The College Student Employment Project at the University of Kansas, 1934–1943

by Richard B. Sheridan

The decade of the 1930s was especially grim for Kansans because farmers and townspeople suffered two disasters. Drought was added to depression, not only in the western part of the state, which was commonly referred to as a dust bowl, but also in the eastern and central parts of Kansas. Calling attention to one of the worst droughts in the state's drought-ridden history, author Avis D. Carlson wrote in November 1933, "Two years of twenty-five cent wheat followed by a year of drought make a sad combination for Kansas. Out through the wheat country great level fields are being foreclosed by the thousands. In the eastern part of the State, where diversified farming is practiced, the condition is no better."  

Prominent Kansans were shocked by the severity of the depression and bewildered as to its causes and cures. "We are going through strange and awful times and I fear worse ahead," wrote William Allen White from Emporia in October 1931. "Our business here has slumped about twenty percent but we are teetering along in high water up to our chin." About a year later White wrote Dan Casement, a prominent cattleman at Manhattan:

What is the answer to this calamitous problem which is enmeshing civilization? I remember well the depression of the '30s; even the panics and flurries of the '80s, and I have often heard men talk who went through the panic of '73, and I remember distinctly the grasshopper plague of '74, but I have never seen times so black for everybody as they are now. If I were an absolute despot of any unit of population, from a city to our entire western civilization, I just couldn't issue ukase number one. I wouldn't know what to do.

Later in the letter White added, "I suppose about all we can do is to tinker here and there at the small immediate problems, 'and with God be the rest'—if any."  

John Ise, the University of Kansas' well-known professor of economics, was extremely pessimistic regarding the state of the economy and world affairs. After returning from a trip to conferences in New York, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, Ise told a reporter for the Lawrence Daily Journal-World in March 1934 of "the darnedest dose of pessimism he has had to take concerning the economic and political future of the United States and the world." It was Ise's hypothesis that democratic government, founded upon competitive capitalism and a laissez-faire policy in regard to private enterprise, could not endure in its present state. "For a long while competitive capitalism, left to itself, solved all questions as they came up," Ise asserted. "Now private enterprise, founded upon competition alone cannot muddle through, and the government has to step in..."
and do what was previously left to business. The government must do this if we are to survive."

Ise was equally alarmed by the rise of fascism in Europe, Japanese imperialism in Asia, and growing tension and military preparedness among the great powers. The professor noted a slight hope for recovery in the United States, observing that business and agriculture were slowly pulling out and that if the progress continued, the United States might yet be saved. "If we climb up out of the depression here, everything will be all right locally, and able to hobble on, as it is now," Ise believed. "If the United States fails to recover, democratic government is doomed."  

As with other towns and farming areas, Lawrence and Douglas County were dealt a severe blow by the depression and drought of the 1930s. Initially, the citizens relied chiefly on their own resources, but as the depression worsened and local relief and welfare agencies were unable to meet the needs of jobless people, resort was had to funds and programs supplied by the New Deal agencies in Washington. It is perhaps true to say that, given its diversified economy and the presence of the state university, Lawrence was better able to cope with the depression than other towns of its size in Kansas and neighboring states. Yet there is substantial evidence that numerous families became dependent on charity, welfare, or work relief to supply food, clothing, and fuel; that Lawrence was invaded from time to time by a transient army of young men and migrant families looking for temporary work; that university students encountered hardships that forced some of them to drop out of school; that homes, farms, and businesses were lost, insurance policies canceled, and careers broken.  

5. The author is writing an economic history of Lawrence and Douglas County which will document the generalizations made in this paragraph.


A wide variety of jobs were offered under the CSEP, including work as laboratory, research, and biology assistants.
The University of Kansas was dealt a series of blows by the depression and drought of the 1930s. Student enrollment declined in the early thirties; the state legislature cut the university's budget, including faculty salaries, severely; the faculty-student ratio worsened; the physical plant deteriorated due to lack of maintenance and repair; the quality of education diminished due to overcrowded buildings, insufficient equipment, and other factors. "Where the 1920s had been merely disappointing," wrote Clifford S. Griffin, "the 1930s blasted all dreams of excellence on Mount Oread."*

