

A concise history of the University*

1840

An estimated 100,000 Illinois children were not in school and more than 28,000 adults in the state were illiterate.

1853

The State Teachers' Institute of Illinois was created in Bloomington by a group of school principals resolved to raise the standard of teaching and push for establishment of a Normal school.



Jesse W. Fell

1857

Governor William Bissell signed a bill on Feb. 18, 1857 to create a Normal school and establish the Board of Education of the State of Illinois as its governing body. The bill stipulated that the permanent location would be the place that offered the most favorable inducements. Jesse Fell took up the campaign for Bloomington and secured financial backing totaling \$141,000. The amount exceeded pledges secured by three other communities, including Peoria. Abraham Lincoln, acting as attorney for the board, drew up the bond guaranteeing Bloomington citizens would fulfill their financial commitments.

Illinois State Normal University consequently became the first state university in Illinois. The name originated from the fact “Normal” was the title given to institutions for teachers. Adding “University” to the name justified the use of money from the university fund and left open the possibility of an expanded educational mission.



Charles Hovey

Charles Hovey was named principal of the school in June of 1857. A total of 43 students enrolled for the first term that began October 5, 1857. Enoch Gastman, Jr. of Hudson was the first student enrolled. He was 23 and had already taught school at Kappa and Saybrook. Classes were held in Major's Hall on the third floor over a general store on the corner of Front and East streets in Bloomington. A model school associated with the University opened in November of 1857 with seven students.



First graduating class

1860

The first commencement ceremonies were held for a graduating class of 10. Old Main, the University's first building, was opened and dominated the campus for nearly 100 years.

1861

Charles Hovey created the Normal Rifles to prepare for war that appeared inevitable. Abraham Lincoln commissioned Hovey as a colonel and authorized the Schoolmaster's Regiments, referred to by Hovey as the Illinois 33rd Infantry. In fall of 1861, the regiment moved out to Camp Butler in Missouri, leaving approximately 80 students at ISNU. Of that total, 50 were in the entering class. Perkins Bass, a Chicago lawyer, was appointed to serve the University until Hovey's return and became acting principal.

1862

Charles Hovey resigned in June of 1862 and Richard Edwards was elected principal. While the model school grew to 153 students, the war deeply cut into the University's enrollment. Men were called to war and the women took only the minimum courses required to qualify for teaching positions, which were abundant.

1867

Hopes of expanding the University surfaced in 1867 when it was proposed the state establish an industrial university under the land grant act. Jesse Fell again solicited financial support, raising more than \$500,000 and locating a site of 140 acres. He organized a group to lobby in Springfield but the effort failed. Champaign was selected as the site for the land grant institution and ISNU dedicated its future solely to teacher training. Enrollment reached 327 by December of 1867.



Jesse Fell became a member of the governing board in 1867 and vowed to carry out a landscaping plan. He supervised the plowing and subsoiling of the entire campus, setting out 1,847 trees the following year. Fell had already planted 13,000 trees before the University was established. A small section of campus was set aside as a nursery to provide replacements and Bloomington became one of the largest nursery centers in the nation. For more than 75 years ISNU was praised throughout the Midwest for the variety and beauty of its trees.

1876 - 1877

Richard Edwards, who had been ordained as a minister in 1873, resigned to preach in December of 1876. Edwin Hewett was named the third president and took over at a time when ISNU was the second oldest Normal school west of the Alleghenies and only the 10th in the United States.



Old Main

1882

ISNU celebrated its first 25 years. At the time the University had at least 968 students teaching in 88 of the state's 102 counties, with another 104 teaching in 17 states and territories.

1890 - 1899

One of Edwin Hewett's hopes was for a library. In 1890 he hired Agne Milner and a general library was established. That same year he resigned, leaving the University with an enrollment of 677 and a total of 18 faculty. John Cook took over as the fourth president on July 1, 1890 and resigned in June of 1899 to become head of a Normal school in DeKalb, which is now Northern Illinois University.

