



NORMAN, Okla. -- Boomer and Sooner have gone animated and digital all in hopes of inspiring school children through a new program announced today.

The University of Oklahoma Athletics Department has unveiled Sooner Jr., an initiative that will feature animation and electronic interactives that promote the acronym, F.A.N.S., -- fitness fun, academics, nutrition and sportsmanship.

"This program, with the involvement of experts in the field of education, the technology we've employed and the work of Premise Entertainment, is one of the most unique youth outreaches by any college athletics program in the nation," said Joe Castiglione, Vice President and Director of Intercollegiate Athletics. "We want to be more creative in our community service and this is a giant step in that direction."

School-Based Program

Appearances at school assemblies and libraries represent part of the outreach, while programs designed for the internet and hand-held devices add a distinctive flare.

"Assemblies are popular because they give school children the opportunity to interact with our coaches and student-

athletes," Castiglione said, while noting that OU student- athletes and staff logged nearly 1,400 community service hours last year. "Now we also include a focused curriculum that we've constructed through consultation with a number of experts.

"By including online interaction, we make the program ongoing and available to even those locations that we can't reach in person."

The educational aspect of the program has been influenced by The K20 Center for Educational and Community Renewal, a statewide education research and development center which promotes innovative learning through school-university-

community collaboration. The K20 mission is to cultivate a collaborative network engaged in research and outreach that creates and sustains innovation and transformation through leadership development, shared learning, and authentic technology integration.

Year one of F.A.N.S., will focus on reading skills with a Read Like a Champion program. "This facet of the program challenges young people to enhance their reading skills by reading more often," Castiglione said. "There is a statewide focus on literacy at this time and we hope that we can provide another tool for the great teachers of this state in that endeavor."

Fundraising Program

As part of the Sooner Jr. Program, OU has launched a special fundraising program that helps area schools and youth-based organizations raise money for much-needed projects in the four core areas through the sale of officially licensed OU products.

Cartoons and Animation

Premise Entertainment played a leading role in developing support materials that will bolster the effort by transforming Boomer and Sooner, the school's mascots, into cartoon format, both still and animated.

Premise is a premiere media based production company specializing in storytelling and character development for animation and live action productions. It consists of industry professionals and former Walt Disney Feature Animation colleagues and live action film veterans located in Orlando, Fla.

"Premise Entertainment is delighted to participate in this exciting youth initiative," said Premise President Dominic Carola. "It's always an added bonus to work on a purpose-driven project that is a positive influence. I applaud OU and its athletic leadership for taking a step in this direction in launching their quality message and allowing us to help bring their characters to life through the broad appeal of animation."

Castiglione said that Premise's participation helps the department reach a long-time goal in personalizing the mascots to youth.

<http://www.soonersports.com/soonerjr/index.html>

"In many instances, the mascots are ambassadors for our program with a younger audience, and this program underscores the important role they play in that capacity," Castiglione said. "By utilizing them in the world of animation technology the realm of animation, we further personalize the mascots and transition them into an educational role that broadens their impact."

iPhone Application

OU's Information Technology department developed the applications for iPhones. It includes avatars, news and events, points earned by the user in various activities, stories that include the mascots as main characters and a game that will combine Sooner and educational themes.

The iPhone application is available in the iTunes store. Download it [here](#).

Program Development

A theme song, "Sooner Someday," was developed by Banshee Music, located in Milwaukee, Wis. It will be featured in all of the program's digital modes.

Castiglione cited the work of two staff members on the project, assistant athletics director for marketing Charlie Taylor and licensing director Renata Hays.

"I want to recognize the efforts of Charlie and Renata," Castiglione said. "They have worked very hard on this project and brought to fruition a program that takes the positive impact of the Oklahoma brand and transforms it into an encouragement and motivational tool for children."

This initiative also is accompanied by a line of apparel that already is available in the [OU Online Store](#) and several stores throughout the region that normally carry Sooner merchandise.

Sooner Jr., has its own email address at soonerjr@ou.edu.