



Getting the money for college is one thing; knowing what to do with it is several other things.

Educators, parents, grandparents, even the prospective students themselves view with some alarm the escalating cost of a college education. As has been discussed in *Sooner Magazine* previously, tuition and fees for a 30-credit-hour year have gone from \$1,869 in 1994-95, when David Boren came to OU as president, to \$5,709 in 2006-07—and that is for Oklahoma residents; non-resident costs have risen from \$5,109 to \$13,998. Add in housing, books and miscellaneous expenses, and the resident pays \$16,863, up from \$9,670, while the non-resident is paying \$25,824, compared to \$13,106.

Increased legislative appropriations for higher education can slow but will not halt the climb in tuition and fees. So what's a parent or student to do? For that matter, what's an institution to do to ease the burden for students caught in the middle—those without sufficient resources to finance a college education on their own but with too many resources to qualify for federal grant and loan programs? OU President David Boren's answer, enunciated in April 2005, is "scholarships, scholarships, scholarships"—and with the help of alumni and friends of the University, he is making good on his intentions.

The Campaign for Scholarships launched with a goal of \$50 million in five years. When that target was surpassed in just one year, the canny volunteer committee, headed by OU alumnus W. R. Howell, with OU Development Vice President JP Audas as staff director, upped the ante to \$100 million. When added to scholarship endowments already in place at OU, the total could reach \$200 million, generating \$10 million annually for scholarships and potentially benefiting as many as 10,000 students.

To date the campaign has raised more than \$75 million in scholarship gifts and pledges, including \$65.9 million for scholarship endowments, the balance to meet immediate needs. Out of this effort has come the Sooner Heritage Scholarships, varying from \$500 to \$1,000 each to shield middle income students, those with annual incomes in the \$30,000 to \$75,000 range, from tuition/fee increases. Matt Hamilton, associate vice president for Enrollment and Student Financial Services, estimates that more than 80 percent of OU's students receive some form of financial aid.

If planning starts early enough, Oklahoma high school students can address much of their own needs through the state-sponsored Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program. OHLAP is a virtual bird's nest on the ground for young people whose families have incomes under \$50,000 a year and who are willing to commit to a somewhat stronger curriculum, a 2.5 GPA, and a trouble-free, drug-free high school career. Those who also qualify for the federal Pell grants can cover their books as well; for the rest, OU offers Sooner Promise supplements to fill that gap for new students.

On the housing front, OU has a Loyalty Program for all students who remain in University Housing, providing progressive discounts on their rooms (but not meals) for continued residency. That discount is deeper for OHLAP students and can reach 25 percent by the fourth year.

Then there is the old-fashioned working one's way through college. Approximately 100 students earn enough to cover room and board in return for working in one of the many OU food service operations 15 to 18 hours over a 7-day period. Another program, Student Worker As-

sistance Team—or SWAT—operates a work-study grant-sponsored pool of student employees farmed out to OU offices to ease the load during peak times.

Getting the money is vital, of course, but knowing what to do with it is equally important. Here OU has been a pioneer, creating an on-campus, coordinated structure to educate and counsel students in good financial practices. Steering safely through treacherous waters is the aim of monthly programs for OHLAP students and Gateway orientation classes, both with a money management component. The Financial Education and Counseling Center works with students individually, while conducting ongoing research on student habits and attitudes.

Financial Aid Services Director Brad Burnett put together a plain-talk booklet titled "The 9 Things Every College Student Should Know About Money," which he uses in talking to Gateway classes. In 20 concise pages, he deals with topics from making a financial plan to needs vs. wants to credit card hazards and everything in between, illustrated with personal horror stories guaranteed to impress as well as entertain.

If a student is among the elite in programs such as National Merit, a free ride is possible, but most other scholars have to mix and match resources and make it work—just as they always have. They find their own ways to supplement their incomes, of course; the possibilities are endless. But OU should and does take seriously its responsibility to find innovative schemes to keep the doors open for anyone with the ability and the will to pursue a university education.

It should be mentioned here that all these programs to maximize a student's financial potential are voluntary—which is the other side of responsibility. —CJB