

## Sooner Scene

Higher education in Oklahoma is under the microscope in 1960. There is wide-spread interest in the colleges and universities of the state. Several groups are giving serious attention to such problems as admissions, good teaching, faculty salaries, reorganization, efficient use of college buildings, recruitment of college teachers and research. The Legislative Committee on Higher Education, the Governor's Commission on Higher Education, and the Oklahoma State Alumni Council are moving into the area of evaluation and planning for the future.

Senator Robert L. Bailey, chairman of the Legislative Committee, O. A. Rockwell, chairman of the Governor's commission, and Leland Gourley, administrative assistant to the Governor, have provided the leadership in their respective groups to plan a series of seminars on the Oklahoma higher education system.

The first seminar was held in Stillwater on February 5, with the committee, the commission, regents, and members of the State Alumni Council participating. Dr. Ernest Lee Hollis, head of the Higher Education Department of the U. S. Office of Education, was brought in for the meeting as educational consultant. Dr. Hollis has directed detailed studies of institutions of higher education in 16 states. He spent several hours in closed session with the committee and the commission discussing problems pertinent to the Oklahoma system. Several educational leaders of the state spoke at the open session. Decision was reached during the seminar to employ an out-of-state consultant who would survey the higher education system of Oklahoma and determine where and when expansion of campus facilities will be needed. This move is expected to have a far-reaching effect upon the colleges and universities of Oklahoma.

The survey will deal primarily with the physical aspects of the system. Additional studies must follow, or be conducted simultaneously, in order to arrive at sensible recommendations because the solution of problems associated with physical plants will depend upon how questions pertinent to operations are answered. It was recommended by President G. L. Cross at the seminar that there should be created an organization to provide continuous self-study within each institution and for continuous self-study of the system as a whole.

He further suggested that the study of the system as a whole be undertaken by a commission, such as the Governor's commission, augmented by representation from the institutions and the governing boards of the institutions, and that in the beginning, at least, the study be directed or augmented by full-time professional personnel employed for the purpose.

The first step, it seems to me, is to identify and understand the problems that must be faced by these institutions in the next ten years. It is agreed by all who have studied the situation that the number of students in our colleges and universities will increase substantially in the immediate

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future. Estimates of the numbers vary. For example, a study made two years ago by the State Alumni Council indicates that whereas there were 37,389 students enrolled in state supported institutions in 1957, by 1962 this number will be increased to 48,667; and by 1970, the number of students will have reached 62,924.

Another real problem has to do with the number of college teachers who are available today and who will be available in the years to come. This will be a problem in Oklahoma and throughout the nation regardless of whether or not there is a revision in the thinking on such matters as teacher-pupil ratios.

In the school year 1957-58 there were 1,664 teachers in the state-supported colleges and universities of Oklahoma. It is estimated that by 1964 this number must be increased to 2,379 and by 1970 to 2,703 teachers. Unless there is an increase in the proportion of outstanding students who prepare for college teaching, the colleges will face a critical shortage of teachers and will be forced to employ a greater proportion of teachers with less than training represented by the Ph.D. degree.

Financial sources for the support of higher education is another point requiring careful study. Dr. Cross has called for a program of stabilized financing so that colleges and universities may be in a position to plan ahead both in operational programs and in the expansion of campus facilities.

One point of caution was effectively stated by Dr. Cross in his remarks to the seminar: "But as we make this effort to study our system of higher education and improve its efficiency, the citizens of Oklahoma should realize that educational efficiency cannot be measured accurately using standards of business efficiency. The object of business is acquisition — acquisition of wealth through the controlled exploitation of natural resources. The object of education is the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. It is most difficult to equate these two contrasting objectives because tangible evidence of success—measurable success—can be obtained only for the objective of business, not for the objective of education. For instance, how can we measure the efficiency of producing a Lynn Riggs? How can you measure the efficiency of more than one thousand research projects under way at the University of Oklahoma?"

You, as alumni of the University of Oklahoma who have a very real interest in the future of the institution, are invited to study these and other problems that are facing its future and to send your suggestions as to what the solution should be.

—R. BOYD GUNNING

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