On The Sooner Scene

Beginning a series of articles by the executive secretary of the Alumni Association.

This month Boyd Gunning discusses the need for aid to worthy students.

By Boyd Gunning

Opportunity is a precious word in the English language, especially if you believe in the free enterprise brand of democracy. The opportunity to worship as your conscience dictates, to speak your mind without fear of reprisal, the opportunity to work, and to seek the truth through education and study, is still important today as it was in 1776.

The opportunity for advanced study should be not only a right but an obligation as well, for all those who are qualified. Society needs the leadership of our best minds well-trained.

A keen mind and the desire to learn are important; however, there are many thousands of students who have these attributes and still are not afforded the opportunity of advanced and professional study.

The report of the President’s Commission on Higher Education, issued in December of 1947, recognized this problem and urged immediate steps be taken to provide gifted youth with equal opportunities through scholarships and fellowships. The report stated, “Only in this way can we be certain of developing for the common good all the potential leadership our society produces, no matter in what social or economic stratum it appears.”

If gifted students are to be granted this opportunity for advanced study regardless of their financial status, then a system of scholarships and fellowships must be established. The report on higher education mentioned above recommended a government financed program of scholarships to insure for every gifted student the opportunity of advanced study. There is no question but what such scholarships are in the national interest. However, the question is this:

Must we secure aid for gifted students from the government and thereby place another responsibility and expense on the public purse? I believe that if alumni of the universities and colleges understand this problem, the money will be forthcoming.

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The thirty scholarship awards will continue their studies anyway, by either borrowing the required funds or working enough to pay expenses, but this is not possible in every case. And in some cases the sacrifice will prove to be too great a strain on the health of the individual.

If every alumna would contribute, even in a modest way, to the Development Fund, the scholarship problem would be solved at O.U., and every worthy student would have a chance to prepare himself for a responsible place in society.

The O.U. Development Fund has demonstrated the value of a scholarship program. Last year twenty development fund scholarships were awarded.

The applicants were so numerous and the need so great that thirty scholarships have been set up for 1950-51. Selection of students for these was made the first week in June by a faculty committee. But for every scholarship given there are twenty applicants of proven ability for whom nothing can be done.

Fortunately a number of these students will continue their studies anyway, by either borrowing the required funds or working enough to pay expenses, but this is not possible in every case. And in some cases the sacrifice will prove to be too great a strain on the health of the individual.

If every alumna would contribute, even in a modest way, to the Development Fund, the scholarship problem would be solved at O.U., and every worthy student would have a chance to prepare himself for a responsible place in society.

The thirty development fund scholarships now available should be increased to 100, and the total number of scholarships at O.U. from the present $86 to at least $100. This would be an investment in the future of Oklahoma and the nation. The returns on such an investment are guaranteed by the abilities and the ambitions of the students helped.