



*Oklahoma's growing urban areas mean growing pains and problems. The University is quietly and proficiently working to meet them through the Oklahoma Center for Urban and Regional Studies and the department of regional and city planning which help the state to prepare for the future*

# THEY PLAN TO HELP

By J. P. SMITH

**A**N ENTIRE community must be moved. A growing city needs to have a new neighborhood planned. A shopping center must be located in a favorable trade area. Confusing housing and zoning laws need to be interpreted. More than a million imaginary people have to be placed in hypothetical cities in southeastern Oklahoma.

Sound like impossible tasks? Problems like these are being solved each week at the University by the staff of the Oklahoma Center for Urban and Regional Studies (OCURS) and by the students and faculty of the OU department of regional and city planning.

Since 1945 when it was established by the OU Board of Regents as the Institute of Community Development, the OCURS and its academic affiliate, the department of planning, have been helping Oklahoma plan for the future by assisting state cities and towns in their development and by graduating trained, experienced regional and city planners.

Joseph Lee Rodgers Jr., chairman of the department and until recently director of the OCURS, explains that the two agencies work in and for the state of Oklahoma. "The

primary aim of the OCURS is to help the state develop through systematic planning for the future," says Rodgers. "The academic department complements the Center by training qualified planners to live and work in Oklahoma to help communities plan for increases in the state's population and economy. Oklahomans are living in a culture of increasing urbanization, and because of this, state cities and towns are undergoing great changes. Our job is to try to see that this expansion is orderly and in the right direction."

Rodgers, who has headed the program since September, 1962, admits that city planning to many people is a confusing, and often troublesome, thing. "With the tremendous increases in population there has to be an orderly expansion of the facilities to contain this growth," Rodgers explains. "Around the nation are hundreds of examples of what can happen when a city or an area expands without adequate planning. We try to help communities plan their growth with an eye to the future in order to develop an environment most pleasing to the people. We don't go to

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Richard N. Kuhlman, professor of architecture and planning and associate director of OCURS, lectures on the concepts of city location. The academic planning program includes extensive classroom and laboratory sessions.

a city or town and tell people what they must do. We work with the civic leaders and advise them so that they can solve their own particular problems.

"Essentially planning is a synthesizing process. We try to span the gaps between the various disciplines that are involved with growth and development of urban areas. We draw on many fields and specialized areas in our work—engineering, sociology, architecture, psychology, geography, economics and others—and pull them together in our work."

A glance at the backgrounds of the members of the staff of the OCURS and the planning faculty emphasizes Rodgers' point that planning is indeed interdisciplinary. In addition to the degree of Master of Regional and City Planning which four of the active planners hold, Rodgers has a bachelor of science in civil engineering as well as extensive college work in governmental and related social sciences; Robert L. Lear, newly-appointed acting director of the Center, and planner Wiley Rice both have undergraduate degrees in sociology, and planner Charles R. Goins holds a bachelor of architecture degree from OU. Dr. John W. Morris, associate director of the Center, has degrees in education and geography, while associate director Richard N. Kuhlman, who also serves on the faculty of the OU School of Architecture, holds bachelor and master of architecture degrees. In addition to the regular faculty and staff of the OCURS, faculty members of the departments of anthropology, sociology and economics and the College of Law often work with the Center on certain projects. Rodgers points out that the major work of the Center falls within three areas—comprehensive planning, project planning and development of planning methods, standards and laws.

"Comprehensive planning is one of the most valuable areas in which we work," Rodgers says. "This part of our work entails having members of the planning staff go to a

community, examine all aspects of the project and make recommendations to the community on the basis of community surveys, land use studies, traffic analysis and other methods of planning research."

About 25 Oklahoma cities have benefited from these comprehensive studies to date. Rodgers explains that comprehensive planning is accomplished by "applying scientific methods to the problems of community development. The first step in comprehensive planning is a community survey to find out facts about the community—the economy, the use of land and the people themselves. These findings are correlated with established principles and standards of planning, which are then modified in light of the community goals. Then we re-examine the findings of the community survey and equate them to planning standards to establish long-range plans of action to assist the community in reaching its goals."

