

# The G.I. Bill and the Changing Nature of State-University Relations

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## G.I. Bill Allocations

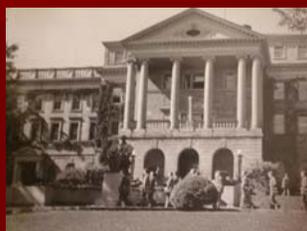
- Covered \$500 per school year for tuition, supplies equipment
- Subsistence allowance to each veteran (dependent on family status)
- Money given directly to veterans (not university)



## G.I. Bill Figures: PL 346

- By 1947, over 600,000 veterans receiving PL 346 benefits
- Between 1947-1952:
  - Tuition benefits over \$500 million per year
  - Subsistence allowances \$1 billion per year
- In total, over \$13 billion spent on PL 346
  - \$100 billion in 2006

## Veteran Student Explosion at UW-Madison



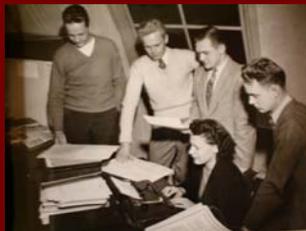
- Enrollment spiked dramatically
  - 1944: 6,500 students
  - 1947: almost 20,000 students
- Veterans drove this increase
  - Of 20,000 students in 1947, 11,970 were veterans
  - 60% of total student body

## Challenges for UW-Madison

- Changing study body
- Capacity problems
- Faculty shortages
- Curriculum issues
- Housing shortages



## The Voice of Veterans



- *Daily Cardinal*
  - “Gee-Eye View”
- Student Services
  - Over 20 clubs
- *Wisconsin Alumnus*
  - Articles on veteran students’ effect on campus and their concerns

## UW-Madison Strategy

- Way to garner support for higher levels of funding needed to confront challenges
- University as defender of veterans rights
  - Ready to serve veterans but lacking funds
- Call for state government to increase support
  - No mention of increased federal support

## Administrators Rally for Support

- E.B. Fred → Wisconsin Idea
- “If Wisconsin is to exert its full influence in support of all that is good and wholesome in the American way of life and in the maintenance of world peace, it cannot afford to lag behind in providing the tools needed by the university faculty to do the required job...Let us not hesitate to invest a few million in the implements of peace and security.”
  - A.W. Peterson (1945)



## Public Reaction

- Support UW-Madison and veteran students
- Belief in a "moral obligation" to veteran students
- Portray university as "wanting to serve" and "eager to furnish" veteran students



## Public Reaction



- Emphasized how the state must step up and pay

"The University of Wisconsin must ask and receive larger appropriations than were ever given to it before. The State Legislature should be ready to grant funds which are necessary to meet the present emergency as well as possible."

*Kenosha News* (1947)

## State Reaction

- Republican-dominated state government
- Need to balance competing priorities
  - funding state entities (like UW-Madison)
  - platform of keeping taxes low
- State increased funding but still cuts made to university budget requests
- Cuts made no matter what the state's fiscal situation

## Changing State Rhetoric

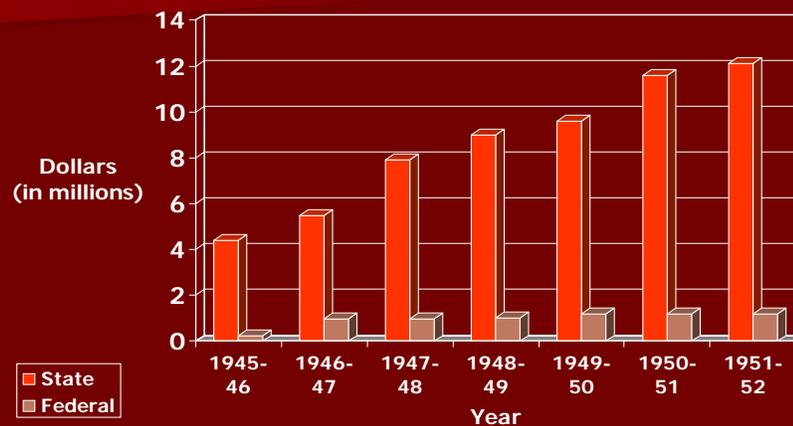
- "It is self-evident that the University desperately needs a far larger appropriation than it has ever received before. I am convinced that the University cannot render the service we expect it to render without curtailing its enrollment of Wisconsin students unless we provide more funds than are provided in the general budget bill."
  - Governor Rennebohm, 1947
- "I agree that many expanded activities are desirable but we must be practical and face the facts. It would be a wonderful thing if the state of Wisconsin could grant these requests, but we must not overlook the fact that its Mr. and Mrs. Average Citizen who foot the bill, and with today's high prices, they have a hard enough time making ends meet."
  - Governor Rennebohm, 1949

## Continued State Support

- Despite blows to budget requests, state did support UW-Madison
  - Top eight in budgets of all state agencies
  - Second-most state employees

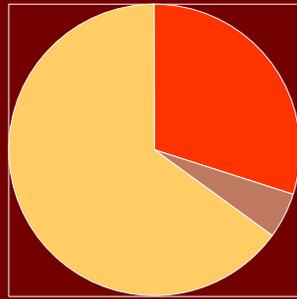


## UW-Madison Budget: Public Appropriations



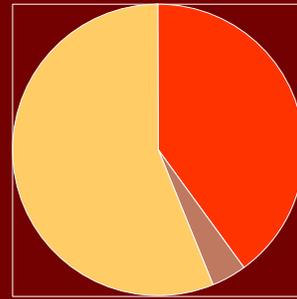
## UW-Madison Budget: Total Income

1946



State Federal Other

1951



State Federal Other

## Was the G.I. Bill a success?

- For students → yes
  - Increased access to higher education
- For university → yes and no
  - Adapted to changing circumstances
  - Rallied some, but not all, funds necessary for survival
- For state → yes and no
  - Found funds to support the university
  - Used its political capacity to set the agenda

\*Created changes that neither state nor university could support alone

## What Can We Learn?

- Increased access creates new challenges for universities and governments
- Federal legislation comes with consequences
  - Implementation has local consequences
  - Temporary can become permanent
- Reminder that no policy is perfect
  - G.I. Bill not a panacea
  - Product of its context