



Postscript

President Boren has given the state and nation 50 years of public service. So far.

An Oklahoma congressman once remarked, "The greatest problem in America today is to erase the question in the minds of men, 'What is the government going to do for me?' and replace it with the question, 'What can I do for my country?'"

The sentiment expressed by Lyle H. Boren (and later echoed by President John F. Kennedy) must have resonated with his young son, David, who was born in Washington, D.C., during his father's third term in office. David L. Boren grew up influenced by those who wanted to make the world a better place through public service. As such, Boren was the first person in state history to serve as governor, U.S. senator, a member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, and last, but far from least, the president of the University of Oklahoma.

On Jan. 26, the OU Board of Regents, students, faculty, staff and friends surprised President Boren at the Regents meeting in Oklahoma City with a celebration marking his 50 years of public service.

"I'm kind of overwhelmed by all of this. It's really amazing," Boren said to the crowd, uncharacteristically at a loss for words. "It's been a labor of love and I feel so lucky to have been able to serve."

In his 2008 book, *A Letter to America*, Boren writes, "I grew up viewing public officials with an admiration bordering on awe. From my earliest years, I wanted to be in politics because I believed it was the best way to make a difference."

And Boren couldn't wait to get started. After graduating from Yale in 1963 with a degree in history, he attended Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, earning a master's degree in philosophy, history and economics. At age 26, while working on his OU law degree, he ran for the Oklahoma House of Representatives. He won four terms and entered the governor's race in 1974 on a platform that championed reforms in government.

In 1979, Boren left the Governor's Mansion for a seat in the U.S. Senate, where he chaired the Select Committee on Intelligence from 1987 to 1993. He gave up the last two years of his third term in the Senate to become the 13th president of the University of Oklahoma in the fall of 1994.

Even before he became a university president, Boren realized the importance of investing in education. "Higher education is critical to our long-term economic strength as a state and as a nation," he says.

As an elected official, he supported the creation of gifted and talented programs in Oklahoma public schools and increased education funding. He helped co-author bills to establish the state technical-training system and state-funded community colleges.

Boren was the founding governor of the Oklahoma Arts Institute and established the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, which recognizes and encourages academic excellence in Oklahoma's public schools.

As a senator, he authored the National Security Education Act, which established the largest overseas scholarship program for American students since the Fulbright Program.

Known as the Boren Awards, the program is open to undergraduate and grad students who wish to study languages that are viewed as vital to national security, including Arabic and Chinese. Boren Scholars also get the opportunity to work for the U.S. State Department in embassies around the world.

"Almost no Americans study in parts of the world increasingly important to our future," Boren says. "Our ability to build constructive partnerships crucial to our national security depends on our understanding of others based on education and shared experiences."

As OU president, Boren has expanded study abroad opportunities for OU students, including the establishment of OU's flagship campus in *Arezzo*, Italy. He has also encouraged international students to study at OU. For the fourth year in a row, OU has won the coveted Davis Cup, awarded to the university with the highest number of Davis United World College Scholars. [See "Scholars for Change," *Sooner Magazine* Fall 2016]

"Get to know your international classmates," Boren tells OU students at freshman convocation. "Learn from them. They may become the next leaders of their countries."

Among the 35 new programs that have been created during Boren's tenure are the Honors College, the College of International Studies, the Institute for Quality Communities, and the Institute for the American Constitutional Heritage. The Stephenson Cancer Center and the Hamm Diabetes Center were established to train doctors, expand research and treat Oklahomans in their own state. The campus at OU-Tulsa also has grown dramatically, including the creation of the OU-TU School of Community Medicine in partnership with the University of Tulsa.

During Boren's tenure, OU repeatedly has had the highest academically ranked student body in state history and is the only public university in U.S. history to rank first among all universities — public or private — in National Merit Scholars enrolled. In 2013, OU became the first U.S. university with students winning the Rhodes, Marshall, Mitchell, Goldwater, Fulbright and Truman scholarships in a single year. Boren also does his part, teaching an honors class in political science each semester.

The university has not only improved its academic standing, but also has looked good doing it. Efforts by President Boren and First Lady Molly Shi Boren have resulted in OU ranking among the 25 most beautiful campuses in America.

Recently Boren has been on the frontline and the front lawn, leaving his office in Evans Hall to rally with students against hate speech targeting minorities and voicing his support for international students.

To the students Boren says, "I hope you will find causes and institutions — like the University of Oklahoma, like the government and Constitution of this nation — in which you can invest your lives and find such happiness and fulfillment.

"When you're given the opportunity to give back to the place you love, to this university and to this state, there's nothing else like it." — *Lynette Lobban*