CHAPTER SIX

Part II: Wartime Curriculum Changes

Flight training was not the only courses created to prepare for the nation’s participation in the war. The whole curriculum was speeded up so men and women could more quickly be trained for war work or to be free to serve in the forces. Accelerated programs were introduced to allow student who participated to graduate in three years by taking twelve week summer sessions. To assist those willing to fight, or who were drafted, they also offered special graduation requirements for students who joined the forces before they had completed their final semester.

By 1942 courses in many subject areas had been adapted to wartime needs and interests. Art courses were creating posters for various war related drives and the Business Education program was adapted not only to train teachers, but also to serve in government offices. Journalism courses put special emphasis on the freedom of the press and wartime responsibility, English writing assignments required research papers on topics from war work for women to propaganda analysis, race tolerance or problems related to peace and post-war conditions.

Math classes taught equations and formulas taken from aviation manuals and stressed solving problems relating to navigation. Units in teacher training included “Arithmetic and the News of the Day,” “Statistics and War,” and “Arithmetic and the Model Airplane.” The Music Department presented patriotic music programs on the radio, in a program called “What We Are Fighting For.” The Social Studies courses added focus on topics like the economic causes of war, the meaning of total war, production and consumption control, and international aspects of war.
Even the natural sciences adapted their existing courses to focus on war related topics, such as including material on the nature and value of explosives and war gases in Chemistry courses. Classes in aeronautics, cartography, radio code, and algebra, were offered, but the most popular was air craft identification.

**Homemakers at Attention**

The enrollment in the Home Economics Department doubled between 1935 and 1945, and even included its first male students during the period. During the war it maintained its emphasis on home management and family life, but adapted its teachings to the changing social conditions. They mobilized to educate the community to adjust to wartime restrictions. Home Economics faculty and students offered training for students and the wider community. The topics included techniques to deal with the rationing of food and other necessary items, and Red Cross nutrition, first aid and canteen courses. Between 1940 and 1943 nearly 700 students were trained in first aid.

Instruction was also offered over the airways in a segment in the college’s radio program called “Homemakers at Attention.” In these programs they discussed topics from rationing points and the rationing of shoes, to substituting honey for sugar or “What is the responsibility of the home maker during a national emergency?”

Home Economics professor Margaret Stitt directed the efforts of student volunteer defense workers who acted as “Victory speakers” in theaters, discussing support activities from scrap and bond drives, air raid precautions, rationing and conservation.
The Nursery school offered by the department increased from one to two afternoons a week. In the Laboratory School, older children were taught to take care of smaller children whose mothers might be working. With the wartime labor drain making it difficult to maintain cafeteria workers, the Home Economics Department established a cafeteria for the Laboratory School, community students and faculty on the ground floor of Leonard Hall in what was the Jr. High Assembly Room under a course called Lunch Room Management.

**New Nursing Program**

“The young women who are sought in this hour of need will be more than stop-gaps. No great army of nurses will find itself without work when the war is over. Public health and district nursing has never been adequate in the United States. .. It is the safety and security of the nation’s health that is the real goal, war or no war.”   
*New York Times, March 12, 1942*

The wartime conflicts and dislocations increased the need for nurses, both at home and overseas. In 1942, the Army put out an appeal for 50,000 new nurses to be trained.

Indiana Hospital had a prewar nurses training program, but it could not easily expand because of a lack of instructors. At the same time the enrollment on the ISTC campus was shrinking. ISTC, like many colleges at the time, agreed to provide basic classes such as Anatomy, Biology, Psychology, and Sociology to nursing students on the ISTC campus. Since the nurses would not be studying to be teachers, such a program required approval from the State.

Approval was granted in the fall of 1942, allowing the hospital to double the number of nurses it trained. The program expanded to include nursing cadets from other hospitals and by February 1, 1943, there were nursing cadets on campus from hospitals in Indiana, Clearfield, and Spangler hospitals.
Laboratory School

A report on wartime alterations in the curriculum made particular note of concern for the courses in the Laboratory School:

“The peace of the world cannot be established by current sickness, by dividing raw materials, by assuring every one jobs – though these things are important and necessary – but only if we develop from nursery school to university a program to make all people alive to the dangers of aggression, of international competition, and of power struggle.”

Always progressive and responsive to the interests of their students, Laboratory school teachers integrated wartime themes and activities into their curriculum to engage and inform its students, but also to mobilize them for war work. From kindergarten on up they sought “emotional outlets” for the tensions caused by war including class discussion of problems, “dramatic plays in which cities are bombed or attacked, construction of airports or invasion barges.”

The whole school participated in war support efforts. They gathered scrap and contributed to war chest drives. The junior high students made Christmas presents and materials for veteran’s hospitals, produced Braille books for the Red Cross and wrote to former student teachers in the service. They also participated in home defense activities such training in aircraft identification, an activity at which female students excelled! In fact, at a mid-year convocation in the winter of 1943, the laboratory school students had a contest to identify 50 aircraft and the girls beat the boys by a score of 62-46.

Another Opportunity?

During the normal school years, female students had led cheers at sports events. Like participation in varsity sports, that practice had been discontinued. For some time before the Second World War, only male students had served as cheerleaders.
In 1941, cheerleading for female students was reintroduced. “Through the efforts of Paul Rishberger, Indiana girls have been given the opportunity in another activity that has previously been limited to the boys!” Mr. Rishberger, was hopeful that the female cheerleaders would have the football audience “wildly cheering.” The reporter who wrote the story for the Penn optimistically recorded that the experience would prepare the young women for leadership and that it would be a tremendous asset latter in their life. (Oct 14, 1941) The career of this group of cheerleaders was short lived because major sports were cancelled in 1943 due to lack of players.

The ISTC Rifle Club responded to a call from the NRA in the fall of 1941 to intensify its program “for the duration of the present emergency.” During the fall months about 45 women learned to use of the rifle.

**Women in the Service**

Women students were urged by Penn writers to join in the war work and take advantage of increased opportunities offered by the war:

“The woman is no longer considered as fit only to tend to her housekeeping. Now with the war emergency ever upon us the women are being called upon to fill all those vacancies left by the men who have gone into the armed forces.... 600 women are arriving in Washington each week to enter Federal service. Many of them are hired for administrative, professional and sub-professional jobs – as economists, public relations experts, ammunitions inspectors, dieticians, medical technicians and ordinance inspectors. .. Calls are for women with college credits in math, physics, and chemistry .. current vacancies are for women... Men can apply for the jobs mentioned above. They just aren’t as likely to get them at present, that’s all.” Penn April 14, 1942
Many young women men did volunteer to join the forces and many more joined the reserves. In January 7, 1943, Dorothy Karabinus who had joined the WAVES demonstrated her excitement in a letter to Florence Kimball about the training:

“We started working as soon as we got here, classes, notes, lectures, and really studying. We have nine books to cover in 17 days. I just love it here. The girls, there are six of us in one room, are all very nice. In about a month those of us who do well in our studies will be issued uniforms.” Penn
January 7, 1943

The Advantages of College Training

With male students deserting the campus for service in the forces or war industry occupations, the financial health of ISTC depended upon the continued matriculation of female students. In the middle of the war in the midst of outside calls recruiting female students for war work, Dean of Women, Florence Kimball, gave a talk to the faculty-at-large on points they could make to female students to encourage them to remain in college, entitled “The Advantages of Teachers College Training to Girls Planning to Enter One of the Armed Services. “

Kimball, who had herself done war duty in WWI, knew the strength of the call of direct war service, but she argued that female students did the best for themselves, in the short and long run, and their country, if they remained in school and completed their education prior to setting off for war work. She told them, “The
need is great and every high school graduate has a responsibility to prepare herself to make a direct contribution. “

With optimism for a postwar world which would embrace educated women and a trust in the value of a college education, she felt they could accurately tell students that with degrees they could serve as teachers, but also as scientists, mathematicians, dietitians, or as business persons. A completed education would also enable them to do better work during the war, as well as contribute more to a postwar world.

She urged her colleagues to encourage female students to take courses in Mathematics, Statistics, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Languages, and Social Sciences which were required by some wartime agencies, but would also lead to significant work in the postwar era.

**War has come to Indiana County...and to you!**

In January of 1942, the Red Cross put an ad in the *Indiana Gazette* which read: “War has come home to Indiana County... and to you.”

The female students which now dominated the campus in overwhelming numbers threw themselves into war support efforts. They raised thousands in direct fund raising, bond and stamp sales, or through the proceeds of entertainments.

Blood drives were held at the hospital and the college station wagon transported students to the hospital to
donate blood. Whether donating their own blood, fundraising, knitting, rolling bandages, collecting salvage or books for soldiers, offering instruction or learning new skills that might assist in the war effort, female students and faculty were contributing to the war effort.

**Home Defense**

It was the perception of Indiana residents of both the town and the campus that propinquity to significant industrial sites such as of Pittsburgh and coal mines put the town in danger of air raids. Therefore, the town and ISTC authorities mobilized to prepare for air strikes. They developed an elaborate air raid plan, appointed an air raid warden for every building, as well as those to serve as wardens, firewatchers, firemen, first aiders, and bomb squads. The campus *Daily Bulletin* on June 24, 1942, warned students “we must remain alert at all times in case an air raid.” Female dormitory students were warned to get their work done in the day time, because blackouts were planned for the evening.