

# DAVID BOREN: ROOTS AND WINGS

## A Conversation with James J. Unger

*Unger: Before beginning our conversation this morning, I want to encourage all of our readers to review carefully the enclosed biography of David Boren. We've included it because he represents a figure of authority and complete accomplishment, not merely in American politics, but in American education and for American society. Most importantly, though, if you read that biography it's going to give you the proper degree of respect for the opinions, the commentary, the analysis of this great American leader.*

*Think about it -- Yale University, Phi Beta Kappa, Law Review Editor, Rhodes Scholar, Oklahoma Governor, Senator for 16 years, University President -- the credentials are obviously awesome, even intimidating. But to start the conversation, Senator, I want to ask you a question I know you've been asked again and again. When I approached the NFL and told them about this project, teachers, coaches, students, a number of my colleagues in Washington, they all had one piece of advice for me: ask him why did he do it? How could he do it? What made him resign from the Senate? We've got lots of theories. There was a Soonergate scandal, there were electoral troubles, there was some other Washington position. They all added up to a massive mid-life crisis. Now I hate to ask you again, but would you share with our readers today your reflections upon the major reasons about why you made such a fundamental change.*

**Boren:** I have to blame some of the educators I encountered early in my life because they made such a difference. Thinking back over where the greatest impacts were made, I include four or five educators who crossed my

path. One being H.B. Mitchell, who's well known to people in the forensic field, who was my high school debate coach and also the Superintendent of Schools for our school district at the same time. Another was Dr. George Cross, who was President of the University of Oklahoma and while I was here in law school, through his example, demonstrated to me that a president of a university could have a major impact on an entire generation. In fact, really in his case, he was president for 25 years so you could say in some ways he had an impact on two generations of Oklahoma students because there were some parents and children who came through the university while he was still here.

And really, it was an evolution, something that all my life I thought some day I might want to be a university president. Now to be president of the University of Oklahoma was very much a part of that thought because my whole life revolved around the State of Oklahoma. I didn't just have the desire or hope that someday I would be a United States Senator, it was to be United States Senator from Oklahoma. Our roots run very deep here and I feel that in many ways everything that I've ever been able to do in my life was a gift from Oklahoma. I have great family roots in this state, I have pioneer roots in the state and one grandfather came in a covered wagon from Texas over the Red River and brought his family here. Another grandfather came and was founder of a small community where my grandparents lived.

So starting with family roots and then going through incredibly fine teachers and public education in Oklahoma and then having the opportunity to be a Rhodes Scholar from Oklahoma, selected by the

Oklahoma Selection Committee. And then coming home and being back in law school and getting elected to the legislature by the people in my home county and then Governor and then Senator. So in many ways my desire to serve has been very much linked to the people from whom I came. I feel such a debt of gratitude to Oklahoma because it's given me so much. I wanted to find a way that I could give back.

I began with a strong interest in education. I kept that interest ten years ago, not as a Senator but in my capacity as a private citizen. I started an organization called the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, which has become a very large part of public education in the state. I started it because I felt that really, the most important thing we could do to assure the future of our state was to assure excellence in public education.

The Foundation each year recognizes 100 high school seniors from public schools as *Academic All Staters*. We pick the top 100 students in the state, they receive a \$1,000 prize, then we pick the four most outstanding public educators in elementary education, secondary education, university education and then an administrator in public education. We give them the Oklahoma Medal of Excellence. It's sort of an Oscar and, we call it "Roots and Wings". It's a glass sculpture etched of a Plains

### David L. Boren

David L. Boren, who has served Oklahoma as Governor and U.S. Senator, became the thirteenth President of the University of Oklahoma in November 1994.

Boren is widely respected for his academic credentials,

his longtime support of education, and for his distinguished political career as a reformer of the American political system.

Boren was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and selected as a Rhodes Scholar. In 1968, he received a law degree from the University of Oklahoma College of Law, where he was on the *Law Review*, elected to the Order of the Coif, and won the Bledsoe Prize as the outstanding graduate by a vote of the faculty.

As governor from 1975 through 1979, Boren promoted key educational initiatives which have had an enduring impact on Oklahoma.

One of Boren's most far-reaching projects in promoting quality education at all levels is the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, which he founded in 1985.

As Oklahoma's Governor, Boren was the youngest in the nation. Known as a reformer, Boren campaigned with a *broom* as his symbol. During his term, he instituted many progressive programs, including conflict-of-interest rules, campaign financing disclosure, and a stronger open meeting law.

During his time in the U.S. Senate -- from 1979 to 1994 -- Boren served on the Senate Finance and Agriculture Committees and was also the longest-serving chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

As a senator, he was the author of the National Security Education Act in 1992.

For more than 10 years, he led the fight for congressional campaign finance reform and for legislation discouraging administration and congressional staff from cashing in on government experience and contacts by becoming lobbyists.

A native of Seminole, OK, Boren was a champion NFL debater coached by the legendary Hall of Fame coach H.B. Mitchell. Indian Eagle Dancer. A rabbi once gave me the idea that what we want to give our stu-

dents, the generation that follows us, is both roots and wings. First, "roots" for a sense of values and belonging and then "wings" with which to spread horizons and to go beyond where we've been.

So, for ten years I've been involved with that Foundation. It also helps to start local foundations to aid public schools and to offer technical assistance. It provides an umbrella organization to share experiences. We now have over 125 cities and towns in Oklahoma. We are number one per capita in the nation that have established local, private foundations to aid their public schools. They build an endowment to give awards to teachers who come forward with new and innovative ideas for academic enrichment and they fund those ideas. We have probably 50,000 people in Oklahoma involved now with local foundations, probably \$100 million of combined endowments, and it's really making a difference.

So, while still serving in the Senate, I was very much drawn back into my interest in education by starting the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence and getting it off the ground. I still serve as chairman of that organization. Another thing that happened during this period was that I was asked seven or eight years ago to become a trustee of Yale University, my undergraduate alma mater. While serving as a trustee of Yale, I really became fascinated with how higher education presumably touched the lives of the next generation.

More and more I came to feel that if we got all else right in terms of every other policy decision I was making in Washington, but if we failed to pass on our values, if we did not properly educate and mentor the next generation, then we were going to lose everything. I didn't realize it at the time, but founding the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, getting so involved with education in Oklahoma, serving as a Yale

trustee and reengaging myself in challenges facing higher education in very many ways was just preparation.

I was ready for the invitation. The President of the University resigned and the invitation came and I really did give it very serious thought for several weeks and my wife and I talked about it and I finally made the decision to do it. You know I had been asked five years earlier, when the last president of the University of Oklahoma resigned, to consider coming in by some of the Regents. At that time I was Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee and just now getting an opportunity for my seniority to count in the Congress. That wasn't the right time.

