

**A History of Tuition and Financial Aid
at
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary**

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“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt 6:21). The Creator of all people understood well the truths of the human heart: We use our treasures – be they silver and gold or time and talents – in the pursuit of those endeavors which we love and value the most.

For a century and a half, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has made a loud confession – not solely with words, but by the prioritization of its budget: We treasure our school system, in all of its forms. Whether it be prep school or ALHS, pre-kindergarten or college of ministry, each of our schools has been blessed by our Lord through the support of a Synod that sings together with Solomon, *“Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding”* (Pr 4:7).

The Wisconsin Synod’s support of the gem in crown of her pastoral training system, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, tells the same story of love and support. Through official synod subsidy, private donation and the support of home churches, WLS has long offered generous financial aid packages to her students. As the Seminary celebrates seventy-five years of training pastors on the Thiensville/Mequon campus (1929-2004) – and as the cost of education continues to rise both in our Synod and public America – it’s fitting to reflect on the financial blessings God has given to and through this institution as we examine the history of her tuition and financial aid. At the same time, as we look to the future with knowledge of our past, we ask especially: “What has changed?”, “What hasn’t changed?”

With these questions in mind, this paper will track the history of tuition charged at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, financial aid awarded to her students, and significant factors influencing both. While it is true that there were fees associated with Seminary

enrollment during her early days in Watertown, WI, this paper will track hallmark figures beginning with the transition of the WLS Catalog from German to English (1920-21 school year), placing special emphasis on changes over the last three and a half decades of the Seminary's operation.

Challenges in Compiling a Uniform Picture

Compiling a financial history for any institution over such an extended period of time is extremely difficult, especially if the history is to have any true integrity or usefulness in forming conclusions. It is worthwhile for the reader to keep such challenges in mind, as they rightly impact the way one considers the facts and numbers presented herein. Below is a list of the chief challenges and considerations that affect not only how such a paper is written, but also how it is to be read:

- *Inflation*: Inflation is the persistent increase over time in the cost of consumer goods or (looked at from the other direction) or a persistent decline in the purchasing power of money. It is impossible to draw any worthwhile conclusions from noting that WLS tuition in 2000 was four times as high as it was in 1981, unless one knows the relative worth of "year 2000 dollars" to "year 1981 dollars." For the sake of both giving an accurate listing and providing a resource for establishing trends, dollar amounts in this paper will often be given both in actual numbers, and adjusted for inflation. Inflated amounts have been adjusted using NASA's online Consumer Price Index (CPI) Inflation Calculator into "year 2003 dollars" (the most recent year available to this point).¹
- *Student Costs*: While other "student costs" will at times be referenced, the majority of this paper will deal with basic tuition figures. Why present only those, when they do not give a realistic picture of the total cost for a student to attend the Seminary? Simply put: because it's easier. There is no true consensus on what "student costs" actually are. Students do not all live in the dormitory, do not all raise children, do not all commute to campus, do not all subscribe to the food service program. The Seminary's Operating Budget does not solely reflect expenditures on students' education: summer quarter, non-Mequon campus related seminary work, and work performed as a service to the Synod-at-large all consume portions of the Seminary's budget. Tuition is the most independent, consistent and universal number that can best be used to track trends at WLS.

¹ Those desiring more information, please visit www1.jsc.nasa.gov/bu2/inflateCPI.html.

- *Changes in Accounting and Reporting Methods:* The Seminary has been in operation (discounting the eight years in which students transferred to Concordia St. Louis) since 1863. Methods of accounting have changed. Organization of our Synod has changed. Terminology has changed – even our language has changed. In recent years this effects especially how we consider what portion of our Synod’s budget is used to subsidize the Seminary, as well as how that subsidy compares to the Seminary’s Operating Budget as a whole.
- *Changing Size of the WLS Student Body:* WLS is a small school. Due to the small size of her student body, there is often as much as a 15-20% change in the size of her on-campus enrollment between consecutive years. This means that while operating costs and financial aid figures (considered from the viewpoint of the institution) may be fairly static from year to year, they are highly volatile as they relate to the student body. For that reason, figures will often be given not only in Operating Budget figures, but also as averaged out over the entire student body.
- *Loss of Documentation:* Dollar amounts only tell part of the picture. Of greater interest is the motivation behind and consideration given to the changes of WLS finances. Unfortunately, a large portion of reports and official minutes from faculty and Board of Control meetings from the early years of the Mequon campus have not been preserved. The most telling information we can gather for those years comes from the Seminary catalog.

The Advent of Tuition at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

As one looks back into older Seminary annual catalogs, one finds little having to do with the “business” and administrative end of operating a school. The early catalogs read more as confessions of faith and purpose than anything else. As the school continued to grow, however – and, we might also observe, as our Synod was led through many of the doctrinal questions of her early years that might have seriously troubled prospective Seminary students – the catalog naturally shifted into discussions of a more “practical” (forgive the term) nature. As it did so, the Seminary stated loudly and clearly its desire to fully fund a student’s education – and the expectations motivating such a decision:

According to the custom obtaining in regard to our synodical institutions of learning, tuition is free to all students coming to us from our own college or from the colleges of affiliated synods, it being understood that these young men obligate themselves to devote their lives to the service of the Church. For the same reason the Joint Synod has at its last session in August, 1920, resolved to take no money whatsoever from students of the seminaries for services rendered, but to receive them as tyrones in the service of the Church. No charges are made for board, for the use of rooms, or of such furniture as supplied by the Seminary, each boarding student being loaned a table, a chair, shelf room for his books, a bedstead, and a mattress for use during his stay.²

This practice continued for the duration of the Seminary's existence in Wauwatosa.

The move from the Wauwatosa campus to the Mequon campus (1929) saw the appearance of boarding fees. To attend the Seminary in 1930 would cost a student \$80 (just over \$881 in "year 2003 dollars"). Despite the appearance of boarding fees, the Seminary still confessed a sense of obligation towards the students and the work to which they aspired:

Table 1

According to the custom obtaining in regard to our synodical institutions of learning, tuition is free to all students coming to us from our own college or from the colleges of affiliated synods, it being understood that these young men obligate themselves to devote their lives to the service of the Church.... However, a nominal sum of \$80.00 per annum is charged for board.³

Shortly thereafter (1933), an "incidental" fee was also added. The board fee at times went as many as eight years without seeing an increase, and over three decades averaged an increase only slightly above the going rate of inflation. These board and room fees were the only ones assessed to students for over thirty years at the Mequon campus.

Needless to say, the introduction of an "educational fee" (tuition) at our Synod's Seminary in the 1962-1963 academic year was a break with a long-established precedent – a precedent that our Fathers seemed quite proud of. The decision was not made lightly. After decades of entirely subsidizing the educational expenses of the Seminary, a

² *Annual Catalog of the Theological Seminary of the Joint Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States*, Session 1920-21, p. 11.

³ *Catalog of the Theological Seminary, of the Joint Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States*, Session 1930-31, p. 12.

committee was established to explore “charging more realistic educational fees at our Seminary.”⁴ The committee consisted of Heinrich J. Vogel, Carl Lawrenz, and John P. Meyer. As one step in establishing what “realistic educational fees” might be, the committee made a comparison of the various fees charged at other Lutheran seminaries across America. The end result of their study was to recommend to the Advisory Committee on Education a \$100.00 educational fee (about \$610 in year 2003 dollars) at the Seminary. This fee was less than half of the tuition being charged at the majority of seminaries, and was lower than all but one of the seminaries compared.

In its report to the Seminary’s Board of Control, the committee saw fit to include the following questions connected with such a recommendation for the Board’s consideration:

- Are we cheapening our Seminary course by subsidizing all our students too heavily?
- Will offering a free education to our married students encourage our students to marry after their middler or vicar year?
- Would students feel their indebtedness to the church for the training received more or less keenly, if they paid a larger proportion of the cost of their education?
- Should individual congregations be encouraged to assist students from their midst with scholarships?
- Should educational fees (tuition) be introduced to help defray educational expenses (salaries, utilities, maintenance, etc.)?
- Should separate dormitory fees and refectory fees be charged?⁵

Charging tuition would indeed help ease the financial burden running a Seminary placed on a small Synod, but it’s apparent that this was not the only concern or motivation for

⁴ “Committee Report,” presented to the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Board of Control. WLS Board Minutes, 4/3/61. Page #2 Seminary Minutes.

⁵ President Report to the Board of Control, 2/27/61.

the introduction of the educational fee. While the ability of a student to afford a Seminary education was indeed a concern, the faculty and Board of Control also saw potential dangers in fully funding a seminarian's education, including a devaluing of the education offered and a lack of perceived "ownership" by individual congregations.

The introduction of the educational fee was stated simply and without explanation or apology in the 1962-63 catalog: "Beginning with September 1962 an educational fee of \$100.00 will be collected from all Seminary students annually."⁶ While the Seminary and Synod still were committed to shouldering the majority of Seminary expenses, it may be of interest to note that at this time the previously standard reference in the catalog to students "devot[ing] their lives to the service of the Church" was discontinued.

The \$100 educational fee of 1962 increased to a \$150 fee the following school year.⁷ It was raised the following year to \$150. By 1970, students were charged \$300 in tuition to attend WLS. Even adjusted for inflation, this was more than a doubling of the modest tuition introduced eight years earlier.

Outside Financial Aid Appears at the Seminary

Immediately after the introduction of tuition at the Seminary, agencies and individuals stepped forward to provide sources of financial aid to exist alongside of Synod subsidy. Some of these had already been in place (most likely to offset the board fees charged). Perhaps to allay the financial concerns of incoming students, these scholarships first found mention in the 1963-64 catalog:

For about a decade the Aid Association for Lutherans, Appleton, Wisconsin, has given the Seminary an annual scholarship grant of \$2000. Such a grant has also been received for the 1963-64 school year, and the Seminary Faculty and Board purposes to award it at the end of the first semester in the form of 12 scholarships of \$150 each and one of \$200 to enrolled students. The Faculty and Board reserve the right to make the selection of the recipients on their own initiative, while they welcome well-founded

⁶ 1962-63 Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Catalog, p. 14

⁷ All WLS tuition figures taken from *WLS Catalog*.

recommendations and applications on the part of students. Need, academic achievement, as well as other factors highly commendable in students training for the holy ministry are taken into consideration.

Also available for comparable scholarship grants are the annual interest receipts from both the \$17,622 Seminary Trust Fund for Indigent Students, and the \$2,125 A. C. Haase Memorial Scholarship Fund. These grants are awarded at the same time and in a similar manner.⁸

Such scholarships are mentioned by name through the 1969-1970 school year catalog. Some of the scholarships were annual grants given by Lutheran institutions; the majority of them were endowment funds, whose annual interest was awarded as scholarships. In addition to those listed above, other mentioned scholarships are:

- The Martin Luther Educational Trust of Neenah, WI,
- Interest off the \$5,000 Joseph L. Quamme Memorial Fund, and
- The Synod Scholarship Fund

These scholarships are at times listed in the catalogs with the amounts of aid they provided, at times listed simply as the principal which provided scholarships in form of interest, and at times listed with no specific dollar amount whatsoever. Because other written records of financial aid from the 1960s have either been lost or destroyed, it is not possible to assemble a trustworthy picture of financial aid for those years.

1970 – 2003: Trends in Tuition

Simply comparing the given tuition for 1970-71 with the amount charged in 2002-03 can certainly make one long for the past: tuition has increased by almost 1500% over those three decades! Adjusting for inflation, however, provides a more realistic – yet not entirely encouraging – picture. Over three decades, relative tuition has increased slightly more than 300%.

⁸ 1963-64 Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Catalog, p. 14-15

For the most part, the rate of relative increase in tuition (the percentage the tuition was raised, accounting for inflation) increased at a slow and consistent pace for those years. Tuition was raised every year during those three decades, at an average hike of 10% every year. Significantly large increases did come occasionally: between the 1980-81 and 1981-82 school years tuition increased by 23%; over the two-period of 1987-88 and 1989-90, tuition increased by over 25%. When examining the tuition over this thirty-four year period, one trend stands out: not only did tuition increase constantly; the rate at which tuition increased was also on a (usually) slow but steady rise, like a rolling snowball gaining both size and momentum.

Chart 1

Table 2

What accounted for the rise in tuition? That question is not limited to WLS or our WELS education system. During the period in question, tuition also increased dramatically at secular institutions throughout the country. Throughout the 1980s and 90s in particular, college and university tuition increases exceeded the general inflation rate. While some of that increase is certainly due to increases in standard operating costs, the general consensus lays much of the “fault” at the feet of bureaucratic expansion and the addition of previously unavailable programs.⁹ WLS tuition’s increase seems to be on par with the national average: A Seattle Times article reports that “the average tuition increased by 22.5 percent nationally at four-year public colleges” between 1997 and 2002;¹⁰ during that same period, WLS tuition increased by 21%.

⁹ Cf www.princetonreview.com for any number of helpful articles on the rise of tuition nationwide.

¹⁰ “College Debt Rising Faster Than Tuition, Fee Increases,” Sharon Pian Chan. <http://archives.seattletimes.nwsource.com/cgi-bin/taxis.cgi/web/vortex/display?slug=studentdebt17m&date=20041017>

Throughout this period, the biennially published *Book of Reports and Memorials* records numerous statements of concern. In 1971 the Commission on Higher Education reported,

The Commission was fearful that the costs at our synodical institutions on the secondary level were having a negative effect upon the enrollments and therefore recommended a reduction in the General Education Fee for academy students of \$25 per academic year.¹¹

The ongoing rise in educational costs made it evident that Synod subsidy was not the only issue; outside scholarships would continue to play an integral role: "With these substantial increases in fees there may well be growing needs for scholarships and aids. We would not want young people to be deprived of the privilege of service simply because of the inability to pay their way."¹²

While the increase in tuition at WLS may seem to follow trends similar to those of institutions of higher education nationwide, the reasons for the increase are actually quite different. The following seem to be some of the key influences on the tuition charged at WLS:

Number of Students enrolled

As mentioned above, at a small institution like WLS (with a considerably "narrower" feeder system than other educational institutions) the size of the student body can change quite dramatically from one school year to the next. As a general rule, the higher the number of students on campus, the lower the portion of the educational costs each student is asked to assume. When the number of students on campus drops, each student pays a greater portion of the educational costs of the school. (As will be noted later, however, this number does work to the benefit of students when financial aid is distributed).

¹¹ Report of the Commission on Higher Education, *Reports and Memorials for the Forty-First Biennial Convention* (1971), p.4

¹² Report of the Commission on Higher Education, *Reports and Memorials for the Forty-sixth Biennial Convention* (1981), p.10

When a chart tracking the number of on-campus students (i.e., the junior, middler, and senior classes) is compared with the average tuition, one finds the sharpest increases in tuition at the same time the student body is decreasing dramatically (note especially the early 1980s and early 1990s). As true as this relationship has shown itself to be in the past, it may then be of special concern to note that while the size of the student body began to again increase after 2000, the rise of educational costs offset the benefit and the tuition charged each student continued to increase at a faster rate.

*Operating Costs:*¹³

The listed operating costs of WLS pay for those line items most closely associated with running an educational facility. Included are budgetary items such as faculty salaries, paid staff positions, insurance, utilities, etc. Other costs such as remodeling projects, special purchases (such as the Luther statue or chapel organ), some financial aid programs, campus improvements, and other similar expenses are paid from the Institutional Budget.

Over the three and a half decades in question, the Operating Budget has shown notable stability (when adjusted for inflation). It has taken over thirty years for the relative operating budget of WLS to double; the majority of the increase has occurred over the last decade. Note: the attached information show a dramatic drop in the operating expenses of WLS, beginning with the year 2001-2002. The “Operating Expenses” reported by WLS from this point on does not accurately reflect true operating costs. Due to cut-backs in Synod subsidy, monies from the Institutional Budget are now being used to finance what are by definition operating expenses. This practice was recently noted in the “Report of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board”:

¹³ WLS Operating Costs kindly provided by WLS Business Office.

The Seminary is feeling the pinch of a decrease in budgetary money that the synod is able to allot for the seminary program. For example, we will no longer be able to fund two professors as well as 7.4 staff positions from the budget. We will be able to fund some of these positions for a few years from "revolving" funds.¹⁴

Size of Faculty

Just as the small size of WLS allows a change in the size of the student body to have significant impact on her finances, so too does the size of the faculty seem to play a role. Without listing specific salary figures, suffice it to say that at a tax-exempt institution whose property and buildings are fully paid for, faculty salaries, benefits and related costs make up a significant portion of operating expenses. In the 1971-72 school year, there were thirteen faculty members for a student body of 208 (1:16 faculty/student ratio). In the 2002-03 year, there were seventeen faculty members for 161 students (1:9.5 faculty/student ratio). (It may be of interest to some that in the days of Koehler, Pieper and Schaller, the ratio of faculty to students was often as low as 1:20.) While the student/faculty ratio has changed somewhat every year, the general trend over the last three decades has been fairly consistent towards a greater number of faculty members per student.

While the growing ratio of faculty to students will naturally result in higher educational costs (assuming subsidy and other costs remain constant), it bears mentioning that the changing ratio does not simply mean a lower workload for faculty. Some of the noteworthy blessings that the Seminary, her students and her Synod have received over the last three decades by the addition of Seminary professors include:

- *Smaller class sections:* The last three decades have not seen a decrease in the number of classroom hours each professor teaches. Instead, classroom sizes have shrunk, and more direct contact between professors and students has

¹⁴ "Report of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board," *Reports and Memorials for the WELS Fifty-seventh Biennial Convention*, 25.

become available. A more structured advisor/advisee system has also been implemented.

- *Addition of programs:* Many “practical” programs have been instituted with faculty oversight that simply wasn’t available before, such as the EFT program and practice teaching in local synod grade schools.
- *Ongoing education of the faculty* as many faculty members have completed or are engaged in degree programs.
- *Ongoing education by the faculty:* Summer Quarter (funded from the Operating Budget of WLS) began in 1972; recently, as many as 10% of the standing pastorate of the Wisconsin Synod was taking part in a given summer. Satellite education programs (such as Pastors’ Institutes) have also become widespread.

*Synodical Subsidy*¹⁵

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has always provided subsidy from its operating budget to help defray the costs of education at WLS. This subsidy is not awarded directly to students, but is applied to the operating budget of WLS. This means that a large portion of educational costs are paid for by the Synod before the student sees a bill.

There are various ways to track subsidy over the thirty-four years in question. If one does so by comparing the amount of subsidy to the Operating Budget of the Seminary, we are presented with quite a consistent picture: 66% of the budget was subsidized by the Synod in 1970-71; 67% in 2002-03 (the largest percentage subsidized in those years: 76% in 2001-02; the smallest, 59% in 1986-87). When a graph measuring Synod subsidy is imposed over the WLS Operating Budget, the two seem to rise and fall in perfect sync.

Such a comparison loses true integrity over the 2001-02 and 2002-03 school years, however. As noted above, a significant portion of the operating budget costs has recently been paid out of institutional funds. While the percentage of the WLS *Operating Budget*

Table 4

Chart 4

¹⁵ WELS subsidy figures for WLS kindly provided by WLS Business Office.

subsidized by Synod has remained constant, the percentage of the true *operating costs* has fallen.

Another way to measure subsidy is to average the subsidy received over the entire student body (since enrollment numbers also affect how much subsidy is received per student, this gives a consistent view of the actual impact subsidy on student tuition).

Chart 5

Some noteworthy observations:

- Our Synod graciously supports her Seminary. While the dollar amounts vary from year to year, Synodical subsidy has also been considerably higher than the tuition charged students.
- So long as Synod subsidy is determined relative to Synod's budget or the Seminary's budget, instead of relative to the projected number of students on campus, changes in student body size will continue to make a dramatic difference on the impact of subsidy on tuition fees (cf. for example, the spike in subsidy for year 1992-93, compared to the drop the following year).
- The ratio of Synod subsidy to student tuition is dropping quickly. While subsidy has remained consistent relative to the WLS Operating Budget, the subsidy per student relative to tuition has decreased dramatically since 2000-01 school year, from averaging over 400% the charged tuition in 2000-01, to averaging just over 210% the tuition charged in 2002-03.
- The attached bar graph tracks the subsidy WLS receives as relative to the entire WELS Operating Budget.¹⁶

Chart 6

1982 – 2003: Trends in Financial Aid

Tracking financial aid will always be an inexact science. Financial aid comes to WLS students in a number of ways: through the Financial Aid office of the Seminary; gifts from home congregations, ongoing support from parents; even, arguably, through the food pantry established to defray the expenses of married students. Of these sources, complete records exist only for the financial aid reported to or disbursed through the Seminary itself. Even then, there are no complete records before the 1982-83 school

Table 5

¹⁶ WLS Operating Budgets as listed in *Book of Reports and Memorial*, appropriate years.

year. Beginning with that year, however, the Seminary began filing reports on “Student Financial Assistance” with the Board of Ministerial Education (BME), showing financial aid for a given year both by category and as a total. These reports list all reported financial aid received from various sources¹⁷ to be dispersed through the Seminary.

Some noteworthy scholarships and contributors during this period include:

- WELS scholarship Allocation Grant
- AAL Grants
- Lutheran Brotherhood Grants
- Kropp Scholarship
- The Salem Foundation
- The Siebert Foundation
- Brooks Foundation

Financial aid is not distributed in the same way as subsidy; it is applied *after* charges and fees have been assessed to students; it is distributed on need and merit, not simply evenly divided among the student body. Therefore while showing the average aid per student does not adequately reflect the way aid is distributed, it is still useful for show trends in the amount of financial aid distributed and the impact it has.

