

Chapter 53

“Doing more with less”

1980-1982

The summer of 1980 brought a number of changes in the administrative structure of the university. Dr. Don Betz, director of the educational foundation, was named assistant to the president. In that capacity, he was responsible for the creation of special non-academic programs such as Renaissance '80. Kenneth Caughman, a Northeastern graduate, replaced Betz as director of the educational foundation. Dr. Jim Murphy, director of continuing education and special programs who had been at Northeastern for eleven years, resigned to accept a vice presidency at Midwestern Nursery. He was replaced by Robert L. Patrick, Sr., a Northeastern graduate with an Ed.D. from Nova University. Joyce Jennings, director of financial aids since 1978, accepted a similar position at Purdue University. Her position was taken by Jocelyn Lee Payne, who had a B.S. from Brandeis University and was completing a master's in education from Temple University. Marc Malouf, director of the alumni association since February, was replaced by Sandra Wagner, a Northeastern graduate who also was appointed coordinator of recruitment publications.¹

The nation's energy crisis of the late 1970s caused individual hardship across the country, but in Oklahoma higher energy prices spelled more tax revenue for the state and income for its schools. During the 1979-80 school year, state appropriations, tuition, and other fees gave NSU a total of \$10,153,449. In 1980-81 that figure rose to \$11,251,998, an increase of almost 11%. With the additional funds, Webb was able to allocate 75% of the new money to salaries; pay raises ranged from 8% to 10%, with \$600 bonuses going to 32 faculty members to correct salary inequities. For the first time since 1972, tenure was granted to three members of the NSU faculty.²

¹ Lea Lessley, "Faculty Members Resign Positions," *Northeastern*, 25 June 1980, 1. "Betz to Assume New Role As Assistant to President," *Northeastern*, 23 July 1980, 1. "Faculty, Staff Positions Filled," "Caughman Appointed Foundation Director," "Administration Changes Announced by Seltzer," *Northeastern*, 1 September 1980, 1.

² Lea Lessley, "Webb Announces Salary Increases," *Northeastern*, 16 July 1980, 1. "'80 Budget Reduces Salary Injustices," *Northeastern*, 23 July 1980, 2. "Alumni Director Named," *Northeastern*, 10 September 1980, 1.

In the spring Oklahoma's thirty-seventh legislature enacted House Bill 1706, which had a major impact on education at the public-school and higher-education levels. The law was designed to provide better compensation for public school teachers and to ensure that their training was improved. In addition to an average \$1,612 pay hike designed to bring public school teachers up to the regional-salary average, the legislation required that new teachers work under the supervision of an entry-year evaluating committee composed of a teacher consultant, a school administrator, and a representative from higher education. College personnel on these committees were required to possess subject-area expertise and to observe the new teacher in the classroom each month. These college supervisors were also required to spend time in public school classrooms on a regular basis. To maintain certification, public school teachers had to participate in a state-approved staff-development program. After February 1, 1982, education majors had to pass a competency test in each area for which certification was sought, and teacher training schools were required to strengthen their academic programs. At Northeastern a task force was established to study and implement changes necessary to bring the school into compliance with the new law, which President Webb characterized as "one of the most far-reaching pieces of legislation affecting Oklahoma education in over 20 years."³

Despite the passage of more than three-quarters of a century since Northeastern's campus had been a Cherokee seminary, the state university retained strong links to its Native American roots. Statistics from the Office of Admissions and Records revealed that 900 American Indian students were enrolled at Northeastern, more than at any other school in the nation. The school's Indian studies major had been offered for almost a decade, and its new tribal management M.A. program had about forty students from across the country. Native Americans were well represented in the faculty and administration, and the school had close working relations with the growing Cherokee Nation. Although their numbers had dwindled with the advancing years, students of the Cherokee seminaries still gathered on Northeastern's campus each spring to observe the May 7th dedication of the original Cherokee Female Seminary in 1851.⁴

³ Daniel Clemons, "House Bill 1706 Upgrades Teacher Education Program," *Northeastern*, 3 September 1980, 3. "House Bill 1706 Draws Comment," *Northeastern*, 25 June 1980, 2. John Greiner, "1,612 Teacher Pay Hike OK'd, Sent to Governor," *Daily Oklahoman*, 5 June 1980.

⁴ "Indian Enrollment Largest In Nation." *Northeastern*, 17 September 1980, 3.

Despite the school's Indian heritage and long identity as the Redmen, President Webb was sensitive to symbols demeaning cultural heritage. Although there had been little, if any, criticism of the "Redmen" designation of Northeastern's athletic teams, other institutions had been branded insensitive because of the caricatures they used as mascots. Some of the symbols used on t-shirts, mugs, and other items promoting the Redmen, such as a big-nosed Indian with a tomahawk, were in questionable taste. Webb directed that the bookstore discontinue the sale of such images, and appointed a spirit committee to develop a suitable mascot for supporting the team on the sidelines. On the opening game of the 1980 gridiron season, a giant banana, introduced as the new NSU mascot, strode the sidelines urging the crowd to cheer the Redmen team to victory. Although Northeastern defeated Langston by a touchdown and extra point, the new mascot produced a storm of complaint, which continued even after Ed Brocksmith, director of public information, explained that the yellow fruit was a spirit leader, not a new school mascot. In defending the new symbol of Northeastern spirit, Dr. Betz, the president's new assistant, explained, "We couldn't have a Native American jumping around on the field looking like an idiot, but a banana in a tuxedo can get away with anything." Northeastern's fans apparently disagreed, for by the third game of the season the banana was "eaten" by a new NSU spirit leader, a gorilla, who proclaimed, "I go ape over Redmen." A poll conducted by the student newspaper revealed that 68% of those responding favored Redmen or something to do with Redmen as a school spirit leader. President Webb appointed a committee to review the issue. It decided to select an Indian warrior and princess to symbolize school spirit for Northeastern. At the homecoming game two Native Americans, Frank Redcorn, a freshman from Anadarko, and Suzanne Turnbull, a freshman from Sparks, Nevada, appeared as spirit leaders in tribal regalia. Jake Chanate, faculty sponsor of the Native Americans Student Association, said, "We hope this will end the controversy over the stereotype Indian used in the past." The heated discussion stimulated by the banana and gorilla subsided, but the issue lived on, surfacing periodically.⁵

