

Sooner Scene

STANLEY DRAPER CHALLENGES OKLAHOMANS TO MEET THE DEMANDS UPON HIGHER EDUCATION

“**W**HETHER we like it or not, whether the scholars approve or disapprove, the University today must rip the mantle of ivy from its towers and stand four-square in the market place.” This is the challenge which the dynamic Stanley C. Draper, Managing Director of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, issued to the leaders of the University of Oklahoma Plan for Excellence November 9, 1963.

Here are four critical areas which Mr. Draper sees as deserving close examination:

“First, there is the concern for the quality and scope of the undergraduate school, whose work normally leads to the baccalaureate degree. Industry does not consider that a university is meeting its responsibility unless there is sufficient scope in curriculum to include work in all of the sciences, the social sciences and humanities.

“The second area of concern is that of doctoral and post-doctoral training. The industrial and scientific age requires large numbers of people trained to the doctor’s degree and beyond. These are the people required to generate the ideas on which modern industry is based.

“At the moment, according to Dr. Lloyd Berkner, President of the Graduate Research Center of the Southwest, the Southwest is graduating in science and engineering only ten to fifteen Ph.D.’s per year for the region, and fewer than fifty from Oklahoma’s major universities. We are told that our state will need more like four or five hundred graduates per year in the science and engineering fields alone to give us the technological leadership needed for our industrial and economic health. The same growth must be developed in the states around us. The growth of graduate and post-graduate education must be enormously accelerated, as rapidly as possible, especially here on the campus of the University of Oklahoma! Even with sufficient funds and enough great teachers and researchers on hand (granting also an adequate supply of well prepared and sufficiently motivated students), it would take ten years to catch up with some other areas of our nation which are meeting these fresh new chal-

lenges of our times.

“Here is a place where we in the Southwest have failed miserably, I think, and I am sorry to say the State of Oklahoma is no exception to the generalization. While we have built good colleges, we have not had sufficient awareness of the desperate need for adequate doctorate and post-doctorate education. We just have not gone far enough. This failure endangers our future, and it must be corrected.

“The third area of great concern is that of adult or continuing education. No one, from the unskilled worker on up, is escaping the hard, cold fact of the necessity for continuing education and re-training in today’s industrial society.

“As technological developments have altered production and varieties of outputs, we have finally come to recognize that economic progress involves not only changes in machinery, but also changes in men. In large measure, the required changes in man will be brought about through continuing education. No institution is better equipped to extend this vital service to individuals and to industry than is the University of Oklahoma. Therefore, the major responsibility in continuing education in Oklahoma and in the Southwest is clearly that of this University. The University of Oklahoma cannot shoulder the entire job, to be sure, but certainly the leadership position and the motivation responsibility lie here.

“My fourth area of concern is research. This is a vital part of every major graduate program. I am confident that everyone in this room is thoroughly aware of the absolute necessity for the University of Oklahoma to mount a program of basic research on a scale that is undreamed of by the majority of the Oklahoma population. It is no secret that Oklahoma industry, historically, has looked to the University for research motivation. All of us, particularly the industrialists, must begin an even more intimate working relationship with the University of Oklahoma, particularly in the field of research. The same comment holds for all major universities throughout our Southwestern area.

“Even our largest research laboratories, to be most productive of new ideas that will eventually be translated into useful products, cannot do this job alone. We must look to the university for this leadership. It will take large sums of money and more time from the best scholars on our university faculties.

“In addition, there must be more businessmen working closely with developing inter-disciplinary groups in the university to create the kinds of relationships that permit knowledge to be developed in the university’s research activities, and then to be transferred to the more practical areas from which industry makes its profits. I am convinced that in all of this, products (as important as they may be) are not going to play as significant a part as will the improvement of the intellectual concepts and processes by which new materials, fabrics, lubricants, electronic systems and so forth are developed and brought into play in the industrial machine.

The University of Oklahoma is doing something about this with its Plan for Excellence. Those who are associated with O.U. feel it is within reach of greatness. Among people inside the campus there is a tremor of excitement, a glow of optimism.

The University of Oklahoma’s future is irrevocably tied to the future of Oklahoma and the Southwest. This area of the country is qualified to sponsor a great institution of learning by its ambitions and its resources—but also by the fact that its people are still close enough to the frontier to possess the courage to innovate and experiment, to search out and to each new truths while retaining the time-tested knowledge of the past.

The young people of Oklahoma and the Southwest, those in the University today and those who will be there in years to come, are as deserving of a superior education as the young people of any other part of the country—and they have a right to expect it at home. The University of Oklahoma, through its Plan for Excellence, will give them the opportunity for the best that education can offer. Their future—and the future they can bring to Oklahoma and the Southwest—is reason enough for setting a goal which can only be reached by stretching. —RBG

(Write the Sooner Magazine for a copy of “The Challenge” by Stanley C. Draper from which excerpts are quoted above.)