

Backlog

THE COST OF OUT-OF-STATERS MAY
BE THE PRICE OF UNDERSTANDING

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THE State of Oklahoma is investing considerable time and money in an effort to attract out-of-staters. We urge them to come to Oklahoma as industrialists and to bring their business dollars and employment opportunities with them. We ask them to come as tourists, and we have built beautiful state parks and lodges to enhance the invitation. And when they go back home, we want them to be enthusiastic about Oklahoma, to pass a favorable impression along to others—to boost our national stock. But there has been some question lately of the desirability of encouraging these out-of-staters to come to Oklahoma as college students.

The question has been a financial one. Some of our state legislators contend that out-of-state students do not pay for the actual cost of their schooling in Oklahoma colleges and universities. In answer to such pressure, the Regents for Higher Education agreed to raise the out-of-state fee from \$15 to \$18 per credit hour (in-staters pay \$6), making the average 15-hour semester load cost the non-Oklahoman \$540 per year. Regrettable as this action may be, it is a good deal better than the legislators' original demand for \$25 per credit hour, which would have made the same academic year cost \$750.

During the discussion in Oklahoma City, a report from the President's office presented O.U.'s case for holding the line on out-of-state fees. By far the largest percentage of out-of-staters are underclassmen who are paying more than the actual per credit hour cost of their education. There is a smaller percentage of upperclassmen and graduate students paying less than actual cost—but most of them are in one-section classes which we must maintain for resident students with or without the out-of-staters. There is also the fact that there are more young Oklahomans in out-of-state colleges than there are out-of-state students in Oklahoma.

The fee question has been settled for this session of the legislature. However, it is the sort of suggestion which will continue to crop up whenever popular solutions are sought for inadequate financing.

More disturbing than the desire to raise more revenue for higher education through higher fees, however, is the sort of reasoning which the backers to the tuition-boost use to justify such action. Those who anticipate increased revenue from the fees reckon without the tuition-paying parents involved. Even those who admit the prob-

ability of a sharp drop in out-of-state enrolment fail to realize what this loss would mean to our colleges.

The value of out-of-state enrolment to the resident students and to the state itself is another of those items associated with higher education which simply cannot conveniently be evaluated in dollars and cents. We can determine the cost per credit hour of educating these out-of-staters—but if we are to assess cost, we must also assess contribution, and there is no monetary equivalent.

President Cross has maintained that raising the financial barriers to the free flow of students between states is in effect raising the barriers to understanding—both for those out-of-state students and for the Oklahoma students they join on our campuses. And if there has ever been a time when understanding between people was of prime importance, that time is now.

There are students from practically every state in the Union and approximately 40 foreign countries at the University of Oklahoma at the present time. They are the sort of "outsiders" which Oklahoma as a state is trying to attract. They are the sort which Oklahoma *must* attract if we are to compensate for the scores of young Oklahomans who decide each year to seek opportunity elsewhere. Failure to introduce these young, educated minds to Oklahoma on the college level is in direct contradiction of the "Build Oklahoma" campaign. It is a failure to look beyond the date of graduation to the day when these college students decide where to make their homes, to the day when they are in a position to decide where industry is to be located, or even to the day when they return to their home states as the best public relations representatives we could possibly enlist.

If the space shots of the past few months are any indication, one day we will be learning to live in a new world. In the meantime we are becoming more concerned with bridging the gaps of understanding in the world we already know. In the face of such one-world, one-universe thinking, "Oklahoma for the Oklahomans" sounds a bit ridiculous. —CJR

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