⁵ Dan Hilderbrand, "Banana Mascot Makes Debut at First Game," *Northeastern*, 17 September 1980. 6. Jodi Stonehocker, "Banana Brings Controversy to Campus," *Northeastern*, 24 September 1980. 1. Robin Ross, "NSU Gorilla Makes First Appearance," *Northeastern*, 24 September 1980. 6. "Poll Shows Spirit Leader Opinion Split," *Northeastern*, 8 October 1980. 1. "Committee to Pick Spirit Leaders; Indian Warrior, Princess Approved," *Northeastern*, 15 October 1980. 4. "New Spirit Leaders

In 1983, when the Native American spirit leader was criticized for his sedentary behavior on the sidelines, Jake Chanate, sponsor of the Native American Students Association, explained, "In the past the spirit leaders have worn their costumes on the field and have had no action at all, similar to a statue, just acting serious." He promised, "This year the spirit leader will have 'freedom of movement' with the cheerleaders and players."⁶

Before the mascot controversy had been resolved, a new protest movement made headlines in Tahlequah and beyond. Following a religious crusade, a group of women circulated a petition to remove *Playboy*, *Hustler*, and similar publications from the shelves of stores in Tahlequah. When asked to discontinue their sale, Shirley Evans, manager of the campus bookstore, said that although she did not care for them and would not read them, she was not prepared to draw the line between what store patrons, mostly college students, could and could not read. When Evans refused to remove the periodicals, two area residents identifying themselves as the Ambassadors of Christ, picketed in front of the university center. At the next city council meeting, a group called the Concerned Christian Citizens of Tahlequah presented a petition with 2,000 signatures asking that a 20-year-old city ordinance defining public nuisances, which prohibited the sale of obscene literature, be enforced. After consulting the council, the mayor of Tahlequah announced that he would instruct the police chief to request that vendors in the city voluntarily stop the sale of the literature. The Concerned Citizens gave the police chief a list of thirty-seven publications they considered obscene. After the council's action, college students and others opposed to the removal of the publications formed a group called Citizens for Constitutional Government. University officials who considered the campus under state jurisdiction left the publications on the shelves of the bookstore and library, and the city chief of police refused to ask for removal until he received clarification from the attorney general. In less than a month the city attorney informed the council that the city ordinance banning the sale of obscene material was unconstitutional and unenforceable. In December the city council updated ordinances defining obscenity and regulating the sale of pornography to those under the age of 17. The new provision prohibited the showing of

Chosen," *Northeastern*, 22 October 1980. 1.

⁶ "Tradition committee to debut," *Northeastern*, 26 October 1983. 1.

nude or partially denuded figures in a public display. The library material had been kept behind the counter of the circulation desk or stored in microfilm drawers, and the bookstore publications had been placed under the counter shortly after the beginning of the controversy. Thus, the university was in compliance with the new city ordinance.⁷

Whether credit should be given to the banana, gorilla, or the Indian warrior and maiden, the 1980 Redmen football team had its most successful season since 1958 when it defeated Arizona State for the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Conference championship. After completing its regular season with nine wins and a single loss, the fourth-ranked Redmen were selected for the NAIA playoffs, defeating fifth-ranked Anglo State 10 to 3 at Gable Field in a quarterfinals contest. In semifinal action, the Northeastern eleven shut out the Kearney State Antelopes in another home game by a score of 14 to 0. In the national championship game in Burlington, North Carolina, the Elon College Fighting Christians edged passed the Redmen by a score of 17 to 10.⁸

If Northeastern's football team had not had an outstanding year, it might have been eclipsed by a new fall athletic competition that attracted attention throughout the state and beyond. Members of the biology club staged a cockroach race in the gazebo, which was rechristened Cucaracha Downs for the occasion. Sponsors could either rent a roach from the biology club or enter one of their own, although race officials were diligent in limiting the contest to *Periplaneta Americana*, which could easily be obtained locally according to the club's faculty sponsor. The race drew 100 entrants who competed in 12 preliminary heats viewed by 700 spectators and an audience on national television. In the finals, "Aku," an Hawaiian entrant, turned in the winning time of 4.4 seconds over the 2.5 meter course and won the title, "Champion Cockroach of the World." For several years the competition continued until interest

⁷ Cheryl Leeds, "Crusaders Request Removal of 'Porno' From Bookstore," *Northeastern*, 8 October 1980. 1. Jodi Stonehocker, "Group Organizes For Basic Rights," *Northeastern*, 15 October 1980. 1. "City Council Approves Plan To Rewrite Obscenity Law," *Northeastern*, 5 November 1980. 1 "Obscenity Law Upheld," *Northeastern*, 10 December 1980. 1

