CHAPTER FIVE

EDUCATIONAL REFORM

At the same time that the foregoing influences were at work bringing change to Illinois State University, yet another emerged to challenge the university community. Beginning with *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, a report released in the spring of 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, a succession of studies and reports prepared by state and national associations, foundations, and commissions condemned the American educational system. The reports expressed the public's alarm over the failure of the nation's schools and universities to adequately educate young people to meet the economic challenges posed by the new technological age. It was claimed that the average high school and college graduate of the early '80s was not as well educated as those of 25 to 35 years earlier, as measured by competencies in the basic skills of reading, writing, and simple computations. Worse, illiteracy at all ages was growing, posing grave dangers to the foundations of American democratic institutions. The numerous studies commonly identified the causes of the decline in basic skills in the inadequacies of elementary/secondary curricula, college admission requirements, and teacher preparation programs. Only by restoring "excellence" to a dominant place in the country's public schools and universities would the American people be ready to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century.

*A Nation At Risk* gave a decisive impetus to a national education reform, which in time affected all levels of schooling. But the call for educational regeneration, like so many other reform movements in history, was not entirely new when first heard in 1983. The effort to bring about qualitative changes in
education had been already underway in Illinois for several years. In 1978 a Joint Education Committee, responsible to both the Board of Higher Education and the State Board of Education, addressed the problem of remediation in the state's public universities, a problem rooted in the basic skills deficiencies of high school graduates entering higher education. As a result of the JEC's study, the BHE directed Illinois public universities to phase out all remediation credit courses by 1983 except where such courses were part of special assistance programs. At the same time that the JEC made its report, ISU's faculty also were addressing the issue of basic skills deficiencies, which would lead to the upgrading of the University's admission requirements and academic standards. Similarly, the 1979 revision of University Studies represented a campus determination to protect and enhance the values of general education. Members of the Board of Regents also expressed concern over qualitative issues, especially the growing vocationalism and lengthening specialization required by some degree programs, often at the expense of a liberal education. One consequence of the BOR's concern was a directive to the regency universities to establish policies and cut back programs to assure that students could indeed graduate in four years. After several years of study and the inevitable "political" jockeying among departments, ISU's Academic Senate in early 1984 finally approved a policy of 120 credit hours for graduation, which compelled most departments to make adjustments in their requirements and brought to an end the "comprehensive major." In 1981, the JEC made further recommendations on improving writing skills, especially in elementary and secondary schools. The next year, ISU's English faculty participated in the Illinois English Articulation Project which focused on writing instruction across levels of education. Based on its previous studies, the JEC in early 1983 proposed that the goal of all education in Illinois should be an increased emphasis on mathematics, sciences, and communication skills, a theme repeated by several special commissions of the executive and legislative branches of Illinois government.

Educational reform in Illinois was already underway when it became a public issue in 1983. It remains a common, though unfunded, concern to the present. As the reform effort gained
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momentum, it came to involve the governor and General Assembly, governing boards, school districts, and teachers' unions, as well as students, parents, and the taxpaying public. All levels of education, from elementary schools to higher education, were subject to intense scrutiny, and none escaped the demands for change as a way to achieve quality. The effects of the educational reform movement on Illinois State University, as well as the other Illinois public universities, were felt in three areas: admission requirements, teacher education, and undergraduate education. In each case, ISU's faculty and administrators had initiated substantial qualitative changes before 1983, yet the reform urge of state agencies and the governing boards, particularly the Board of Higher Education, was so compelling that further changes were mandated in those areas whether or not they were justified or feasible. Though each of the three elements were dealt with separately by the University, the three actually overlapped in time. In combination they exerted a potent influence in shaping institutional priorities, while blurring the University's sense of mission and identity.

