
PROLOGUE

If the past five years have taught us anything, it is never to say never

We would all like to say that we saw it coming. That we saw all the possibilities five years ago when David Boren first sat behind the president's desk in Evans Hall and ideas started bouncing off the walls like ping pong balls. That we shared his confidence in the attainability of his goals, the practicality of his vision for the University of Oklahoma. The truth is, no one could have imagined that we could go so far so fast.

Oh, the ideas were wonderful. A few of them had been kicking around here for years, unrealized; others were brand new and startling in their audacity. More than once, we reacted with, "He wants to do *what?*"

Would the students, whose classrooms and housing had drifted far south, actually flock back to a refurbished and expanded Union? Could we hire the type of faculty that would make an Honors College flourish? Could we assemble blue ribbon panels of experts to staff world-class conferences? Would faculty families agree to move into the residence halls? Could we finish Catlett Music Center and the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History and start all those other projects waiting in the wings? And most important of all, who was going to sit on all those commemorative benches?

There were legitimate reasons to wonder—things such as money, personnel, connections. But our president is not a man easily deterred.

He found the money—and is looking for more. Less than a year into his new job, he boldly launched a \$200 million, five-year private funding campaign that he dubbed The Reach for Excellence. This, we all agreed, was a *real* reach. Yet a year later, the goal was boosted to \$250 million, then passed at the three-year mark on the way to

\$344 million in four years and is still going. \$400 million by campaign's end in September 2000? Count on it.

Boren went to the legislature each year to make the case for higher education, securing increases here, staving off cuts there. He freed up other money by cutting administrative costs to 6 percent of the general budget, the lowest level of any Oklahoma university.

In the five years of his administration, faculty salaries moved from the bottom of the Big 12 to the top four. OU's research growth attained the top ranking in the Big 12, as did the number of international exchange agreements. Library funding increased 50 percent. Endowed faculty positions went from 100 to more than 250.

Total institutional endowment grew 250 percent to rank among the top 20 of U.S. public universities. Private contributors to OU rose from 17,000 to 61,000, while faculty and staff giving is up 600 percent.

Freshman enrollment increased 25 percent over the past five years. OU maintained its number one ranking nationally in National Merit Scholars per capita and enrolls four times as many Oklahoma State Regents Scholars as any other university. Twice the University has won the Templeton Award as a "Character Building College" and this year won the "Champs Award" for outstanding academic and campus life programs for student athletes.

While David Boren tackled the University's programmatic and fiscal problems, First Lady Molly Shi Boren addressed the aesthetic and cultural life of the campuses. The Norman campus looked pretty good before the Borens arrived; now it is gorgeous. Outdoors we have flowers, fountains and sculpture; indoors we are surrounded by handsome furnishings and

walls adorned with art and historical mementos. Plans are under way for similar campus upgrading at the Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City.

David Boren is fond of recounting former President George Cross' advice that in all his planning he keep students first. Certainly Cross' successor has reserved for them a place at the table. *Sooner Magazine's* "A Five-Year Report Card" (inside back cover) reflects not only a desire to give to students but also an expectation that students give back. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in volunteerism, service to campus and community, mentoring. Far from being a burden, they line up for the privilege.

The past five years have been quite a ride—for the Borens and for the rest of us. You may be assured that there is more to come.

As for the questions posed earlier:

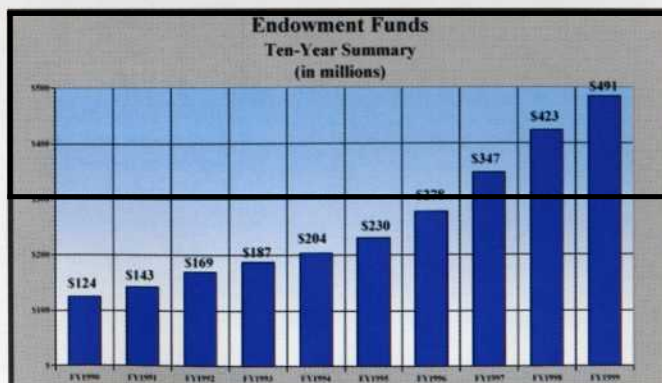
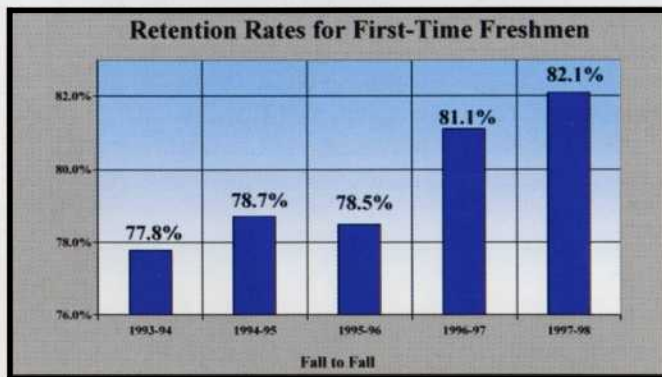
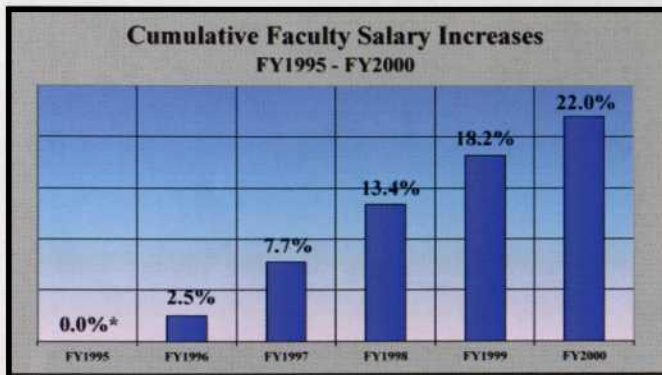
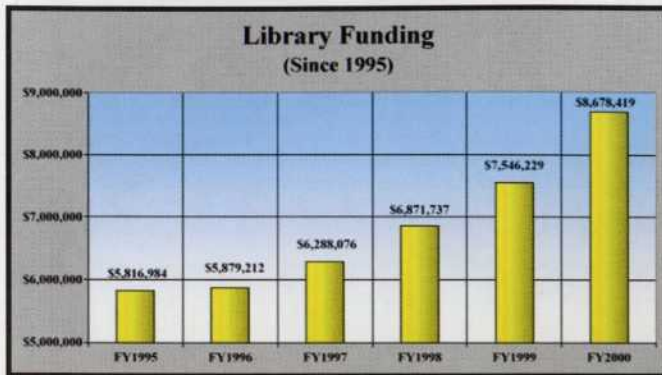
The Union is alive with students; it's the place to be. Not only is the Honors College attracting exciting young teachers from the nation's best Ph.D. programs, the endowed chairs and professorships are occupied by eminent scholars and researchers. It is impossible to take in all national and international figures who speak and perform on our campuses. There is a waiting list to become a faculty-in-residence family. Catlett is packing them in; Sam Noble comes online in May; dozens of other projects are in various stages of completion.

And the benches? On game days, call ahead for reservations; other times you can share space with students who sit there and study or eat or nap or just stare into space.

Mr. President, we'll never say never again. —CJB

"A Five-Year Report Card" continues on the inside back cover.

A FIVE-YEAR REPORT CARD



NEW PROGRAMS

- Faculty-in-Residence in residential halls
- Honors College established
- Retired Professors in freshman classrooms
- International Programs Center
- Charles M. Russell Center established
- Artist-in-Residence established
- Camp Crimson Orientation for new students
- Office of Student Volunteerism established
- President's Trophy initiated
- Class Reunions revitalization
- Presidential Professorships for merit performance
- Graduate Student Fellowships established
- Women's Center established
- Visiting Professorships established
- University Hospital public/private joint venture
- Multidisciplinary programs in Geriatrics
- Faculty Mentoring for freshmen
- Interdisciplinary President's Round Table
- Presidential Study Abroad Scholarships
- Adopt-the-Campus
- Foreign Policy Conferences

FACILITIES/ACQUISITIONS

- Oklahoma Memorial Student Union restoration
- Catlett Music Center completion
- Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History
- Nielsen Physics Building wing
- Jimmie Austin OU Golf Course and Charlie Coe Golf Learning Center
- Charles M. Russell Center for study of Western art
- Jacobson Hall restoration as the Visitor Center
- Fleischaker Art Collection
- Faculty-in-Residence apartments
- College of Law addition groundbreaking
- Health Sciences Center Student Center
- Barry Switzer Center and Siegfried and Family Strength and Conditioning Complex
- Softball Stadium
- Boyd House restoration
- Engineering Courtyard and fountain
- David A. Burr Park and Gazebo
- Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher Garden
- Honors College addition
- Library's Honeymoon Anteroom; Zarrow, Brandt Reading Areas, Canyon Gardens, coffee house
- Major Library computerization
- Union's Clarke Anderson Wing
- 260 new campus benches
- Historical markers
- Historic photos in campus buildings
- Antique British phone booths
- Blue-light emergency phones
- Major works of sculpture
- Endowed gardens and fountains
- Outdoor architectural lighting