This time when the invitation came I had just finished my chairmanship in the Intelligence Committee. I was getting more and more frustrated by the polarization between the two parties in Washington, the partisanship was becoming more and more vitriolic for the moderates and the centrists to get people to work together. In one of my last speeches I said I wished that I could have moved my desk into the central aisle and literally try to sit there between the two parties and work to bring people together because I was so frustrated at seeing the lack of results, the amount of polarization.

So, in a way it was probably a combination of two things. First, self-frustration with what I saw in Washington. A phase through which we're passing of increased polarization and partisanship so that a moderate bipartisan person has a harder and harder time making a difference. But, second, even more important was the magnet, the opportunity to come home back to Oklahoma, to touch lives more directly and to be involved in investing my life with the next generation.

In fact, some of my colleagues who decided to retire from the Senate since then have called me for advice and

some of them I've advised to stay and they said, "Well, how can you say that since you left?" And I reply, "Well, you're talking about staying in Washington, practicing law there and maybe working with a think tank or something else. If my choice had been between staying in the Senate or doing those things, I would have stayed in the Senate. It wasn't that I was that disaffected with the Senate, but I had the opportunity to come home and serve in such a special way that had always been in the back of my mind, that's different. So, unless there's a *new* avenue of service for you that would be meaningful, if you're a good public servant I'd urge you to stay."

## James J. Unger

Director of Forensics at the National Forensics Institute and The American University, and former Director of Forensics at Boston College and Georgetown University, Unger received his B.A. as valedictorian from Boston College and his J.D. from Harvard University Law School. As an intercollegiate debater he reached the semifinals and finals of the National Debate Tournament. During his years as coach at Georgetown his teams reached the final round of every major intercollegiate tournament, including the National Championship, often more than once. His teams were ranked "Number One" in the nation in the National Coaches Poll an unprecedented five times. Unger is a member of the National Federation's Committee on Discussion and Debate, the author of "Second Thoughts" and a Debate Consultant to both NBC and ABC. In every election since 1976, he served as Chairperson of the Associated Press National Presidential Debate Evaluation Panel and has already been reappointed for 1996. In 1992 he also assumed similar duties for United Press International and the New York Daily News, and

appeared on more than thirty national media shows. In a recent national poll of leading intercollegiate coaches and debaters he was named both the Outstanding Debate Coach and the Outstanding Debate Judge of the entire decade of the 1970s. In 1982 he received an honorary gold "key" from the Barkley Forum of Emory University. He recently appeared as moderator-host for the distinguished NFL National Forensic Library, a comprehensive instructional videotape series supported by the Bradley Foundation. A substantial component of that series was "Unger and Company," a set of "McLaughlin Group format tapes" in which Dr. Unger led top national collegiate debate coaches in often controversial "debates about debate." He is universally recognized as one of the most distinguished figures in American forensics.

I called Terry Sanford who at that time had gone back to North Carolina. He had been a governor as I had been and he had been a senator as I've been, and the other part of his life of course was serving as president of Duke University. Now it is ironic that when I was teaching political science at Oklahoma Baptist University, which I was doing at the time I ran for Governor, I used one of the books that Terry Sanford had written as a political scientist and so that's how we really came to know each other. He was in a local meeting and he came out to take the call and he said "David, is this a five minute answer or is this a twenty minute answer? I'm in the middle of this meeting, but if it's a five minute or less answer I can answer it now."

So, I said "It's a five minute question. You've been governor, senator, university president. I've been two of the three and I've now been asked to do the third, go home and be president of the University of Oklahoma. What do

you think I should do?" And he said, "That's a one minute answer. Accept before they change their minds!" He explained that he had a tremendous sense of satisfaction having served as Governor and Senator. But if you really love a place and you really want to make a difference in the fabric of a place, he said nothing really measures up to the opportunity to invest your life with the generations that will follow you.

I've really found that to be true and as I think back, we've had some great political figures from Oklahoma. We've had a Speaker of the House, we've had people like Senators Kerr and Monroney who reached great positions of power in the Senate. We've had others. But when I think back to two or three educators like Dr. George Cross here at the University of Oklahoma, Dr. Bizzell who was a great president before him, Dr. Bennett at Oklahoma State University who also originated the Point Four program later, I would be hard pressed to say that any political figure left as long lasting an impact on the quality of life in the state as the educators did.

*Unger: In looking over some of the previous interviews you gave when you retired and listening to you today, I must say I get the impression now that it was a choice among a number of positive options. At the same time, I think some of the earlier interviews at least, have focused about the incredible treadmill in Washington, D.C., the difficulty of even just scheduling a meeting to do any public good. This made it seem more negative at that time and I was wondering, have you mellowed since?*

Boren: No, I think that depended somewhat on the people doing the interview and somewhat on what they wanted to emphasize. There were definitely those who wanted me to emphasize the downside even

in doing "op ed" articles, but I tried to make them constructive criticisms ever since. But I would say it was much more a decision of what I wanted, the choice between positives, than it was leaving the negative, being frustrated with the negative. There was certainly an element of that, but I think it was small in comparison with the positive opportunity to come here.

Also, I had come to feel that it wasn't very healthy for a person to be a professional politician all his or her life. It's not necessarily that I think we should artificially impose something like term limits, but I don't think the system is served and I don't think people are serving their own individual lives by holding a public office forever, by having that become a life career. You certainly need some people staying for a longer time, you need historic memory in an institution, you need some continuity. We're fortunate when good Senators stay a long time. We've had the Sam Rayburns and people like that in our history, the Tafts on the Republican side and more recently people like Sam Nunn. A lot of other countries benefited by a long tenure of service by people of the caliber of Howard Baker.

The one thing I came to feel was that there was more vitality--I believe this very strongly--more vitality and creativity at the local level and in the private sector than there is in Washington at the federal level. I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that Washington is becoming a very closed environment really dominated by professional politicians who make serving in their office a lifetime career. I would go to my Yale board meetings, and we would talk about a problem and gathered around in the Yale Trustees' meeting room there were two or three CEOs of "Fortune 500" companies, there was a New York real estate developer, there was an art

historian who's the head of Sotheby's, there was the mayor of a city, there was a writer from New York, there was an educator, a woman who was president of Randolph Macon College, there was a clergyman.

There was a tremendous variety of people who came from very diverse daily life experiences and as you talked about a problem the CEO would come from one direction, the writer would come from another, the clergyman from another, the educator from another, the real estate developer from another. You had all of this richness of experience and all the different perspectives to bring a way of solving the problem.