The second major facet of the Center's work, project planning, is similar to comprehensive planning, except that it is the development of a plan for a particular area, such as a park, community center or residential area. The master plan for the expansion and development of the State Capitol area in Oklahoma City, which was prepared by the Center, is a good example of project planning. The completion of the two capitol office buildings, which were designed by private architectural firms, marked the first stage of the plan, which eventually calls for the construction of a series of circle drives and a mall, with NE 23rd Street being tunnelled under the mall.

The development of planning methods and laws constitutes the third major function of the center. The State Metropolitan Planning Law, adopted by the 1957 Oklahoma Legislature, was written by staff members at the Center, as was the Model Housing Code which is now being used by many Oklahoma cities and towns.

Just as charity begins at home, planning often begins



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in your own backyard. The Center has worked closely with the city of Norman for many years. Norman city planner Ray Patton, a graduate of the OU MRCP program, developed, with some assistance from the OCURS, a comprehensive general plan for Norman. More recently the OU Board of Regents and the Norman City Commission delegated the OCURS to begin a parallel study of Norman and the impact of OU on the university city. This study will result in a long-range plan for campus building and development of areas surrounding the campus. Closely aligned with the OCURS is the department of regional and city planning, an academic division of the University which grants the degree of Master of Regional and City Planning (MRCP). A two-year graduate course of study, the program requires some 54 credit hours beyond the bachelor's level, 30 hours of which must graduate courses in the department of regional and city planning.

"It is extremely difficult for small and medium-sized cities in Oklahoma to compete with other states for trained professional planners," says Rodgers. "However, with the program we have at OU we can attract outstanding students from Oklahoma and other states. Once we have the students in the program we can show them the advantages of locating permanently in Oklahoma and thus build a strong force of professional planners in the state."

The academic program in planning education had its beginning in 1948, three years after the Institute of Community Development was created. Because there was such a demand for the services of the Institute, there was a need for more qualified planners. The regents authorized a graduate program in planning on an experimental basis with Dr. Leonard M. Logan, who was then director of the Institute, as chairman of a co-ordinating committee composed of representatives of the departments of civil engineering, sociology, government, geography and economics. Morris and Kuhlman, who are members of the planning faculty and are serving on the staff of the OCURS and teach courses in planning, taught some of the first courses in the newly-formed program. Rodgers, who joined the staff of the Institute in 1949 as a planner, received the first MRCP degree from OU in 1953. One degree was awarded in 1955 and another in 1957. In September, 1961, the experimental program was termed a success and was given full departmental status as the department of regional and city planning. Since its beginning in 1948, 18 students have been graduated from the young program. The current enrollment in the department totals 30 graduate students, representing 12 states and five foreign nations. Seven of the students are resident Oklahomans.

"Because the very nature of planning involves many varied disciplines the MRCP program students come from a variety of academic backgrounds," Rodgers says, explaining that the students in the program have degrees in architecture, economics, engineering, government, sociology, social work and other fields. "The students in the program acquire a broad view of many fields of knowledge in their daily associations with their fellow students with different academic backgrounds," Rodgers points out.

The two-year graduate program is designed to provide students with a thorough understanding of problems of urban growth and change and of the technical information required to allow graduate planners to assist communities in providing good solutions to their own particular planning problems. As part of their course work students solve actual and hypothetical planning problems and often work along with the professional planners of the center. Graduates of the program are qualified to work as regional and city planners, in local and state governments, as city managers and other specialized fields of civic work. Urban and regional planning at OU has grown to its present status as one of 26 degree-granting programs recognized by the American Institute of Planners through the hard work of many men, but essentially the program has developed from the visions of one man—a 1914 OU graduate who could look to the future and see the need for a discipline to span the gaps between the fields most active in building for the future.

