THE GRADUATE

A STUDY BY THE American Council on Education has indicated the need for strengthening the graduate programs in both major Oklahoma universities. In *An Assessment of Quality in Graduate Education* by Dr. Allan M. Cartter, formerly the vice president of the council, the nation's graduate programs are rated by more than 4,000 professors in 106 universities across the country. The study was conducted in 1964 and released in July.

The professors were asked to rate the quality of the faculty and the effectiveness of the graduate program in 29 academic areas. Ratings for the faculty in descending order are distinguished, strong, good, adequate plus, and not acceptable. Ratings for the effectiveness of the graduate programs are extremely attractive, attractive, acceptable plus, marginal, and not attractive. When a department is not rated in a particular area, the professors indicate that it falls into the lowest categories or no PhD is offered in the field by the university.

7 OU Departments Rated

The University fared unimpressively in the study, failing to receive better than an "acceptable plus" or "adequate plus" rating in any area. The OU faculty received an "adequate plus" rating in six departments—history, bacteriology-microbiology, botany, physiology, geology, and chemical engineering. Graduate programs in botany, pharmacology, and chemical engineering received "acceptable plus" ratings. OSU had "adequate plus" faculty ratings in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and chemical engineering, and its graduate programs in mechanical engineering and physiology were rated "acceptable plus."

Other Big Eight schools—Iowa State, Kansas, and Colorado—received higher ratings. Texas University was given ratings, most of them quite high, in 25 of the 29 areas including a "distinguished" along with Harvard, Yale, and California (Berkeley) for its faculty and an "extremely attractive" for the German program. (California at Berkeley is the leading school in the humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, biological sciences, and engineering. Harvard and Stanford appear in four top classifications; Columbia, Yale, Illinois, Princeton, Michigan, and Cal Tech in three; MIT, Chicago, and Wisconsin in two.)

In a foreword to the report, Logan Wilson, president of the council, explains the purpose of the survey: "This inquiry was not intended merely to supply a conversation piece in college and university circles, but rather to be an aid to those departments and institutions, not to mention other educational agencies, which are seriously concerned about the improvement of graduate education. This volume does not claim to be more than what it is, a survey and an analysis of informed opinion . . . in the final analysis the national reputation of a department or an institution is nothing more than an aggregation of individual opinions." Another survey will be taken within five years because of the changing nature of programs.

Weaknesses in the Report

Bob Ruggles, who holds two degrees in journalism from OU, in a series of articles about the study in the *Oklahoma City Times,* for which he is an education writer, examined the apparent weaknesses in the study. He wrote that sounder bases than the reputation of the rated departments probably exist. Dr. Cartter believes, however, that the opinion of a department and faculty by a professional colleague most accurately reflects the quality. (Much in the same way that the All-Star baseball teams are chosen by the players.)

Ruggles pointed out that undergraduate programs were not rated. Also, the 4,000-plus professors were allowed to withhold judgments on the basis of "insufficient information" and some did. Ruggles asked how many based their judgment on hearsay, how many rated areas even without the benefit of having heard from someone else, and how many rated a department on the reputation of the institution of which the department was a part rather than on the program and faculty of the department alone.

Ruggles listed five conclusions about the report:

"1. There is a close relationship between faculty salaries and quality of graduate faculty. Universities receiving the highest overall rating in faculty quality have an average faculty compensation of $14,700 annually. Average yearly compensation at the lowest ranking institutions was $9,500.

"Average faculty pay at the University of Oklahoma for the 1965-66 fiscal year was $9,675 and at Oklahoma State University, $9,188.

"2. Institutions strong in all areas have major national research libraries, averaging 2.7 million volumes.

"With 1.0 the average for the 106 universities rated, OU's overall library index fell between .75 and .99. OSU was rated between .50 and .74. Missouri, Kansas, Texas, and Colorado all rated above OU and OSU.

"3. 'Distinguished' rated departments are primarily in the Northeast, 80 percent of them in only five states. The Southwest and Plain states could point to only one each.

"4. Good departments in closely allied fields seem to cluster together. There was no university in the study, for example, having a 'distinguished' economics department that did not also have a 'distinguished' or 'strong' political science department.

"5. Departmental strength is directly associated with quality of publication performance."

