

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Prospects For Private Gifts Are Bright

The University of Oklahoma is embarking upon an entirely new project—that of seeking private gifts and bequests to supplement legislative appropriations. Although in no way conceding that the State Legislature should relinquish in the slightest degree its responsibility for providing adequate appropriations, the Regents and the Alumni feel that the experience of other state colleges and universities of the United States has proven definitely the vital need for private gifts and bequests to improve the effectiveness of higher education.

What has been the experience elsewhere? Can O.U. reasonably expect to receive large benefactions? Those are natural questions, and should be answered at the outset for the information of O.U. alumni who, in the long run, must serve as public relations agents for the University if the new program is to succeed.

A survey of educational benefactions in the United States shows at once that there are, indeed, a great number of Americans who are sufficiently interested in advancing the cause of higher education to make gifts and bequests to colleges and universities.

A statistical survey prepared for the American Alumni Council by the John Price Jones Corporation of New York shows that during the last seventeen years, a total of forty-nine colleges and universities have received gifts and bequests amounting to \$770,913,560, of which \$538,089,355 was in gifts and \$232,824,205 in bequests.

This seventeen-year period includes both the prosperous twenties and the unrivaled depression that followed. It is impressive to note that the total amount of gifts and bequests to the forty-nine institutions during the depression was only slightly below the figure in the prosperous era. The figures show:

YEARLY AVERAGE OF COMBINED GIFTS AND BEQUESTS	49 INSTITUTIONS	PER INSTITUTION
1920-21 through 1928-29	45,573,053	930,062
1929-30 through 1936-37	45,094,512	920,296
A yearly decline of	478,541	9,766

It is explained by further statistics that large gifts to Harvard, Yale, and Chicago universities during the last seven years are largely responsible for the fact that the decline in the total giving has been so small.

The survey report comments:

"These general figures would indicate that, with the exception of a few institutions, gifts to educational institutions have not been as generous since the 1929 depression as in the preceding ten years. These figures do, however, indicate that education has a striking hold on the interests of people of wealth."

Among important conclusions reached by the experts conducting the survey are these:

1. Total gifts and bequests to higher education were almost precisely the same during the depression which followed 1929 as in the preceding prosperous era.
2. Gifts to the leading institutions in times of stress fell off very slightly.
3. Colleges and universities, except for the ten leading institutions, did not have as great an appeal.
4. Bequests are a stabilizing influence in the financial support of higher education over a period of years in which bad times are mixed with the good.

In view of the facts and conclusions presented in the John Price Jones survey, O.U. alumni may feel confident that they can support a benefactions program for the University with bright prospects of success.

The present business recession doubtless is something of a

handicap, but it is by no means an insurmountable obstacle. The University, being Oklahoma's leading institution of higher learning, and serving the public in ever-increasing ways, is the type of institution that has received support in both good times and bad.

As the Jones experts remark, "When money is given to an institution it is because of the service the institution is performing, the demands upon it for service, the money needed to perform those services, and the conviction among the friends of the institution of its value."

O.U. meets all of those qualifications as an institution capable of attracting private gifts and bequests. If the program is properly presented to alumni and the public, it seems reasonable to expect a generous response that will make it possible for the University to enrich greatly its service to the State of Oklahoma and to the Southwest.

Must Education Resort to Hollywood Glamour?

The casual newspaper reader must think that higher education consists largely of comely co-eds in shorts playing tennis or practicing archery or merely posing to display a surplus of feminine pulchritude.

City editors have a good idea as to what their readers like, and if what is technically known as "leg art" is in demand, they will keep assigning reporters to get it. And of course the modern university or college campus is a happy hunting ground for the photographer in search of anatomical perfection in a glamorous setting.

A co-ed in shorts is much easier to present in attractive style than a picture illustrating research into the structure of the atom, although it is possible to imagine a city editor sufficiently skillful to dramatize the more constructive phases of higher education.

At least one university, however, has apparently adopted the Hollywood glamour technique and utilized it with considerable success.

When Huey Long was elected governor of Louisiana in 1928, he found L.S.U. a quiet, static institution. He decided it needed a lot of things. He launched a building program that led to the present \$20,000,000 plant. He brought "big time" football to L.S.U. He built the biggest university swimming pool in the United States. What happened? When Huey Long went into office the school had an enrolment of 1,985 and a graduating class of 258. When he died it had an enrolment of 6,601 and a graduating class of 742. This year it has an enrolment of 8,045 and a graduating class of 925.

The importance of a good faculty has not been neglected, and outstanding educators have been brought from many parts of the country. Since Huey Long died, the institution has put more emphasis on the serious aspects of higher education, but it would be interesting to know just how much effect the Hollywood glamour had on giving the school's rapid growth its chief impetus.

An example of more dignified dramatization of education is provided by Northwestern University. This institution has deliberately exploited the interesting work done its campus in order to attract popular support, both from alumni and the general public. Yet it has managed to do this without becoming undignified.

Showmanship is needed in order to impress the general public with the real importance of higher education to society, and O.U. faces this problem in starting a campaign for gifts and bequests. But it should be possible to present the "show" in terms of high class drama, and offset to some extent the burlesque show type of publicity which certain newspapers insist on giving the students of Oklahoma colleges and universities.