⁸ "Redmen Head for Playoffs; First NAIA Bid in 22 Years," *Northeastern*, 26 November 1980, 1. Alan Riley, "Redmen Dehorn Anglo's Rams 10-3," *Northeastern*, 10 December 1980, 1. "Northeastern Skins Antelopes 14-0," *Northeastern*, 17 December 1980, 4. "NSU's Title Hopes Smashed by Elon, 17-10," *Northeastern*, 21 January 1981, 4-5.

waned, although dorm residents insisted that potential contestants remained plentiful.⁹

When the initial class of optometry students began its course of study, the regents had approved the program for only two years. In July of 1981, they authorized expansion of the program to four years when the new Hastings Indian Medical Center in Tahlequah was completed in 1983. Students would finish the first two years at the end of the spring semester of 1981, and despite assurances that they could transfer to other schools of optometry, prospects for acceptance in other programs were doubtful. With assurances that the new hospital would be completed on schedule and that current clinical resources at Northeastern were suitable for third and fourth-year students, the regents approved expansion of the program to a full four years.¹⁰

A month after announcement of the funding of the third year, the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences announced his resignation. After his departure, optometry, which had been a division within the College of Arts and Letters, became the College of Optometry, and the chair, Dr. Chester Pheiffer, was named its first dean. In the spring of 1983, Northeastern awarded its first doctoral degrees on May 13. It also received accreditation from the Council of Optometric Education. The next year the Optometric Student Association requested that the clinic at the new W.W. Hastings Hospital be renamed the Chester Pheiffer Optometry Clinic. The Indian Health Service approved the recommendation, and the new clinic was dedicated in honor of the College of Optometry's first dean in a ceremony on November 26, 1984. Pheiffer retired in June of 1986, after firmly establishing Northeastern's first doctoral program. Dr. Lynn Cyert assumed the duties of dean on an interim basis until Dr. Lesley L. Walls was appointed dean in April of 1987.¹¹

Northeastern officials identified another health-care area with an unfulfilled educational need. Registered nurses with college degrees were in increasing demand throughout the medical profession.

⁹ Lisa Brassfield, "Cucaracha Downs opener set," *Northeastern*, 7 October 1981, 4. "Cucaracha Downs," *Northeastern*, 28 October 1981, 1. "Aku? World's Fastest Cockroach," *1982 Tsa La Gi*, 30-31.

¹⁰ Robin Ross, "Four-Year Optometry Program Approved," *Northeastern*, 21 January 1981, 1. Minutes of the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges, 19 February 1981, 24-25.

¹¹ Juanita Freeman, "Boatright, McClure, Grigsby Resign Administrative Posts," *Northeastern*, 18 February 1981, 1, 3. "Distinguished optometry professor passes away," *Northeastern*, 1 February 1989, 1, 3

Northeastern was surrounded by nine junior colleges that produced associate-degree nurses. Most of the programs in the state that trained nurses culminated in an RN, but not a bachelor's degree. In sixteen counties of northeastern Oklahoma 1,346 RNs did not have a bachelor's degree, and statewide little more than one-quarter of registered nurses had earned bachelor's degrees. The state did not need more RN programs, but it did need to make educational opportunities available to nurses who wanted to improve their credentials. The regents approved a "plus-two" bachelor of science in nursing degree that provided two years of academic instruction to supplement the clinical training registered nurses had already received. The sixty-hour program required thirty-two hours of nursing course work, ten hours of supporting classes, and a sixteen-hour minor. In September 1981, Elaine Menges, B.S., University of Tulsa, M.S., Western Reserve University, was hired to direct the new nursing program, which graduated its first class of fourteen in the spring of 1984. Because most of the students in the program worked full-time, courses were offered primarily in the evenings.¹²

Early the next year the National League for Nursing's Board of Review notified Northeastern that its nursing program had been granted full accreditation. By 1986, the program had grown to 177 majors and 34 enrolled in the first clinical course, a 100% increase over the previous semester. Dr. Janet Bahr, the new chair of the nursing division, attributed the program's success to arranging courses to fit the schedule of students who were older and worked full-time. Bahr, who had joined the nursing faculty in 1984, was appointed chair the following year, when Elaine Menges McMinn retired. She had a B.S.N. from Wichita State University, an M.S. from Texas Woman's University, and an Ed.D. from Oklahoma State University. By 1988 the number of majors had declined to about 120 and the program had a faculty of six. Since most of the students commuted within a 100-mile radius of Tahlequah, classes were arranged in a back-to-back sequence¹³

Dr. Jack Dobbins, head basketball coach, director of athletics, and chair of the department of health, physical education, and safety, asked to be relieved of his coaching duties at the end of the 1981

¹² Robin Ross, "Nursing Program To Open in Fall," *Northeastern*, 21 January 1981, 1.

"Graduating nurses will bury memories in time capsule," *Northeastern*, 2 May 1984, 3.

