

Sooner Scene

THE ACADEMIC IVORY HUNTERS HAVE LAUNCHED A CONCENTRATED SEARCH FOR HIGH SCHOOL TALENT

THERE is a higher percentage of high school graduates entering college in Oklahoma than in any other state. In the fall of 1961, 15,000 graduates enrolled as freshmen in the institutions of the Oklahoma higher education system. Six thousand of these students enrolled at the two large universities, and 9,000 were divided among the other institutions. A number of conclusions can be drawn from these heavy enrolments. Oklahomans believe in college education for their youngsters. The social and economic advantages of college training are accepted by Oklahomans of all levels. It is generally agreed that a bright youngster can reach any goal he may set for himself with hard work and perseverance.

These large numbers of freshmen enrolling each year also mean that Oklahoma colleges have a high percentage of students from the top ten per cent of their high school classes. This reflects on the level of freshman classes and adds strength to the entire system. The other side of the story, however, is that many high school graduates from the lower one-fifth of the classes also find their way into college classes.

A recent report of the research division of the office of the Regents for Higher Education in Oklahoma estimates that 1,500 students in this year's freshman classes throughout the state finished high school in the lower one-fifth of their classes. We should not lose sight, however, that colleges and universities everywhere are interested in recruiting talent. The search for students who have demonstrated ability to do outstanding work in academic subjects, and who have scored high in college aptitude tests, becomes more vigorous and better organized each year.

The alumni club of Oklahoma City announced as its principal objective two years ago, a search for talent, and the energetic young leaders of that club have sought bright students for the University of Oklahoma with the same vigor and imagination that football coaches apply in recruiting halfbacks. Other groups around the state have also taken an interest in the top high school students of their own communities.

This is a rewarding activity. It will pay off for the communities by increasing the number of better students who attend college in Oklahoma. Such work also repre-

sents a real service to the colleges and to the young people themselves.

Widespread interest in the problems and needs of higher education and the anticipated increase in enrolments caused the Regents for Higher Education to begin a self-study program as a basis for long-range planning. The study is under way and should lead to the standardizing of the entire system of higher education.

This general interest in higher education and attitude of Oklahomans toward college training pays off in many ways. There are many examples of this around the state. As the gross product of the state increases, new industries spring up and existing businesses continue to grow and become more competitive. A dramatic example of this was the announcement last week by Ralph J. Cordiner, board chairman of General Electric, that a new multi-million dollar plant will soon be built west of Oklahoma City by his company to manufacture components for missiles, satellites and space vehicle electronic guidance systems. The new General Electric installation will also conduct research and development in addition to manufacturing.

In speaking of the new plant, Cordiner referred to his respect for Oklahoma's colleges and universities. A high percentage of new jobs created by the establishment of this plant will be in management and technical areas requiring people who are college graduates. The total payroll of General Electric shows a total of more than 250,000 employees. This includes 36,000 college graduates, 155 of whom are graduates of the University of Oklahoma. The number from Oklahoma is bound to increase as this new enterprise gets under way.

Recognizing the importance of this relationship, General Electric was the first

major company to establish the matching gift concept whereby all employees who contribute to the support of their alma maters find the company prepared to match their gifts dollar for dollar.

Another aspect of this relationship is illustrated by a new study supported by the Fund for the Advancement of Education and issued by the research division of the Council on Financial Aid to Education. The study of representative colleges and universities reflects that college graduates contribute to our society in many ways. Of those reporting, 45 per cent of the alumni are working in business and industry; 37.5 per cent are in medicine, law, education and other professions; 12 per cent of the alumnae are housewives, and 6.5 per cent are employed by government at various levels.

One of the principal conclusions drawn from this study was stated by the committee as follows: "These findings suggest why business corporations in the last fifteen years have given increasingly larger amounts of voluntary aid to American institutions of higher education and why the companies very likely will give still more generously during the present decade. They are estimated to have given approximately \$150 million during 1960 for higher education alone—above and beyond what they contributed via the tax route.

"The top executives of leading companies know that these contributions are in reality investments, made out of enlightened, self-interest in the sources of their present and future educated manpower."

Higher education, deserving of the name, is more than a job-producing experience, it is a way of life. The zeal with which the academic ivory hunters search for talent in Oklahoma is commendable. The increased pace of industrial development in the state will provide more jobs and will make it possible for a higher percentage of these college trained men and women to stay in Oklahoma and be a part of Oklahoma's future. —RBG

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