

Overcrowding, high enrollment plagues Iowa State

By Denice Smee

Imagine it is the first day of school, you discover you have been cut from half of the classes you need for graduation and then find out you are going to have to stay in temporary housing because a room was not available.

There are just two of the problems faced by many students at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa.

Jim Blume, editor of the *Iowa State Daily*, said he thinks overcrowding is the major problem facing students at ISU.

The university is characterized by a lack of housing, long lines for every activity and a lack of openings in classes, Blume said.

Three or four years ago, he said, about one-fourth of the dormitory rooms were changed from accommodating two persons to house three.

"Only seniors would realize this is a problem because they are the only ones who can remember before there were three to a room," he said.

No single rooms

There is no such thing as a single room at Iowa State, he said.

Recently, the Iowa State Department of Residences opened up housing previously used for married couples to any student, and they have been assisting in the construction of more apartments, Blume said.

There are no plans to build more dorms, he said.

Robert Parks, president of the university, said he thinks enrollment will level off, then decline, making new dorms unnecessary.

"I think most universities have reached their peaks in size," he said.

Parks said students have been moved out of temporary housing quicker this year than in the past.

"All the women are out of temporary housing. All of the men should be out by next week."

He said this is because there are more available places to stay in Ames and more commuting students.

The Ames Chamber of Commerce has worked with the university in asking the community to find available sleeping rooms for students, Robert Mickle the chamber's executive director said.

There has been some talk of limiting enrollment, according to Fred Schuster, student body government president.

"I think there is a state law that the university has to admit anyone in the upper half of their class in high school," Schuster said.

But Parks said the administration has no plans to limit enrollment.

"I don't think we're going to have to find it necessary except in some departments," he said.

Limited enrollment

The veterinary medicine department always has limited its enrollment, Parks said.

"Some students in certain majors aren't able to get in classes they want or need. This has been more severe in the last couple of years," he said. "It's an inconvenience to students but it all works out."

Schuster said the department of industrial administration (business administration) and the College of Engineering are "really overcrowded." He said the College of Engineering is trying to limit enrollment.

Blume said the administration has been trying to hire more professors but is having financial difficulties because the Iowa legislature has become tighter with its money.

"If you want my personal opinion, they (the administration) haven't been doing

enough," he said.

New system

Another problem facing Iowa State is that they are switching from a quarter system to a semester system over the next three years, Schuster said.

The agriculture and engineering colleges will face the most problems from this switch-over, he said.

Some students "farm-out," that is they work on their family farms part of the year and go to college part of the year," Schuster explained.

While on the quarter system, there was little difficulty for the "farm-out" students because they could choose the quarters best suited to their need, he said.