¹³ "NSU nursing program receives accreditation," *Northeastern*, 23 January 1985, 3. "Enrollment had doubled," *Northeastern*, 19 November 1986, 3. Christine Lienhart, "Spotlight on . . . Division of Nursing," *Northeastern*, 19 October 1988, 5.

season. The longest-serving basketball coach in the school's history with more than three hundred victories, Dobbins had retired from coaching in 1977, but agreed to resume the position in 1978, when his replacement resigned several months before the beginning of the new season. Dobbins explained that he was stepping down as coach to allow more time for his administrative duties. Webb accepted the resignation with regret and "deep admiration for the remarkable success he has had." Dobbins' assistant for the past three year, Ron Cox, B.S., M.Ed. from Northeastern, replaced him as head basketball coach.¹⁴

When construction resumed on the Northeastern campus, the first major project was neither a dormitory nor additional classrooms, but rather a recreational facility designed to enhance the quality of life at the university. Built south of the heating plant, close to the dormitories, the new half-million-dollar building was primarily for the use of residential students, not varsity athletics. The brick and metal structure contained an open area gymnasium for basketball, badminton, gymnastics, and some intramural sports. It also contained four racquetball courts, a separate area for karate, a weight room, a game room, and dressing rooms. Before the new fitness center opened in January 1982, President Webb announced that an additional half-million dollars allocated to Northeastern for capital improvement would be used to expand the center to include an indoor swimming pool to replace the aging natatorium in the old gymnasium. In addition to his duties as coach of the varsity golf team, Dr. Daniel Grover, professor of health and physical education, directed the new facility through its construction until the summer of 1983.¹⁵

That summer, Ken Hayes was hired to replace Ron Cox as head basketball coach; during the 1982-83 season, Cox had compiled an 11-15 record and resigned to direct the new fitness center full-time. Hayes, a 1956 Northeastern graduate who earned a master's degree there in 1959, had fourteen years experience as coach of at the NCAA, division I level. With Hayes as coach, interest in Redmen basketball increased. In his first season at the helm, Hayes' team compiled a 17-11 record and was eliminated from the District Nine

¹⁴ "Dobbins Resigns Coaching Position," *Northeastern*, 18 February 1981, 1. Juanita Freeman, "Owsley Resigns; Cox Named Head Coach," *Northeastern*, 25 March 1981, 1.

¹⁵ "New Recreational Facility Proposed At Estimated Cost of \$500 Thousand," "Academics, Library Budget Priorities," *Northeastern*, 22 July 1981, 1. Melody Voss, "Athletic complex opens; memberships available," *Northeastern*, 20 January 1982, 1.

playoff in the first round by Southeastern. His second season the Redmen ended regular season play with a 25-2 record, ranked number one in the nation among small college teams, and earned the conference title for the first time since 1972. They easily won their first game in the playoffs against Cameron University, but were upset in the semifinals by East Central.¹⁶

For the first time since boxing became a varsity sport in the 1940s, a new men's program was added to Northeastern's fall schedule in 1981. Soccer, the world's favorite sport, had never caught on in America, although it was becoming more popular with the nation's young people. Seventeen thousand public school students in northeastern Oklahoma played in the Green Country Soccer Association, but they had no place to continue at the college level in Oklahoma unless they attended a private school. In 1981, Dr. Daniel DeLoache, a professor of education, organized a team and raised funds to equip it and defray the cost of travel. The first team fielded by a state school in Oklahoma took the pitch against Bethany Nazarene College at 2 p.m., September 10, at the intramural field at corner of Cedar and Crafton. The game ended with the Redmen on the short end of a 6 to 1 score, the same place they finished in their remaining seven games. The second season, the Redmen improved, posting a 3 win and 13 loss record, but the team survived the first two years, which DeLoache considered critical. By the 1986 season the team compiled a record of ten wins, eight losses, and two ties. For the first time, the Redmen defeated Bethany Nazarene College, and Dan DeLoache was named District Nine Coach of the Year. The next year, the team tied for District Nine championship with a record of 11-5 in regular season play.¹⁷

In February 1981, Dr. Betz announced the plans for Kaleidoscope 1981, a week-long festival similar to Renaissance '80, featuring big-name speakers and entertainers, as well as projects and presentations from all of the divisions of the university. Scores of

¹⁶ Steve Wright, "Redmen finish year with win," *Northeastern*, 2 March 1983, 6. Fount Holland, Jr., "Hayes new NSU basketball coach," *Northeastern*, 22 June 1983, 1. "NSU 1983-84 basketball season results," *Northeastern*, 21 March 1984, 8. Scott Pettus, "Redmen clinch elusive conference title," *Northeastern*, 20 February 1985, 8. Bob Colon, "No. 1 Redmen Open Playoffs Tonight," *Daily Oklahoman*, 2 March 1985. Gerry Bennett, "East Central Stuns No. 1 Northeastern," *Daily Oklahoman*, 6 March 1985.

¹⁷ Glenda Pate, "Northeastern sponsors varsity soccer team," *Northeastern*, 2 September 1981, 6. Susan D. Savage, "DeLoache gets kick out of soccer," *Northeastern*, 14 July 1982, 4. "Soccer . . . A Beginning," *Tsa La Gi*, 110-11. "Soccer," *Tsa La Gi*, 110-11. "Committed," 1984 *Tsa La Gi*, 120-21. "Soccer coach and player receive district awards," *Northeastern*, 3 December 1986, 10. Mike Jones, "Redmen grab share of soccer crown," *Northeastern*, 4 November 1987, 6.

activities from April 27 through May 1 again brought large audiences to campus and focused attention on the university and its diverse and creative academic community. The spring festivals not only provided a showcase for the school's students and faculty, they created an environment which stimulated both to be more productive and innovative. While they were held, these annual festivals symbolized the fulfillment of another year of academic achievement as much as commencement ceremonies.¹⁸