College students who had to work part-time to stay in school were particularly hard-hit, owing to the scarcity of jobs for which male heads of families were generally given preference. Leaders of the University of Kansas and the Lawrence community came to the aid of students with schemes to provide student loans, increase job openings, and reduce living costs. In September 1931, a campaign was launched by university officials and the chamber of commerce to raise a student loan fund. Several weeks later the fund amounted to more than eight thousand dollars, of which the university faculty had contributed a larger sum than was originally set as the quota for all downtown Lawrence. But the loan fund was too small to aid many students. Moreover, many students wanted part-time work rather than to go in debt. To meet their needs an employment bureau was created at the university. On September 1, 1931, there were approximately two hundred applications from students wanting work to help pay their expenses through school. The following fall university officials sponsored a "Keep the Student in School Week," during which time homeowners and businessmen were urged to find jobs for students.

Besides loans and jobs, the university and the community helped needy students find cheap board and room. Prior to the beginning of the 1931-1932 school year, the university's mail was reported to be filled with inquiries from prospective students and upperclass men and women who said they must find more economical quarters than the average provided in the previous year. Many townspeople and faculty members provided rooms for students in exchange for services. On the other hand, the opportunities to work for meals were not so plentiful. To supply this need a newspaper article reported:

A plan to provide meals at 10 cents each to University of Kansas students who could not otherwise remain in school during the second semester was announced today. . . . The offer of 10 cent meals will be open to any student making satisfactory grades who will not be able to remain in school without a special price on food. All applications will be investigated by the committee and only those who must have help to remain here will be allowed to take advantage of the special offer.

The fund to start the program was provided by downtown friends of the university and faculty members, after which it was largely self-financing. Each student was expected to pay $1.80 for three meals a day, six days a week. The meals, which were served in the cafeteria of the Student Union building, were said to be "adequate although not elaborate." On February 13, 1933, a group of twenty-six students were served their first ten-cent meal.*

On January 15, 1934, readers of the Daily Journal-World learned that Chancellor Ernest Hiram Lindley of the University of Kansas had been to Washington,

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7. Griffin, University of Kansas, 433; Lawrence Daily Journal-World, September 10, 1931; October 1, 1931; October 7, 1931; September 1, 1932; January 11, 1933.

Illustrating Cicadellidae for an entomology publication was the job assigned this student during the 1939-1940 school year.

D.C., to appeal for the extension of government aid to needy students. He conferred with George F. Zook, commissioner of education and a KU alumnus; Harry L. Hopkins, relief administrator; and President Roosevelt, with whom he and his wife dined at the White House. Raymond Nichols, Lindley's executive secretary and later chancellor of KU, told the reporter that Lindley went to Washington with a three-fold plan for government aid to the University of Kansas:

He asked federal officials for funds to aid needy students, who would earn money for their schooling by manual and clerical work on the campus; for graduate and advanced students who would be paid for doing research work for members of the faculty who lack funds to complete research work begun; and for buildings needed for the University.

Lindley estimated that from 150 to 300 students at KU would be forced to leave school at the end of the semester unless employment or some sort of financial aid was given them. Furthermore, he said that with a college enrollment of twenty thousand in Kansas, there were fifty thousand unemployed persons in the state who could go to college if they had financial aid. He proceeded directly from Washington to Topeka to confer with the presidents of colleges in the state to find out if they were interested in the proposed program for student relief.9

Lindley said he conceived the plan for student aid after he and his wife gave a ride to two young men after they had stopped for the night at Limon, Colorado, on an automobile trip to the Pacific Coast. One of the young men, whom Lindley had known as a student, said they had traveled from Texas to Colorado on a freight train. To the question, "Were there other boys on that freight train?" the young man replied, "Yes, about 180." This incident set the chancellor and his wife to observing freight trains on which they counted hundreds of boys as free passengers.10

In February 1934, after an extensive investigation, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) organized the College Student Employment Project (CSEP). In the editor's introduction to an article published by Lindley on this project in the Literary Digest, the chancellor was referred to as "one of the educational leaders who were instrumental in persuading the Federal Government to assist in providing jobs for college students who otherwise would not have been able to continue their education." Lindley had argued that a comparatively small amount spent in keeping students in school would relieve the overcrowded labor market as well as prove of great advantage to the students concerned. The plan allowed all public institutions of college grade in the nation to assign jobs to needy and capable students up to ten percent (later raised to twelve percent) of their October 15, 1933, enrollment. Students were paid wages for useful work on a wage scale ranging from thirty to fifty cents an hour for a maximum of thirty hours a month. Monthly earnings ranged from ten dollars to twenty dollars; the average was fifteen dollars per student. According to Lindley, "three-fourths of the students who received jobs were taken from those who would have had to drop out of college because of lack of funds; the remaining fourth were chosen from young men and women who would have been unable to enter college without a job." The jobs, which were of a great variety, included the following categories: clerical, stenographic, maintenance of buildings and grounds, accountants, library assistants, laboratory assistants, museum assistants, research assistants, biological assistants, hospital assistants.11