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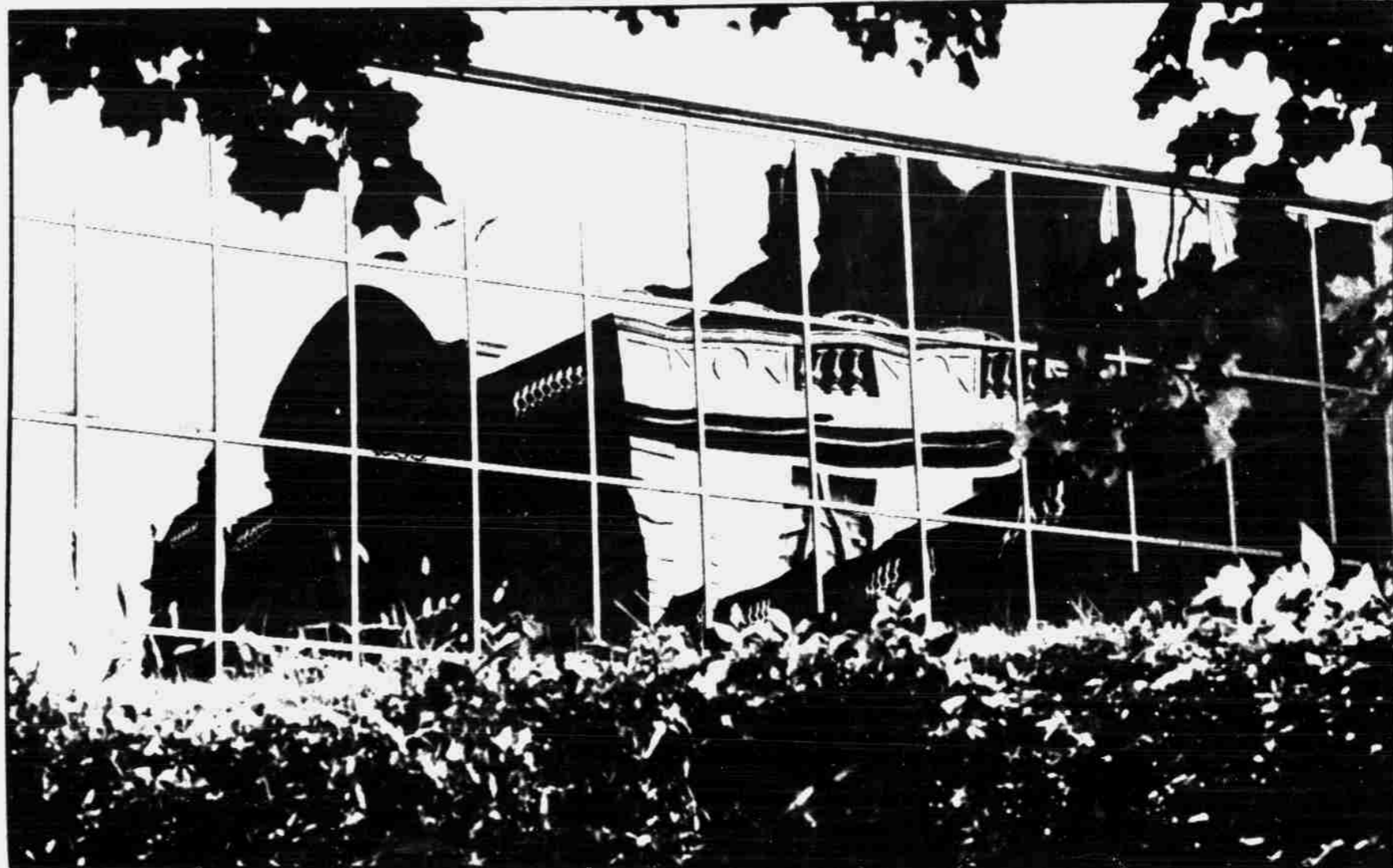


Photo by Mark Billingsley

Change is seen on the Iowa State campus when windows in the new addition reflect the old Iowa State Student Union.

Businesses count on students for support

Ames, Iowa, is a college town. Of 47,000 population, 23,000 are registered students at Iowa State University, according to the executive director of the Ames Chamber of Commerce.

Bob Mickle said the city and its

businesses get \$80 million yearly from students.

"And that's not counting that big money from instructors and faculty,"

Terry Sprenkel, city manager, said the city is definitely "aware of student involvement."

Mickle said, "I would hate to see a 10 percent decline in enrollment."

The university is also the largest employer of the city, Sprenkel said. The university has 6,000 employees.

They said being a college town does create some problems, though.

Sprenkel said there is a "continual battle to face needs with a limited tax base."

Mickle said about 46 percent of the land inside the corporate limits of the city are state-owned and therefore tax exempt.

He said he does not think this large amount of tax-exempt property has really

affected the city because it is continuing to grow.

"Taxes are high everywhere," Mickle added.

Both Sprenkel and Mickle said the city is encouraging industrial and business growth.

The city finished a redevelopment project last year designed to revitalize the downtown area, Sprenkel said.

The project was concentrated in a four-block area that was "not in a progressive situation," he said.

"It has improved the business climate downtown," Sprenkel said.

Mickle said there are "certain types of industry that are not compatible" for the type of city that Ames is.

"We're kind of picky and choosy anymore (about the types of industry coming into the city). We seek industries instead of being sought," he said.

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