

The Hancher Years—1940-1964

On July 13, 1940, the State Board of Education named Chester A. Phillips, Dean of the College of Commerce, as Acting President of the University in recognition of twenty years' faithful service. Phillips administered University affairs with fidelity and efficiency, and returned to his post as Dean following Virgil M. Hancher's assumption of the presidency on November 2, 1940.

Virgil Melvin Hancher was selected as President by the Board of Education on August 28, 1940. A Pocahontas County boy from Rolfe, Hancher entered the University in 1914 where he was active in debate and oratory. He joined the Zetagathian Literary Society, Sigma Nu Fraternity, was elected president of the senior class and to A.F.I. (All for Iowa). During World War I he was on active duty with the Naval Reserve. He was selected as a Rhodes scholar from Iowa and traveled widely in Europe. Returning to the University, he entered the College of Law and received his degree in 1924.

For the next sixteen years Hancher practiced law in Chicago. On November 2, 1940, he began his long career as President of the University of Iowa, the longest of any president to date.

The sneak attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on Sunday, December 7, 1941, rocked the campus. Although he had been in charge of the University only a little over a year, President Hancher took command of the situation with a sure and firm hand. The wartime survival of the University received his deep consideration and sustained attention.

He offered the resources of the University to the government, and adapted the schedule and curriculum to a wartime pace. The following principles were to be in force for the duration of the war, beginning with the 1942-1943 academic year:

1. Full-time continuous use of facilities and personnel.
2. Maintenance of normal standards of achievement.
3. Lengthened academic year—three sessions for 1942-1943.
4. Calendar time reduced for completion of a given curriculum.
5. Flexibility of curriculum to meet wartime needs.
6. Special guidance concerning military service and preparation for specialized services.
7. Students called to military service during the semester to be given proportional credit and tuition refunds within reasonable limits.
8. Students and faculty to be stimulated to a consciousness of their duties and responsibilities.
9. New courses to meet special needs such as electronics, chemistry of explosives, navigational astronomy, ballistics, and others.
10. Normal program for emergency training and long time educational needs.

11. Increased cooperation with National government by intensifying R.O.T.C. training and by sponsoring adult education courses in Engineering Science and Management Defense training, aeronautics for civilian pilots, training of aviation cadets, and in special research projects.

Early in 1942 University officials, headed by President Hancher, and representatives of the Navy worked out an agreement by which a Navy Pre-Flight School would be established on the campus. On April 6, 1942, the United States Government entered into a contract with the Iowa State Board of Education for use of two dormitories and partial use of the Fieldhouse and adjacent drill ground areas. On April 15, the Navy commissioned in dramatic ceremonies the first of four (later five) pre-flight bases.

By 1943 the Navy Pre-Flight School numbered some 2,500 cadets in each training course. Four such courses were staggered throughout the year. Some 8,000 cadets were given pre-flight training each full year. The permanent staff consisted of 175 officers and 150 enlisted men.

Cadets were housed and fed in Hillcrest and the Quadrangle. Training and instructional programs were handled in the Fieldhouse and in a newly constructed building, South Hall, which also furnished quarters and offices for the Navy staff.

Official relations between University administration and Pre-Flight officers were carried out with a minimum of friction.

By 1943 the University was functioning as an "arsenal of education" in a wartime training situation. Hundreds of students and alumni were in the armed forces. Many of the faculty had donned the uniform or entered into war work or government service. War research projects were under way in libraries and laboratories. Navy and Army programs gave the campus a military aspect.

The University also participated in the War Training Service feature of the Naval Aviation Training program. Some 90 students were given elementary flight instruction under University auspices. By June, 1944, over 500 individuals had received this training. These students were housed at the Burkley Hotel, fed at the Iowa Memorial Union, given flight instruction at the Iowa City Airport, and received theoretical training at the College of Engineering.

Late in 1942 the University entered into an Army Air Corps Pre-Meteorological program. This was staffed by regular members of the University faculty on a half-time basis.

Another Army program began March 15, 1943. Some 200 men were housed in the Law Commons while classes were held in Schaeffer Hall, University Hall, and the Mathematics-Physics Building. In May, the Army B program of this series was activated. This group was housed in East Hall, fed at the Iowa Memorial Union, and attended classes in University buildings. The aca-

demic program was taught by University personnel with an Army Air Force major in command.

An Army Specialized Training Program (A.S.T.P.) was started on May 10, 1943, for some 420 basic engineers under the military control of the University's R.O.T.C. staff. The engineers were housed in fraternity houses leased for the purpose, and the Iowa Memorial Union served as a mess center. University faculty members conducted courses in mathematics, physics, chemistry, English, history, and geography.