I contrasted that with what would happen in, say, the Senate Finance Committee when we would get in the back room and talk among ourselves about some pending issues of importance and *everybody* in there was a professional politician. No one had run a business or been a teacher or done anything else for at least 20 or 25 years, they might not have been in the Senate for 20 or 25 years, but they'd been a Governor or a House Member. So everything was how did the interest groups line up, how will it affect the party in the next election, etc. None of this rich, everyday experience that I found so valuable when we were grappling with problems on the Yale board. And so I began to think, I'm not sure it's good for the system that there's not more fresh infusion of a creative spirit and everyday life experience from the grassroots, and I'm not sure it was good for me. In other words, I'm not sure it's good for a person to go spend 30 years--and it was almost 30 years I spent--inside an artificial bubble instead of being really on the front line dealing with life experiences.

I found that it's wonderful being on this campus for a lot of reasons. Probably every other student I pass I know their parents, their

grandparents, their cousins, their aunts and uncles, their next door neighbor in the community. I've been in every town in Oklahoma larger than 100 more than once. I figured one day that I'd had a letter from or shaken hands with or had been in a meeting with almost one out of every three people in the entire state at some point in the last 28 years.

So you really become a part of their life. One day I met a young man who was severely injured and was rushed to the hospital, I found out about it, I was called, and I rushed over. I got there and sadly he did die. His parents were there and a priest was there. When I went in I immediately remembered as I saw the faces who they were, that I had known them before, I even knew the priest. And they asked me to remain there with them during that very personal time with the family and you really felt like you were helping to minister to their needs at that moment.

Now when I came out, the student from the University who had driven me to the hospital asked if I watched the CSPAN on some issue that was in Congress yesterday, or last night, or this morning. And I said simply I don't have time for that. To me it was the most startling question because I was living life very intensely and being involved in the broader life of the community and the lives of other people and it was almost jarring to be asked this. It suddenly seemed irrelevant to me what had happened on CSPAN today. And, truthfully, I've watched CSPAN once in the 12 months since I returned home and I've only watched Sunday talk shows two times in almost a year! I know that's probably hard for people to believe. Yes, I still do read the *Sunday Times* and things like that; but it's just that I am enjoying and so fully throwing myself into my present challenges, being a real part of the life of this kind of institution that I

rarely think about the world "out there."

*Unger: You've used this demonstration before about how revitalization of the country, is going to come not from Washington but from the grassroots. I'm interested, though, in the examples that you're offering. Don't you find that this is an indictment of just professional politicians, period. It's in any level, not just in Washington, where they're hyper professionals.*

*Boren: I think it's gotten worse there because you really have an insurance system in which people look through the revolving door. They remain part of "permanent Washington" either as lawyer or lobbyist and so they never really leave. And people at home find it more and more alienating to them. They feel they can't really penetrate Washington anymore.*

*Part of that is the way campaigns are financed, the amount of money that flows into campaigns that they don't have to give. More and more people from Congress are getting more of their money from people who don't even live in their states or districts. I think that that has become something that has really been a feeling on the part of people. But I also think there's a very positive side to this. The same data that shows disaffection with Washington shows that people are spending more time involved in volunteer activities, more hours involved in their community, more hours involved at local government than they ever had before.*

*But, I don't think Washington gets it yet. It just isn't the center of the universe. When you're there you think that people are focusing upon your every word. But people out in the country are really busily leading their own lives and also really trying to solve the problems for themselves. I do think it's hard to say whether the '94*

*election represented any kind of permanent shift between the parties. That seems problematic when you see the ratings of Congressmen are just about as low now with the Republican Congress as they were with the Democratic Congress before the '94 elections.*

*I do think what political scientists have been calling "devolution," is not only a phenomenon in our country but worldwide, and it's going to be a more permanent part of American politics. That is that as people have come to feel that they can't really touch Washington, that they can't impact it, that they can't really penetrate it. They've also come to feel that Washington is sort of arrogantly outreasoned, that they come forward with these solutions to our social problems in which one size fits all: Centralize it in Washington, tell all you people back at the grassroots and at the state level how to do it.*

*In fact, in many cases, people at the local level, be it in the private sector or at your private charitable organizations or through local units of government, feel that they have a much better idea about how to solve their own problems and that Washington is out of touch. I think that what's happening is there's going to be more and more of a permanent trend toward devolution of policymaking, at least on social policies and economic policies as opposed to international relations and national security issues, which of course will remain at the national level.*

*But on educational policy, welfare policy, social policy, criminal justice, many, many other areas, I think more and more of that power is going to shift back to the state and local level. For one thing, Washington is often out of money. It doesn't have the financial base to continue to make all those decisions and create all those policies. I think we saw it with health care, that's one of the reasons the*

*administration's plan on health care collapsed.*

*I feel that the country is going to be revitalized from the bottom up because the people are going to demand that and it's a permanent trend in our politics. But I think it's also something that fundamentally we shouldn't have a lot of optimism about. What it says is we care so much about our communities we're not going to wait around waiting for someone else to solve our problems for us. We're not going to wait and say will Washington come down here, give us the money we need, and give us the programs we need to solve our problems. More and more people are taking them into their own hands and saying we'll solve the problem ourselves, we'll solve it more cheaply, we'll solve it a lot more rapidly, and we'll solve it in a way that fits our local needs far better than a policy devised in Washington.*

*But, that also means there are going to be more policymakers. It means think tanks in Washington, like AEI and Brookings and many others which exert a great influence and in many ways a lot of good ideas. There are going to be many more policymakers and that means there are going to need to be multiple, multiple think tanks, if you want to call them that, spread all across the country.*

*In many ways the policymakers who will be more and more at the state and local level running private*

**". . . there are fewer efforts at real bipartisanship. Sam Nunn says 'it's like one hand clapping.'"**

*nonprofits as well as being involved in local governments, will really be formed and influenced mainly through our great public educational in-*

stitutions at the state level. I think that universities like the University of Oklahoma and other sister institutions across the country are going to have a far greater role to play in providing information to and training those who will be policymakers.

For example, we are already at this university establishing a center for research to serve state and local units of government so that as state legislators grapple with different issues, we will have our own think tank and our own faculty, a multidisciplinary approach to try and help solve problems.