Enrollment grew to 900 and faculty numbered 19 under the leadership of Richard Edwards, Edwin Hewett, and John Cook. Illinois State Normal University became a national leader in the Herbartian movement in teacher education with its emphasis on integrated curriculum for the elementary grades.

1899 - 1900

Arnold Tompkins was selected as Cook's replacement and the fifth president. He brought radical changes in the University's administration, organization, and school spirit. From beautifying the campus to extending the length of class sessions and expanding the model school to the full four years of high school, Tompkins' term was considered revolutionary. It was also brief, as he was chosen to be president of the Chicago Normal school in June 1900.

1900–1930

David Felmley was named the sixth president of ISNU, offering assurances he had no ambition beyond the position. When the celebration of the first 50 years occurred in 1907, the University was known across the country and had contributed so many graduates to presidencies and faculties of other Normal schools that it was often spoken of as the mother of Western Normals.

Felmley led the expansion of the University from a Normal school into a teachers' college. The metamorphosis was evident across the campus as the following occurred.

- Felmley organized the North Central Council of State Normal Schools in 1902. The organization expanded in 1917 to become a national association that eventually joined with the American Association of Teachers Colleges under that name in 1936.
- Summer school became a regular part of the University's curriculum.
- The first bachelor's degrees were conferred in 1908 on two students in education, a victory for Felmley who sought authorization from the General Assembly in 1906 to award the degree as a step beyond the two-year diploma work.
- In 1911 the agriculture department was born and by 1914 a farm was established with a herd of cows that soon supplied milk to 160 families, yielding a profit of \$18 a day.
- By 1912 students were required to select an academic major and minor.

- Felmley fought for a new model school building that was completed in the fall of 1913.
- The gray sandstone Fell Memorial Gateway located north of Hovey Hall was erected in 1914 in memory of the University's founder, Jesse Fell.
- A student council was formed in 1920.
- Intercollegiate athletics became a regular part of university life.
- The first Homecoming was celebrated in 1916. The event became an annual celebration beginning in 1921.
- Athletic Director Clifford "Pop" Horton and *Daily Pantagraph* sports editor Fred Young collaborated to change the school's nickname from "Teachers" to "Redbirds" in 1923.
- Greek honorary societies were organized in the late 1920s to recognize student academic distinction.
- The University's alma mater was written in 1926 by faculty members Wanda Neiswanger and Jennie Whitten.**
- Gamma Phi Circus was founded in November of 1929 by Clifford "Pop" Horton. It is the oldest and largest collegiate circus in the country.
- Enrollment increased to 1,500 by 1930.

Felmley kept his pledge to stay on as ISNU's president, despite employment offers and repeated efforts to lure him into seeking the state superintendency. In 1929 he offered his resignation for health reasons but was encouraged to remain in the office by the board. He eventually did resign on Dec. 26, 1929 and died January 24, 1930. Herman Schroeder became acting president.

** *Illinois State University's Alma Mater*

"Glory hast thou, might and power; proud the halls of ISU. Deeds that live in song and story, loyal sons and daughters true. So shalt thou in years increasing send thy sons of honest worth, forth to bear with zeal unceasing wisdom's torch throughout the earth."

Changed to "send thy grads of honest worth" by President Strand in April of 1998.

1930 - 1933

Harry Brown was named the University's seventh president and sought an entirely new curriculum that would prepare teachers of atypical children, with special training for the study of problems of the gifted, crippled, mentally deficient, as well as defects of speech, hearing and sight.

Brown quickly became controversial as he did not take faculty into his confidence and was accused of being aloof and unsociable. From faculty discontent came an investigation into Brown's past and realization he had forged credentials of a faculty member on staff.

Brown resigned under pressure in the summer of 1933 and Herman Schroeder was again named acting president until the appointment of Raymond Fairchild in October.

