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## PROLOGUE

# Love the way the place looks— but it's content that counts

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**T**he Norman campus of the University of Oklahoma has become a visitor destination point. New and restored facilities, fountains, statuary—and landscaping to die for. Where once the attraction was largely for college shoppers, now tourists and day-trippers swing off the interstate just to take in the sights. We are looking good and proud of it.

*Sooner Magazine's* coverage of this physical transformation has been extensive in the last couple of years—and there is more to come. The aesthetics of campus development are entertaining to watch, easy to understand, interesting to chronicle and fun to photograph. But make no mistake, the real excitement at this University is what is going on inside, out of sight.

Last year the energy generator was the super-charged Michael F. Price College of Business, spurred by the \$18 million gift leading to its renaming and a host of new and improved initiatives within its programs. Equally intriguing is the work in progress at the new Honors College, led by its first dean, Steven Gillon, an Oxford scholar whose hiring was a legitimate academic coup.

The new hires coming on board for the next academic year are no less exciting. Take, for example, the three newest deans and the colleges they direct.

The addition of W. Arthur "Skip" Porter as dean of engineering and the University's first vice president of technology development signals a new focus for the state as well as the University. He is described as an international authority on technology commercialization and the management of collaborative projects. Simply stated, he will concentrate on putting the expertise of academic researchers to work in growing Oklahoma's economy. He will be assisted in this effort by Brent Mills, the new director of OU's Office of Technology Management.

This sort of commercial application of higher education resources already has a start in areas such as engineering, meteorology, energy and the

biomedical enterprises of the Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City. To augment the work already under way, recruitment is ongoing for the nationally renowned research scientists who will occupy the laboratories of the HSC's newly completed Biomedical Research Building. The potential in the human genome research, featured in the fall 1997 *Sooner Magazine* and other publications, is tremendous, and expect to read a lot about the research of OU's new zoologist, Tom Ray, whose research specialty is artificial computer-based intelligence.

The announced emphasis of the new dean of fine arts, Marvin Lamb, is to enhance the national performance reputation of the college. A widely noted composer who formerly directed the Baylor School of Music, Lamb will have another newcomer, Kenneth Fuchs, as director of the OU School of Music and a new school of dance, directed by OU veteran Mary Margaret Holt. Also in fine arts, the holder of the new Charles M. Russell Chair in the Art of the American West, the eminent scholar Peter Hassrick, is opening a whole new area of study at OU, surprising considering how uniquely suited the subject is to this institution.

Rounding out the trio of new deans is architecture's Bob Fillpot, who brings with him immense practical experience from his successful private practice in Houston and graduate degrees from Harvard.

*Sooner Magazine* readers will be learning more about these fascinating new personalities as their presence begins to impact the institution. They are joining the University at a very good time in its history, probably the best since a boatload of enterprising young faculty returned from World War II to cast their lot with a good regional institution and turned it into modern university of national note.

OU has become a destination point for all sorts of people—for highly recruited students, faculty and administrators; for internationally important speakers and conferees; for artists and performers. And these folks don't come just to see the flowers.

—CJB