9. Ibid., January 15, 1934; January 17, 1934; February 19, 1934; University Daily Kansan, Lawrence, January 14, 1934.
The College Student Employment Project was begun early in February 1934. Funds from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration were channeled through the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee (KERC) to the colleges eligible to receive such aid. I. E. McConnell, who was state supervisor of this project, was directly responsible to John G. Stutz, executive director of the KERC. The KERC was responsible for (1) recommending to the FERA the applications of the various colleges for CSEP funds, (2) recommending to the FERA the projects submitted by the various colleges, (3) accounting for all funds received and expended for CSEP by the participating colleges, (4) reporting the activities of the CSEP monthly to the FERA, and (5) advising and assisting the participating colleges in such matters as interpreting rules and regulations and working out new projects.\(^\text{12}\)

The College Student Employment Project was summarized in a report submitted by John G. Stutz to Gov. Alfred M. Landon for the calendar year 1934:

A monthly average of 1,611 students receiving $188,515.53 from federal funds in wages paid through the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, was enabled to continue educational pursuits in Kansas colleges and universities from the beginning of the College Student Employment Project in February, 1934, to the close of the year. Of this average per month for the year, the number of men employed was 950 and the number of women 661.

Forty-one Kansas colleges and universities took part in the program. Reports from the heads of the participating institutions indicated that enrollments in most of these colleges and universities had increased, owing to a large extent, to the federal funds made available to college students. As the largest institution in the state, the University of Kansas had the largest quota of students who were eligible for CSEP jobs. At KU, 724 different students were employed during the calendar year, of whom 507 were men and 217 were women. The total payroll amounted to $41,047.20 in wages.\(^\text{13}\)

It was the policy of the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee to leave the details of administering the College Student Employment Project to the heads of the various colleges. "They alone were responsible for the selection of students to participate, the assignment of students to work, the initiation of new projects, the establishment of a committee to administer the College Student Employment Project, and for all other details incident to the operation of the program." At the University of Kansas students seeking employment applied to Fred Ellsworth, alumni secretary, and Dora Bryant, assistant dean of women. Later a CSEP office was established with Mary C. Olsen as executive secretary to administer the program. Raymond Nichols was appointed chairman of the CSEP Committee on Policies, Projects and Selections. Students who had applied during the school year for part-time work were automatically eligible to receive CSEP jobs. Moreover, application forms were sent to former KU students who had been forced to drop out of school the previous semester. By February 17, 1934, when the work commenced, nearly 500 students had been interviewed, of whom 322 men and women had been accepted. One week later, when the full quota of 850 students was reached, it was reported that 90 of these were new students who were partly responsible for a small overall increase in the university's enrollment by comparison with that of the previous year.\(^\text{14}\)

The CSEP work accomplished at KU during the spring semester of 1934 was the subject of a detailed report. It showed that more than sixty thousand hours of work were performed by 374 different students at a total expenditure of $20,145. One of the most helpful projects was accomplished by eight CSEP workers who classified and mounted literally hundreds of thousands of insects, some collected fifteen years previously, for the Department of Entomology. Eighty-eight students were engaged on grounds maintenance and the building of campus roads and walks. Sixty-nine students worked as research assistants for faculty members. Stenographers numbered thirty-six, clerical assistants fifty-seven, and smaller numbers were employed in the student hospital, the medical school hospital at Kansas City, the libraries, various science laboratories, and the printing plant. Several CSEP students constructed models for the engineering and mathematics departments, while others worked as cabinetmakers, greenhouse gardeners, painters, and elevator operators.\(^\text{15}\)

Work opportunities expanded in the 1934–1935 school year. By late July 1934, university officials were ready to receive CSEP applications. It was


\(^{13}\) Ibid., 775.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 776; *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, February 7, 1934; February 16, 1934; February 17, 1934; February 23, 1934; *University Daily Kansan*, February 16, 1934.