The first reform issue focused on the basic skills deficiencies of high school graduates. Both the state legislature and the BHE in 1983 attacked the problem in terms of specific course requirements but from slightly different directions, the legislature being concerned about all high school graduates and the BHE only those entering higher education. The General Assembly acted first. Legislation specified diploma requirements for students entering high school in 1984: three years of language arts, two years each of math and social studies, and one year each of science and fine arts or foreign language. Governor Thompson later substituted computer technology for one year of math. The General Assembly possessed the constitutional power to impose its will directly on school districts, but the BHE lacked such authority and therefore resorted to indirection by means of university admission requirements to force high schools to upgrade their curriculum. On November 1, 1983 the BHE recommended that each public university should include specific subjects and units as part of its freshman admission standards and told high school students who intended to pursue a baccalaureate degree to complete four years of study.
in English, social studies, math, and science, and if possible two years of a foreign language. Universities were required to explain and justify their own requirements, and based on those reports, the BHE in the fall of 1984 recommended that all public universities should adopt the board’s standards for the 1990-91 year, allowing for “provisional” admission of those students unable to meet the criteria; the same course specific standards would apply to students in transfer programs at community colleges. The BHE also directed that universities should assist high schools to prepare their students to meet the tougher admission requirements. Once again the universities had to report their actions. On November 11, 1985 the BHE made its requirements mandatory for all Illinois public universities and community colleges.

It was a sensitive subject which raised basic questions about the purposes of schooling and practical considerations of implementation for educational leaders over the next several years. Antithetical to the BHE’s method to raise the quality of the public schools, the staff and members of the State Board of Education, as well as school superintendents and principals, argued that “learning outcomes” or competencies should be used as admission criteria rather than time spent in specific subject courses, which guaranteed nothing; the SBE in conjunction with statewide commissions proposed a repeal of all mandated course requirements and new legislation incorporating the learning outcomes approach. Practical considerations of implementation were no less important. Did high schools have the faculty, financial, and space resources available, particularly in math and science, to meet the BHE’s tough recommendations? What effects would the higher admission standards have on university enrollments? Would minority students from disadvantaged inner-city schools, older adults, or graduates from small high schools be denied access to higher education? At ISU, admissions personnel estimated that less than 25 percent of the freshmen class could meet the BHE’s criteria. These questions and others in extended detail were topics of discussion in conferences and meetings of the Board of Regents, but without resolution.

Probably most university administrators would have pre-
ferred to see the issue go away. President Watkins in 1983 felt that ISU's admission standards, revised three years earlier, upheld quality and at the same time protected access to the University. Even before the advent of educational reform, the readiness and potential for university-level work of ISU freshmen, as indicated by ACT scores, were improving. University presidents were also uncomfortable with requirements applicable to all universities regardless of differing institutional missions. Yet as President Watkins told the Academic Senate in October, 1984, the BHE's recommendation could not be ignored. "It is necessary to remember that the IBHE is a most important body in terms of final approvals of budgets . . . and has the authority to approve or flatly reject any major area of study that may be proposed. . . ." Instead of rejecting outright the BHE's course-specific criteria, the University sought to take a middle position between the BHE and the advocates of general competency standards as reflected in its admission requirements in place since 1982. The University's first report, sent to the BHE in June, 1984, was prepared by an ad hoc committee which recommended that the current catalog requirements of class rank/ACT scores and basic skills in English and math, determined by test scores or courses, be retained with the addition of a new science component; the implementation date would be 1987, if approved by the appropriate campus bodies. When the BHE once more recommended its own course-specific requirements to be effective in 1990, the problem was turned over to the Academic Standards Committee, chaired by Joann Rayfield of history, where prolonged discussions followed, including a committee-sponsored conference of high school principals and superintendents and community college officials who expressed their own reservations on the BHE's plan. In early 1985, the Standards Committee accepted and the administration sent off to the BHE the conclusion of the earlier ad hoc committee's report as a statement of ISU's intentions. In a sense the University was dragging its feet, but in November, 1985 the BHE's recommendations became mandatory. The politics of education, however, intervened at that point. In response to pressure from a number of school districts, the Illinois General Assembly in its 1986 session deferred
implementation of the BHE’s requirements to 1993. Still, the University could no longer delay taking action. Once again the Academic Standards Committee took up the problem and after long discussions proposed to the Academic Senate a two-stage revision of admission requirements, which the Senate approved in March, 1987. Freshmen and transfer students entering the University in 1990 had to fulfill an upgraded version of class rank/ACT scores and broader basic skills requirements which allowed either years of study or minimal ACT subscores in English, math, social sciences, and natural sciences; those entering in 1993 would have to meet the BHE requirements. Despite the long period during which this issue was debated, it is still not clear whether the BHE’s action would have the desired outcome of forcing an improvement of the basic skills of Illinois high school graduates, or what the impact would be on Illinois State University, particularly the size, composition, and preparation of its student population.

