
PROLOGUE

Just imagine OU Journalism all dressed up and everywhere to go

Life's experiences almost always look better from a distance—childhood, school days, summer camp, first love, parenthood—all chapters from our good old days. So admittedly my fond memories of the OU journalism school may be colored by time. That notwithstanding, even as they were happening, I knew those were days to be cherished. I loved J-School.

Personal bias thus established, I would like to invoke editorial privilege to single out one from among the dozens of pace-setting gifts to the Reach for Excellence Campaign. First, this \$22 million is the largest single gift in the history of the University; second, remarkably, the beneficiary is journalism and mass communication.

We have used variations of that phrase, "largest gift in history," so many times in the last five years that it no longer startles—elicits broad grins and high-fives, perhaps, but not shock. What is surprising is that this gift is not for business or engineering or medicine or even OU's glamorous new natural history museum but for a discipline that long has labored on with a slight stepchild complex. That is about to change.

The family of Edward L. Gaylord, editor and publisher of *The Daily Oklahoman* and head of a host of other major publishing and entertainment enterprises, is supplying the resources that should propel OU to the top tier among the nation's journalism programs. This support also will provide the impetus to elevate the school to "college" status, greatly increasing its national prestige and ability to attract corporate and foundation grants.

The most visible manifestation of the Gaylord College of Journalism

and Mass Communication's new standing will be the \$14 million Gaylord Hall, to be constructed on Lindsey Street on the east side of the south oval. Housed there under the college's umbrella will be the H. H. Herbert School of Journalism and separate academic programs in advertising, public relations and broadcasting and electronic media. Those disciplines, as well as *The Oklahoma Daily* and the *Sooner* yearbook will benefit from the latest in facility design and equipment.

The remaining \$8 million will form an endowment, half of which will fund three chairs and seven professorships, including one to be held on a rotating basis by a distinguished visiting journalist. When matched by funds requested from the state regents endowment program, a total of \$8 million will support the new teaching positions.

With the balance of the endowment, \$4 million, the college will establish a new student support center to provide mentoring, identification and funding of summer jobs and internships, academic and career counseling and professional job placement. Undergraduate and graduate scholarships will nearly double; faculty research grants will be available; and the Gaylord Journalism Lecture series will bring nationally known journalists and other media professionals to the campus. Funding also is included to maintain and regularly upgrade computer and electronic labs and expand the journalism and mass communication library.

A request accompanying the Gaylords' gift was that the University retain the H. H. Herbert name on the School of Journalism. Herbert

came to OU in 1913 and had the support of his friend E. K. Gaylord, the late founder of the Oklahoma Publishing Company, in establishing the journalism program.

The only downside to these momentous developments is that the first dean of the new college will not be the man with the grand plan and the perseverance that made it possible. David Dary, who held the Edward L. and Thelma Gaylord Chair, retired this spring as the school's last director, although he will remain as a consultant in the planning and construction of Gaylord Hall. As the 65-year-old Dary told *Sooner Magazine* a year ago, achieving college status for journalism and endowing its future were his only remaining goals before retirement.

A national search is being launched for the new dean. President David Boren announced that the donor had joined him in insisting that "no philosophical tests or narrow job descriptions limit our consideration of candidates. We will consider both professional and academic experience, and excellence will be our sole guide."

There should be no shortage of candidates for this job. But whoever this inaugural dean is, he or she will be taking the students of the Gaylord College—700 undergraduates and 30 graduates at present and destined to increase—into an uncharted, demanding era of communication challenges. Those of us who grew up with the manual typewriters, noisy old Teletypes and hot-type presses in a converted science building on Asp Street—two generations of buildings and many generations of equipment away from the proposed new facility—can only wonder what their future holds.

—CJB