January 25, 2002

Dear Arts and Sciences Student:

Welcome back for the Spring 2002 semester. This will be my 23rd spring as a faculty member at OU and my fifth as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. As dean I have become increasingly concerned about how many of your fellow students leave OU without completing their degrees. In many cases, they leave to earn money, either with the intent of coming back to school at a later date or to take a full-time job for which a degree is not required.

So, I want you to ask yourself a question. Which is more important to you, getting a job or earning a diploma? Your answer to this question will affect the rest of your life.

Although getting paid to work can sometimes appear more attractive than paying to stay in school, failing to complete a degree is a mistake with life-long consequences. Data from the U. S. Census Bureau show that college students who earn a bachelor’s degree earn 57% more than those who have only a high school education. Moreover, employment rates are higher for those with a bachelor’s degree than those with only a high school education.

By completing your bachelor’s degree, you can have the best of both worlds - an education and employment - and by completing your degree, you will significantly enhance your life-long earning potential. A college degree is an investment that really pays off.

We in the College of Arts and Sciences are committed to helping you complete your education and earn a diploma. The advisors in our Academic Services Office, located in PHSC 429, are there to answer your questions and to help you explore options relative to your educational goals. They can also help you overcome barriers – financial, academic or personal - that may be blocking your path to graduation. Please call to make an appointment (325-4411), send an email (casacad@ou.edu) or just drop by if you need advice or help in completing your education at OU.

One of the services offered by the A&S Academic Services Office is a degree check, which will let you know exactly how many hours and requirements you have remaining to graduate. Once you have earned 75 credit hours, you should call the office and make an appointment for a degree check. Also, during the semester before you graduate, you should visit the office and request a final graduation check to verify your graduation status. Finally, during the semester in which you will graduate, you must file an application for graduation in the Academic Services Office.

I am looking forward to saying, “Congratulations!” as you walk across the stage at graduation, knowing that you have achieved your educational goal and will now be among those for whom the door of opportunity will open wider. In thinking about what is more important - a job or a diploma - keep in mind that you can have both. Let us know how we in the College of Arts & Sciences can help.

Sincerely,
Paul B. Bell, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean