

# Sooner Scene

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Executive Secretary  
O. U. Alumni Association

WHAT is the real issue facing Oklahoma in providing for the colleges and universities of the state in the immediate future? It is to decide whether or not Oklahoma will offer qualified high school graduates educational opportunity of high quality at the college level. By your actions or your silence you will help answer this question, one way or the other, during the present session of the Legislature.

An appropriation of thirty-two million dollars for each year of the biennium has been requested. This is a lot of money, but not as much as will be spent on highways, welfare and other government services. It is comparable in per student cost to that being spent in neighboring states. In the opinion of those who know the institutions best, it is a minimum requirement. It is the amount necessary to make these schools competitive with similar institutions of neighboring states. This is not an off-hand personal opinion. It represents a conclusion, arrived at after careful study, shared by regents, administrators, faculties and alumni. To provide it is to meet the current emergency and not the problems of the future, for this figure does not allow for new buildings or greatly increased numbers of students.

To be more specific, here is a most pressing problem that must be met now:

Teachers' salaries—The salaries for all ranks of teachers at O.U. and O.S.U. are the lowest of the Big-Eight Conference schools. Oklahoma competes with these schools and in the national market for good teachers. A study made by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1958, comparing faculty salaries of 25 state universities, finds O. U. below the mean average for the other 24 schools.

The result of this discrepancy speaks for itself . . .

The number of resignations at O. U. over a five year period (1953-57) is equal to 51 per cent of the present teaching staff. Some turnover on university faculties is normal and expected, but this situation has become disturbing.

In recent months O. U. has lost such outstanding men as Ernst Erich Noth, Professor of Comparative Literature and Editor of the world famous journal *Books Abroad*; Laurence Snyder, Dean of the Graduate College; Stephan Borhegyi, Director of the Stovall Museum; and Kester Svendsen, David Ross Boyd Professor of English.

On February 11, Joe W. McBride, President of the Board of Regents, issued a statement which in part reads as follows:

"The critical situation confronting the University of Oklahoma as well as other State-supported institutions of higher learning can be solved only by the procuring of additional funds for operations and capital improvements. The University Regents fully realize that the State funds requested for higher education together with proposed capital improvement funds undoubtedly will require new sources of State income, and the Board has pledged itself to support actively any tax measure necessary to provide additional revenue for higher education. Failing to procure additional State funds, the institutions will be forced to choose one or more of the following alternatives:

1. Another increase in enrolment fees;
2. Limited enrolments;
3. Lower academic standards, which might result in loss of accreditation.

The people of Oklahoma are justly proud of these institutions and they realize that a crisis exists today in higher education in our state. We are confident the people of Oklahoma will support actively your action in defending adequate appropriations for higher education. Failure to carry this program through could cause irreparable damage to the quality and prestige of the State system."

Alumni of the University of Oklahoma should be extremely proud of the strong position of leadership taken by our regents. These men are sincerely dedicated to the solution of O. U.'s problems. They serve faithfully, without remuneration or much credit. Their reward is in doing a good job. As successful business and professional men their evaluation of the problems facing the institution must be accepted as a well-informed, carefully considered judgment.

The Regents and the University need the support of alumni now more than ever before. Where do you stand on this issue?

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