Early in the spring semester of 1981, a personnel upheaval reshaped the administrative landscape of the university. Although one of the affected deans said he was not part of a general purge, many members of the faculty could think of no better word to describe the episode. The new college organizational structure created in the Collier administration had established an additional bureaucratic layer that impeded the decision-making process. When they visited the campus in the spring of 1982, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools evaluators commented that Northeastern's academic organization lacked logic and disciplinary cohesion and noted, "an obvious duplication of administrative responsibility and duties has emerged between the divisional chairs and the deans." The North Central visitors were also concerned that "another double layer of administrative structure has developed in the organization with five of the deans reporting to an Academic Dean, who, in turn, reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs." Perhaps the Byzantine structure of Northeastern's administrative organization prompted President Webb to dismantle it, or he may have been motivated by personal differences with one or more of the deans and a desire to end continuing strife that had divided the campus before his arrival.¹⁹

Webb's principal rival for the presidency, Kirk Boatright, was dean of the college of arts and sciences. An outspoken administrator with strong views on education that did not always coincide with the president's, Boatright had clashed with Webb often enough that he carried a letter of resignation with him. Called to the president's office on February 11, Boatright handed Webb the letter, severing connections with the university at the end of the fiscal year. At the same time Dr. Major McClure, the dean of the College of Education

¹⁸ "Kaleidoscope To Illustrate Changing Patterns In Future," *Northeastern*, 4 February 1981, 1.

¹⁹ Report of a Visit to Northeastern Oklahoma State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, February 10-12, 1982, for the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, 5-8.

and Behavioral Sciences, and Dr. Everett Grigsby, chair of the division of natural science and mathematics, submitted their resignations requesting a return to the classroom. In the 1981 fall semester the remaining dean of an undergraduate college vacated his post. Webb claimed the resignation of Dr. Williams, dean of the College of Business and Industry, to return to full-time teaching was unrelated to those of Boatright and McClure, but the elimination of the last dean streamlined administrative channels by allowing division chairs to report directly to the office of academic affairs.²⁰

Over the next two years changes in personnel and structure of the university completely altered the school's administration, removing most of the remaining key figures from the Collier era. Following the resignations of the deans and one chair, Webb recommended that the vice president of the university be designated vice president for academic affairs. Before this change, the vice president of the university was clearly the second in command of the school. When additional vice presidencies were created, that status was no longer clear.²¹

Because of the work generated by the implementation of recently enacted House Bill 1706 and the size of the department of education and psychology, Webb decided to divide it into a division of education and field services and a division of psychology and special services. Dr. Raymond Archer, current chair of the old division headed psychology and special services, and before the beginning of the fall semester, Dr. Lloyd Coppedge was named to head education and field services. In March, Lindsey Owsley, director and former vice president of business affairs, resigned to accept a position as comptroller of Central State University. Owsley's assistant director, Suzie Sanders, a Northeastern graduate, was named to replace him. During the summer, Tony Boyle, director of maintenance, resigned pointing out that there was "a tremendous and almost unbelievable amount of work to be done at NSU." Frustrated by a lack of funds and the inability to hire personnel with the skill to maintain increasingly complicated equipment, Boyle decided it was time to end his ten-year career at Northeastern. In that time he had held a variety of positions including director of food service, director of tourism, coordinator of

²⁰ "Williams Resigns Position As Business College Dean," *Northeastern*, 9 September 1981, 1. Juanita Freeman, "Boatright, McClure, Grigsby Resign Administrative Posts," *Northeastern*, 9 September 1981, 1.

²¹ Minutes of the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges, 19 February 1981, 24-25.

continuing education, and finally, for over a year, director of maintenance. In August Bob Patrick, a certified heating and air conditioning technician with vo-tech training, was appointed to head the maintenance department. He agreed with Boyle that “the maintenance department is overworked and short-handed.” Before the beginning of the fall 1981 semester, the president appointed Robert Smallwood, associate professor of education and psychology, as interim dean of the division of natural science and mathematics. Dr. Brad Agnew, interim director of the library since 1978, returned to the history department in the fall of 1981. Dr. J. Richard Madaus, B.A., Louisiana State University, M.L.S. and Ph.D., University of Texas, was selected as the new director of the John Vaughan Library. Madaus had been serving as associate director for library services and development at the Arkansas State Library in Little Rock.²²

Early in 1982 James Howard, director of university services since 1979, was appointed vice president for administration with responsibility for business affairs, computer center, financial aid, housing, maintenance, grounds, and the university center, including the bookstore, food service, recreation room, and Northeastern Activities Board. In explaining the selection of Howard, Webb called him “a ‘key figure’ that has shown ‘excellent administrative abilities.’” Dr. Kenneth Collins, the director of university relations who had joined the Northeastern faculty in 1969, left the university in January of 1982, to become the dean of students at Carl Albert Junior College in Poteau, Oklahoma. Dr. Betz, assistant to the president, assumed Collins’ duties in addition to his own. Dr. Tom Cottrill, chair of the arts and letters division since 1976, resigned his position to return to full-time teaching. He was replaced by Dr. Bruce Tibbetts, a professor of English who had been with Northeastern since 1966.²³

²² “Psychology Splits From Education,” *Northeastern*, 21 January 1981, 1. Jodi Stonehocker, “Administrative Resignations Given Approval by Regents,” *Northeastern* 25 February 1981, 1. Teresa Perry, “Coppedge Named Education Division Head,” *Northeastern*, 24 June 1981, 1. Juanita Freeman, “Owsley Resigns; Cox Named Head Coach,” *Northeastern*, 25 March 1981, 1. “Sanders Named Head Of NSU Business Office,” *Northeastern*, July 15 1981, 1. “Maintenance Director Named; Boyle Appointed to Position,” *Northeastern*, 20 January 1980, 3. Dan Pierce, “Maintenance Director Resigns,” Teresa Perry, *Northeastern*, 24 June 1981, 1. Danny Tate, “Patrick named new director for maintenance department,” *Northeastern*, 23 September 1981, 3 “Regents Approve Smallwood As New Division Chairman,” *Northeastern*, 17 June 1981, 1.