Between July, 1942, and June, 1944, the University trained or had in training army and navy personnel as follows:

Navy Pre-Flight	15,399
Medical (Army and Navy)	291
Dental (Army and Navy)	130
A.S.T.P.	2,144
Training Service (Navy)	507
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Total	18,471

A total of 36,357 military personnel had some part of their educational or military training at the University. In 1944, when the training program was at its peak, the University reserved for its students only one large dormitory—Currier Hall—for 566 women, and five co-operative residences reserved for 118 women.

Several University faculty members made special contributions to the war effort: Alexander El-

lett, secret defense projects; Dean Francis M. Dawson and James A. Jacobs, V. T. fuse; C. H. McCloy, physical education; Dewey B. Stuit, psychology; Don Lewis, army; Goldwin Smith, Ross Livingston, George Cuttino, Army in Europe; John Haefner and R. W. Crary, Navy Pacific area; J. J. Runner, Geographical Survey; Allen C. Tester, engineers; J. Milton Cowan, languages; Wilbur L. Schramm, Office of Facts and Figures; Herbert O. Lyte, German language; George Glockler, consultant, War Board; George H. Coleman, National Defense Research; Lothrop Smith, Manhattan District Project; Paul C. Packer and E. T. Peterson, University courses in France and England; and others.

The war years affected every aspect of University life—student affairs, financial support, the curriculum, and public service. During these years the University moved to a more efficient and a more democratic operation.

At the request of the Federal Security Agency and the United States Office of Education, the University set up a Key Center for War Information with the Extension Division, the Department of Speech, and War Information Committee cooperating. Information about the war was distributed through press, radio, lectures, and pamphlets. The University, through concerts, plays, art exhibits, lectures, sports events, and conferences, entertained and enlightened the public.

In the spring of 1942, President Hancher merged the offices of Dean of Men, Dean of Women, and the Employment Service to provide unity and effect economies. In July, 1942, the three agencies were united as the Office of Student Affairs under the directorship of Professor C. Woody Thompson. As Dean of Students and Director of Student Affairs, Professor Thompson and his staff handled student problems, made assignments to dormitories through Student Housing Service, and provided inspection and approval for quarters rented to students. A committee on Student Aid, composed of members of the Office of Student Affairs, the University Treasurer, and the University Comptroller, administered loans and grants to students in cooperation with the Manager of Student Placement. An advisor to foreign students was in charge of social programs, housing, and personal problems of these students.

Complementing the work of the Office of Student Affairs was the Office of Veterans Service in charge of Professor William D. Coder as Director. Under the G. I. Bill of Rights the influx of veterans became heavy in 1945-1946. This Bill provided (1) financial support to veterans in proportion to length of service; (2) tuition and supplies not to exceed \$500 per year; and (3) subsistence allowance, at first of \$50 per month for single and \$75 per month for married men, later \$65 for single and \$90 for married veterans.

This influx created a housing shortage in Iowa City. Trailer and barrack communities were established: one along the Iowa River west of the Library Annex, another north of the Dramatic Arts Building, and others on the west campus. The University bulged with veterans and their wives. These students, eager to pursue their education, brought a feeling of stability and educational motivation to the campus.

Agitation for student government received the approval of President Hancher and Dean Thompson. A student council was organized.

During the first five years of the Hancher administration financial support was influenced by war conditions. While demands of the war years imposed burdens, Navy and Army contracts helped. Support increased from \$3,439,869.72 for 1941 to \$4,362,766.39 for 1944. Although tuition declined the loss was made up by increased state support and service contracts.

During the war and afterwards the University kept its contacts with the citizens of the state. Football and basketball games drew large crowds. Radio Station WSUI reached a large audience. The Extension Division reached thousands through correspondence courses, bulletins, conferences and institutes, and high school events. Annually over 12,000 persons visited the campus for conferences and institutes. Some 7,000 high school musicians participated in State Music con-

tests, and the State Scholarship contest (popularly called the Iowa Brain Derby) brought in 1,200 high school students for examinations and an award dinner. High school speech contests and drama festivals brought hundreds of students and adults to the campus. An annual conference on child development and parent education, sponsored by the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station and the Extension Division, drew several hundred parents for study and discussion. The University of Iowa Speech Clinic, with such men as James F. Curtis and Wendell Johnson, attracted national attention. A new building on the west campus is named for Johnson.

On June 30, 1945, Dean Harry K. Newburn of the College of Liberal Arts left to become President of the University of Oregon, joining the ranks of 22 other University alumni who were presidents of universities or colleges at that time. He was succeeded by Earl J. McGrath of Buffalo University, an active leader in general education. Dean Emeritus C. E. Seashore emerged from retirement to fill the position he held for so long. At the end of 1946 Professor George W. Stewart, distinguished head of the Physics Department for 37 years, retired and was succeeded by Louis A. Turner, a noted nuclear physicist of Princeton University. Dean Paul C. Packer of the College of Education became Chancellor of the Oregon System of Higher Education.

