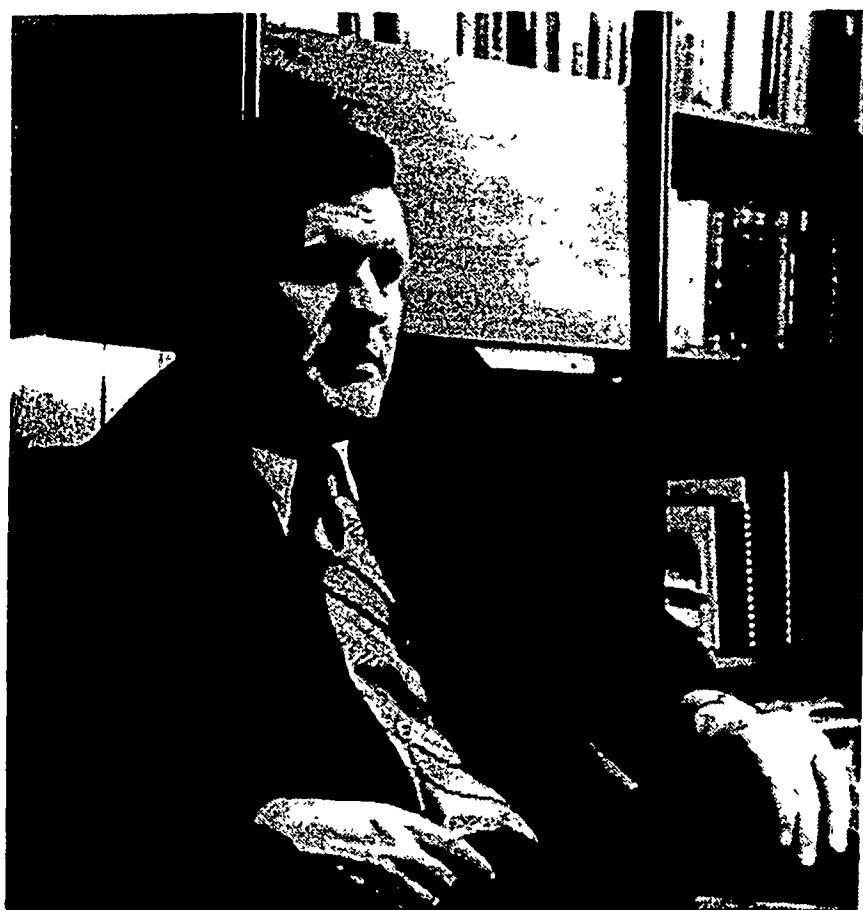


## PEOPLE ARE OUR STRENGTH



**President Armacost discusses Ottawa's future.**

*Editor's Note: These are perilous times for higher education, particularly for private institutions. Declining enrollments and rapidly accelerating costs have forced numerous colleges out of existence. Fortunately, Ottawa University experienced a 23 percent increase in new students last fall and for the first time in its history received a million dollars in gifts during the past year. In order to gain a clear perspective of Ottawa's present circumstances and future needs, we have asked President Armacost to share his insight on these matters.*

**Dr. Armacost, how important is enrollment for Ottawa's continued excellence?**

Stabilizing our present enrollment is absolutely essential. In terms of doing the kinds of things which are important to our future and of undergirding the quality of the educational program, some enrollment growth would be very desirable. You simply cannot maintain a faculty the size that we would like to maintain with an enrollment of say, seven hundred students. Now we can do a good educational job with our present enrollment; we can maintain a sound program; we can do some exciting things; we

can continue to strengthen the quality of the educational effort for our students, but we could do a better job still with a thousand students.

**How would you explain the increased giving to the University last year?**

Really there's a seven year trend that is steadily upward. In the decade between 1957 and 1967, we averaged about \$142,000 a year for current gift income. The highest ever reached was \$169,000 in the 1966 to 1967 year. Since that time, we have more than quadrupled our current gift income from that high of \$169,000 prior to 1967 up to \$973,000 in current gift income last year, and total giving of over a million dollars.

Our major success in increased gift income has been almost entirely the result of success in raising major gifts from a very few concerned friends of Ottawa University, from major philanthropic foundations, and from two different government agencies. But what has not happened, has been a major increase in the level of giving of the average Ottawa constituent. When it comes to the total number of dollars realized from the person

who gives anything up to say thousand dollars or fifteen hundred dollars, we haven't increased in the area nearly as much during the last seven years as I think would be desirable. Still, you have to say that in context, the overall change in gift income has been fantastic. I think we have raised more current gift income per student than almost any college in the country. Needless to say, we would like to decrease our dependence upon current operations gift income in order to concentrate on building endowment. Enrollment increases will make that possible.

**How have these increased gifts helped OU?**

Well, there are two major things that are deserving of comment. In the first place, it has enabled us to develop an educational program that is really a pace-setter in American higher education. Secondly, the current operations gift income has really provided a buffer against the difficulties which face most private colleges.

**What are the most pressing needs for Ottawa University over the next few years?**

First of all, I think our most pressing financial need right now is to provide the undergirding of our present education program — the basic financial stability that will enable us to maintain our character as a private college committed to excellence in undergraduate education. We simply do not have the endowment that we need as a hedge against the tremendous pressures on private education right now. In the absence of a substantial endowment, two things need to be noted. First of all, we don't have as much income from that source as would be desirable to underwrite the program quality. But secondly, in the absence of a substantial size endowment, we are very much dependent upon the current market place in higher education, and if we have a really good experience in admissions, or retention — anything which influences enrollment — we just don't have the staying power that we would like to have. Likewise, as inflation hits us and as we try to deal with the other increased cost factors, it becomes very difficult not to become dependent upon government support or new sources of funds, over which we have very little control. This would make our destiny out of our own hands. So endowment seems to me to be the staying power that any private college needs. It is not just a source of income, although it is important in that regard. It is also that which enables us to maintain our private character. So our first need financially, I think, is for a substantial increase in the size of our endowment.

Over the decade I would hope that we could increase our endowment principal to the point to where it is in excess of ten million dollars, whereas at the present time it is only \$ .6 million. That is a fairly ambitious undertaking! It is far less than I think we really should do. But I think we need to be realistic

about what we can do.

Secondly, we have needs for some physical plant improvements. For example, we do not have any outdoor recreation facilities now other than for softball, football or baseball. We do not have any tennis courts on campus that are useable. We have only one handball court. Likewise, we have no outdoor volleyball or basketball areas.

We have a critical need in performing art. We simply do not have a place on campus where we can put on dramatic productions that require any kind of staging facilities, curtain, lighting, etc. Now, I don't think we should build a major auditorium with a proscenium stage. What we would like to have is a smaller facility which could provide seating for small theatrical productions, multi-purpose classroom facilities with audio-visual capabilities and conference facilities for groups that come on campus.

Also, our library is not presently of adequate size. Everytime we put a book on the shelf, we have to take one off. We must increase our shelf space in order to keep pace with the needs of our program and of our students.

Then beyond that, we have some needs for modernization and beautification of the campus that we think are important to our desired overall appearance, to the impact that the campus ought to have on the quality of the learning experience and of the total living experience of our students. So endowment and plant improvement are our first two priority needs.

And finally we have in the immediate future and in the longer term future a continued need to underwrite our operating budget at a level that enables us to do the kinds of things that are important to program quality. In the long run, our

goal is to increase the size of our endowment and to increase our enrollment to the point where we can take pressure off of gift income for current operations. But in the short run, major increases in gift income for current operations have been our staying power in lieu of endowment.

*Is there anything else you would like to add?*

Well, I guess only that one of the real strengths of this institution throughout its history, has been its people. The quality of people here and the quality of people and their concern as they leave here as alumni or as Baptist constituents of Ottawa University or friends in the community. And when you have that kind of commitment, when you have that kind of interest in our program, when you have the sincere conviction that our mission is an important mission as a Christian college of liberal arts, you just have to be optimistic about the future.

**"Our most pressing financial need right now is to provide the undergirding of our present educational program."**