²³ Robin Ross, “Howard assumes duties as vice president,” *Northeastern*, 24 March 1982, 1, 3. “Collins accepts CAJC position,” *Northeastern*, 20 January 1982, 1. “Cottrill resignation stuns, faculty, staff,” *Northeastern*, 31 March 1982, 1. Juanita Freeman, “Tibbetts new A & L Chairman,” *Northeastern*, 1 September 1982, 1.

In late June the board of regents approved the selection of Dr. Charles T. Prigmore as vice president of academic affairs to replace Dr. Ronald Seltzer. A 1950 Northeastern graduate and lineman on the varsity football team, the fifty-six-year-old new vice president had earned an M.A. at the University of Tulsa and an Ed.D. at the University of Oklahoma. Before returning to Northeastern, he had been the executive vice chancellor and chief academic officer at the University of Arkansas for Medical Science in Little Rock.²⁴ The two years of personnel change and restructuring had eliminated an entire level of administration and facilitated the flow of communication between the department chairs and the vice president of academic affairs.

The bond crisis that had dogged Northeastern for over a decade was finally resolved in 1982. Although renting dormitory space to the job corps and to academic departments of the university and dramatically increasing occupancy had enabled Northeastern to meet its payment without calling on other resources, a decrease in enrollment could have returned Northeastern to the brink of default and threatened its stability. Webb and two other university presidents met with the speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives seeking relief from the semiannual bond payments that siphoned off funds needed for maintenance. Late in the 1982 legislative session state lawmakers established a \$9 million escrow account from interest on a \$37 million general obligation fund to reduce the bonded indebtedness of three state universities, including Northeastern. Officials at the Tahlequah school and the other two universities agreed to forego their share of capital improvement money during the next year in exchange for the financial bailout. By 1985 the *Annual Report of the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education* listed no bonded indebtedness for NSU's dormitories, which gave the school about \$400,000 twice a year for other uses.²⁵

The progress at Northeastern Webb had made since assuming the presidency in July of 1978 prompted the Tahlequah Chamber of Commerce to present him the "Big T" award for 1982, an annual recognition of an individual who had made outstanding

²⁴ Juanita Freeman, "Prigmore relishes challenge," *Northeastern*, 30 June 1982. 1.

²⁵ Mike Hammer, "Draper Threatens to Block University Special Funds," *Daily Oklahoman*, 6 May 1982. "Bond fund receives \$9 million windfall," *Northeastern*, 21 July 1982, 1. "Hard work pays off," *Northeastern*, 21 July 1982, 2. Jim Young "\$9 Million of State Interest Used To Aid Three State Universities," *Daily Oklahoman*, 25 July 1982. Twenty-Third Biennial Report, Part I, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1985 (Oklahoma City: n.p., 1985), 134.

contributions to the community. The award citation highlighted Webb's role in the reversal of the fortunes of the university. It read:

At the time of his arrival, Northeastern State University was experiencing a 10-year decline in enrollment, and bonds on dormitories were about to default. Under his leadership, enrollment has increased and stabilized because of the team recruiting concept involving both faculty and staff.

The commendation noted that the dormitories were "almost 100 percent occupied, are better repaired and provide an atmosphere in which to study and feel secure." In particular, the chamber's selection committee praised the increase in freshman enrollment from 593 in 1978 to 897 in 1980, which it described as "one of the most dramatic improvements in the state." The NSU president was also praised for securing "more significant new programs in the past three years than any other university in the state."²⁶

Webb had little time to savor the praise of the Chamber of Commerce, for two threats to the well-being of the university loomed on the horizon. The first was the increasingly strident demand of business and civic leaders in Tulsa for a state-supported university in the city. Webb recognized that citizens of the state's second largest metropolitan area should have had access to the full range of publicly-supported higher education within their community and anticipated that they would achieve their goal soon. A state university in Tulsa would have far greater impact on NSU than Tulsa Junior College had over a decade earlier. Webb realized that it would be futile to attempt to stop the inevitable extension of state-supported higher education to Tulsa, but he hoped to influence its nature in the best interest of Northeastern.²⁷

The second threat was also predictable, but its timing was not certain. Throughout its history, Northeastern had been subjected to a cyclical pattern of boom and bust, often related to the condition of petroleum. Although oil was no longer as large a factor as it had been in earlier times, it still influenced the state's economy. The Arab oil embargo of the early 1970s drove the price of petroleum up, triggering prosperity in the Sooner State that extended into the

²⁶ "Chamber Of Commerce Honors Webb With 'Big T,'" *Northeastern*, 17 February 1982, 1, 3.

²⁷ Tony Williams, "Nigh Asks State Regents to Take Stand on Proposal for University in Tulsa," *Daily Oklahoman*, 19 February 1982.

early 1980s. Like previous oil booms, this one did not last forever. Its end was more spectacular than most and was followed by years of austerity that posed continuing challenges to higher education in general and Northeastern in particular.