\(^{15}\) *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, March 5, 1934; July 10, 1934; *University Daily Kansan*, July 10, 1934.
announced that KU’s quota of jobs had been raised to 420, or twelve percent of the enrollment of full-time students on October 15, 1933. At least half of the positions were to go to students who were not in school in January 1934. One-third of the appointees were to be women. At a district meeting of CSEP officials at Lincoln, Nebraska, the decision was made to permit students to work off-campus in such nonprofit institutions as schools, city and county offices, and churches. By October 1, the Lawrence city schools had thirty-five CSEP workers from KU on duty. During 1934-1935 the emphasis on Mount Oread shifted from clerical and physical labor to projects sponsored by academic departments which made the CSEP a “practical training ground for student workers.”

16. Lawrence Daily Journal-World, August 14, 1934; October 1, 1935; Griffin, University of Kansas, 414-415; University Daily Kansas, August 5, 1934.

As chairman of the CSEP Committee on Policies, Projects and Selections as well as executive secretary to Chancellor Lindley, Raymond Nichols was involved in all aspects of the work program. In April 1935, he replied to a questionnaire he received from John Stutz in Topeka. In answer to the question, “Has the CSEP been worthwhile?” he replied that it had been a definite success at KU. Students were working seriously and faculty supervisors were well satisfied with their work. Nichols gave a negative reply to the question, “Is the present quota satisfactory?” Observing that fifteen hundred applications had been received for the 420 jobs allowed, he was “convinced of the desirability of expanding the program to make possible the opportunity for college education for more of these applicants.” He believed that KU could provide satisfactory supervision for 210 additional student workers. Nichols also replied in the negative to the question, “Is the present monthly allotment satisfactory?” He pointed out

*Two students prepare a museum exhibit.*
that many of the students were entirely dependent upon their CSEP earnings, that the maximum allotment of twenty dollars a month would in most cases provide only for board and room. He recommended that the average be increased to eighteen dollars a month and the maximum to twenty-four dollars, which would more nearly cover actual living expenses. Despite these shortcomings, Nichols believed that the CSEP should be continued because of the great social value of the work and the program’s low cost to government.  

The activities of the 1934–1935 school year were summarized in a newspaper article based on an interview with Mary C. Olsen, executive secretary of the University of Kansas CSEP. She said that during the fall semester 422 students were on the payroll, compared with approximately 400 in the spring semester. The university had been allotted $6,300 a month to pay student wages. The bulk of the jobs were divided into the following groups: technical, research, survey, library, museum, education, recreation, health, landscape, and clerical work as part of the special projects. “We attempt to fit the students for the job in order to offer training in their particular field,” Olsen commented. An undated typescript report in the University Archives contains the following statistical table which shows a substantial increase in the CSEP program in 1934–1935, as compared with 1933–1934, even allowing for the fact that the program operated only during the latter half of the earlier school year (see table 1). At the time of the newspaper report it was not certain that the CSEP would continue the following year; however, projects were being submitted by the heads of the various departments at KU in case they were needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. Students on Payroll</th>
<th>Hours Worked</th>
<th>Amount Earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1933–34</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>60,968</td>
<td>$20,145.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934–35</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>160,638</td>
<td>$52,728.15</td>
</tr>
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That these projects were needed for an expanded College Student Employment Project which became part of a new alphabetical agency is clear from the events which transpired during the summer of 1935.

Chancellor Lindley went to Washington in mid-June to confer with government relief authorities on the probable continuation of the CSEP. Upon his return he told a summer school convocation of students that Harry L. Hopkins was highly interested in aiding the large number of students just out of high school to get a start in college. Lindley brought to his audience the hopeful outlook of an increase and the continuation of the CSEP, but no official assurance. The day after Lindley’s return the Daily Journal-World, in an article carrying a Washington dateline, said that President Roosevelt had established the National Youth Administration (NYA) to meet what he called “a great need” by offering unemployed youth “their chance in school, their turn as apprentices and their opportunity for jobs.” The President had “set aside $50,000,000 to be used in providing work apprenticeships in private industry, in offering high school and college training for those between 16 and 25, and in giving work relief to youths.” In early August Chancellor Lindley was appointed to the National Advisory Committee of the National Youth Administration and was called to Washington for the first meeting of the committee.

Chancellor Lindley was not the only Kansan or former Kansan appointed to the National Advisory Committee of the National Youth Administration. Among the other thirty-five appointees were Glenn Cunningham, Peabody, world champion middle-distance runner and KU alumnus; Amelia Earhart, New York City and formerly of Atchison, famous aviatrix; and George F. Zook, president, American Council on Education and KU alumnus. Ernest K. Lindley, the chancellor’s son, and his wife Betty Grimes Lindley were involved closely with the NYA. As Washington correspondent of the New York Herald Tribune and author of three books concerned with the career of President Roosevelt, Ernest K. Lindley arranged for his father to meet the President and members of his cabinet.

Betty Grimes Lindley and Ernest K. Lindley wrote the book, A New Deal for Youth: The Story of the National Youth Administration, which contains an independent survey of the activities of the NYA.


and an appraisal of the organization. Under the NYA program, student aid was expanded to include a few graduate students and a large number of needy high school students. Moreover, part-time work was provided for out-of-school and out-of-work youth in families on relief, together with job training, vocational guidance, and recreational and cultural programs. In Douglas County the NYA was introduced into the high schools in September 1935. In the Lawrence schools, forty-four students received wages not to exceed six dollars a month; in Lecompton there were about a dozen youths on NYA; and in Baldwin and Eudora about six each. A NYA center was opened in Lawrence which included rooms for handicraft work, a music studio, and a dramatics department. Young people were instructed in sewing, weaving, woodworking, metalwork, clay modeling, and art. There were classes in piano, group singing, and one-act plays. The recreation program included the games of softball, horseshoes, volleyball, and croquet. The Douglas County unit of the National Youth Administration was directed by T. A. Beatty, who was well known in recreational and school circles in the state, having served as athletic coach and school administrator for the past fourteen years.21

The 1935-1936 school year witnessed change and expansion of the College Student Employment Program at the University of Kansas. The major change was the addition of graduate students to the program. In early October the executive secretary announced that a supplemental payroll included twenty-five students who were working for their master’s degrees and thirteen working for Ph.D.s. Their monthly pay was twenty-five dollars and thirty dollars, respectively. On the regular payroll there were 423 students. The payroll for the school was said to amount to $62,100, the largest sum ever to pass through the CSEP office in any previous nine-month period.22

Besides the projects carried over from previous years, several new projects were undertaken. James Hammers made an exact replica of the Globe Theatre where Shakespeare presented his plays. This theatre model was made for the English department for use in connection with the study of Elizabethan dramatists. Research work on Mexican amphibians and reptiles was conducted by students in the Department of Zoology, and on methods of purifying chemicals in the Department of Chemistry. In the Department of Geology several CSEP workers surveyed the mineral resources of Kansas, while in the Department of Civil Engineering another group made a topographical map of Kansas. Several students helped to prepare and serve meals in the Student Union cafeteria in a cooperative meal plan that was sponsored by the CSEP.23

That the CSEP was by no means without its critics is revealed by a debate in which Chancellor Lindley was a participant. Several days after his return from a meeting of the National Youth Administration Advisory Committee in Washington, D.C., in May 1936, Lindley addressed the district Rotary convention at Topeka. He argued that steps should be taken to reduce the flow of youth into the employment market and that the least expensive and most beneficial means to this end was to extend the years of schooling. He deplored the fact that the nation’s crime bill during the previous year was $12 billion—four times the cost of public education. The speaker who criticized the chancellor’s views was Thomas W. Nadel, president of Drury College at Springfield, Missouri. Warning against “mollycoddling our boys,” he declared that “no red-blooded young man wants to have his ambitions and energies benumbed by some old-age pension provision of society which insures his future, if he can live long enough.” Nadel feared that welfare programs would lead young people to believe that the world owed them a living. If they did not find jobs waiting for them, they should go out and create jobs. How the Rotarians in attendance reacted to these opposing viewpoints is not recorded, but it seems reasonable to believe that many were inclined to side with Nadel.24

