. News and World Report* this year ranked the MBA program in the OU College of Business Administration in the top quartile of such programs in the nation. Another study ranks OU in the top 10 universities in the nation in producing CEOs of major U.S. companies.

❖The College of Business Administration, founded in 1923 and first accredited in 1926, is one of the oldest accredited business schools west of the Mississippi.

❖OU’s College of Fine Arts also is one of the oldest west of the Mississippi and the only comprehensive college of fine arts in the Big Eight.

❖OU is one of the very few universities in the nation offering its musical theater students the opportunity to appear in the same casts with professional Broadway actors in brand-new productions.

❖In the spring of 1995, the world premiere production of “Jack,” a musical on the life of John F. Kennedy, focused national attention on the OU musical theater program.

❖OU’s Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is one of the premier university art museums in the country.

❖The College of Continuing Education’s Economic Development Institute was ranked by *The Wall Street Journal* as the second most popular executive training program in the nation.

❖Over the past two years, OU’s College of Continuing Education has served more than 200,000 learners through more than 4,000 programs. This includes credit and non-credit courses and activities held in 266 Oklahoma locations, 268 U.S. locations and 39 international locations.

❖*U.S. News and World Report* ranks the OU College of Medicine among the top 20 comprehensive medical schools in the country.

❖Half of all Oklahoma physicians and many of the state’s other health-care professionals earned their degrees from the OU Health Sciences Center.

❖The OU Health Sciences Center-Tulsa campus annually serves more
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than 100,000 patients at its nine clinics in six Tulsa locations.

❖The College of Pharmacy at the Health Sciences Center is among the top 10 pharmaceutical programs in the nation.

❖When completed, the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History at OU will be the largest university-based museum in the United States, housing more than 5 million natural history artifacts.

❖OU's library system is the largest in the state.

❖The History of Science Collections are the best of their kind in the country. With more than 80,000 volumes, including rare and historical works by the world's most renowned scientists, the collections boast Galileo originals with margin notes in his own hand.

❖The Western History Collections are recognized as one of the nation's most important resources on the American West.

❖The Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center houses the papers of more than 50 current and former members of Congress, making it the nation's leading research center for congressional studies.

❖The Political Commercial Archive is the world's largest collection of political commercials.

❖OU's Neustadt International Prize for Literature is second in prestige only to the Nobel Prize. In fact, 17 of its laureates, jurors and candidates have gone on to receive the Nobel Prize.

❖OU's international literary quarterly *World Literature Today* is the oldest continuously published international literary journal in the United States.

❖The University of Oklahoma Press,

ranking among the 20 largest university presses in the United States, is the oldest in the Great Plains and the leading publisher of books about American Indian and Western U.S. history.

❖OU's graduation rate for football players was the highest in both the Big Eight and the newly formed Big 12 conferences.

❖OU athletic teams have won 19 national championships, two National Women's Invitational Tournament championships and 133 conference championships.

❖OU has a strong Honors Program that offers outstanding students the chance to take small classes of 20 students or less with the University's best teachers.

❖The counseling psychology program is ranked in the top 10 by the American Psychological Association.

❖OU is bringing back retired full professors to teach introductory courses and to provide mentoring for first- and second-year students.

❖In the past five years, the OU faculty has nearly doubled external research grants, bringing important educational dollars to Oklahoma, even though the faculty is smaller than it was 10 years ago.

❖With 200 research and teaching laboratories, the Sarkeys Energy Center at OU is attracting international attention.

❖More American Indian languages are taught for college credit at OU than at any other university in the world.

❖The College of Law publishes the only law journal devoted exclusively to Native American legal issues in the United States.

❖The H.H. Herbert School of Journalism and Mass Communication offers the country's only accredited journal-

ism program in fiction and non-fiction professional writing.

❖*The Oklahoma Daily*, OU's student newspaper, once again has been named one of the nation's top five daily college newspapers.

❖OU has one of the top three meteorological research programs in the nation and is the top university research center in the nation for the study of severe storms.

❖The new National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center being established at OU will provide information for the entire nation on tornadoes, heavy rains and thunderstorms, flash floods and winter storms.

❖OU has attracted numerous Fulbright scholars from such countries as Italy, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Hungary, Bolsoza and Kazakhstan.

❖More than 1,750 international students are enrolled at OU. More than 50 international exchange programs with 28 countries enable OU students to study abroad and students from other countries to study at OU.

A disclaimer appears to be in order here. By its very nature, a list like this one cannot be either complete or up-to-date—and happily so. Since the fact sheet was compiled in September for the inaugural festivities, additional reasons for institutional pride have been announced. The College of Continuing Education, for example, was awarded a \$19 million U.S. Department of Education grant as one of 15 regional centers providing consolidated services to elementary and secondary schools in Oklahoma and five other states.

It's not much of a reach to cite the above as evidence of excellence—in case anyone should ask. —CJB



EXCELLENCE
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