*Unger: About those think tanks, I was interested in your reaction in Washington because often it seems that people are frustrated not necessarily by the politicians but just by the overwhelming mass of data and conflicting predictions and presumptions. I think it was in your recent address before Ross Perot's convention, United We Stand, you said in Washington in 1950 there were 1,000 lawyers and today there are 63,000, more than any other city per capita. And there is this tremendous expansion, a hyperexpansion as I say, of all of the data. Numbers ... Numbers... Numbers. How reliable and how easily accessible did you find the data when you were there? Was it easy to have a sound basis for decision making?*

*Boren: It isn't easy. I found myself bypassing all of that, by picking up the phone and calling someone back home. This illustrates exactly my thought about how policy ought to be made. I was always most likely to pick up the phone and call a farmer I knew who had a broad view of things, or call a banker or call a small business person or whatever, call a local hospital administrator, and say how would this affect you if we put this particular language into a piece of legislation. I was more apt to do that than I really was to rely very*

heavily upon the mass of material that came into me from so many different official or public sources.

Our experience pushes the political system to a local level where it's more manageable. There's certainly a distinction between *information* and *knowledge*. I stressed this in my inaugural address. Really, this is something that has stuck with me ever since. I heard Daniel Borstein, before he ever gave public lectures on this subject, discuss it privately. We may have information but it doesn't necessarily we have more knowledge or wisdom!

As Chairman of the Intelligence Committee we so developed our technology, our satellite capability, our ability to technologically bring in even conversations in other places, that we probably went up 100 fold in the amount of material that came in. But the quality of our intelligence, I think, went down, because we so overwhelmed the analysts and those who were making human judgments about what data was important and what data was not important. Finally, the policymaker was given a less focused set of information that truly mattered -- more total information but so much information that it wasn't into proper focus. We weren't separating the wheat of knowledge from the chaff of information.

I think that's harder to do if you're trying to run everything through one centralized decision making point. Look what's happened to private industry. How have we revitalized and regained the productivity in this country after a 20 and 30 year trend of building bigger and bigger conglomerates, run through a traditional chain of command approach where one decision maker sat at the top of the stairway and made decisions all the way down for the conglomerate? Now more and more the large companies have spun off companies or treated parts of their own,

monolithic corporate structure as independent subsidiaries. We are encouraging entrepreneurship, breaking big units into smaller units and trying to get a spirit of entrepreneurship in these local entities.

That's what's been happening economically and it has caused the productivity of American business to turn around and start to grow faster, for example, than Japanese productivity. It makes sense that the same

**"I don't think Washington gets it yet. They aren't the center of the Universe."**

thing will take place in politics and policymaking. I really think we'll see a rejuvenation of policymaking and problem solving in this country by allowing the federal system to "focus". It is a great opportunity for local experimentation, and different approaches.

But there's something more fundamental. You know I insisted if I was going to come back to the University, they had to allow me, as President, to teach; and I chose to teach freshmen because they're often the most overworked and I wanted to send a message to our faculty that it's exceedingly important for the big names on our campus to teach freshmen or undergraduates. They need mentoring and there needs to be a lot of contact early on in the educational experience with some of our best faculty. But I was prepared to teach Rousseau and we were talking about the general will and the fact that for Rousseau's vision of democracy to work there are certain preconditions. You have to make decisions on a level which is literally almost a town meeting kind of format with many shared experiences. You are able to talk face to face and listen to each other

with respect so that when it becomes time for the majority to vote the majority is not voting its own interest. The majority is a fair minded majority which has listened carefully to the minority and is not trying to ramrod its views, through. Finally, it is trying to reach what is a fair consensus for everyone.

Our country has become quite diverse. In many ways, and I think alarmingly so. We have seen ourselves split into ethnic, religious and other tribal groups. It is more and more difficult, almost impossible, to form a consensus.

I think this leads us to step back and say, well, let's solve our problems at a more manageable level where we can have enough contact with each other. I think it is just the legitimacy of decisions made in that format where you can form a consensus that makes a lot of sense.

I remember one Sunday the *New York Times Book Review* was almost completely taken up with books about "is democracy in peril." And I think that you come to realize that one of the ways we can revitalize democracy at this time is to leave to the national level only those things that really, truly, have to be nationalized, such as defense policy, international policy, diplomacy. But we must allow many of the other decisions to be made at the local level where you can form a more general consensus.

Strange as it seems, look back at some of the early political philosophers and look at what's happening in private business in this country in order to rejuvenate itself today. I think you will find this trend toward "devolution", if you want to call it that, to a political scientist makes a lot of sense!

*Unger: You raised an issue a moment ago concerning an increasing consciousness among a number of the political communities about the whole concept that some com-*

*mentators call "hyphenated Americanism." I would be interested to find out what your thoughts were about whether there is a legitimate, vital role for affirmative action programs on a public policy level? Also do you find them here, here at the University?*

Boren: I would say we're in the process of reevaluating our programs here. I would say if I would name the greatest single challenge I face since I came back as the University President, it is the challenge of dealing with the divisions that I already found in place, particularly on the basis of race. There was a very interesting piece in the *New York Times* last week about what's happening on campuses all across the country. If we're having these kind of problems here in Oklahoma, where I think we traditionally have far fewer divisions, I can only imagine how severe they are on many other campuses.

The thing that worries me is why we can't, as I put it, learn how to become one family, while being a diverse family. In any true and successful family siblings don't try to make each other carbon copies of one another. There isn't a standard conformity. A parent loves children who are very different and respects their integrity and their different abilities, their different interests, and their different values.

At the time that I was in college we were focused upon desegregation, but particularly integration, breaking down all the barriers, becoming one people. Racial minorities at that time probably were pushing themselves to assimilate, giving up some focus on their own racial heritage. Now we've come full circle. We're in the process of seeing a resegregation and divisions on many campuses re-established. Part of that is the feeling that we were giving up a lot to become integrated. We were giving up the integrity of our own ra-

cial or religious or ethnic heritage, and we take great pride in these. Therefore, we almost have to in some ways separate to maintain our identity -- our separate identity and our own integrity and our own culture, our own racial background.

It seems to me that both are extreme positions, that somewhere between the two there's an ultimate goal we should reach. That is to no longer have barriers between people, to allow people in the room to be different and to respect the differences and to have the maturity that values their own racial heritage, or ethnic heritage, while at the same time still being open to becoming a part of the broader community and a real sense of family. So, that is the most difficult of all problems. Now some of our students believe that to feel secure in their own identity or to take pride in their own heritage, they have to be negative about the prevailing culture in the country or be negative toward others or separate themselves totally. Some become so sensitive that they are almost waiting to be viewed as having been victimized by the prevailing majority culture.

So, I see that all the time. I spend a good deal of time trying to deal with it on our campus, trying to deal with a sense of family. It takes a lot of personal interaction by presidents and deans and the leading faculty members to try to strike the proper balance. For these reasons I wanted to move back onto the campus and have the historical home of the president, right at the gates of the campus, restored. For these reasons I try to get through and eat in the faculty club or eat down at the student cafeteria or in the student union with students once a week or so. I want to be seen and be very visible and approachable and talk through these problems face to face when they occur.