On February 25, 1947, the State University of Iowa concluded its first 100 years of service to the State and Nation.

One of the significant achievements of the Hancher administration was the study and revision of the Liberal Arts curriculum. In 1942, when Dean Newburn had been in office less than six months, a steering committee and subcommittee for subject matter areas were appointed to study and present a curriculum report. After months of work the reports were made. Professors Norman Foerster, Director of the School of Letters, and Professor E. B. Reuter, Head of the Sociology Department, led the opposition. On April 5, 1944, in a stormy session the Faculty of the College of Liberal Arts approved the new curricular program by a vote of 108-50. Professors Foerster and Reuter resigned and left the University. The announcement of the revised Liberal Arts program evoked nationwide interest and response.

During the Gilmore and Hancher administrations progress was registered for the faculty in academic freedom, tenure, retirement, sick leave, leave of absence, sabbatical leave, and general organization. In 1939 the State Board of Education accepted President Gilmore's proposals on tenure. Instructors were to hold their appointments on an annual basis, assistant professors, for three years on a renewable footing, while faculty members with academic rank of associate profes-

sor or above were to be appointed for an indefinite tenure. This arrangement became effective on July 1, 1939.

Plans for selecting and appointing new faculty members were developed with the cooperation of department heads, deans, other administrative officers, as well as the approval of fellow members of a department. Age, teaching competence, membership in learned societies, marital and family status, written recommendations, education, experience, manners and habits, health, nationality, and publications were factors to be considered.

No well-defined policy for leaves of absence existed but the war forced decisions. There was no established plan for sabbatical leaves, but a policy of granting time for study and research was substituted under Hancher. Standards for promotion included teaching ability and research.

Before 1944, the University of Iowa had no definite retirement plan. Under the old system each case was dealt with on its merits. In 1944 Iowa was the only Big Ten school without a funded retirement plan. In May, 1944, President Hancher announced the adoption of a funded retirement program through the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America.

Under Presidents Gilmore and Hancher two organizations conducted faculty business. The Senate of the State University of Iowa consisted of the President, Deans, Registrar, Librarian, Di-

rector (later Dean) of Extension, the full professors, and heads of departments. This group met irregularly at the call of the President. Its principal activities were carried on by 21 standing committees. The Faculty of the College of Liberal Arts met regularly on the second Wednesday in October and March. It discussed problems relating to curriculum, requirements for entrance or graduation, study of problems relating to legislation, and broader educational issues. There were eight standing committees.

Restoration of faculty salaries faced both Presidents Gilmore and Hancher and under each substantial progress was made. Iowa, however, lagged behind other Big Ten schools. During the Hancher administration efforts were made, with considerable success, to bring University salaries up to third place in the Big Ten.

Faculty achievements during these years were noteworthy. Of one thousand scientists listed in *American Men of Science* in 1938, thirteen were University of Iowa men:

Professor Edward Bartow—head, Department of Chemistry

Professor Joseph H. Bodine—head, Department of Zoology

Professor Edward Chittenden—Department of Mathematics

Professor Alexander Ellett—Department of Physics

Professor Gilbert Hauser—Department of Zoology

Dean George F. Kay—former head, Department of Geology

Professor Kurt Lewin—Iowa Child Welfare Research Station

Professor Henry L. Rietz—head, Department of Mathematics

Dean Carl E. Senshore—former head, Department of Psychology

Professor George W. Stewart—head, Department of Physics

Professor Arthur C. Trowbridge—head, Department of Geology

Professor Emil Witchi—Department of Zoology

Professor Robert B. Wylie—head, Department of Botany

Professor Frank L. Mott, Director of the School of Journalism, was a Pulitzer prize winner in History for his three volumes of *A History of American Magazines*. Paul Engle won the \$1,000 prize of the Friends for American Writers in 1941. Lester D. Longman, head of the Department of Art, was editor of *Parnassus*, a national art magazine. Professor Louis Pelzer, History Department, became editor of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* in 1941.

President Hancher began to work for a library appropriation soon after he took office. He assembled convincing evidence to support his request. In view of the critical need, the University sought an appropriation of \$500,000 from the 49th General Assembly for the first unit of a Li-

brary. This was trimmed to \$300,000 by the Legislature and passed. But the war intervened and the building was delayed. In 1945, the University secured another appropriation of \$1,000,000 and the long-needed Library was begun.

At the same time plans were developed for a Communications Center to house Journalism, Visual Education, and Television. Journalism had used parts of four buildings after Close Hall was damaged by fire. An appropriation of \$515,000 by the 51st General Assembly in 1945 assured the Journalism unit.