1933 - 1955

Raymond Fairchild was the eighth president. He served for 22 years, operating from a policy of evolution, not revolution. The following events highlighted his administration.

- Faculty qualifications were improved.
- The University began to operate on a semester basis and began to award letter grades.
- The academic department became the basic unit of the University.
- In January of 1933, students created the Blackfriars to foster creative music and drama among campus men.
- Commencement in 1934 was in full regalia dress and held outdoors for the first time. The ceremony continued to be scheduled outdoors until the year 1979.
- The faculty senate and a publicity office were established in 1935.
- In December 1942, one year after the beginning of World War II, the University became the training center for naval aviation cadets and residence halls were converted into naval quarters.
- A special education program—the first of its kind in the state—was established to train teachers of exceptional children in 1943.
- Graduate work began in 1944, with the first master's degree conferred in 1945 in biological sciences.
- A University Council was founded in 1951 as an important vehicle for faculty participation in policy making.

Fairchild resigned in August of 1955, leaving behind a university that had seen enrollment nearly double, the number and qualifications of staff increase, curriculum expand, and off-campus student teaching opportunities enhanced.

Arthur Larsen became acting president until the appointment of Robert Bone in 1956 as the University's ninth president.

1956–1967

The second century of classes began on Sept. 13, 1957. From the rented hall used when the first class of 19 enrolled in 1857, the campus had grown to 25 buildings on 68 acres and a 192-acre

farm. There was great growth during Robert Bone's presidency, as enrollment went from 3,200 students in 1958 to 13,000 by 1968. A total of 15 new buildings and 10 additions were completed in the same time frame at a cost of more than \$60 million, allowing class space to triple.

Bone saw that his challenge was to make a great school into a greater one. During his presidency, Illinois State Normal University fulfilled its founders' dream and became a multipurpose institution. Highlights from the period include the following.

- The administration was structured into six areas with directors overseeing each in 1958.
- Old Main was demolished in 1958.
- Doctoral programs were added in 1963.
- The University name was changed to Illinois State University January 1, 1964 after extensive campus debate and campaigning by faculty that began in 1959.
- The institutional mission shifted to more of a liberal arts university.
- Academic programs and departments were organized into colleges in 1966.
- Extensive plans for additions and remodeling across campus were developed, with the decision made to expand the campus to the west and avert the need to purchase commercial buildings and private homes.
- The number of students in residence halls grew from 1,032 in 1956 to 5,070 in 1966.

Bone felt strongly that 10 years was all he should serve and announced he would retire in 1967. The board appointed Samuel Braden as the institution's 10th president on May 15, 1967.

1967–1970

When Samuel Braden arrived at Illinois State, the University's land and buildings were valued at \$54 million and Watterson Towers was under construction. To meet enrollment expectations of between 21,000 and 28,000 in 10 years, he began an ambitious program of land acquisition, building construction, and curricular expansion. Braden promoted the need for a 10-year academic plan, the first of which was approved in March 1969 with the basic assumption that the University's strength and quality depended on its undergraduate programs.

Braden served for three years that were among the University's most tumultuous. He led the University through the "days of rage" of the late 1960s, a time of turmoil and tensions sparked by student rights, civil rights, and anti-war movements that led to strained community relations. The following also occurred during his tenure.

- The Illinois Board of Higher Education master plan called for the University to be placed under the Board of Regents and restrict its doctoral planning to the liberal arts and sciences, with only a limited number of associated graduate professional schools.

- Advanced courses for undergraduates increased 43 percent.
- A budget crisis hit in 1969 when Governor Richard Ogilvie announced the state was nearly bankrupt. Illinois State had one of the largest budget reductions of the state's 12 colleges and universities.
- Fraternity and sorority chapters were founded beginning in 1969.
- The University's growth put a strain on municipal services and cost taxpayers more.
- A university committee drafted a new constitution and system of shared governance that was approved in 1969, formalizing student participation in university decision making. Policies on campus activities that endangered life, property, or the functioning of the University were formulated, as well as student code of ethics. The University agreed to cooperative procedures with local officials for mass arrests.
- Will Robinson was named head basketball coach, becoming the first black coach in the nation at the university level.