Every time we've had a

problem that had some racial or ethnic component, I've been in the middle of it myself but the broader society also impinges upon every university. Students don't just come here as blank tablets. The minute there's a problem, there are those of greater years in a broader community who come in, insert themselves and tell students what they ought to be doing, too.

So it's very difficult because you can't operate in a monastic sense, separated from the world. You're impacted by it. But I think one of the most important things we can do is to build a real sense of family. It's not integration or assimilation in the original sense that we want to view that and it's certainly not separation either. It is being a family, being a true community. Individuals moving forward to real diversity within various heritages but still coming together as one community.

Affirmative action, when you begin to approach quotas and to say we're going to give significant advantage based upon race particularly, is something that we have to change. For one thing it's not even an accurate way to approach a problem. There are some students who are in racial minorities who have been privileged. Financially they may be from families that are very well off with all sorts of educational and travel opportunities and so forth. To say that we should base an admission standard or a particular benefit or a hiring practice solely based upon race, I think probably misses the point.

Our goal is to give people who have had fewer opportunities a probationary period to achieve an equal chance. For example, we allow a certain percentage of our students to be admitted *on probation* if we feel that they have not been given an equal chance, or if we feel that something happened in their lives that disrupted what oth-

erwise would have been a good performance -- a death in the family or very modest economic background or something similar. Then they can be admitted to the University on a trial basis. Usually they come in a summer program before the regular freshman come in. If they prove themselves, they're given a probationary admission for another semester. If they prove themselves again then they're fully admitted.

I think that we ought to move more and more of what we might call our affirmative action programs, base them on whether or not a person has demonstrated motivation and ability within an appropriate environment. Today, affirmative action is basically *predictive* based upon arbitrary qualifications. Tomorrow's, should be *productive* with major continuing input based upon demonstrated utilization of relevant tools within a probationary setting.

*Unger: I wanted to pick up on the theme of the value of communication. Right now, in high school communities across the country, dollars are scarce. Maybe that's part of budget balancing or conservatism or declining economic base. The fact is that high school speech in big and small programs, at a competitive level and at an educational level, are subject to increasing budgetary pressures. Could you give us your reactions to such shutdown and such reductions?*

Boren: I can't tell you a more serious mistake that can be made. As I've indicated so many times, when I think about people who have touched my life and made a difference, always high on the short list I give is H.B. Mitchell, who was my high school speech and debate coach. I don't know how many times my mind has come back to him, whether it has been in a setting in which I was getting ready to make a speech on the Senate floor and think

about the fact I'm using tools he helped give me or whether it was simply persuasion in an informal lobbying setting where you're trying to move three or four colleagues, or sometimes even one on one, in your direction. I've used all the tools of persuasion he helped me develop. Simply put I think that probably my ability to speak and my ability to engage in informal persuasive conversation have been the two most important tools I've used in my careers!

When I look back at it I hope people would say that the ability to speak, the ability to communicate, the ability to translate issues into a language that people could understand and identify with, the ability to be persuasive at a town meeting... this probably has been my greatest strength as a public servant and it still is! Just a little while ago I left a meeting with a group of our faculty and staff discussing racial issues on the campus. Again and again being able to communicate clearly and being able to share ideas back and forth was critical. I want to show that we can create a sense of community and family on this campus. How do you do that? Communication, being able to talk things out, is absolutely the most crucial skill!

When I look back on my education from the the secondary level on into college and university but especially in my secondary years the very last two courses I would give up would be: number one, my speech and debate training, and then number two my writing course. Both emphasized English, English composition. Both focused upon the goal of communication. You see, if you're going to provide any kind of leadership in any field you will only be successful professionally because you're going to be relating to people. For example if you are a research scientist you're going to have to be able to communicate your results and to convince people

perhaps to invest in your research. You have to be able to communicate anywhere and everywhere!

*Unger: We touched on this before and I gather to be a good speaker you have to have good listeners. In that regard, do you feel with the growth of technology, the growth of sound bite communicology, that the American people are really good listeners? I'm fascinated by the concept of the Sunday talk shows, the ten seconds of instant wisdom. You have suggested a reform to go back to more Lincoln-Douglas debates. Would people be willing to listen? Is the present system of brevity driven by the media or is it responding to people's pressure when they say don't bore me with all of this, I'll get it quickly?*

*Boren: Maybe I'm an optimist here, but I think that people are still willing to listen when confronted with ideas that are intelligent and stimulating and deserve understanding. I think in many ways this is an attempt to avoid responsibility on the part of the mass media and other experts to argue that they themselves do not shape attitudes as to what the marketplace of public opinion desires. Again, I go back to something like the McNeill-Lehrer News Hour. There's a definite market niche for it. I'm sure if you looked at income level, number of years of education and the rest of it, that the audience is heavily weighted, maybe the highest per capita number of years of education among the viewers of any news program, but underestimation of the general level of intelligence and interest in the future of our country on the part of the American people. That, in a way, is kind of an arrogance in itself. I talk to people in Washington sometimes and they say, how can we trust educational policy*

**Medal of Excellence. It's sort of an Oscar and we call it 'Roots and Wings.' 'Roots' for a sense of values and belonging and then 'Wings' with which to spread horizons and to go beyond where we've been."**

to people at the grassroots, with some feeling that the average citizen doesn't really care about equal rights, equal opportunities, civil rights and the rest of it. That's really not true! I think such an attitude seriously underestimates the desire of people to adopt all these programs themselves.

So, a lot of it is a matter of exposure. When the mass media expose people, puts on nine second sound bites, that's what people get used to having as standard operating procedure. If you expose people to something more in depth, regularly, people will find a good response. There may be some sort of lag time, but overall that's an evasion of responsibility, really, on the part of the mass media, a failure, to set higher standards of discussion.

*Unger: You recently wrote an editorial piece, for the Atlantic Monthly with the title "The Party's Over." You began by saying the next ten years are likely to produce more political change in this country than has occurred since the Civil War. Would you share with us what precisely you had in mind? Washington, of course, was abuzz with the idea of a Colin Powell candidacy, a third party, a fourth party candidacy. Do you see that as some of the directions?*

*Boren: It's possible that*

will happen. I think that the possibility has never been so high as in the next ten years, in the next two to three presidential elections, we could have a president elected who is not a member of either one of the existing two major parties. Now that could really happen because the level of discontent is so high. You can't sustain the 79% distrust of government figure, which is where we are now. I went back and checked the figures and when I was in college we had a 76% positive trust factor in government according to the polls instead of a 79% distrust factor. This shows the level of rising discontent is way beyond any historic norms.

Finally the American people are going to say - and 62% say it now -- that they don't like the current two parties, the choices. I certainly can understand that as a moderate and a centrist. Very often you feel disenfranchised, you don't feel at home in your own party and you're not made to feel at home in the other party either.

If you look at retirement ranks in the last four years in Congress, you find probably 90% at those leaving voluntarily are moderates in both parties. The vast number are Democrats who have chosen not to run and are moderates. And the same is true of the Republicans, many of them who are quitting are moderates. So, what happens is that the congressional parties then become more polar extremes, further to the right and left.

The activist groups, those who control internal party policies, on the Republican side, may well be a minority of the total votes. But they're more to the right, more aligned with the religious right and others who have become very much activists. The same is true in that social activist groups in the Democratic Party have a disproportionate number of party officials, precinct workers and so on compared to the mainstream.

**"... the Oklahoma**

So in the two parties, everything seems to be dividing apart and there are fewer and fewer efforts in bipartisanship. So one thing, if you're a moderate, you're never quite at home in your own party. Whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, if you do have a lot of internal bipartisan coalitions then you still have a role to play. But when there's no bipartisan negotiating going on, you do not feel at home in your own party. There's certainly no one in the other party for you who is even willing to bargain with you because things are so polarized. Simply put, you don't have a role! Sam Nunn says, "it's like one hand clapping." Not very many people will follow me because I'm to the right or center in my own party and because the people in the Republican Party become so polarized. Someone like a Bob Dole who is trying to shore up his right in order to get a nomination, doesn't want to be seen talking to a Democrat, even a Sam Nunn Democrat. So you're sort of left out there.

So the dynamics all seem to be pushing us toward more partisanship, more polarization and less a government of national unity. Centrists feel disenfranchised. One of these days, if that continues, we're going to say, "no more am I going to be satisfied with the lesser of two evils, I'm going to demand a real choice." I think that Republicans have been more in line with the American people as to *methods*; that is, that they will oppose the idea that everything be done from Washington, big government programs, highly centralized bureaucratic solutions. The Democrats in some ways are still, as far as the *goals* are concerned, perhaps more in sync with the American people. I think the American people still believe in public education, they believe in civil rights, they believe in helping people who are genuinely not able to help them-

And to some degree people are rather skeptical as to whether in their hearts the Republican Party is really committed to many of these things.

So when it comes to *both* goals and methods, neither party is fully in sync with the American people. What could change that, what could save the two party system? Well, if you had nominated and elected as president a member of one of the two existing parties who is willing to take on the extremists in their own party, successfully did so and pulled the party to the center, that party could really establish itself for a long time as a majority party in the country and also save the two party system.

Will that happen? Nobody knows. If a Colin Powell were to run as a Republican, if he were to get the nomination, if he were to really pull the party to the center, he could change history. Or even if a Bob Dole, with all his political experience and record were to say, "I've reached the pinnacle, now I'm President, I'm going to be willing to take on some of the extremists among the party and recast the party in a new way," he could make a big difference.

I'm convinced that one of the reasons Clinton got elected is a lot of people felt here is a *new* Democrat. He's going to take on some of the entrenched people in the Democratic Party on the left and move the party to the center. But it didn't happen. Of course, this limits his ability to do it in the future. Just from a credibility point of view, even if he would want to, he is viewed now as having had his chance. People say, "you didn't do it when you had your chance."

In short, it's not too late for one man or woman or a small group to make a difference and save the two party system. Now I hope they will. Because let me tell you I worry about further fragmentation into the three and four and five party

systems. I think a two party system is by far the most stable available. But candidly its future hangs in a perilous balance!

*Unger: Given that balance, given it hanging there, you mentioned Colin Powell, you mentioned Bob Dole. But in the future can we still see a different "presidency" for David Boren? Let me just read a couple of comments that I brought with me. One was from your TV address in 1993. You said "I agree with President Kennedy's assessment. Service to our nation and our community should be a life-long commitment for all of us. However, that does not mean that we should serve in exactly the same way throughout our lives." Second, doing the research for this project I discovered an interesting historical fact. Since 1968, as I calculate it at least, the University of Oklahoma has had five presidents and they each served about an average of five years. For you that puts us right there to the election year 2000.*

*Third, Bill Safire from the New York Times wrote, "I called Senator Boren to see if he would be running as an Independent. He answered carefully, 'Not in 1996.'" And finally, our audience should be aware that you are, a very, very young man who stresses public service as a concept of where one can do the most good.*

Boren: Right, I agree.

*Unger: Well, do you see sometime in the future that you might be able to do that kind of "good" by returning to the national political scene?*

Boren: I would never rule it out. I wouldn't rule it in either because I think that what you should do is render the most service you can render at the time at hand. My father always said, do whatever task you're assigned as well as you can possibly do

it and the future will take care of itself. If you look over your shoulder in the past or look beyond where you are to something else in the future you won't do what you're doing well right now.

*Unger: In this context many of our readers might not realize that you come from a "public service" family in terms shaped by your father.*

Boren: Right. My father was both a teacher and a Congressman. In many ways he combined the same two careers as I have. In fact, he was teaching in a small rural school when he ran for Congress the first time. But I think that to be "open" about "the big question," I would doubt that I would return to the national stage. My inclination is to come here and stay here, certainly as long as I feel I'm doing any good. I think that my inclination is to want to stay here for longer than five years, for sure, if I possibly can, because short terms have been one of the problems that the University has had. I look back to the years of Dr. Cross who was my mentor in this role. He spent 25 years of his life here. The University benefited tremendously from that continuity. And he didn't use the institution as a "stepping stone" to something else.

When it was announced I was coming here, I said that I thought this institution was worthy to being loved for itself and it was worthy at investing one's life in it. I truly mean that. I feel very strongly as an Oklahoman that we're determined to do some things here which will be a role model for public higher education in the whole country. We not only want to be outstanding within Oklahoma. We want to develop, for example, an honors program so you can match an Ivy League education within the boundaries of a large public institution, have much more diversity and do it at a lower cost because all residents,

whether they can afford an Ivy League education or not, deserve that kind of intense educational experience.

We're going to internationalize our curriculum. I'd like to encourage our students to minor in an area study -- maybe that's Spanish and Latin American studies, maybe that's Chinese and Asian studies. Virtually all of them are going to be living in an international environment, unlike the "provincial" environment we've been living in. American higher education has not stepped up to this challenge to prepare students of the next generation to live in an atmosphere that's going to be far more international. I'd like to show there's a state university out here that can do that.

So, there are a lot of reasons why I would like to stay here as long as I can. In fact, if it happens this way, this could be where I would conclude my career of public service. If I stay here until old age overtakes me, I would be very, very happy and content.