As the price of oil rose and revenue flowed into the Oklahoma treasury in the 1970s and early 1980s, state officials, usually hard pressed to meet the state's financial needs, had discretionary income. In addition to cutting taxes, they were able to satisfy the desire of the citizens of Tulsa who had campaigned during the past several years for publicly supported higher education beyond the junior college level in their city. While many Tulsans hoped for a free-standing university, complete with a football team, state universities that drew a large number of students from Tulsa opposed any plan that would diminish the flow of students to their institutions. In addition to protecting their "turf," regents for the various schools realized that another state-supported university would diminish their share of an educational budget that was seldom adequate to fund the state's colleges and universities. But with oil revenue rolling in legislators found it difficult to tell their Tulsa constituents no. A proposal to establish a higher education center drawing on Oklahoma State, Northeastern, and Langston universities was flatly rejected by Tulsans and their legislative delegation. In late February, the higher regents urged the legislature to establish a university in Tulsa governed by its own board of regents by the fall of 1984. The estimated annual cost of the institution was \$6.5 million. In the meantime they proposed to offer upper-level and graduate courses in Tulsa beginning in the fall of 1982 through the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, Langston University, and Northeastern State University.²⁸

President Webb questioned the need for another state-supported university and told the regents for Oklahoma colleges that he opposed anything that would hurt Northeastern or higher education in general. Webb endorsed the idea of an educational consortium providing upper-level education in the Tulsa area. His views were shared by the presidents of the other state schools drawing large numbers of students from Tulsa. Mobilizing alumni and friends, these institutions were able to marshal enough support in the

²⁸ Jim Killackey, "Regents Recommend Tulsa For New State University," *Daily Oklahoman*, 25 February 1982. "Bowing to Tulsa Pressure," *Daily Oklahoman*, 28 February 1982.

legislature to block provisions of Senate Bill 480, which would have established “Tulsa State University” under a separate board of regents. Compromise legislation signed by the governor, Friday, April 16, in Tulsa, created a University Center at Tulsa (UCAT), drawing on the resources of OU, OSU, LU, and NSU. Webb, who viewed the arrangement as temporary, was determined to carve out as large a role as possible for Northeastern as the best way to protect the Tahlequah school’s interests. While the measure was indeed temporary, the consortium lasted longer than expected because in August the Penn Square Bank in Oklahoma City collapsed, abruptly ending the oil boom, which had fueled Oklahoma’s prosperity and forced austerity measures on all state agencies.²⁹

Dr. Alton Williams, professor of psychology and counseling, was named director of NSU programs at UCAT. He had fifty-four days from the time the governor signed the legislation to organize classes, arrange advisement, and establish enrollment procedures for numbers that could only be estimated. For the first few years classes met in five different locations, including the state office building on Houston Street, and Northeastern professors traveled to Tulsa where they taught classes as an overload. Students in Tulsa tended to be older, most between 25 and 35. From the first NSU had a disproportionate number of the 1,866 students taking classes at UCAT. While some of the students who would have enrolled at the Tahlequah campus took classes in Tulsa, many who attended UCAT would not have enrolled if they had to travel seventy mile each way to Tahlequah. Enrollment at NSU’s home campus remained high, and with the students in Tulsa, it reached record numbers in the fall of 1982. During the first two semesters, 1,234 students enrolled in the 91 classes Northeastern offered in Tulsa. The Tahlequah university also provided computer support for enrollment and operated the bookstore for UCAT. In 1985, the higher regents selected a location north of downtown Tulsa for a permanent home for the university center. The 200-acre site just north of the inner dispersal loop provided room for growth and easy access from all directions. Sites in Sand Springs, Broken Arrow, and in the Cherokee Expressway industrial district were considered. The first part of the new UCAT campus opened in the fall of 1988, and building continued with funds from a third cent sales tax voted by

²⁹ Jim Killackey, “Northeastern State Gearing Up in Anticipation of New University in Tulsa,” *Daily Oklahoman*, 21 February 1982. “Tulsa Class Center OK’d,” *Daily Oklahoman*, 13 April 1982.

the people of Tulsa. By the time the campus opened, 44% of the 2,800 students enrolled at the Tulsa center were taking classes from Northeastern.³⁰

Launching the University Center at Tulsa and operating the campus in Tahlequah became more challenging following the collapse of the Penn Square bank. Since the passage of the budget-balancing amendment during the administration of Governor Leon Phillips, state officials were prohibited from borrowing to finance government when revenue was inadequate to fund the legitimate functions of the state. Plans and commitments made by school officials based on legislative appropriations had to be altered whenever revenue fell below expenditures. President Webb's annual report of the 1981-82 school year written several months before the crash revealed no indication of the financial crisis looming on the horizon. He reported, "State appropriations allocated to the institution by the State Regents for Higher Education reached an all-time high. Private contributions to Northeastern's Educational Foundation also exceeded those for any previous year. These increases of both public and private monies will help assure the quality of the educational offerings at Northeastern."³¹

The initial impact of the downturn was reflected in the next annual report when Webb described the school year as one of paradox, involving record growth in enrollment, expansion into Tulsa, and "mid-year budget reductions . . . imposed because of an unexpected reversal in state financial fortunes." Putting a positive spin on what was a devastating reversal, Webb reported, "The challenge of doing more with less was met successfully by a dedicated faculty and administration. This was a very successful year in spite of the fiscal adversity." A president of one of Northeastern's sister institutions was more candid when he wrote, "Then came a 4.1 percent decrease in our budget for the year and resulting situations on campus have been ones of confusion and lack of planning."³²