Among the most notorious events during Braden's tenure were flag pole incidents. On December 4 of 1969, black student association members lowered the American flag to honor two slain Black Panther leaders. Braden ordered the flag be raised or students charged with criminal trespass. The association made demands of the University, including the naming of a major building after Malcom X and Martin Luther King. Braden would not meet all the demands. Still seeking building name changes, 200 students barricaded themselves in the union on March 4, 1970. They left when Braden made clear police would be called to remove them.

The Vietnam War caused another period of turmoil that followed the student deaths at Kent State on May 4, 1970. The next day students fought over lowering the flag for Kent State victims. Braden agreed flags could be at half staff for six days to mark the six deaths and an additional two for the two slain Black Panther leaders. The decision upset many in the community.

On May 12 flags were raised but not without protest incidents that included cherry bombs exploding in Hovey Hall, the union, and bookstore, and an attempted firebombing of the Normal police station. Store windows were broken and a vacant university-owned house set afire. On May 18, 50 students demanded flags lowered for students killed by Mississippi police on May 14 at Jackson State University. Braden denied the request but agreed it would be lowered one last time the next day for Malcolm X. More than 40 construction workers from nearby sites came to the quad on the 19th and raised the flag. Braden ordered it lowered. Workers returned and raised it. When they left, police assistance was requested and the governor's office called. State police

marched onto campus at noon in full riot gear. The University circled the flagpole in wagon-train fashion with a barrier of 25 cars and trucks, but the workers never returned.

Braden resigned in 1970 after he became a scapegoat for public objection to student unrest. Despite the turbulence on campus, the University experienced substantial growth under his leadership and enrollment climbed to 14,600 in 1969.

Francis Bud Geigle was named acting president. Surveillance equipment was added on several buildings and the flagpole was replaced with an electronic model. A news hotline began. A revised IBHE master plan for 1970 - 71 directed the University to devote itself to innovative programs in teacher education and not expand beyond education into other doctoral programs. Enrollment was not to exceed 19,000 and the lab schools phased out as soon as possible. Geigle organized resources and successfully argued the state should not resurrect the old ISNU. Geigle served until the board appointed David Berlo as the 11th president.

1971 - 1973

David Berlo's administration was hindered by his adversarial relationship with the Academic Senate in a time of scarce resources and budget cutbacks. His dismantling of the colleges and attempts to alter the procedures to determine faculty salary increases led the Academic Senate to move toward a no-confidence vote. He resigned under pressure in the spring of 1973 following criticism over his involvement with the University-owned president's house, including criticism of expenses for the home and alleged violations of state law. Gene Budig was named acting president.

The campus conflict experienced under Berlo did not hinder the University's continued growth, as enrollment reached 18,000 in 1971. There were also some exciting memories, such as those created in 1972 by Illinois State senior and basketball standout Doug Collins. Collins played in the U.S. Olympic games and put the U.S. team ahead by making two free throws with only 3 seconds left in the game. Despite the team's eventual loss of the game, the points helped secure Collins' legacy at Illinois State.

1973-1977

Gene Budig was named the 12th president on November 15, 1973. He restored administrative stability and reinstated the University's collegiate system. During his term, the University succeeded in adding 21 programs, including five doctoral degrees. Enrollment grew higher still and was more than 19,000 in 1976.

- Budig emphasized recruitment of new students as well as returning veterans and adults continuing their education.
- Under Budig's term the University began to require undergraduates live at least four semesters on campus.
- The Quad became the site for the Rites of Spring, Illinois State's version of the Woodstock culture. The first event was held on May 12, 1972 and drew 3,000. The festival became an annual affair that grew to approximately 25,000 in May 1977. The event left the quad declared unsafe because of broken glass and mounds of garbage.