The end of the school year saw the graduation of a number of CSEP workers. According to the Lawrence Daily Journal-World of June 2, 1936, “About 100 of the 1,100 students receiving degrees and certificates at the University of Kansas this commencement are employed on College Student Employment Projects, a feature of the NYA.” Seventy of these were seniors in the various schools and departments, fifteen or twenty had been doing graduate work, and the remainder received certificates in special programs. One recipient of the Ph.D. degree had been employed by the CSEP since its inception. The report summarizing the year’s work said that

23. Ibid., September 16, 1935; September 19, 1935; September 24, 1935; October 22, 1935; April 25, 1936.
683 different students had been employed by the CSEP, of whom 49 were graduate students. There were 495 men and 198 women employed. They had worked a total of 12,165 hours, and the payroll amounted to $61,889. Eighty-four counties in Kansas, a dozen states, and the Philippine Islands had contributed to the CSEP lists.25

The summer and fall of 1936 saw an increase of both CSEP job applications and placements. By August 6, approximately twelve hundred applications for student jobs had been received at the CSEP office at KU. One month later Raymond Nichols received a telegram from the NYA headquarters in Topeka, asking if the university could use an increased allotment. Nichols' affirmative reply was followed by the announcement that about 230 student jobs would be added to the previous allotment of 469, making a total of about 700. It was explained that the additional money grant had been made "because of the drought which ruined crops and might mean that many students would have to call off their plans for attending school unless they received part time work." An editorial in the Lawrence Daily Journal-World questioned the motives behind the fifty-percent increase in the CSEP grant, noting cynically that the political effect of the increase in the amount of public money expended so shortly before the election would receive attention.26

From the high point of 720 CSEP jobs in the school year 1936-1937, the number of part-time student workers plummeted to 499 in 1937-1938 and 496 in 1938-1939. Not only was the percentage of places allowable cut from twelve to eight percent of the enrollment at the University of Kansas, but also the base was further reduced by the elimination of students who were twenty-five years of age or more. There were 358 students on the first payroll on October 2, 1937, of whom 11 were graduate students. Thirty-two more were added four months later. By counting all who worked on CSEP jobs at some time during 1937-1938 the total came to 499. The CSEP office received 922 applications for jobs during the summer and fall of 1938, and 395 students were granted jobs. The total of 496 for the 1938-1939 school year was almost identical with that of the previous year.27

25. Ibid., June 2, 1936; Summer Session Kansan, Lawrence, June 26, 1936; June 30, 1936.
26. Lawrence Daily Journal-World, August 7, 1936; September 8, 1936; September 9, 1936; September 10, 1936.
27. University Daily Kansan, September 11, 1937; October 10, 1937; January 26, 1938; July 1, 1938; January 11, 1939; Summer Session Kansan, June 30, 1939.

On the athletic field, student workers earned money as supervisors of intramural sports.
One of the most worthwhile CSEP projects was the subject of an article written by Mary Jane Sigler in the *University Daily Kansan* on January 12, 1939. She pointed out that although many blind students were enrolled in American universities, relatively little material was available to them in the way of college textbooks and reference works in Braille. In an effort to solve this problem, three blind University of Kansas students earned their way through school by transcribing college textbooks into Braille. Both the blind students and the students who read the books aloud to them were employed on the College Student Employment Project. "The process is a slow and painstaking one," wrote Sigler, "but the finished product will more than sufficiently reward the students who have accomplished it, for they realize its worth to themselves and to the blind students of the future." 28

The 1939-1940 school year saw increased student employment by the CSEP-NYA at KU. At some time during the year the payroll contained the names of 550 different students who were employed on non-routine projects on the campus and in non-profit-making public organizations in Lawrence. Living costs for the average CSEP-NYA student were about $22.50 per month for room and board, a figure somewhat below the average for the student body as a whole. 29

America's entry into World War II created such a demand for labor, including part-time student help, that the CSEP-NYA turned its attention to war-related projects. In a report to President Roosevelt of April 16, 1942, the National Advisory Committee of the National Youth Administration said that during the pre-defense period, the NYA program was based primarily upon meeting the needs of unemployed youth and geared to the needs of the communities in which they are located. However, as far back as two years ago, with the approach of armed hostilities and the necessity for preparing for whatever would eventuate, a gradual transition took place in the NYA program from what might be termed a community construction and production basis, to a war construction and production basis. As a result, today the entire NYA program is geared to war needs. 30

29. *Summer Session Kansan*, June 23, 1940.

Chancellor Ernest H. Lindley was a leading proponent of financial aid and relief for students during the Great Depression.

