

Elaborate fee system funded IU's 'free' education

"It shall be the duty of the General Assembly ... to provide by law for a general system of education ascending in a regular gradation from township schools to a State University, wherein tuition shall be gratis, and equally open to all." — Indiana Constitution.

It was the intention of the Indiana General Assembly to provide for free education from elementary school through college. That mandate was followed until it became fiscally impossible for Indiana University to comply.

In the early years, by anyone's standards, the education provided by the Indiana Seminary/College/University was a bargain. In 1828 the Preparatory School (high school level) fee amounted to \$10, and students in other classes were charged \$15.

By the 1858-59 school year the fees had risen, but not all that much. IU historian James Woodburn reported in his book, *History of Indiana University*, that the students were paying \$8 per term, \$25 and \$20 in the two law classes and \$6 per term in the Preparatory Department. There was also a \$5 graduation fee.



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

Around the turn of the century, the IU Board of Trustees shifted its position on the subject a little bit. Woodburn related, "Recognizing that it was 'desirable that admission and attendance be absolutely free to the people of the state,' the trustees at their November meeting in 1900 abolished all contingent fees except those in the School of Law, and except a reasonable charge for the use of the gymnasium, library, and equipments and supplies of the laboratories."

"HIGHER FEES MUST BE PAID BY I.U. STUDENTS" announced a headline in the June 24, 1920, edition of the *Bloomington Evening World*. The lead sentence said, "When the Liberal Arts Bulletin of Indiana University for 1920-21 is issued, it will contain a new 'Fees' page which was recently announced and which will be of especial

interest to all prospective students."

The new fees were spelled out in the newspaper article. First of all, there was a late charge in regard to fee payments. That was \$1 initially and five cents per day afterward.

Then there was a fee for "deficiencies in entrance work." "All students who have not upon the records of the university, credit in full for all entrance work will be charged a fee of \$5 a semester," explained the *Evening World*.

Out-of-state students were recognized in another way. "Students who are not legal residents of Indiana are charged a contingent fee and library fee amounting to \$5 per semester."

Students studying law paid \$65, which covered the use of the library and gymnasium. Their out-of-state counterparts had to cough up \$100. Medical students had microscope and contingent fees.

Then there were the costs for taking type-writing and secretarial courses — \$5. Students who took their examinations late had to pay \$1 for the privilege and were obliged to give the instructor or professor the receipt from

the bursar's office.

Music students paid \$4.50 per semester for use of a practice piano for one hour daily.

The gap between what the Indiana General Assembly gave the university and what it cost to run the institution must have been readily apparent long before 1920. But IU was still struggling with the need to preserve the image of a free education for Hoosier youth.

As late as the 1974-75 school year, the trustees were still struggling with the semantics of what they were charging students. The catalog for that year states that Indiana residents were not to be charged for their schooling, but in another part of the same catalog there was a description of the rate per credit hour. The following year, the sentence about education being free to Indiana residents had disappeared from the catalog.

The 1920 article in the *Evening World* commented, "Prospective students will watch with interest the new bulletins as practically every college and university has been confronted with the problem of raising its fees for the coming school year."

10/13/97