Less controversial but more immediate in bringing change to the University was the reform of the requirements and programs in teacher education. According to the critics of the time, some of the responsibility for the failures of America’s educational system could be laid at the door of the colleges of education that produced poorly qualified classroom teachers who were themselves deficient in the basic skills and lacked preparation in the subjects they taught. It was a popular issue which generated numerous national, state, and professional reports and proposals to change the training of teachers. In Illinois, Governor James Thompson had proclaimed 1985 as the “Year of Education,” but much already was underway that would affect teacher education. Several years earlier, the General Assembly had established a legislative commission which examined aspects of teacher training as a part of the larger problem of school reform; the commission’s work eventually produced the sweeping Education Reform Act of 1985 (SB 730), features of which directed changes in state teacher certification requirements. Meanwhile, the Board of Regents in 1984 created a task force of regency faculty and administrators, chaired by Dean William Dunifon of ISU’s college of education, to study “Quality in Education Programming” at the three regency universities.
The task force's report, accepted by the BOR at about the same time that the state legislature in 1985 was enacting school reform, called for substantial changes in teacher education programs, paralleling the revisions mandated by SB 730. Included in the thirteen recommendations, the exploration of experimental approaches was encouraged; programs should achieve a better balance of subject matter and pedagogy; higher academic standards and other criteria for admission to programs were necessary; minority students must be recruited and retained; and professional assistance in various ways should be extended to school districts and community colleges.

Important as external stimuli were to bringing about a re-examination of teacher education programs, that process had been initiated in the college of education even before it became a matter of popular interest. Although the place of the college in the university had diminished from the golden years of the late 1960s as had occurred at every other university, it was nonetheless one of the nation's leading education establishments. Given its historical commitment and achievements in professional education, it was perhaps to be expected that the University would play a primary role in the reform of teacher preparation. As President Watkins told the Board of Regents shortly after the release of A Nation At Risk, "ISU is uniquely equipped to become the leading center for a national drive toward excellence in education." Indeed, a critical survey of education colleges conducted by Newsweek magazine in 1984 placed ISU's college among the few in the country that were already seeking to meet the challenge of reestablishing quality in public education. Under the leadership of the deans of the college, Benjamin Hubbard (1979-82) and William Dunifon (1982-86), the members of the council for teacher education and faculty in the education departments were abreast, perhaps even ahead, of the reform movement. As early as 1981-82, the Council for Teacher Education initiated study of the need to establish more selective admission and retention standards for education programs as a way to improve the quality of prospective teachers. Late in 1982, a report of a special committee, chaired by Dr. Franzie Loepp, distinguished professor of industrial technology, recommended the verifica-
tion of the basic skills competency of students entering teacher education. After further consideration, the teacher education council in 1983-84 approved a basic skills requirement and a pilot testing project to begin in the fall of 1985. The council during 1983-84 also reviewed the minimum grade point average necessary to enter and remain in teacher education. Since the early 1970s, a 2.2 GPA had been required, a level slightly above the University's definition of "academic good standing" for all students. After a study committee report in 1984, the council proposed to raise the minimum cumulative GPA to 2.5 for students seeking to become teachers.

Other activities of the college of education faculty also placed them in the mainstream of the educational reform movement. Dr. David Tucker, professor of specialized educational development, started in 1982 with the cooperation of Metcalf teachers a project to develop instructional procedures to improve the reading comprehension of elementary students; the "Metcalf Project" became a model and in 1985 won a "Showcase for Excellence" award from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and was featured in a national PBS television series on education. In 1984, Dr. Thomas Fitch, professor of curriculum and instruction, received a $500,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to upgrade the teaching of science at the elementary and secondary levels; each summer for three years, 40 school teachers would come to the University for additional study. Two conferences of significance were held in early 1984 to address the issues of quality in education. One brought together the presidents of nine of Illinois's twelve public universities, and the other national education leaders and an audience of nearly 2,000 people.

