

6-1875

First Annual Report of the Principal of Southern Illinois Normal University

Southern Illinois State Normal University

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Recommended Citation

, . "First Annual Report of the Principal of Southern Illinois Normal University." (Jun 1875).

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ANNUAL REPORT.
June, 1875
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The Principal of the Southern Illinois Normal University has the pleasure to offer to the Trustees and to the public in general his First Annual Report. It is a great satisfaction to know that the people of this section have highly appreciated the benevolence of the State which established this University and have shown this opinion by sending many of their children to enjoy the advantages so generously provided. The numbers in attendance since the first special session in July 1874 have exceeded the large calculations made by friends of the University. As a general rule institutions of learning do not very rapidly attain the power of large numbers. They grow slowly and with many fluctuations: and only after considerable years of comparative uncertainty do they appear to be established in the confidence of the community. While our enterprise has had some lukewarm friends, a few opponents and perhaps, some enemies, it has had so many warm, earnest and enthusiastic supporters, and has seemed so exactly to meet the wants of this part of the State, that it has far thus moved rapidly forward on a tide of cheering success.

It is not always fortunate for an institution of learning to be crowded with students, more especially in its beginning. These may be ill prepared, lacking moral habits and scholarly enthusiasm. Then the larger the numbers the worse it will be for the school. But where nearly every student is manly or womanly or even child-like, brave, truthful, serious and earnest, the more the better, till the full capacity of the buildings is reached, and the teachers are tasked to the utmost of their time and strength. These members are an inspiration and a power.

The building would accommodate more pupils, and we have seats for more in the higher department. But in the Model or Primary School, owing to a lack of furniture, we have been compelled to be crowded and to refuse many applications. The several rooms of the Preparatory School have been so full as to be almost incommoded. We should have at least two more rooms furnished for study, but our Legislators in their desire for economy, have left us no choice in this matter. We are to go on the next two years with no means to accommodate more of this class of worthy young people who may greatly desire an education and whose time for acquiring it will have passed away before we are prepared to receive them. This will be as seems to us a great loss both to the youth and to the State.

The teachers have been compelled to have the charge of six and even seven classes each, and they have labored with great zeal and fidelity and hence been rewarded with the consciousness that they have been honestly endeavoring to do thorough work. For the most part they have received the grateful respect of all, and certainly they have made their several departments highly successful, and they point with pride to the record of the students both in their daily recitations and in their several monthly examinations, written and oral. A better showing has rarely been made, and we congratulate ourselves on having had so many pupils who have shown themselves honest, earnest, and ambitious to learn and to make noble characters by a faithful performance of all duty. The families from which they come have been honored by what they have done and the localities to which they shall go for future duty will be fortunate

The numbers during the year have been as following, viz :

Special Session	-	-	-	-	51
First Regular Session	-	-	-	-	147
Second Regular Session	-	-	-	-	183
Third Regular Session	-	-	-	-	283
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Total	-	-	-	-	663
The number of individual students has been	-	-	-	-	403
And	-	-	-	-	172

Persons have received gratuitous tuition and have pledged themselves to

teach in the schools of the State, provided situations can be obtained with reasonable effort. None of these have yet completed the course of study prescribed for graduations, though many of them have taught in the district schools for several years.

The several departments have been well instructed in every case, and mention of any one of them would seem to imply either higher efficiency in it or same degree of inferiority in others. Each teacher has cordially, and promptly co-operated with the President in all respects and each has my hearty thanks. Their labors have made mine not only lighter and pleasanter, but much more profitable to the school: while the careful obedience of the students has rendered the duty of all the officers singularly delightful and far more valuable to the State than it could have been, had the pupils been vicious, idle, dilatory. Only one thing mars the completeness of this commendation. The boys—in some cases young men—have compelled the janitor to do extra work in cleaning buildings. From only a few of the students, and an occasional visitor, has there been a mouthful of tobacco juice or saliva ejected on the floors, though some have for a time persisted in this sort of indignity to propriety. Such ones have tried hard apparently to prove that they had never been decent in their lives, and that their early advantages had singularly neglected by friends and misimproved by themselves. We have this satisfaction however to know that they have made great improvement in the direction of cleanliness. In other points about the University, in the rooms, on the black boards, with perhaps only a single exception, we have reason to commend and have to say that the general neatness and care of furniture could hardly have been better.

The department of natural history has made some progress in gathering specimens. Professor Parkinson has done most of the work in this line, and from various sources, by his own gun, by donations, by purchase he has made a fair beginning of a Museum. Birds, Quadrupeds, and Reptiles have been collected to the number of a hundred or more. Dr. Thomas has received by favor of Prof. S. A. Forbes, Curator of the Illinois Normal University, many valuable specimens of Birds, Shells, etc.,

from the Smithsonian Institution, specimens of Insects and the publications of the Institution, from the War Department's Exploring Expedition; a large collection of Insects and from the U. S. Northern Boundary Survey; specimens of Natural History, from Prof. Jerome, various specimens preserved in alcohol, all of which make an admirable beginning for the first year, and are all we could have taken care of while we have no shelves or cases properly arranged for them.

The Botanical Cabinet has not been begun. The Library consists of Works of Reference and Congressional Documents, and has just been put in its place on shelves. We do most seriously need more books, and the appropriation made by the Legislature, to take effect in July, will enable us to do something toward meeting the wants of the University.

The aim in our work for this first year has been to lay the foundation of a broad culture, yet to make a specific culture the definite object in every department and branch of study. We have sought to accustom our pupils to self-control, to a thoughtful regard for the comfort and rights of others, and to a reverent obedience to law as embodied in the general usages and customs of society and business, and we are proud to say they have not disappointed us. They have been ladies and gentlemen in the true sense of the word. Our care has been devoted particularly to the elementary branches and to discipline in knowledge, science, art, habit health, and exercise. Every student has practised the graceful and inspiring system of light, free Gymnastics or Calisthenics, has been drilled in Spelling, in Writing, in Vocal Music, and Drawing. While we are dissatisfied with the prevalent notion that these things are of less importance than book learning, we are pleased to know that their value has been recognized and we shall bestow more thought and labor on them in the future. They will hereafter be imperative requirements of all. We are certain that health has been preserved by the Calisthenics and grace of carriage acquired. We have, however, no adequate provision for instruction in these useful things. The several teachers have added to their other duties the work of the Spelling. The Principal has taken the Drawing into his own hand. Mr Brownlee the Singing and Calisthenics, and

Mr. Hillman the Writing, and while these have been profitably done they could have been better done by one who could have given his whole time and attention to them. This ought to be made a special department, supervised by a professor employed for it.

The work of grading the grounds have been provided for in part by the legislature and has proceeded nearly as far as the money appropriated will carry it. While the Principal is grateful for the sum granted he cannot withhold the statement, that after a careful examination and estimate, he asked for this purpose Twenty Five Hundred Dollars. Two committees of the Legislature, one from the Senate and one from the House, visited the institution during the winter and both reported this sum, was if anything to small and recommended its appropriation. But men in that body who had never seen the institution and its grounds insisted that this sum was more than a State such as ours could afford and granted us the sum of One Thousand Dollars. With this sum we shall accomplish something to beautify the grounds, and put them in better order of drainage and surface. But it is probable that for the whole future of the University the place will be deformed by this attempt at economy, or else more money will be voted hereafter, than could have finished the whole at once. The same may be said of the fence. Not less than two thousand dollars were needed to make a good enclosure; twelve hundred and fifty dollars are given, and while the fence will enclose the lot, it will not adorn it as it ought to have done. It is a great pity that the people of this end of the state do not demand for themselves, as they and their children need and are worthy to enjoy, privileges of education equal to those of any state in the Union, or at least to those which the Northern section of the State enjoy. What would be the cost? We need in order to do the work for the young of this locality, a sum of say, thirty thousand a year. We are three million people nearly, that is one cent for each inhabitant or two cents for both Normals. Put ours wholly on the population of Southern Illinois, in which we have a million people. and it is only three cents each, or fifteen cents to a family of five persons. What a petty cost?

It has seemed proper to make this statement not in condemnation of the legislature which undoubtedly endeavored to do its duty to the people, but in extenuation of any blame, which some might attach to our asking so much money and of our failure to secure what we need and what we expected we would readily gain.

Our work is not for ourselves. It is for the people of the State, for their schools and children. We are only interested to have it well done and we are willing to have others do it if we are not found to be the best men. And we prefer not remain if we are incompetent. But we are distressed when a false economy restricts us. It is to the interest of the State to have work of education well done, and for every child.

With these remarks we close by asking all our patrons to send us scholars and to give us sympathy and encouragement.