



CARLOS RUBIO

If I close my eyes, I can imagine an OU flag gleaming and fluttering in the wind...

The vibrant crimson coupled with the cream letters pops against the canvas of campus. Students, faculty and staff walk under the flag and paint a picture of a beautiful spring day. I can hear them talk about the intricacies of their lives as they fill the space and bring the canvas to life. The emotions of four years in Norman are woven in the painting. Nights in the Tarman basement and afternoons in the Union define the colors. Cheese fries at the Mont, gatherings at “the shack,” High School Leadership Conference meetings on Tuesday nights and everything in between that reinforced creativity. The atmosphere on a Saturday in the fall and the incredibly fast pace the spring semester brings — the flag still gleaming bright through all of it.

Today, I open my eyes and no conversations fill the canvas. No walks down the South Oval or through the Bizz to paint the beautiful spring day. No pit stop in the Union for lunch before work, normally an abrupt halt to the pace of a spring semester. The crimson and cream of the flag grows dim. To be clear, there have been moments where the flag’s colors weren’t as bright. I would be remiss not to mention when the canvas that was painted made my peers and people of color feel oppressed and devalued. Never could I imagine, however, that I would open my eyes and come to this harsh reality at OU — the harsh reality that March 13 was the last brushstroke of many students’ journeys at the University of Oklahoma. I didn’t get the chance to say goodbye. My parents won’t have the chance to see their son walk across the stage. A nerve-wracking, formative and empowering part of my life has suddenly come to an end.

I can’t help but hope to see that flag fly once more.

Carlos Rubio