³⁰ Glenda Pate, "Enthusiasm runs high at UCAT," *Northeastern*, 1 September 1982, 1. Mike Chanslor, "UCAT boosts NSU enrollment," *Northeastern*, 9 September 1982, 1. Jim Killackey, University Center of Tulsa Helps Students Finish Their Education, *Daily Oklahoman*, 26 September 1982. Twenty-Second Biennial Report, Part I, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1983 (Oklahoma City: n.p., 1983), 32-34. "UCAT site chosen," *Northeastern*, 6 February 1985, 3. Jana Self, "New UCAT prepares to open," *Northeastern*, 23 March 1988, 3

³¹ Twenty-First Biennial Report, Part II, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1982 (Oklahoma City: n.p., 1982), 32.

³² Twenty-Second Biennial Report, Part I, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1983 (Oklahoma City: n.p., 1983), 32-34.

In 1988 the normally ebullient Webb reported,

Five years after the energy boom ended in a crash, which resounded throughout the economy and created the first state budget shortfall, recovery has not yet begun. For the fourth year in the past five, Northeastern State University received no increase in state appropriated funds. State appropriated dollars have declined three of the past five years, and this year's funding is at a standstill level.

In that five-year period with "dismal financial support," Northeastern's enrollment had increased twenty-eight percent, with headcount growing from 6,586 to 8,425. Webb characterized the additional workload as "chilling." Although economic recovery started the next year, it would be years before the university achieved the funding level that existed when the collapse occurred, after inflation and increased enrollment were calculated.³³

Throughout the economic downturn, the school tightened its belt and provided educational and extracurricular opportunities for a rapidly increasing number of students. During 1982 the Redmen went undefeated in the regular football season, defeated Ouachita Baptist University in the quarterfinals of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletic playoffs, but were eliminated by Central State University in the semi-finals. The Northeastern track team won its first Oklahoma Intercollegiate Conference championship in the spring of 1983. Northeastern students continued to excel in intercollegiate completion in the Model UN program, drama, and debate. The Northeastern Singers were invited to perform during a fifteen-day tour of Europe. George Elliott's 1983 football team won eight of its nine regular-season games, was invited to participate in the NAIA playoffs, but lost in the first round to Central Arkansas University. In his nine seasons as the Redmen's head coach Elliott had achieved the best record in the NAIA, 70 wins, 22 losses, and 3 ties. He was named the Oklahoma Intercollegiate Conference Coach of the Year for the fourth straight time, and in the past four years, he had taken the Redmen into they playoffs three times.³⁴

³³ Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report, Part II, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1988 (Oklahoma City: n.p., 1988), 42.

³⁴ Twenty-Second Biennial Report, Part I, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1983 (Oklahoma City: n.p., 1983), 32-34. "Winning Football," 1984 *Tsa La Gi*, 109. Sean McDaniel, "NAIA title eludes Redmen," *Northeastern*, 7 December 1983, 6. Jeff Prodger,

William "Count" Basie, renowned jazz pianist and bandleader, ended his touring career at the twelfth annual Green Country Jazz Festival in two sold-out concerts on February 23, at the NSU auditorium. The seventy-eight-year-old performer had been influenced by the Oklahoma Blue Devils, an early black jazz band, more than half a century earlier. At Northeastern's Jazz Festival, which attracted music students from almost forty area schools, Basie was declared a "native son of Oklahoma," and Governor George Nigh proclaimed February 23 "Count Basie Day."³⁵

More faithfully attended than most classes, the snack bar in the university center was completely renovated during the summer of 1982, after fourteen years of heavy use. Since its opening in 1968, the snack bar's stainless-steel, self-serving area created an atmosphere more institutional than collegiate. In addition to booths installed along the walls, the remodeled snack bar featured fast food with personnel to serve customers. In addition to providing a more inviting atmosphere, the new arrangement was designed to speed up service. A build-up of grime on the walls made it impossible to save club logos and murals painted by various campus organizations since the 1970s.³⁶

The Garrison Memorial Fountain, built in honor of Harrell Garrison, Northeastern's eleventh president, has inspired more pranks than reflection on the man who directed the construction of more than half the campus buildings. Never designed as a wading pool, the fountain seemed to attract students like a magnet on warm days. Students also found it difficult to resist the urge to enhance the cascade of water with bubbles produced by boxes of detergent. After each soaping, the fountain had to be drained. Usually those guilty of adding detergent escaped undetected, but on at least one occasion the perpetrators were discovered. Ginny Wilson, director of student conduct, required the guilty to remove the water bucket by bucket, although she knew the pool could be emptied in a fraction of the time by using the drain.³⁷

Northeastern Singers travel abroad," *Northeastern*, 2 February 1983, 4.

³⁵ Juanita Freeman, "Basie performance ends 47-year career," *Northeastern*, 3 March 1982, 1, 3.

³⁶ Raelyn Krug and Sally Miller, "Snack bar to go 'fast food,'" *Northeastern*, 8 July 1982, 1, 3.

³⁷ Photo caption, "Beating the heat," *Northeastern*, 28 July 1982, 1. Rick Welch, "Fountain not wading pool, officials say," *Northeastern*, 29 September 1982, 3.