These accomplishments prepared the college of education for the governor's "Year of Education" in 1985, and the changes in teacher preparation recommended by the BOR task force and those required by legislative enactment. The earlier plans to establish basic skills testing and a higher grade point average for admission and retention became specific proposals and gained full campus approval by 1987; over a dozen departments in the other colleges followed suit and imposed a 2.5 GPA on their
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program majors entering teacher education. All degree programs in the college of education were evaluated in 1985-86 as part of the University's regular program review process. That college review, coming at the high point of educational reform, produced curricula revision in several programs to achieve a better balance between subject matter and methodology. Although a small-scale teacher induction project, which provided ISU graduates with professional support in their first year of teaching, was started in 1986 as a response to SB 730, full implementation was delayed by state budget problems. Faculty of the college always had a close working relationship with school teachers and administrators. After passage of SB 730, and the designation of the University as a regional Educational Service Center, the number of workshops and consulting services touching various elements of educational reform increased dramatically. Education specialists from academic departments continued to offer summer institutes to upgrade math, science, and English teachers. These activities, and others besides, altered the appearance and substance of teacher education at Illinois State University and made the college of education a major participant in the state's program of school reform.

It was inevitable that the public's concern over the absence of quality in elementary and secondary schools should spread to undergraduate education at universities and colleges. Although there were earlier signs of a critical view of higher education, it was not until 1984 that specific issues of quality at the undergraduate level were raised in reports of the National Institute of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities, with the promise of further studies in 1985 from the American Association of Colleges and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. These reports claimed that the undergraduate curriculum placed too much emphasis on professional and career preparation, no longer giving students a grounding in the liberal arts by which they could learn how to learn and think. The primary responsibility for the collapse of the undergraduate curriculum was attributed to faculty, who were characterized as being too discipline oriented, self-indulgent, and indifferent to change. Restoration of quality depended on restoring teaching as the faculty's most important
function. All this represented a severe indictment of higher education, one which caught the public's attention as well as that of governing boards and state legislatures. By early 1985 the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that sixty percent of American colleges and universities were reviewing their undergraduate programs, admission standards, the balance of general education and professional specialization, the quality of teaching, and student achievements. Illinois's universities followed the same path. By the direction of the Board of Regents and the Board of Higher Education, Illinois State University took steps to review its undergraduate educational functions.

The Board of Regents took up the issue first. A committee report of early 1984 recommended that the regency universities should continue to intensify their attention to quality, particularly student and faculty performance and the ways that both might be improved through special incentives, support services, and development programs. After two years of study and campus hearings around the state, the Board of Higher Education in September, 1986 adopted a lengthy report and set of recommendations on the quality of undergraduate education. The reports of the governing boards paralleled each other insofar as each dealt with admissions, general education, assessment, student achievement, and faculty support and excellence in teaching. But in the end the BHE's recommendations were perhaps more influential because of that board's authority over budget priorities for Illinois higher education. Even before the BHE's report was completed, it had established academic program quality as one of its priorities in weighing budget requests, a position which was further defined and made paramount in 1986 for program approval, program review, and budget development. Highest priority would be given to promoting and strengthening excellence in teaching, interaction of faculty and students in scholarly and community service activities, student commitment to learning and academic achievement, and the centrality of general education and the liberal arts in undergraduate degree programs. Whether they thought it was necessary or not, or liked it or not, Illinois's public universities, administration and faculty alike, had little choice but to follow the lead of the boards and give primary attention to the conditions of
undergraduate education. In ISU's case, it mattered little that the University in 1985 had received a favorable report on all of its programs and a ten year accreditation from the North Central Association.

Unlike admission standards and teacher education, the influence of this issue of education reform on Illinois State University has yet to run its full course. There are indications, however, which suggest the force of the BOR/BHE's undergraduate priorities, especially in the Academic Plans of 1986 to 1988 and the special budget requests which followed those planning documents. The institutional mission statement in the 1986 Plan, for example, forthrightly embraced the language of education reform by declaring that "developing student talent through high quality teaching is the first priority of Illinois State University" and that among ISU's goals, the first was "to provide the highest quality undergraduate education of the universities in Illinois." That emphasis on the University's basic undergraduate character, in both programs and teaching, was repeated in the 1987 and 1988 plans. To achieve the dual goals of excellence in undergraduate education and teaching and to establish a harmony with the BHE's program and budget priorities, the University gave greatest emphasis to those activities already underway that would enhance the undergraduate experience and to new plans to improve the campus learning environment. Among existing activities emphasized were further internationalizing of the curriculum through new degree programs and additional exchange agreements; enlarging the honors program to include a "fast track" for exceptional undergraduates; extending computer literacy across the campus; expanding retention programs, such as writing and math across the curriculum and the activities of the learning assistance center; and greater minority student opportunities, including more intensive recruitment and retention efforts for both students and minority faculty. The planning statements which opened new areas focused on three elements: value added assessment to measure changes in each student's intellectual and personal development; increased student involvement in learning through participation in faculty research activities, faculty/student mentorships, and program options for adult learners; and a revival
of faculty development to enhance teaching, research, and scholarly productivity.

