

Small Colleges One of Our Assets

THE CRY that we ought to abolish a substantial part of Oklahoma's statewide system of higher education again is being voiced to give the legislature more money for other purposes. In my opinion, our localized college system is one of our state's major assets.

We have good reason to be proud of Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma. Both are serving the state well, struggling to raise their standings among the nation's institutions of higher learnings and in significant research and knowledge.

Their purposes and work must be supported and expanded, but not by sacrificing a dozen smaller universities and colleges, or even the dozen junior colleges over the state. These also serve useful purposes.

They provide opportunities for thousands of students to obtain college educations who might be unable to attend larger universities. Probably half of our state's graduates obtained their degrees from smaller colleges, while that many more received two or three years of

college which helped them prepare for productive lives.

Not all high school graduates are ready to tackle the competitive world of business or the awesome pressures of a large university. Many of them accomplish more at small colleges, where there is a closer faculty-student relationship, and a greater opportunity to participate in activities.

Instead of abolishing or crippling our system of higher education, we should consider ways to make it better.

Steps are being taken to bring OU and OSU to parity with other major universities. Advancements should be made but they may make it more difficult for average students to qualify for entrance or to complete courses.

Standards are being raised at other institutions, too, but not all of them seem to have well-defined goals. Every institution ought to have at least one area of achievement in which it is outstanding. It is not enough just to hold classes. Merely calling a school a university

or college doesn't make it one.

The rising cost of education is another reason why there is need for colleges over the state. Basic cost of attending one of our larger universities is now estimated at \$3,300 per year.

Not every family can come up with \$12,000 or \$15,000 each for three or four children. If the students can live at home and commute the cash outlay may be reduced substantially.

It has been claimed that colleges and universities are turning out more graduates than there are jobs opening. This is a surprising statement when we are being told that we are entering "The Information Age." How can we have too many educated people?

In our sports-crazy nation there is a tendency to rank colleges and universities according to their rankings in football or basketball polls. It might shock some fans to learn there are educational institutions where research and knowledge are considered to be more important than athletics.