Among the crises faced by President Hancher, one of the worst threatened the strength and stability of the College of Medicine. His solution was contained in the Iowa Plan for Medical Compensation which established a pattern of public-private payment of Medical staff members now followed as standard procedure by many universities. Under Dean Robert C. Hardin and staff of the College of Medicine additions and alterations were made to the Medical plant; and a "Graduate Program in Hospital and Health Administration" was introduced by Director Gerhard Hartman.

New University agencies established during his administration included a Center for Labor and Management in the College of Business Administration, the Agricultural Law Center in the College of Law, the Institute of Agricultural Medicine in the College of Medicine under Dr. Frank-

lin H. Top, the Institute of Public Affairs under Robert F. Ray, and the School of Social Work—all of special benefit to Iowa.

An accomplishment in which President Hancher took pride was acquisition of land west of the campus for future expansion. The purchase of a site for the new Finkbine Golf Course, considered by some as a luxury, gave the University an area more than twice the size of the campus in 1940.

During the Gilmore and Hancher periods athletics flourished and the debt on the Fieldhouse and Stadium was liquidated. Money was left for needed improvements on the athletic plant. The winning football teams of Coach Eddie Anderson, 1939-1940, with the famous "Ironmen," started the upward swing. Then came the fabulous period under Coach Forest Evashevski with Big Ten championships in 1957, 1958, and a tie in 1960. Trips to the Rose Bowl in 1957 and 1959 with victories over Oregon State and California focused the spotlight on Iowa. During the same period, Big Ten championships in basketball, baseball, gymnastics, tennis, wrestling, and track were greatly enjoyed by Iowa fans.

President Hancher may be remembered in years to come for his "One University for Iowa Plan" as much as for his 24 years of service. At a meeting of the Service Clubs of Iowa City and Coralville, June 29, 1964, he proposed consolidation of the three universities into one under the Board of

Regents; that the University of Iowa be designated as a Land Grant University to share with Iowa State in the benefits from such a status; and that one president would preside over the three institutions. No action was taken on his suggestion.

When Virgil M. Hancher returned to Iowa City in 1940 he had had no previous experience in educational administration. But he possessed three important assets: an innate understanding of what a University is, a deep affection for that which was his own, and a native's sense of the Iowa way of doing things.

He had his share of the problems, coming to Iowa at a time of national crisis when enrollment was dropping and progress was stalled. His goals—to accomplish a more realistic pride in the University and to merit new support from the people of Iowa and others—guided his actions.

Hancher's leadership accomplished much. Enrollment at the University in 1940 was 6,667; in 1961 it reached over 11,000. In 1960 the campus had tripled the size of the 1940 campus. At the same time the University staff had doubled, and there was more than a fivefold increase in the payroll. Research grants had multiplied 34 times. The University had grown from an \$8.5 million enterprise in 1940 to one of \$48 million in 1960.

In the 1950's extensive repairs were made at the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory under the direction of Professor J. H. Bodine and Dean Bruce E. Ma-

han. A new building, Mahan Hall, was used for lectures, conferences, and public meetings.

By the end of the Summer Session in August, 1961, President Hancher had conferred more than one-half the degrees awarded to graduating students in the 114-year history of the University.

An outstanding event was the dedication of a new College of Law Building on April 6, 7, 1962, under the direction of Dean Mason Ladd. Chief Justice Earl Warren of the United States Supreme Court was the principal speaker. Built on the bluff west of the Fine Arts Building, the new structure furnished needed classrooms and library space. The former Law Commons adjoining provided offices for the faculty and seminar rooms.

The College of Pharmacy occupied its new building north of the Fieldhouse in the summer of 1963. It provided much needed space and new facilities. Under former Deans Wilber J. Teeters, Rudolph A. Kuever, and the present Dean, Louis C. Zopf, the College has attained high rank.

During this period Loren L. Hickerson and Joseph W. Meyer, alumni executives, reorganized the Alumni Association and set up the University of Iowa Foundation to receive gifts and bequests. Money from the Foundation was used to support research and other campus projects.

During his administration President Hancher became a figure of national and international renown. He has been described as "an educator of

discerning judgment, of enduring patience, and of effective action." He was twice awarded the George Washington Honor Medal for outstanding scholarly writing by Freedoms Foundation.

Hancher served as Chairman of the American Council on Education; as President of the National Association of State Universities; and as Vice President of the Association of American Universities. In 1949 he was that organization's delegate to a conference on Indian-American affairs in New Delhi, India. In 1952 he was named a member of the National Commission for UNESCO, and in 1959 served as a United States delegate to the United Nations. Under President Eisenhower, Hancher was a member of the five-man committee which selected the site of the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1954. He was named to the Academy's first Board of Visitors.

Shortly after his retirement he and Mrs. Hancher embarked for New Delhi, India, where he was to serve as an educational consultant for the Ford Foundation. On March 30, 1965, after serving from the previous August, he suffered a severe heart attack, the second in nine years, and died that same day. His body was returned to Iowa City for burial.