Budig resigned in 1977 and Lloyd Watkins was named the 13th president in July of that year.

1977–1988

Lloyd Watkins presided over the University during its 13th decade. One of his first acts was to cancel the Rites of Spring.

A self study report done in 1977 pointed to problem areas of the University, specifically the underfunding compared to other Illinois public universities. Fiscal difficulties existed and escalated throughout Watkins' administration, particularly from 1981 to 1983. Among the bleakest of years was 1982 when Governor James Thompson announced a \$200 million treasury deficit. A midyear budget recession followed and the governor impounded nearly \$1 million of Illinois State's budget. The decision resulted in classrooms that were overcrowded and the eroding of campus physical facilities.

The University's financial woes occurred in part because the budgets had not kept pace with institutional growth during the 1960s. It was during that time that budget requests were in large measure determined by formulas based on projected enrollment and credit hour production. Illinois State's enrollment generally exceeded projections.

Watkins and other university leaders across the state called for increased taxes. Instead, student fees, room and board, and especially tuition increasingly shot upward to compensate for lost state revenue. Tuition went from \$404 in 1976 to \$680 in 1981 - a 68 percent increase. Watkins emphasized that the University was state-assisted, not supported.

One of the major student issues centered around alcohol policies in residence halls. The University had to address party problems repeatedly, especially as the legal drinking age changed to 21 in

January of 1980. The party problem then shifted from campus to off-campus locations that agitated local residents and involved Normal city officials and police.

Local ordinances against large parties were enforced and arrests soared. In October 1980, 150 students protested with a march to city hall. They blocked traffic at College and Main streets for nearly an hour before returning to city hall with numbers closer to 1,500.

Despite educational programs about local and state laws and a student association party patrol, the friction between students and town officials continued to the point Normal Mayor Richard Godfrey called for a committee of civic leaders to make recommendations. They suggested banning late evening beer keg sales. Tensions grew to the night of October 3, 1984 when a rally held on the quad to protest the town's anti-party laws led to a destructive riot with as many as 2,000 students against 50 officers in riot gear in downtown Normal. Students smashed city hall windows, damaged police cars, tore up street signs and telephone booths, and hurled rocks. The result was \$10,000 in property damage and grand jury indictments against two students who were convicted for felony destruction of property.

Other significant events that occurred during Watkins' years of service include the following.

- Illinois State became the headquarters for the Illinois Special Olympics.
- The lab schools were formed into an independent school district so that they were eligible for assistance from the state like other public schools.
- Illinois State's marching band, "The Big Red Marching Machine," became one of the largest in the nation with 340 members.
- The Illinois Shakespeare Festival was inaugurated on July 6, 1978.
- Faculty grants increased from \$1.3 million in 1977 to \$5 million in 1986. Watkins launched a parallel effort to improve private fund raising, which went from less than \$1 million to more than \$2 million by 1986.
- Efforts to unionize the faculty after years of pay raises below inflation rates were unsuccessful.
- The student population changed to include older, nontraditional students, which brought an increase in night classes.
- Academic advancements included internationalizing the curriculum.
- A proposal to build a \$9 million arena for athletics was unveiled in March 1984. Students approved the project in a vote held in April.
- Quality was strengthened by higher admission standards, increased general education requirements, and a university-wide writing examination. Academic policies and standards were

revised and the general education core of courses reformed to require 48 hours in 8 subject groups in the fall of 1979.

- Illinois State was one of only two public universities in the state to be included in the book “How to Get an Ivy League Education at a State University.” The University of Illinois was the other institution.
- The union was turned into more of a student center to improve revenue for the facility.
- Enrollment increased to more than 22,000 in 1987.

Plagued with continual budget constraints, Watkins became the target of campus discontent and announced in January of 1988 his resignation. Thomas Wallace was appointed the University’s 14th president on June 23, 1988.

1988–1995

Thomas P. Wallace faced the continued problem of serious underfunding. In his first State of the University address in the fall of 1988, Wallace focused on the funding needs by noting the University’s operational budget had not increased for nearly three years and that there had been a 7 percent decline in state tax contributions since 1986.

From early in his administration Wallace gave great attention to what he called the political chaos and gridlock in Illinois, which he said kept a wealthy state from providing for educational needs. He broadcast the fact that Illinois ranked 15th nationally in tax wealth but was 43rd in appropriation per student relative to tax revenue per capita at the time he took office.

The drop in tax support continued during Wallace’s administration, leading him to champion across the state and country a plan to refine financial aid programs. He promoted the idea of increasing tuition significantly to bring in additional revenue to the institution. His plan then called for using some of the income generated to provide financial aid to middle and lower-income students who could not afford the tuition increases.

Wallace also insisted the campus community develop an entrepreneurial attitude to move beyond reliance on tax dollars and student tuition. He invested heavily in fund raising, alumni, and public relations programs. The results were seen in increased private giving and grants. In FY93 the University obtained \$14.2 million in external grants, contracts and gift revenues. That same year there was a record \$5.3 million received from individuals and corporations, which equaled a one-year increase of 71 percent.

Enrollment management was another issue critical to Wallace. He initiated a program that reduced enrollment to match the University's level of funding, announcing in 1990 a plan to cut the student body from 22,400 to 19,400.

Other changes that occurred in his administration include the following.

- Wallace initiated strategic planning that started at the departmental and college levels. A university-wide task force was established to synthesize the college plans into one document that provided a guideline for budget and degree-offering decisions.
- There was an extension of Illinois State's presence in Chicago, where a university office was opened in 1989.
- An identity/image study was done with the assistance of the consulting firm Downey, Weeks and Toomey. One result of the work was the changing of the University seal to read "Gladly we learn and teach" in 1992.
- The University adopted the practice of using nonappropriated funds to construct a student services building and to advance a computing and telecommunications system.
- The state approved funding for a \$29.2 million science building in March 1993.
- Two major centers were created. They were the Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, and the Katie Insurance School, which started with industry support of more than \$1 million.
- The University eliminated men's soccer and wrestling programs as part of a gender equity program in 1994.
- The Board of Regents was eliminated effective January 1, 1996 and Illinois State obtained its own Board of Trustees.

Although praised by many for his strong leadership and advocacy of the University in Springfield and with the Board of Regents, Wallace was not without his critics on campus and in the community. He was seen by some as a cold micromanager who circumvented shared governance.

Wallace did not shun controversy that surfaced periodically throughout his administration in response to the many changes he initiated and the manner in which they were implemented. But he was unable to quell the discontent that became increasingly apparent in 1995, particularly as the ethics of salary supplements he had received were debated. Wallace resigned shortly after a faculty no-confidence vote in July of 1995. David Strand was named interim president in August of 1995. He served for eight months before the Board of Trustees approved his appointment as president on May 10, 1996.

1995 - 1999

David A. Strand presided over Illinois State's historic transition to an independent governing board that took office in January of 1996. Early in his administration he outlined many initiatives that will challenge the University as well as the Board of Trustees. Some of these initiatives involve the need to:

- acknowledge the university-wide responsibility in attracting and retaining students through enrollment and retention efforts;
- encourage diversity by fostering the development and success of diverse faculty and help underrepresented student groups achieve success;
- address funding issues by placing increased importance on the pursuit of capital and operating funds from the state, as well as private sources; and
- alert the General Assembly and the Illinois Board of Higher Education to the mounting list of maintenance projects and overall campus infrastructure concerns.

July 1, 1999 –

Victor John Boschini Jr.

* Adapted from the following:

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