These were ambitious plans, developed in compliance with the Regents' and BHE's priorities to improve the quality of undergraduate education. But it would be difficult, perhaps even impossible, to realize them fully without additional money because of the University's inadequate level of funding. Among other things, special requests to support undergraduate education, to correct the University's underfunded state, and to underwrite ISU's role in school reform activities, were included in the University budget proposals for fiscal years 1986 through 1989. The requests for additional funds for new and improved programs sent to the Board of Regents were ambitious, ranging from $5.6 million for 1985-86, $6.5 million for 1986-87, and $5.5 million for 1987-88. Those requests boldly exceeded the amounts asked for in earlier years. President Watkins, of course, knew from experience that the requests would be pared down as they made their way through the state's budgeting process. Nonetheless, the requests represented a statement of what the administration judged was necessary to fulfill the BHE's recommendations. If approved and appropriated, the additional funds would allow the University to make good on past budget disparities and at the same time implement its plans for undergraduate program improvements. Unfortunately for the University's plans, only a small part (about 13 percent) of what was requested was actually appropriated. Education reform in Illinois, whether aimed at the public schools or higher education, was largely frustrated by a return of the state's general revenue problems. Despite the reappearance of budget difficulties, limited improvements in undergraduate education were achieved. Some activities were in response to the general educational reform impulse, and others were undertaken because of the BHE's 1986 recommendations. But it must be emphasized that promoting undergraduate excellence was not entirely new, whatever the immediate rationale for specific undertakings. In fact the University's response to the discovery by off-campus people of the virtue of excellence represented a continuation of the administration's and faculty's efforts begun in 1977 to improve the quality of the University's academic life.
If there was something new, it was the major attention in planning and budget decisions now required to be given to undergraduate education.

Many different parts of the University were involved in plans to raise the quality of undergraduate education. Special efforts were made by the admissions office to counsel high school teachers and students on the higher admission requirements being used, and in 1986 the University "adopted" Dunbar Vocational and Englewood high schools in Chicago for purposes of preparing minority students for university-level work. Serious attention was given to reducing the undergraduate attrition rate. Though ISU's attrition was below the national average for all undergraduates, the number of freshmen who dropped out of the University was increasing, some for academic deficiencies but others for personal reasons. The problem was attacked on a broad front. The academic support services, begun years earlier, were brought together in 1986 to form a more effective undergraduate learning resources center, directed by the provost's office; in addition to offering assistance in reading, writing, and mathematics, the center initiated in 1987 "supplemental instruction" or SI in high-risk courses, such as economics, psychology, and criminal justice science. The Student Affairs division, under Dr. Neal Gamsky's leadership, intensified its residence hall orientation and general counseling programs for new students, and in 1987 offered on a trial basis a new course designed to introduce freshmen to higher education. Retention of minority students, no less than their recruitment, received special attention. A council to coordinate the University's various services aimed at increasing access and improving retention of minority students was established in 1984. In addition to the tutoring and counseling activities of the High Potential Student and Special Services programs and the learning assistance centers, a minority professional opportunities program was started in 1985 to assist minority students to prepare for professional and graduate study. Student Affairs established a separate office in 1986 to oversee that division's orientation and counseling programs for beginning minority students.

Enhancing existing programs was also part of the effort to
improve undergraduate education. Enhancement appeared in several ways, from upgrading equipment in computer science, industrial technology, and the sciences, to an expansion of the writing, computer literacy, and math-across-the-curriculum strategies. Noteworthy were the advances made in internationalizing the curriculum which had been one of President Watkins's goals from the start of his administration. Between 1984 and 1987, the Office of International Studies and Programs negotiated agreements for new foreign study centers at the University of Stirling, Scotland, University of Paderborn, West Germany, Institute for Italian Studies, Florence, Italy, University of Alicante and University of Seville, Spain, and Liaoning Normal University, China. In addition, Art Adams of the president's office assisted in organizing 32 community and two-year colleges into an Illinois Consortium for International Studies under ISU's leadership. The number of students studying abroad increased, from 158 in 1982-83 to 450 in 1986-87, while 102 faculty participated in exchange programs with China, Thailand, and Japan. The number of foreign students attending ISU held steady at around 350, at a time when other universities were experiencing declines. And to assist new arrivals and as a recruiting tool, an English Language Institute was established in 1987. New courses with a non-western focus were developed in various departments. When Chrysler Corporation and Mitsubishi Motors of Japan in 1985 selected the Normal-Bloomington area for a new auto assembly plant, Diamond-Star Motor Company, an ISU task force chaired by Ed Anderson worked with state and local officials to make University resources available to Japanese management personnel and their families. By means of a special grant from the state, Metcalf School created Saturday classes for the children of Japanese managers working at the new car company. The University offered workshops on Japanese language and culture to American employees of the new auto company. A lecture series begun in 1986-87 on Japanese society attracted large audiences from the campus and the community, and conferences sponsored by the education and business colleges emphasized international themes.

Receiving great attention in the national reports on the
problems of higher education and in the Board of Higher Education's 1986 study of undergraduate education were the need to assess student achievement and the related importance of teaching. Assessment activity, of course, was not entirely new at ISU. The Office of Student Affairs had been surveying student values for years. In 1977 the University sought funds to evaluate the effects of programs on the cognitive, vocational, psychological and social development of students as a way to make program improvements, but the request was denied by the BHE. By the middle '80s, however, as the Chronicle of Higher Education reported, assessment had become a popular watch word in a number of national reports and with governing boards and state legislatures. And such it was in the State of Illinois. Largely in response to such external pressures, by 1986-87 a concerted exploration of value-added assessment which would measure changes in the intellectual and personal development of students became a major planning goal for the University and remains so to the present. In early 1987 Provost Strand formed a coordinating committee, representing the major academic and student life areas of the University, to develop a comprehensive assessment model for general education, major fields of study, and student programs and services. While important initial steps have been taken to devise ways to assess University Studies, such as in certain major fields in arts and sciences, and cocurricular aspects of student experiences, further work must be completed before implementation of a university-wide system is achieved.

Closely associated with assessment was an interest in promoting teaching excellence and faculty development as vital elements in raising the quality of undergraduate education. The University has always expressed a commitment to high quality teaching, and from the late '60s on, it has required student evaluations of teaching and the use of classroom performance ratings as a major component in its faculty merit system. And the University recognized its outstanding teachers. In 1980 the University Foundation, assisted by the Alumni Association, Parents Association, and Student Alumni Council, created the "distinguished undergraduate teaching award" to be given annually to a faculty member in each college.
When the "distinguished university professorship" was established in 1981, teaching excellence was specified as a qualification. But times change, and suddenly faculty teaching became suspect. The national commission reports published by the NIE, AASCU, and Carnegie Foundation indicted the quality of undergraduate instruction and presented compelling arguments for a more direct and active student involvement in the learning process as an alternative to the faculty's reliance on the traditional lecture method of instruction. Even before "involvement in learning" was included in the BHE's 1986 recommendations on undergraduate education, it had become a planning priority of the provost's office. The faculty instructional development program of the '70s was revived in 1985, and small grants were made to faculty to develop teaching strategies actively involving students in the learning process. An annual outstanding university teacher award was started in 1985 with William Gnagey of psychology as the first recipient. The next year ISU was selected as one of 133 universities to participate in the Burlington Northern Foundation Faculty Achievement Awards program; the two annual awards would recognize outstanding teachers who involved students in learning. A "Provost's Retreat" of deans and faculty held in May, 1986 endorsed the main outlines of the NIE's Involvement In Learning. The group proposed that steps be taken to establish undergraduate research participation and mentorship programs, provide program options for adult learners, and expand the internship program in small business environments.

By 1987 budget problems side-tracked the recommendations on the means to improve teaching and learning and even halted the instructional development awards. But despite the worsening financial condition of the University, President Watkins maintained an optimistic view of the future, at least for the moment. In a March issue of the Illinois State Report, distributed to all in the university community, he presented what he saw as opportunities for future development of Illinois State University. The seven he listed did not represent new proposals, but rather a gathering of recent trends which showed the greatest promise of further development for the betterment of the University. First, since ISU was an "institution of choice"
among prospective students, a modest enrollment reduction could be accomplished over several years that would allow a more selective admissions and free funds for research and public service activities. Second, the University also had an opportunity to become one of the nation’s premier undergraduate public universities by continuing to work toward the program enhancement goals already in place. Next, capitalization should continue of ISU’s national reputation for the preparation of teachers, long the University’s principal function and now so important in the public’s view. Fourth, ISU has an opportunity to become a leader and model for others by expanding existing programs and establishing creative new ones to meet the educational concerns of minorities. The economic development of Central Illinois presented still another opportunity for ISU, to extend and relate the University’s resources and the faculty’s expertise to business, industry, and community participation in the region’s economic growth. Sixth, faculty research, already of national importance in some cases, possessed great potential for expansion and, though it would be difficult, should include research oriented doctoral programs in areas of special strength. Finally, President Watkins believed that by persistence and patience the University would be able to overcome some of its critical space deficiencies. In concluding his assessment of future opportunities for ISU, he sounded a note of caution: “Some doors are closed to us; we will not become, nor should we aspire to become, a small replica of the University of Illinois ... But we can be very good in the areas I have noted. They are important areas, worthy of the best efforts of this University community.”

A return of severe funding problems for the University in the late ‘80s brought the thirteenth decade to a close on a sour note. The University received substantially less money from the state legislature for 1987-88 than in the previous year, imposing a fiscal austerity on all university operations reminiscent of the dark days of 1981-83. Not only were the requests for program
improvement funds slashed, but worse, nothing was available for pay increases. What happened in fiscal year '88 was the culmination of a period of years during which the allocation of public tax funds to support higher education increased only slightly as the state legislature and governor sought to keep state spending within the state's means. Compared to levels of support in other states, based on population and percapita income, Illinois' position since the 1970s had steadily declined from a national leader to a much lower ranking. To make up the difference, Illinois's governing boards were forced to raise tuition repeatedly to provide their universities with adequate budgets. Total funding of Illinois State University did increase 23 percent from 1983-84 through 1986-87, but it was because of higher tuition plus enrollment growth that the University was able to avoid overwhelming fiscal difficulties. Over that period the "University Income Fund," derived largely from tuition, increased 33 percent and enrollment grew a modest 8 percent, from 20,662 to 22,041. The trend in funding of Illinois higher education was ominous, raising troubling questions about access to a university education, so vital to the state's economy, as the costs of that education were shifted from the general public to individual students and their parents.

To some political leaders, especially Governor James Thompson, the solution to education's funding problems, as well as the fiscal needs of other state agencies and services, was to increase the state's general revenue. In the spring of 1987 the governor proposed tax increases to the Illinois General Assembly, warning that state spending would have to remain the same if additional revenue was not provided. President Watkins, along with other university leaders, stumped the state that spring and early summer in support of the governor's tax package. To prepare for the worst, and also to attack the University's persistent underfunding, the provost's office took steps to reduce enrollment for the fall of 1987. But little went well. Instead of falling as planned, enrollment rose by 763 students, to 22,041, mainly because of greater retention of those already attending the University. Worse yet, the legislature rejected the governor's tax proposals and all university budgets were cut. The amount of public money finally alloted to the University
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was 8 percent less than the year before, which compelled the Board of Regents to raise tuition 18 percent to prevent a crippling of the regency system. It now seemed appropriate to say that the University was state assisted rather than state supported. In his annual speech to the faculty at the start of the 1987-88 year, President Watkins used blunt language to describe the situation: "It will take a long time to regain the step backward which Illinois has taken this year, and the state's decision-makers must not delude themselves that everything is 'all right' simply because the schools and universities are open and operating. It is not. The educational systems of Illinois need financial assistance, they need a great deal of it, and they need it now. Nothing less than the prosperity of our state is at risk."

