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CRIMSON AND, UM, ORANGE? OU shares Norman campus with OSU

As the Bedlam football game quickly approaches, devoted fans proudly display their school's colors and Oklahoma divides itself into orange and crimson.

Strangely enough, one building on the campus of OU amicably promotes both Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma. The new National Weather Center at OU is home to the Oklahoma Mesonet, Oklahoma's world-class weather monitoring network. When the Oklahoma Mesonet relocated to the National Weather Center in August, two OSU colleagues joined the rank and file on the campus of OU.

"What better way to display the OU/OSU partnership than to have an OSU employee with an address on 'David L. Boren Boulevard,'" asked Albert Sutherland, OSU Mesonet Agricultural Coordinator, whose new office is located on Sooner soil. "The move to the National Weather Center provides a physical reminder for everyone that walks by our office that OU and OSU not only can work together, but ARE working together."

And working together has meant the difference between success and failure, said Ken Crawford, director of the Oklahoma Climatological Survey and Mesonet steering committee member. "There is no way OU could have done the Mesonet by itself. We needed the political support of OSU, their agricultural linkages, and their independent voice. Likewise, OSU needed its colleagues in Norman," said Crawford. "Together, we have done great things."

The partnership between OU and OSU began about 20 years ago. In the early 1980s, scientists throughout Oklahoma recognized the need for a statewide weather network. At OSU, agricultural scientists wanted to upgrade weather instruments at their research sites. Meanwhile, scientists from OU and the Oklahoma Climatological Survey were helping to plan and implement a flood-warning system for Tulsa. OSU and OU joined forces in 1987 when they realized one statewide weather network would help both universities achieve their missions.

"It has never felt like a 'them-versus-us' situation," said Sutherland. "Both universities have so much to gain by sharing expertise and perspectives. In my experience, Oklahoma citizens are genuinely happy to know that the two largest universities in the state are working together. Then they let you know who they root for on Saturday afternoons."

Although they are staunch competitors on the football field, both Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma can celebrate their highly successful collaborative project. No other state or nation is known to have a weather network that boasts the capabilities of the Oklahoma Mesonet.

"It has been a great 20 years since we discovered each other," said Crawford. "Let's do another 20 years and hope we are half as successful."

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