**"Now when they offered me the Presidency at the University of Oklahoma I got on the phone to my friend Terry Sanford and asked 'What do you think I should do?' He said, 'Accept before they change their minds.'"**

*Unger: I flew out here to Oklahoma City, got in a taxi and the taxi driver asked me where I was going. I said out to the University and I mentioned the fact that I was going to interview the president. He said, "Oh, David*

*Boren, he's very well thought of in Oklahoma." Then he paused for a minute and he said, "Boy, I'll bet he's found it was easy in Washington compared to back home. "Give us some of your initial comparative reflections now that you've taken over the University.*

Boren: Yes, I will. But first, let me finish this one last point on the U.S. presidency. I also have a strong feeling that this is something no one should "run for"... no one should actively seek the office out of ambition. Maybe that's an unusual attitude for a practicing politician to have, but I think this is definitely the one political job where in essence the circumstances and the times should fit the person. You should never seek the U.S. Presidency unless you feel that your own personal qualities match the times. Then you have an *obligation* to do so. I think these are the only circumstances which would ever draw me back. But who knows, these are factors beyond my control. Will the times ever be right? Will they ever demand the qualities I have as opposed to the qualities other candidates have? Who knows. Those are different at different times. For example, when I came back here, we had already had two or three presidents who really had no ties to Oklahoma. Now some people were beginning to wonder if the University really belonged to Oklahoma. Previous presidents had been here a short ten years, they hadn't stayed; and people were longing for someone who would love it like Dr. Cross did and invest his life here.

So, it was in a way the right time, I was needed here. If I had not been a native Oklahoman, if I had not had the deep ties to the state, if I had not had lengthy identity with people here, I probably would not have been the right person to have come here at this time. Of course, there may be other times when some-

one with my background would *not* be the right president for the University of Oklahoma. For example, following a president who's been here 20 years, who's been a native Oklahoman, who's built the University up to a high stature -- that's the time you go out of state and get a traditional academic, a traditional scholar with a distinguished national reputation. Then, maybe, that's the time you want to get a full surprise, bring in an unknown with revolutionary views.

So different times demand different people. And I felt that having watched this university it was the right time for someone whom everyone viewed as being an Oklahoman down to his toes - which I am - to come back and be a vital part of the university community. Even more than traditional academic credentials it was a time which needed different kinds of leadership abilities, drawing people together, changing some cultures. And so I thought it was the right time for me to come to the right place.

In reacting to the job itself, first of all I'd say I'm not disappointed. I've found, here without overstating it, the most rewarding year I've ever had in a professional capacity or any life's work capacity -- even more rewarding than my first year as Governor and my first year as Senator. It's given me a greater sense of satisfaction and a greater sense of accomplishing something worthwhile. Now that's because in the political process, especially today, so many things are never resolved. In Washington you argue about the same things year after year after year. At the end of the day here if you recruit an outstanding new member of the faculty to start a new program in a certain direction you have progress. For example, we recently brought in an outstanding woman, a nationally ranked scholar, we have her in our

Native American studies program. And now we will see that take off. You can make decisions at the end of the day and you realize that you've really impacted things. You see a change. You are a mover and a shaker!

For me the opportunity to deal firsthand with the students is great! You know the two days a week I teach the freshman government class -- Tuesday and Thursday between 9 and 10:30am I'm in my best mood all week because I just truly enjoy that personal interchange with the students. I think there's nothing more special than the relationship existing between teacher and student, the intellectual energy from the two generations coming together. I think I gain every bit as much from it as the students do, perhaps more. I try to share my experience, but I get back from them the energy, enthusiasm and idealism that comes from them seeing things through new eyes.

So, it's really exciting to be a part of that process. But the thing that has surprised me the most has been how difficult it is to schedule my time. Today I'm working harder physically than I ever have. I'm working more hours than I've ever worked-- and I worked 14 and 16 hour days as Governor and Senator. I really didn't think that I would ever work harder than that. Usually at least I had my Sundays off and maybe even part of my Saturdays. Now I'm really working those kind of hours seven days a week. On Sunday, I'm in Tulsa speaking at a school dinner, a banquet fund-raiser for a school in Tulsa. Saturdays, your alumni flood in for football and basketball games and your potential contributors and parents come to check on the students. So there's a whole round of meetings and activities on the weekends too. There are tremendous demands on your time. I guess the taxi driver was right!

*Unger: But wouldn't you*

*describe that as a "treadmill," too?*

Boren: No, I really don't because I think that at the end of all of it you're really seeing things happen as a result. I'm either helping raise money for the University to do some good in the long run, or I'm recruiting good students for the next year, or I'm giving alumni a sense of identity with the institution so important to its continuity, or I'm encouraging, our athletes or our student actors and their dramatic productions. Whatever it is you feel like you are playing a role within a family and it's very rewarding.

But the greatest frustration has been that I have no more of the spare time to read, write and reflect which I had in the Senator's and the Governor's office. Of course, administering a large university, is very complex. Now, I already knew it was complex by being a trustee and having been involved in education extensively. It is perhaps the most complex institution in modern America because you have so many different constituencies. Among just the students themselves, whether it's ethnic or by interest or by discipline or whatever you have tremendous different constituencies. You have various constituencies among faculties where you have all the tension between teaching and scholarship. You have the alumni. You have the state institutions such as the state legislature, the state media, which focuses on public institutions in a way it does not on private institutions. Just as a comment, I would imagine that there have been more inches of press written about me since I've been President of the University of Oklahoma and more day to day press oversight as to what I'm doing than there ever was when I was a Senator. There, I got on an issue and selected the way the press would come and cover what I was doing. Here, they cover everything I

do everyday. You have trustees, which you don't have as a Senator. You have thousands of support staff as well as faculty. You are running hospitals which are very complex institutions in these days. You're running museums. You have your own police department, you have your own food service, your own hotel system in a sense. You have all of that and yet you don't have a number of the tools that, say, a corporate CEO in the private sector would have. You don't have the same kind of authority. You lead by persuasion and cooperation. You can't order the faculty to follow you, you can't order the students to agree with you in a way that a corporate CEO can make a decision and say here's our decision and here's what XYZ corporation is going to do this next year. It has to be much more of a community decision and many more people have a say in it.

So, what does it all mean? I knew it would be a challenge. It's an even greater challenge than I anticipated. Today, I have tremendous respect for those who are trying to lead our educational institutions everywhere. I think also it's part of what's happening in our society -- the pressures on university presidents are reflected in the pressures on the leaders of all institutions in our society. I confess, I'm sure in our day and time it's much more difficult and not as much fun to be a Senator compared to the way it was say 30 years ago. I saw that change even in the 15 years that I was there.

