

SEP. 18 1975
Ferdie J. Deering

Make Use Of Colleges

IN a survey to obtain opinions to update its "Plan for the Seventies," the State Regents for Higher Education have found what appears to be majority support for the idea of closing certain colleges located over the state.

Such action, if taken, almost certainly will bring strong objections from people in areas served by those schools. This would be true especially if enrollment at the state's biggest institutions should be limited, a point which received stronger support than the closing suggestion.

Net effect of the two proposals could be a reduction in educational opportunities available to Oklahoma high school graduates. Quite likely, fewer of them would go to college.

Proportions of the 2,374 survey respondents who are oriented to the metropolitan areas or who are affiliated in some way with the larger institutions were not revealed. People who travel widely over the state are aware of significantly different attitudes of city dwellers from rural residents. City folks sometimes consider rural dwellers to be provincial when their own concepts may be just as limited in perspective.

One reason Oklahoma has as many institutions of higher learning as now exist was that early day citizens were anxious that their offspring should have better educational opportunities than they had enjoyed. This desire still is reflected in the growing number of public and private colleges.

In many instances, the smaller colleges have provided programs peculiarly suited to needs of the areas, serving students who could not or would not go elsewhere. Possibly, if certain of these colleges were to be closed, local people would find it desirable to replace them with new local institutions.

Arguments that transportation and distances are smaller factors than they were 60 years ago are valid, but many parents and students prefer smaller institutions for other reasons. One is that many high school graduates are not ready to face the demands and problems encountered in huge universities. Cost is always a consideration, and will become more important.

Many parents and students feel that instruction given in person by professors in smaller colleges generally is equal to or better than instruction by graduate assistants in larger colleges, where many professors are engaged mainly in writing and research.

Unquestionably, programs at smaller institutions have deteriorated over the years, as emphasis has shifted to the more prestigious universities. A desire to remedy this apparently was a reason for renaming certain colleges "universities."

The direction for the future should be to make available better education for all of our young people, from the lower grades, right on through colleges and universities.

This would not be accomplished by reducing the number of colleges in an effort to compel attendance at bigger universities in order to make them bigger. It could be done by upgrading the curricula of institutions the state already owns, and seeing that they serve useful purposes. Vitalization, not abolition.

Not everybody wants or needs to go to college, but colleges should be available for those who do. We have them, and we ought to be able to find ways to make them useful.



WEATHERFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INC.

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October 2, 1975

Mr. Ferdie Deering
Oklahoma Publishing Co.
500 North Broadway
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102

Dear Mr. Deering:

Thank you for your remarks in the Oklahoman on the four- and five-year regional colleges and universities.

The notion than an institution has to be bigger to be better is utter nonsense. Alums of the state's ten regional universities and citizens of the areas which they serve are not about to sit idly by and permit Oklahoma City to build up the Health Sciences Center at the expense of the institutions which serve all areas of the state with quality programs.

At a meeting last week in Shawnee, the Association for Oklahoma Regional Universities was formed to represent the regional university communities and to oppose the Oklahoma City proposal. This group passed a resolution calling for "maximum development and support" of the regional university concept, and presented its views before the Advisory Council and State Regents for Higher Education on Wednesday, October 1, in Oklahoma City. I have enclosed a copy of that resolution for your information.

The metropolitan press was conspicuous in its absence at that meeting, although the story was covered very well in papers serving these communities. Perhaps the views of those of us out here in the sticks are still not very important to OPUBCO, despite the standing room only crowd expressing citizen concern at the meeting (about 170 persons--the largest citizens group ever to assemble before a constitutional board or advisory group on an education issue).

Thanks again for your support.

Sincerely,

JOHN FOWLER
Executive Manager

HIGHER EDUCATION ALUMNI COUNCIL OF OKLAHOMA

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MR. CARTER W. BRADLEY

October 7, 1975

Mr. Ferdie Deering
The Daily Oklahoman
500 North Broadway
Oklahoma City, OK 73102

Dear Ferdie:

Just a note to compliment you on the column you wrote recently entitled, "Make Use of Colleges." I think the emphasis on quality that the State Chamber of Commerce provided in its statement to the Citizens Advisory Council was far more constructive than the half-baked line our own organization* delivered.

Many good suggestions have come to the State Regents in the course of this study. Just for your background, I'm enclosing a copy of a column written by Milt Phillips, a member of the advisory group. It deals with one of the stickiest problems of all.

Again, I liked your comments.

Cordially,


Carter W. Bradley

CWB:rs

** Referring to the O.E. Chamber not
NEACO!*

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