

A historic \$200 million, five-year private funding effort kicks off with \$41 million already committed.

by Robyn Tower



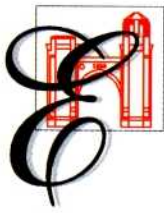
University of Oklahoma President David L. Boren's inaugural weekend, September 15-16, which cast the spotlight on OU's academic, fine arts and athletic strengths, provided the perfect setting to formally launch the \$200 million Reach for Excellence Campaign. Scheduled to conclude in the year 2000, the campaign will enable the University to build on those acknowledged strengths and to pursue new areas of excellence.

The campaign kicked off Friday night at the Inaugural Gala in Lloyd Noble Center with Boren's announcement that \$41 million in advance gifts already had been raised toward the \$200 million goal in the seven months since the campaign was proposed.

On the following Saturday morning, The Reach for Excellence National Campaign Committee's chairman, James G. Harlow Jr., gathered members of his committee to discuss goals and procedural plans for the fundraising effort. Boren and David L. Maloney, vice president for University Development, were the principal speakers.

A 1957 graduate of the OU College of Engineering and chairman of the University of Oklahoma Foundation trustees since 1986, Harlow opened the session with a challenge to the 189 volunteer leaders who have been named to the national committee.

"We have an important opportunity to help the University grow and excel with this campaign," Harlow



declared. "OU is doing wonderful things, but we need more resources to accomplish the really important goals that have been set."

The President's Vision

OU's president addressed the committee about Universitywide goals to be advanced through gifts to The Reach for Excellence Campaign. These objectives include the establishment and endowment of an Honors College, in which courses will be taught by a core faculty of outstanding teachers and scholars and be offered to all students who meet the academic criteria.

"In many ways, I look at the Honors College as the linchpin of our ability," said Boren. "We can become known as the place where young people can come with great confidence to a public University and get a challenging experience equal to what you would get from any small, heavily endowed private college. If we do that, we will do something incredibly important to this institution."

Boren also spoke about other private funding goals, including:

- Providing OU students with new opportunities to prepare for the international environment in which they will live and work.
- Establishing and endowing a significant number of Presidential Professorships, to be awarded for four-year terms on the basis of outstanding faculty performance, providing supplemental salary stipends and research assistance of \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year.
- Carrying out a comprehensive program to put students first and create a real sense of community on OU's campuses.
- Strengthening current areas of academic excellence and building in areas of natural potential for future leadership, as with the expansion of OU's program in Native American Studies.

"The University has a concrete blueprint for the future," Boren told the National Campaign Committee. "The \$200 million we seek would truly move us into the front ranks of American higher education. Because we have

set careful goals, we will reap the most from every dollar contributed.

"I am convinced that within five years or less, when people say, 'Well, what is one of the greatest public universities in the country?' people are going to say, 'The University of Oklahoma. That's the place you want to go, a wonderful place, good values, and they have one of the greatest Honors Programs in the country.' This is our dream, and to realize this dream we need the help of our alumni and friends."

The Campaign Plan

Maloney outlined the organization of the campaign and introduced University of Oklahoma Foundation executive director Ron D. Burton, who

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will be working in a leadership capacity with the University's development officers. Maloney's senior staff members are Kenneth Conklin, assistant vice president and director of major gifts; Paul Massad, associate vice president and executive director of the OU Alumni Association; and Sandra Waterkotte, assistant vice president and director of development.

Maloney explained to the committee that a key to the success of the campaign is to increase the number of alumni who make gifts to the University. Currently some 15 percent of all OU graduates provide financial support to their alma mater, he explained. Over the five-year course of the campaign, if that number is increased to 25 percent, OU will be a national leader among public institutions in terms of alumni support.

The University's annual giving programs were cited as integral to achieving this goal. Included in this area are the OU Associates and fund drives geared to the needs of individual colleges and other programs. Annual giving drives also focus on special constituencies, such as the Parents Campaign and the Faculty-Staff Campaign.

The National Campaign Committee is being divided into a number of special committees, including a campaign cabinet, whose members will work directly with Chairman Harlow to provide overall leadership. Other major committees are the national individual and corporate leadership gift committees—which will reflect the national scope of OU's alumni base—with special Oklahoma and Texas leadership gift committees working with many of the 82,000 OU alumni in those two states. A foundation leadership gifts committee will be assigned to the state and national foundations that support higher education.

During the campaign, committee members also will arrange special events to carry the University's message to alumni and friends in cities throughout the country.

A Universitywide Effort

Maloney stressed that The Reach for Excellence Campaign is a Universitywide effort that will be supported in a dedicated and unified way by each constituency within the Norman and Health Sciences Center campuses. University development staff and campaign volunteers will be working both toward gifts that benefit the entire University, such as the University Libraries, the Honors College and Presidential Professorships, and toward gifts that provide special benefits for individual colleges and programs. The majority of these college and program gifts will fall into the following areas:

- Strengthening funding for faculty members through endowed chairs and professorships and faculty fellowships, which will enable the University to recruit and retain outstanding professors.
- Improving facilities and resources for learning and research. The

University's students and faculty need modern tools for learning, including the latest computer technology, a vast assortment of scholarly books and current journals and the laboratory equipment that allows hands-on learning.

- Providing scholarship funding that enables OU to recruit and retain outstanding students and to make a university education possible for talented and dedicated students who require financial assistance to pursue their dreams. Private gifts are needed for undergraduate and graduate scholarships and graduate research fellowships.

- Extending OU's public service mission through private gifts to museum and fine arts programs, outreach activities for public school students and teachers, and continuing education.

- Completing new building projects, such as the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History and the Biomedical Research Center, and modernizing and expanding current classroom, laboratory and public spaces in many areas.

- Expanding support for vital research through philanthropic gifts by non-profit foundations and individuals also will be an important goal in medicine, science and other areas.

Committee Members Enthusiastic

Members of the National Campaign Committee responded enthusiastically to the campaign goals and plans set forth by Boren and Maloney.

Oklahoma City banker Gene Rainbolt, a leading member of the Centennial Commission that raised \$150 million for the University from 1986 to 1990, sees The Reach for Excellence Campaign as part of a natural continuum that began with the Centennial Campaign. He is a firm believer in the importance of both



Forming the University's leadership team for the \$200 million Reach for Excellence Campaign are Sandra K. Waterkotte, left, assistant vice president and director of development; David L. Maloney, vice president for development; Ron D. Burton, executive director of the University of Oklahoma Foundation; Kenneth R. Conklin, assistant vice president for development and director of major gifts; and Paul D. Massad, associate vice president for development and executive director of alumni affairs.

drives to the University and the state of Oklahoma.

"The future of Oklahoma and the success of its population is inextricably linked to the future and success of the University of Oklahoma," said Rainbolt, who holds two degrees from OU's College of Business Administration. "Education is the differential between poverty and prosperity."

Sandra O'Brien, of Houston, is an OU College of Education graduate who was also a leader in the Centennial Campaign. "I haven't seen such

a change in the level of campus excitement in years," she said. "What the University is doing now is truly exciting and important."

A former teacher, O'Brien is particularly enthusiastic about the re-emphasis on the importance of great teaching. She and her husband, Brian, an OU geology graduate, were among the first to support the Presidential Professorships, providing both immediate funding to launch the program and endowment gifts to continue it.

"We have to have the best teachers to teach the wonderful students that OU has been so successful in attracting," said Sandra O'Brien. "I love the way teaching is being valued. That's what the University is about."

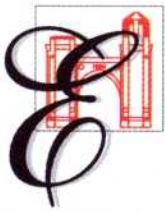
Houston attorney La Mont Jones was a National Achievement Scholar at OU and is enthusiastic about the Honors College concept.

"I think OU's Honors Program is one of our well-kept secrets," he insisted. "It provided me with an education that had both breadth and depth. I went to Columbia Law School, and I never felt that I came in with a lesser education than any of my Ivy League colleagues."

As a 1990 OU graduate, Jones is among the youngest members of the campaign committee.

"I think that often when we first graduate from OU, we think that someday we'll give back to the University, but not now. I want to get the message out that even if we have a small amount to give, it's never too soon to begin. That way we can develop the habit of contributing to the University."

A common thread among The Reach for Excellence Campaign National Committee members is the sense that the University contributed something important to their lives, a debt they



wish to repay.

"I'm grateful to the University of Oklahoma for providing me a good education and for providing my children, and now my grandchildren, with a good education," said Oklahoma City physician William G. Bernhardt, who established the Bernhardt family tradition when he graduated from the College of Medicine in 1958.

Joe Buskuhl, of Dallas, a 1964 graduate of the College of Architecture, has both practical reasons for supporting the University and one closer to his heart. Buskuhl is president of Dallas' HOK Architects, one of the largest architectural firms in the country, and he recognizes that when businesses and individuals invest in the University of Oklahoma, they reap rewards in the quality of graduates who can contribute to business and society.

But Buskuhl's commitment to the University also has roots in his own college years, when, as a young man

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from Blackwell, Oklahoma, he received a helping hand from a community member who believed in the contribution Joe might someday make.

"When I was growing up, there was a person in that little town who helped me and another student attend college. Every year, he gave us \$500 for

our college bills—and that was when \$500 went a little further toward paying for college than it does now. I always said that when I got to the point where I could help someone like I was helped, I would give something back."

The committee members generally felt that conveying the spirit of the inaugural weekend to their fellow Sooner supporters was essential to a successful major private funding campaign. University of Chicago law professor Beth Garrett, a 1985 College of Arts and Sciences graduate and former chair of Student Congress, summed up the contagious enthusiasm among her National Campaign Committee colleagues.

"I was amazed by the many wonderful parts of the University that were represented during all the activities," Garrett described the events of the weekend. "We stood up and said with such pride, 'Look what we have here!' It was a great way to begin a campaign for OU's future."



The first meeting of the National Committee for The Reach for Excellence Campaign, held during the presidential inaugural weekend in September, concluded with a class picture outside the Oklahoma Center for Continuing Education's Forum Building.

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