

Phillip H. Falk
First Semester, 1938-1939

Ernest T. Smith
1939-1940

Phillip H. Falk, 41, was chosen in 1938 to succeed President Hyer. He was known to have turned down more lucrative offers than the Central State president's salary of \$5,000; so when Falk resigned after just one semester, it would seem that salary was not the deciding factor.

He said he accepted the presidency because of the greater opportunities he felt were afforded in the Stevens Point position. He left because he felt there was even greater opportunity for educational service at Madison where he accepted a post he had once held temporarily, the superintendency of the public school system.

All of Falk's degrees were earned at the University of Wisconsin. His abrupt departure did bring criticism about the teachers college situation. Thoughtful educational leaders expressed concern that standards would be lower if the campus did not receive adequate support.

In a bulletin to the faculty in January 1939, before he left for Madison, President Falk wrote:

"The poor record of (our) transfers at the University of Wisconsin is not prima facie evidence of low scholastic standards at Central State or that the faculty has been remiss in its services to students. The record does, however, cast scholastic suspicion over the college in the eyes of many people, and presents a situation of which the faculty should be fully cognizant."

The study President Falk made of the quality of Central State's educational program apparently discouraged him, but this study was not done in vain. A later president, William C. Hanson, recognized its value and used it as a guideline when he tackled the task of upgrading the institution.

Though his tenure was short, Falk perhaps had greater effect on the college than he or anyone else suspected at the time.

Ernest T. Smith was appointed acting president upon Falk's resignation and was named president in August 1939.

Smith had been at the college since 1909 and was a senior faculty member in years of service. He was so liked and respected, students had petitioned the previous year that he be given the presidency.

The sixth president earned a B.A. degree at Bowdoin College and an M.A. at the University of Chicago. The University of Chicago Press had published several of his widely used history textbooks.

But now there came the threat of war. France had fallen. A civilian pilot training program was started on campus under Raymond M. Rightsell. Men began to go into uniform and enrollment started a downward trend.

Then tragedy struck. President Smith died suddenly, September 28, 1940 after a two-week bronchial ailment.

For the second time in its history, the campus community gathered in the Auditorium to pay final respects to a president of the institution.