Generally Oklahoma educational spokesmen did not disagree with the study's results. In commenting on the ACE report, Dr. George L. Cross was quoted as saying that the people who

SCHOOL REPORT

did the voting probably don't know more than one or two schools very well and said this could lead more to a popularity contest than an objective rating. Dr. Cross believes OU should have been rated higher but pointed out that it was up against strong competition. "This is a young region," he said, "and we haven't had time to develop it." He said the report was not dismaying and should not have any adverse effects on faculty morale or graduate school applications.

All did not agree. Said one faculty member, "I don't believe in treating the report as if it's a popularity contest. We have been judged by our peers who are qualified to do so. We need to improve in many areas and we ought to face this and do something about it. The departments which received high ratings have large faculties who are well paid, with small teaching loads; they are made up of people who have time to publish, do research, give papers at meetings, keep ahead.

"For example, one of the departments at Texas which was given a high rating has four times the number of professors we have. We shouldn't gild the lily if the lily is drooping."

"We Have to Try Harder"

"Like the rent-a-car people, we're second rate, so we have to try harder," said Dr. Carl D. Riggs, dean of the OU Graduate College, in a press conference held in Oklahoma City after the report was released. He and Dr. James Boggs, academic vice president and graduate dean at OSU, met reporters to comment on the survey. Both disagreed with portions of the study and were critical of some omissions. Dr. Riggs believes OU's departments of English and physics should have been rated, and Dr. Boggs says that biochemistry and civil engineering at OSU should have had ranking. (Another area, petroleum engineering, thought to be one of the strongest in OU, was not evaluated in the report.)

In general both men agreed with the study. "We're nowhere near the top school even in our own conference," said Dr. Boggs. "We've told ourselves how good we are for too long." Dr. Riggs said, "This is an opinion poll. We think we're better than this, but this is beside the point. The results are being distributed, and people are going to be guided by them."

More money is needed to upgrade higher education, the deans said. "It's not redistribution of money that will help. There's not enough money to redistribute," said Dr. Boggs.

In quoting figures about education in America, Dr. Boggs said, "Although Oklahoma higher education received a 25 percent gain in funds for 1964-65 and a 55 percent gain for the six-year period 1960-66, these percentages place us, for the two-year period, in 40th place among the 50 states, and for the six-year period we're 47th. States increased their budgets by as much as 280 percent."

"Graduate education is not repeating what is known but exploring the unknown," says an OSU dean. Graduate education costs more. The State Regents point out that in 1964-65 cost for freshman and sophomore years was $8.58 and $7.56 per credit hour at OU and OSU, respectively; for the junior and senior years it was $15.21 and $13.40 and graduate education was $32 and $44.09 per credit hour. Graduate enrollments have increased from 3,838 in 1960 to 6,290 in 1966 at the two schools.

"The number of graduate students doesn't make a good graduate program," says Dr. Riggs who like Dr. Boggs expressed concern that the report might discourage out-of-state students from coming here. That some faculty members might be tempted to leave and that others would be hesitant about coming to Oklahoma also concerned the deans.

Both pointed to the need for good graduate schools. "Very few people have any idea what a top graduate program can do for the economy of an area," said Dr. Riggs. "We're expecting a dividend before we make an investment," Dr. Boggs commented.

Better Conditions Needed

In addition to more money for better salaries, the deans pointed to better working conditions as attracting top professors. The facilities for research have to be present to draw a good researcher. An OSU engineering dean pointed out that both OU and OSU have nuclear reactors but that they are teaching aids and have no research value. Each school also has two electron microscopes, important to research in some scientific areas. Texas University has six.

Professors at the two universities average 12 hours of teaching a week. "The better universities don't even have 9-hour teaching loads for their professors," Dr. Riggs said. The men explained that both schools were somewhat reluctant or unable to recognize and reward outstanding professors. This enables other universities with money to be better able to hire the top professors away. "Every one of our David Ross Boyd professors has been getting half a dozen offers a month," Dr. Riggs said.

Said another OU professor, "I hope the people will not react negatively to the study. This is a time for positive action, not paranoia. There is no reason why we can't have top programs in several departments."

Gaylon White, editor of *The Oklahoma Daily* closed an editorial about the report by writing, "An educational system is only as strong as its educators. Excellent educators are acquired only through a substantial outlay of money. In other words, 'You pay for what you get.' " And the former sports editor for the *Daily* closed with the rather irreverent statement: "And if 'money is no object' in attracting a talented football coach, it should be no object in obtaining and retaining brilliant minds which plant seeds of knowledge in tomorrow's leaders."

END