If the NYA program at KU is any guide, college student workers turned to war work later than workers on other NYA projects.

At the University of Kansas, CSEP-NYA employment declined to 437 student workers in 1940-1941 and 365 in 1941-1942. In the latter year the program involved 66 departments, 174 projects, 84,356 hours of work, and total earnings of $29,146.65. A report from the CSEP office at KU said that since the introduction of the project in the spring of 1934, more than two thousand students had been on the payroll with a total expenditure of $316,258.56. 31

On August 11, 1942, it was announced that because congressional appropriations for NYA projects had been cut, it was expected that only about one-half as many KU students would be provided for in the 1942-1943 school year as in the previous year. By the fall of 1942 the need for CSEP civilian-

31. *University Daily Kansan*, April 23, 1940. *Summer Session Kansan*, July 28, 1941; Summary of NYA Work by Departments with Projects and Student Assignments, School Year 1941-42. University of Kansas, Correspondence of Chancellor Deane W. Malott, box 3, National Youth Administration, 1939/40-1941/42.
type employment had diminished. Indeed, it was reported that because of job openings in wartime programs, jobs for both men and women students were plentiful. Thus, the CSEP-NYA program wound down and was terminated on July 30, 1943.³²

Two noteworthy features of the CSEP-NYA at KU deserve special mention. One was the high level of scholarship attained by the student workers. In an address made by Mary C. Olsen to the Rotary Club of Lawrence in September 1936, CSEP students were praised for their character and ability and for winning far more than their share of honors at KU. While they made up only eighteen percent of all students enrolled, they had won 40 out of a total of 160 awards for scholarship. Five years later the assistant registrar at KU issued the annual scholarship report for 1940-1941 which showed that students employed on CSEP-NYA projects ranked second only to students who were members of honorary societies. The article in the University Daily Kansan said that the comparatively high scholarship ranking of these students had vindicated Chancellor Lindley's faith in the worthiness of young Kansans who were compelled by economic necessity to assist themselves in getting a college education.³³

The second noteworthy feature of the CSEP-NYA at KU was the ability of young people from comparatively low socioeconomic backgrounds to grasp the opportunities for higher education and prepare for careers in public and private walks of life. One study of these backgrounds was made by Martha Tillman, who succeeded Olsen as executive secretary of the CSEP office at KU. She found that the family income of nearly ninety percent of the parents of CSEP workers was less than $1,500 yearly, and that approximately forty-four percent of the student workers were entirely self-supporting. Tillman summarized the occupations of the CSEP workers' families as follows:

From farm families and towns of less than 2,000 population come 40.4 percent of the CSEP workers. More than one-fourth of the parents of the students employed under the program are farmers. It is seconded only by the laborers, who represent 10.9 percent of the workers' families.³⁴

Similarly, high praise was given to the CSEP-NYA students by the editorial writer in the University Daily Kansan:

No government agency has had higher ideals and more practical aims than the NYA. This semester at the University of Kansas 990 students from dependent-ridden families in the lower-income brackets found work with the student aid agency that enabled them to pay for part of an education they would not have had otherwise. The work done by the students is high in quality and usefulness because only those students with a high scholastic rating and good character are given work. Politics does not enter into the dispensing of jobs in the NYA.³⁵

Within two years of the ending of the CSEP-NYA student work programs at the University of Kansas, a new government program of far larger scope was inaugurated. This was the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the "GI Bill." It provided education, job training, and other benefits with government financing to men and women veterans of World War II. The program had a tremendous impact on KU, so much so that student enrollment between 1945 and 1948 expanded from fewer than four thousand to more than nine thousand. This necessitated the addition of hundreds of faculty members and a scramble to find student housing. Raymond Nichols elaborated on the problem, exclaiming that "we were overwhelmed by students, just unbelievably... most of them were veterans."³⁶

It is significant that the years from 1934 to 1948 witnessed the transformation of the University of Kansas from a small provincial university, which one editorial writer called facetiously the "country club" of Kansas, to a peoples' university which has built on its base in the state of Kansas to become an institution with extensive national and international connections. A good part of this transformation, it is submitted, can be attributed to the foresight of Chancellor Ernest H. Lindley in launching the program to enable worthy but impecunious young people to receive wages for useful work while they were pursuing a course of studies for a college degree.³⁷