

# Citizens' Crisis

## a special editorial

Higher education in Oklahoma is confronted with a "Citizens' Crisis." The nub of this crisis is a lack of money to hold and recruit new teachers in the face of competition and rising enrollments.

As citizen-made and citizen-supported institutions, Oklahoma's colleges and universities are your concern. It is not only a defeat for teachers and administrators if the institutions fail for lack of support. It is a defeat for every citizen who has benefitted from those institutions. It is an irreparable loss for the children of every citizen.

The University of Oklahoma, and its sister institutions, will be crippled if essential financial support is not forthcoming in the immediate future. At the present time, O.U. is a better school than is justified by its financial support.

By curtailing essential services and programs, the University Regents and the administration have been able to tape a good faculty together by providing limited pay raises and an excellent climate for teaching. But no one believes that the present faculty can be held for long without stronger bonds.

The University of Oklahoma must have a sizable increase in operational money if it is to continue as a top-flight institution. Proof of this statement is readily available:

ITEM: The University has lost 1/3 of its present number of faculty members in the last five years.

ITEM: A national accrediting agency for colleges of pharmacy, although complimentary of O.U.'s faculty quality and enterprise, stated: "The University has had to operate on a budget all too modest for many years . . . Sooner or later under such conditions, the University loses its prestige and becomes stamped as a mediocre institution."

ITEM: A State Universities Association survey of 24 institutions indicates O.U. salaries for full professors are nearly \$2,000 below the average of the study.

ITEM: Combined, the state-appropriated funds for O.U. and O.S.U. are \$15,859,584—as compared to the University of Missouri's \$11,115,000 budget and Louisiana State University's \$13,769,000 budget. With enrollments of approximately 11,000 each, appropriated state funds per student at O.U. and O.S.U. are \$686; L.S.U., with an enrollment of 10,558, received \$1,304 per student; Missouri, with 13,849, received \$802 per student; Iowa State College, with 9,886, received \$837; Kansas State College, with 6,695, received \$904; the University

of Nebraska, with 8,548, received \$1,088; and the University of Arkansas, with 5,925, received \$1,144 per student. (Figures are from 1957 budgets.)

ITEM: Three Big Eight institutions now are paying full professors \$1,000 or more higher salaries than O.U. During the present academic year, Colorado increased salaries 18 percent; Iowa State, Missouri and Nebraska, 12 percent; Kansas and Kansas State, 10 percent; the University of Oklahoma managed to increase salaries 4.4 percent in the face of an over-all budget decrease.

ITEM: Faculty members' morale is at a low ebb. The financial figures cited above are no mystery to them. Just-wait-till-next-year has run its course as an argument for staying at O.U. Many have waited during the past several years, watching O.U. salaries inch upward, believing that the institution would experience salary increases that would match those of similar schools in neighboring states. One young faculty member put it this way: "I would like to remain at O.U. But I don't think I should be teaching young men and women unless I have enough common sense to be interested in improving my economic status. I'm going to be forced to go elsewhere."

And there are many places the teacher might go. Industry is offering scientists, engineers, and mathematicians an opportunity to write their own tickets. Colleges and universities throughout America are actively competing in the academic market place for the best teachers.

The University of Oklahoma cannot compete with similar institutions in neighboring states for faculty members. We cannot even afford to hold our present faculty members in many instances.

In the last week of December, Dr. Kester Svendsen, David Ross Boyd professor of English, resigned to take a position at the University of Oregon. Although unofficial, it is understood that his salary will be increased by more than \$3,000.

Dr. Svendsen is a distinguished professor. And distinguished professors are in short supply everywhere. We could not afford to lose him and we could not afford to keep him. It is safe to predict that he will not be replaced by a man of comparable stature.

Dr. Svendsen's loss would not seem so great if it did not follow similar moves by similarly gifted men. His departure does point once more to the warnings issued repeatedly by President Cross that the University of Oklahoma is an academic boot camp.

Under the existing salary scale, the University of Oklahoma can hire the young and the inexperienced, train them to maturity as teachers—and then lose them as soon as their reputations have been established.

If it seems to our readers that faculty members are ingrates by leaving O.U., take another look. Most of those who have left the faculty would have stayed had their pocketbooks permitted. Most of them had paid their debt of fidelity by their service.

The factors that have been mentioned here cast a gloom on the continued advancement of the institution and the State's system of higher education.

Nearly 50 percent of Oklahoma's 1958 highschool graduates are attending college this year. Approximately 3,000 more students will graduate from high school in 1959 than in 1958. The same increase is expected for 1960 and 1961 over each preceding year. The best evidence

of prospective college enrollments is found in the phenomenal growth of the school population in the reader's community.

Oklahoma colleges and universities cannot handle such projected increases without additional faculty members.

The cost of education is going up. There is no other way for it to go without a subsequent decrease in quality—a quality that is already being seriously questioned in light of the nation's needs.

The immediate need of the University of Oklahoma and of all State institutions of higher education, is an increase in State appropriations for faculty salaries and a general improvement in faculty facilities. At O.U. there is a critical need for funds for faculty research, teaching and research equipment.

The State Regents for Higher Education have placed the needs of the State's system at approximately \$32 million for each year of the 1959-1961 biennium. This figure covers only operational budgets, and does not include money for new buildings or repair and modernization of old ones. During the past two years the system of higher education has received appropriations of approximately \$22 million (1957-58) and \$21 million (1958-59).

If the Legislature appropriates the \$32 million, it will not solve the financial difficulties in the State's 18 institutions of higher education. But it will be a long step forward.

There is every reason to believe that the Governor and the 1959 Legislature are sympathetic to the needs of higher education but the Governor and the Legislature will be confronted by a great many State agencies, all of whom will be seeking more support.

The citizens of Oklahoma, and particularly the alumni of the University, can help the Governor and the Legislature help the institutions by an active concern for the adequate financing of higher education. This is the "Citizens' Crisis": to be concerned and to translate that concern into action.

Do you believe the educational institutions of this state are of modest importance or do you believe them to be crucial for the development of our young people and our young state?

Surprisingly enough, the answer no longer rests with the institutions. It rests with you.

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