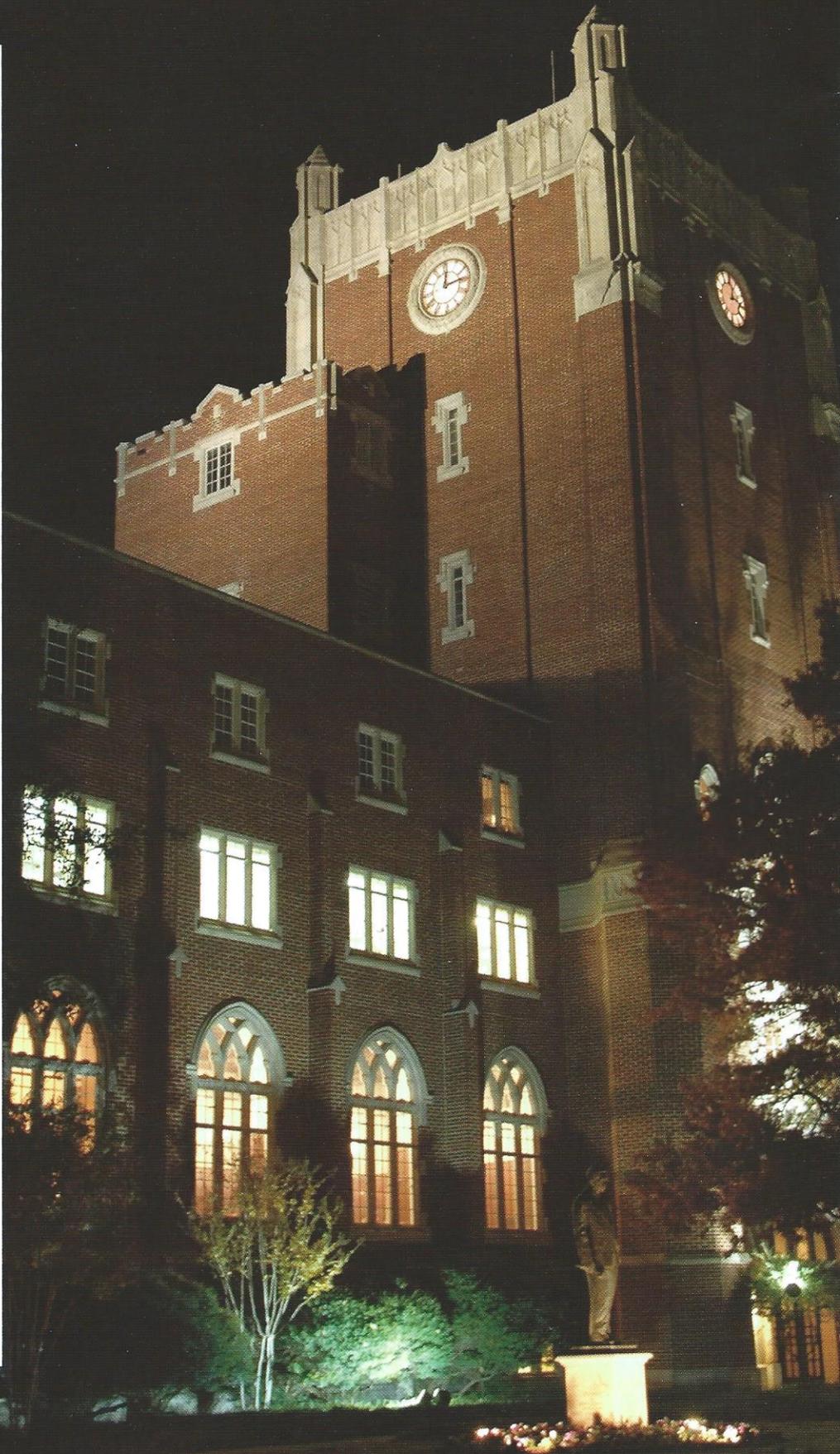


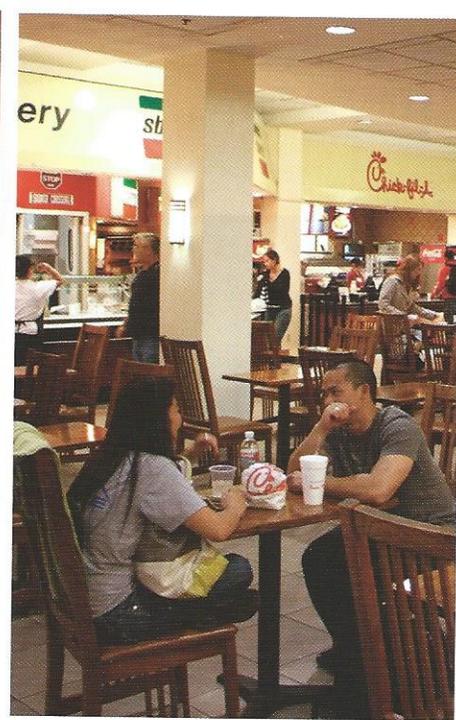
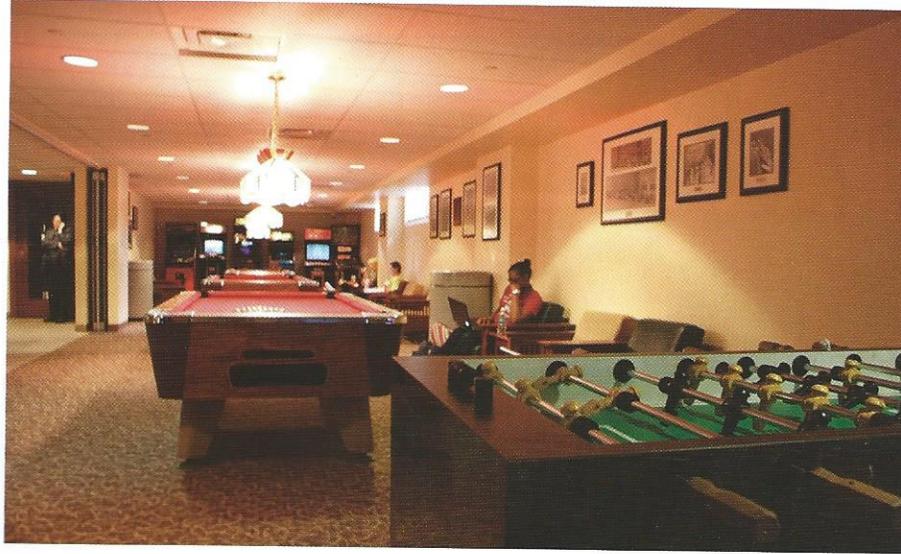
UNION: SO MUCH TO LOVE

BY KAYLEE BURTON

The Union: A History

- The original idea of a student union on the university campus came about in 1916 but was soon put on the back burner due to the onset of World War I.
- The original architectural drawings showed the Union as a part of the football stadium; however the designers ultimately decided to separate the two structures.
- It wasn't until 1922 that the need for a Union was revived when the Norman YMCA building caught fire and was reduced to little more than a pile of ash.
- The trustees of the Stadium-Union Memorial of the University of Oklahoma was formed in 1922 to oversee the proposed \$350,000 project. The group's first successful fundraiser was an auction of two bird dogs at the 1922 Homecoming football game vs. Missouri.
- The Union opened in January 1929 as a memorial to World War I veterans and featured a bookstore, cafeteria, soda fountain, billiards and game room, ballroom, and Alumni Association, Union and student government offices.
- The \$30,000, 99-foot clock tower was added in 1936. Two years later, the main lounge and two dining rooms on the second floor were added for \$27,000.
- The north and south wings tripled the floor space of the original building in 1951.
- 1982 saw the addition of the parking facility and several student-centered services, such as a copy shop and ATMs, at the request of a university task force that included students, faculty, Student Affairs and union staff in the late 1970s.
- In 1990, a food court replaced the cafeteria, and 1995 welcomed a \$15 million renovation that lasted nearly three years and covered all four floors of the entire building.
- 2000 marked the addition of the Archie W. Dunham Conoco Student Leadership Center, a response to student requests for a place where student organizations could be centrally located to meet, interact and co-program. The three-story, 16,000-square-foot addition currently houses student government and student organization offices as well as workspaces and lounges.





The Oklahoma Memorial Union has served as the hub of campus life since its unveiling in 1929 and has since blossomed into a campuswide community living room where students, faculty and visitors can congregate in historic OU style.

In addition to serving as a home base to more than 300 student organizations and activities, the Union houses a diverse selection of eateries, numerous lounges and study spots, a recently renovated bookstore, a 24-hour computer lab, an auditorium that doubles as a movie theater, a student radio station, student art gallery and even a grand ballroom and event spaces. A full-service post office, copy shop, ATMs and OU Credit Union are also among the Union features that make life on campus more convenient and efficient.

About 10,000 people visit the Union on an average weekday, says Laura Tontz, OMU director. "The Union is open 24/7, and there are always people here."

Whether you're catching up with friends or attending a larger meeting with professionals, the Union's central location, constant availability and many versatile areas make it a prime place for groups of any size to gather.

"It's a great meeting point," says Mohan Incharas, mechanical engineering senior. "Anybody knows the Union."

David DeWitt, political science senior, agrees. "It's a central meeting place," DeWitt says. "It's (also) a good break between classes. It's a place to relax where you don't have to stress about classes."

The Union boasts a number of lounges and seating areas that feature plush furniture to serve weary students and their need to fit in a few extra minutes of shut-eye or one last note scan before an exam. The furniture featured throughout the Union helps make every visitor feel a little more at home and a little less exhausted at the end of the day.

"Beard Lounge on the second floor provides students, faculty, staff and visitors a comfortable location to relax or study. The bookshelf on the north wall holds books published by the OU Press," Tontz says.

For those who prefer an alternative to a traditional library setting, yet also want to get away from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the campus, the Union offers plenty of hideouts, ranging from actual rooms that are traditionally used for studying or meetings to little nooks throughout the building.

"The Clarke-Anderson Room is most used for

studying, although you will see students everywhere, studying throughout the building," Tontz says.

"The building is almost completely saturated with wireless Internet. The Clarke-Anderson Room also offers data ports and lots of electrical outlets."

In addition, the Union offers a variety of culinary options perfectly suited for busy students, faculty, staff and visitors. Well-known restaurants Quiznos, Chick-fil-A, Wendy's, Sbarro and Wong Key fill the north wing of the building with a barrage of scents that tease the senses. The area is also host to a healthier option of salads, wraps and tomato-based specialty dishes at The Laughing Tomato.

Crossroads Restaurant, a classic favorite among students located on the first floor of the south wing, is a hit because of its low prices and outstanding 24/7 availability to students. Plus, it doesn't hurt that Starbucks, numerous televisions and a game room are all located nearby.

"I think the Union is great because of its classic style," Tontz says. "There's so much to love. Personally, I love the courtyard. I think it is so peaceful and beautiful. I also think it is awesome that it is open 24/7. I think that's a great service for OU students."

Whether it's between classes, in the evenings or on the weekends, relaxation and fun are key at the Union. The Union Programming Board, a student-run organization dedicated to bringing diverse programs to the Union, offers a number of exciting social activities, including an ongoing concert series, Union Jazz Lounge nights featuring free music, food and fun, and even the occasional foam party in the OMU parking facility. In addition, some of the most popular events on campus are free movie screenings in Meacham Auditorium, which boasts the versatility to run both 16- and 35-millimeter films, all in surround sound.

In addition to social activities, the Union hosts a number of events that enhance learning by adding the experience of a real-world professional atmosphere to student repertoires. Career fairs, leadership seminars and acclaimed international speakers and panels are just a few of the events that bring people from around the world to experience all that the university and Union have to offer.