To be a leader of a church is much more difficult. Popes weren't written about 25 years ago the way they're written about now. The Supreme Court Justices were not written about 25 years ago and were not put under the same pressures the way they are now. The leaders of all institutions are just subject to many more pressures, many more doubts. I think that the pe-

riod in which we live is more questioning of authority of all kinds. We have as part of a baggage system we have rejected, a lot of old ideas without yet putting together a new system of values, pulling together a system of new values to take its place. And the institutions like the church, the university, the government, are sort of there as the flash points of frustration on the general population.

So, anyone who tries to lead an institution and becomes accountable as its leader to all the rest of society is a target until a new set of values fully emerges. So it's a challenging time to try to lead any institution. But particularly in an educational executive sense I would say this: I don't believe there's any more institution more challenging, not private corporations, not even government. I think probably only the President of the United States has a tougher job than a college or a university president!

*Unger: I know back in your acceptance speech, you set out your own goal for the University to become and I quote, "an engine of economic growth . . . a flagship for education in our entire region. . . . a national role model in American public higher education." Did you have some specific programs in mind, some specific ideas to turn this rhetoric into reality?*

Boren: Yes, I think we're doing a better job constantly. As I talk of devolution, we're going to really be training a larger percentage of the policymakers and the leaders in the future. This year the University crossed the \$100 million mark in externally funded research and training grants. The first time that's ever happened. In our program *Reach for Excellence*, we're creating a research and development corporation-- which we

should have done a long time ago--to spin off some of these areas of research into commercial enterprises which will produce direct economic growth in the state.

For example, the first one will be working together in a joint venture with some investors to market a sun tanning cream which was developed by physicians, researchers in our medical school. We are also working right now with an airline because our weather service has developed computer programs which can narrow down a location of two or three mile radius, to predict fronts such as when hailstorms and things like that will hit. They've run it through and they found that one airline alone would have saved \$28 million if they had it in place when the Dallas-Fort Worth hailstorm hit and damaged all the aircraft. This could be a really big joint venture, because that first airline might sell the service to others. There are all sorts of things like that. We're also working on electric engines with an automotive manufacturing company that might end up selling its product to major car manufacturers.

We also continue to track incredibly highly gifted students. We're "Number One" in the nation in the number of national merit scholars per capita in our student body. That's in all public universities and number five among all universities in total numbers. This year almost one out of every twelve of my freshmen was a national scholar, achievement scholar or a national merit scholar. I think only the president of Harvard could say that with certainty!

What we're intent on doing now is creating classes for students of 22 or less with our best faculty. We're also in the process of trying now with our international campaign to endow this program so that we can provide a core faculty for the honors program and reimburse depart-

ments which lend us their best faculty and will teach these courses at a higher rate. I want to produce the intense learning experience you would receive in a small, highly endowed private university but do it in the means and manner of a big school, a public university with all its diversities.

Every semester we allow more students to join. Even if you're a late bloomer, once you get a 3.7 average in your sophomore year, your junior year, even the first semester of your senior year, you can be admitted to honors courses in the field in which you've established that kind of academic record.

So, it's like a chance to get in an Ivy League school. But a new chance every semester. Many of our students who do come in from public high schools are late bloomers. They didn't necessarily want to be known as "students" in a high school. But they come here, they blossom, they bump up against very bright students from all over the country who were coming here and they complete.

Two more things. One would be we want to be a role model in international education, in the honors program, to show that public higher education can provide just as intense and intellectual experiences as private education can. And second we want to interact and use the resources of the University to help our state legislators, mayors and other public officials to use our center that we're developing, a research center in state and local government. It may be a scientific issue they're working on, so we use the center -- for example political scientists will use the center to bring a physicist in to talk about some piece of legislation with a scientific component.

The last thing is we're really trying to rebuild a sense of family and community, restore the values of teaching and mentoring outside of the classroom. Higher educa-

tion has done that in scholarly research and we shouldn't stop. But we should not undervalue great teaching and mentoring because that's so important. That's one of the reasons I'm teaching a class myself. We have brought back 50 retired full professors since I got here this past year to teach first and second year students. They're marvelous! Many of them retired too young, they have all these talents, they're not under pressure to publish anymore or to do scholarship anymore. They have time to be mentors, spend *extra* time with young students.

In our residence halls each floor has now "adopted" a professor for that floor and periodically the professor who agrees to be adopted will come and have dinner in the dining hall, spend time in their "home away from home." We're restoring the old president's home at the edge of the campus so that Molly and I can live here and be very visible right on the campus. Then I can walk to work because that always gives people a chance to talk to you and intercept you and you're approachable.

I think one of the reasons why people now don't have the same kind of sentimental attachment to their universities and a strong sense of wanting to give back is that 20-30 years ago there was always that special professor, teacher, mentor; they had a personal relationship. Not today. But I've said I don't want any student to ever graduate from here who doesn't have at least one or two faculty members who knew them by name but knew a lot more than that about them, knew their hopes, their dreams, their aspirations, helped encourage them. There should never be someone who leaves here without that kind of personal attachment that really makes a difference for the rest of their lives! No one should leave here who doesn't want to come back!

I still have "special" teachers. My first grade

teacher who I lost two or three years ago was someone I talked to every month of my life. All the time I was in the Senate I called her, "How am I doing?", I would ask and believe me Ms. Robbins would tell me. Her picture is right up there, the very first picture nearest my door next to Dr. Cross. My high school English teacher was another. Of course, Mr. Mitchell as long as he was alive, had constant communication. I was blessed to have those kind of relationships that were so meaningful to me and I'm determined that we try to create an atmosphere here which gives other young people those kinds of relationships.

So, personally, be a leader. That may be the most important thing of all. Because in higher education in the country, from the best of intention, under great pressure, there's more and more information available to scholars in your own discipline there's more and more to know. In this context we've succumbed to pressure to give up the time, the one on one time with students, that is just critically important if what's supposed to happen in the higher educational institutions is going to happen.

Basically we have kind of lost our soul and I think we have to struggle to get it back. And I hope the University of Oklahoma can be a place that demonstrates how to do that. It's not an overnight process, but it's something I hope we can do.

*Unger: Personally, my own sense is that if the University of Oklahoma can't do it with President Boren, then they will never do it. Earlier you mentioned the tremendous difficulties you now face in obtaining and budgeting "time." I want to pick up on that to thank you for making the time for us, for the NFL. I don't have any doubt, after this personal conversation, to hear you out, to hear your ideas, that "13" is going to be a very lucky number for the University of Oklahoma!*