No building, no playing fields, no school mascot, but students of OUHS find plenty of academic choices to speed them toward a diploma and beyond.
When it's time for Kaitlyn Melton to hit the books, she simply pulls out her iPhone, logs on to the Internet and gets to work. Any time is school time for this University of Oklahoma High School student, and, she says, that is the ideal situation for her. Although she lives in Edmond, Melton spends the better part of her school year in California, pursuing her dream of becoming an actress.

"Whenever I have a few minutes here and there between auditions and acting class, I can get my work done," the 15-year-old sophomore says. "OU High is wonderful. It is so flexible, and it meets all my needs."

Melton's story echoes those of her fellow OUHS classmates. Students find their way to this nontraditional school setting for a variety of reasons, says Sally Jo Blair, OU High counselor. Some are aspiring professionals, like Melton. Perhaps illness has caused them to fall behind. Others want to be challenged. Regardless of the reasons, anytime, anywhere education is the appeal for the nearly 1,000 students taking classes through OU High School.

"Our school is not in competition with public schools," Blair says. "Rather, we complement what already exists. One of our largest constituent groups is rural students supplementing their own high school's curriculum."

As one of only eight universities in the country with a diploma-granting high school imbedded on its campus, OU serves approximately 150 students enrolled in its diploma program. This year, 28 students graduated with an OU High School diploma. Another 750 students are currently enrolled in 1,700 courses that are available in both online and paper formats.

If one went looking, the actual school might be hard to find, at least in the physical sense. There is no marquee in front announcing back-to-school night or weird hair day. Nor are there other manifestations of a traditional brick and mortar school, like Friday night football games, drama club or detention. In fact, there is no OUHS sign at all in front of the Cross Main Building on Jenkins Avenue where the school is housed inside the Center for Independent and Distance Learning, part of University Outreach.

Behind the scenes, however, is a complete operational structure that keeps the school running. A curriculum department is responsible for the design and content of courses. IT puts the courses online and trouble shoots technical issues. Customer Service handles all enrollments, lessons, tests, advanced placement testing and proctors local students. The bookstore supplies necessary materials, and the financial department handles tuition and fees.

"We all work well as a collective system with the mutual intention to hold students accountable and help them be successful," Blair says.

The high school is a self-supporting part of the Center for Independent and Distance Learning and is accredited by the North Central Association on Accreditation and School Improvement, and by the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation. While OU High has been accredited since 2001, distance education has been part of the University's mission since 1913.

Originally, students not living near campus gained access to education by sending and receiving assignments and tests through the mail, but this method had its limits. With the evolution of radio, television and satellite programs, the reach of distance education was extended, and now the Internet has completely rev-
"I looked at universities to find a high school, and Oklahoma had the best one. The staff at OU was really helpful and responsive."

OU High School graduates, from left. Lauren Degar, Thorin Wagoner and Jacquelyn Balko listen to the commencement address given by former State Senator Cal Hobson.