That far-seeing man was Dr. Leonard M. Logan, a social scientist who served two governors as an advisor while educating OU students and engaging in such varied research as prison education, state police training programs, tax exemption laws, old age pension laws and many others. Logan, who now holds the academic title of professor emeritus of sociology and planning director emeritus of the OCURS, headed the Institute for Community Development until 1958 and now serves as consultant to the program and the OCURS. Logan, who also holds a master of arts degree from Columbia University and doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Wisconsin, became interested in planning prior to 1935 while he was teaching economics courses at OU. In 1935 he was granted a leave of absence to serve as executive vice-chairman of the State Planning Board during the administration of Gov. E. W. Marland. Returning to the campus in 1938 as professor of sociology, Logan had a new interest in planning and began to integrate the field into his sociology courses.

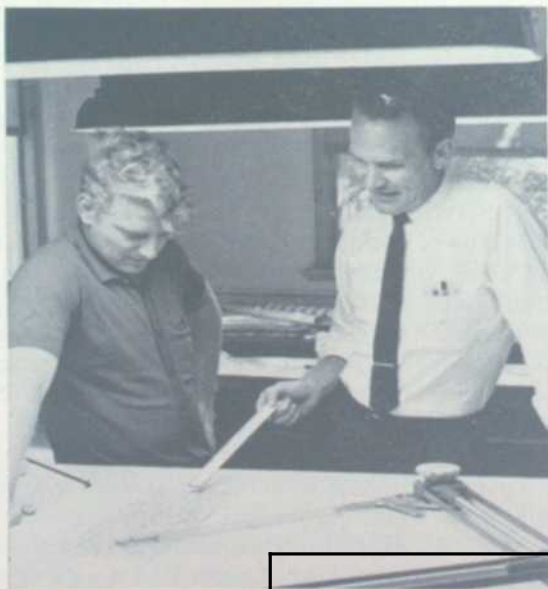
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Today's OCURS program has developed essentially from the vision of one man—Dr. Leonard M. Logan.



The planning research library, one of the largest west of the Mississippi, is a source of pride.



Planner Robert Lear confers with graduate student on part of general plan study of Sayre.

In the waning months of World War II, Gov. Robert S. Kerr foresaw a state-wide problem in finding enough jobs for returning servicemen. Logan was made chairman of a committee in April, 1944, to suggest ways to employ the returning soldiers and integrate the GIs into post-war community life. Because of an abundance of purchasing power and an over-supply of jobs, the problems Kerr had anticipated never developed, but there was so much demand in the state for the services of the committee that in 1945 the OU Regents created the Institute of Community Development, which in 1959 became the Oklahoma Center for Urban and Regional Studies. "The work then was much the same as it is now," says Logan. "Communities had growing pains and the people came to us for help." Some of the projects done under Logan's direction included a joint program with the Army and Johns Hopkins University on the behavior of people during disasters, a community development program for Sapulpa and a survey of Ada, which brought some \$2 million of industry to the southern Oklahoma community.

One of the more dramatic studies done by the Institute came in 1958 when the town of Mannford was to be inundated by the waters of the Keystone Reservoir. The Institute staff examined all aspects of the small community and recommended proper steps in relocating an entire town of 400 persons. The plan was carried out and today Mannford is a thriving little community located some three miles from its former site. The town is ready to take full advantage of the economic resources of the lake.

"We did have some early problems in getting people to accept our help," Logan says. "People used to call us busybodies, socialists and even communists when we tried to help them, but those ideas are pretty much gone now. People then just didn't understand planning.

"The people who objected most to our first efforts at helping them with their planning are now the most outspoken advocates of organized city and regional planning. When we first began to preach planning, very few people appreciated it. Now it is fully accepted by the majority of the people." With increased populations and resulting problems of traffic control, sanitation, housing, business district re-development and slum clearance, the future of planning is assured. What began as a concern on the part of a few farsighted individuals has now expanded to a matter of great importance on the local, state and national levels.

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These students are concentrating on a class problem in locating more than a million imaginary people in hypothetical southeastern Oklahoma communities. They must provide not only housing but also recreational facilities, business, industrial and commercial services and communications networks. Chairman Rodgers is at rear.