The school year of 1987-88 was in most respects a bleak year for people at Illinois State University. There were a few bright spots, however. On June 19, the *Vidette* celebrated its one hundredth year of publication. Tom Smith of Heyworth won the NCAA high jump championship in both 1987 and 1988, the only individual ISU athlete in Division I competition to ever achieve that distinction. The completion of the Cook Hall remodeling, placed on the National Register of Historic Places the year before, allowed the music department to occupy the building in time for the fall term. The construction of Redbird Arena on the west campus was making visible progress, though its cost still prompted complaints from student leaders and brought letters of criticism to the *Vidette*. But in other respects there was little to cheer about because of the University's funding problems. The work went on to be sure, but with less purpose and spirit. Students had to find extra money to pay higher tuition and fees. All units of the University suffered budget cuts. Class sizes were larger and teaching loads heavier. The numerous improvement plans and the start-up of graduate programs which were dependent on new money were postponed. The morale of faculty, civil service, and staff plummeted when they went without a salary increase for the first time in memory. As the fall semester progressed, expressions of discouragement and dissatisfaction were common responses, especially among the faculty, largely because of the University's financial condition. But there were other complaints as well.
Enrollment increased to a record high instead of the decline which had been expected; compared to other state schools, ISU’s faculty load was onerous and unbearable; and some faculty were not enamored with the direction of the University’s development. Perhaps it was inevitable that President Watkins, as the official everyone held responsible for the state of the University, should become the target of campus discontent. The criticisms and complaints were expressed in newsletters, meetings of the Academic Senate and college and graduate school councils, and in pages of the student newspaper. Petitions began circulating among the faculty, calling for a campus-wide faculty meeting to discuss various issues confronting the University. The Academic Senate would eventually conduct such a meeting on February 29, 1988, at which resolutions were approved in favor of enrollment reduction, improved physical facilities, and the creation of a faculty senate. As criticism among some faculty grew more intense, President Watkins, supported by Provost Strand, provided explanations and counter-arguments to his critics, few of whom were interested.

At the start of the second semester, January 14, 1988, President Watkins announced his intention to step down as president of Illinois State University and return to teaching. He made it plain, however, that his decision was not because of faculty criticism, but the result of a year of reflection. He gave three reasons for his decision: his conviction that universities can benefit from a change of leadership, allowing for “new beginnings,” which he thought were especially important for a school like ISU in search of its identity; that after a decade of effort, he had reached the limits of his frustrations with the funding policies and the leadership of Illinois higher education that made ISU’s progress so difficult; finally, he said, he and Mrs. Watkins wished a more private lifestyle. The time had come for others to lead Illinois State University through the next decade. On June 23, 1988 the Board of Regents appointed Thomas P. Wallace to be ISU’s fourteenth president.

Although President Watkins’s resignation came during a time of institutional stress, Illinois State University’s condition, though plagued by a persistent funding problem, was stronger
in 1987 than it was in 1977. Admission requirements and academic standards were higher; the quality and performance of students was greatly improved; overall, academic programs in all the colleges were improved, and most importantly, internal procedures were in place to assure continued improvement; new programs were added at all levels; the expansion of such special undertakings as Honors, International Studies, and the Adult Learner program made them significant adjuncts to the traditional undergraduate experience; the college of continuing education and public service developed into a vital component of the University; special public service centers in the college of education and the college of business extended the faculty's expertise far beyond the boundaries of the campus; and some progress was made to overcome space shortages. University people took pride in the fact that only ISU and the University of Illinois among the state's public universities were included in a national survey published in 1988, "How To Get An Ivy League Education At A State University: Comprehensive Profiles of America's Outstanding Public Colleges."

Yet problems remained for the future. Perhaps there are a number, but two important ones are finances and mission. The most critical is the University's underfunded condition, both for its operations and capital needs. The fact that the thirteenth decade began and closed with little substantive improvement in University resources only underscores the gravity of the problems for the University arising from inadequate funding. In addition, the trend of shifting the costs of a baccalaureate education from state funds to higher and higher tuition rates raises ominous questions about future access to a public university for the citizens of the state. The second major problem, that of institutional mission, is related to the first. It is one of the most perplexing but demanding issues of the future. The need has existed for twenty years, ever since the dreams and plans of the 1960s of transforming ISU into a regional comprehensive liberal arts university failed to come true. Since then little has been proposed by either the faculty or leading central and college administrators (who tended to be transient) except the rather empty statements that ISU is a diverse, multi-purpose university. There is a need for a common vision
shared by both administration and faculty of what the University should become in the years ahead; a need for the formation of a clear sense among the governing boards of the University’s place and role in Illinois’ system of public higher education. But without a correction in the University’s level of funding, Illinois State University’s mission for its fourteenth decade will be no more than what the institution has become, neither comprehensive nor undergraduate, whose essential character will only be the sum of its historical development.