Throughout the last two decades, God’s people (both as Synod and as individual donors) have shown that the work done at the Seminary is indeed close to their hearts. While Synod subsidy dramatically reduces the tuition charge actually assessed to each student, both Synodical and private sources of financial aid have often contributed enough to cover all remaining tuition expenses. A study of financial aid received reveals the following:

Chart 7

¹⁷ Sample of the sources listed on a Combined Report: School Funds, WELS Tuition Grant Program, WELS Student Assistance Fund, WELS Travel Assistance, WLS (Supplemental) Travel Funds, Congregational, District, Private Donors, USVA Benefits, AAL Grants, LB Grants, Siebert Foundation Grants, Salem Foundation Grants, Brooks Family Scholarships, BHM Tuition Program, On-campus Employment.

- Over the last twenty years, financial aid has more often than not fully covered tuition expenses
- Financial aid contributors do seem to bear in mind the number of students on campus when releasing funds. Because of this, the amount of financial aid received per student never drops dramatically when enrollment rises, nor increases dramatically when enrollment drops.
- The most dramatic fluctuations in the amount of financial aid received per student (e.g. the large increase in the 1996-97 school year) are do to generous gifts from private donors.
- The “boom years” of the 1990s, in which financial aid outpaced tuition, seem to be over, with the average financial aid received per student at times dropping below the cost of tuition.¹⁸

Student Indebtedness at WLS

The “WLS Financial Aid Application Form” is the key tool for determining the amount of financial aid a student is to receive. From 1997 on, the Seminary’s Financial Aid Officer has also used these forms as a method of tracking student indebtedness at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The statistics listed are gathered only from the financial application form given at the beginning of the school year, and reflect government loans, personal loans, credit card debt (only credit card debts over \$400 are included in this report), and WLS short term loans. In many cases, “married debts” – government and other debts that a student’s wife brings to the marriage – are also inseparably reflected in this report.

Table 6

While these statistics have not been gathered over a long enough period to identify major trends, they do seem to give warning signs: student indebtedness – and more significantly, student credit card debt – is on a fairly consistent rise. At the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, 62% of the student body reported debt, with 38% of the

Chart 8

Chart 9

¹⁸ Additional information from WLS’s Financial Aid Officer notes that this trend has continued over the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years as well, seeming to establish a trend of a growing disparity between tuition and financial aid per student.

student body reporting credit card debt. Both categories showed more than a ten percent increase over the corresponding statistics of 1997.

These numbers may come as little surprise. Debt – especially in the 25-34 age group in America – has been on the rise for over a decade.¹⁹ Yet while most surveys of the indebtedness of young adults in America sample a cross section of society, WLS sees a much more homogenous group. In our group of students, there is a statistic that is not only easy to track, but would certainly have an impact on student indebtedness.

The tuition of Martin Luther College, the feeder college for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, has also seen its tuition rates rise (at a slightly faster pace than those of WLS). Though it is not the focus of this paper, when considering the financial challenges facing students of the Seminary, it's worthwhile to remember that as tuition rises at our Synodical schools, our students do not simply face four years of higher tuition – they have the compounded effect of facing eight years of higher tuition.

Attached is a table tracking tuition at MLC from 1996/97 – 2004/05.²⁰

Table 7

What Has Changed? What Hasn't Changed?

A study of tuition and financial aid at the Seminary does show noteworthy changes over the years. Many of the changes would seem to be very discouraging:

- WLS is no longer a tuition- or fee-free environment;
- The costs of education on our campus are rising at much the same rate as at secular institutions;
- Synodical subsidy per student is decreasing;
- The average amount of financial aid received per student seems to be on a downward trend while tuition is increasing;

¹⁹ For an in-depth study of the rise of debt and credit card debt among young adults, cf. www.demos-usa.org.

²⁰ All figures gathered from *MLC Catalog*, various years.

- Student indebtedness is on the rise;
- The WLS Institutional Budget is now being regularly used to cover Operating Budget expenses, spending down the principal on many endowments.

When one considers the changes of recent years, one might struggle to find a change that seems to work to the benefit of the Seminary or her students. May it be noted that our Synod is looking at adapting our system to alleviate the impact of such changes:

“In the future we will undoubtedly have to make more use of endowments for student assistance and even for budgetary purposes in our ministerial education schools. There are few in America today who attempt to operate the kind of system we have without sizeable endowments.”²¹

Yet for these discouraging changes, there is still constancy for which to be grateful. God’s people – both as Synod and individuals – continue show their love and support for the Seminary. The cost of Synodical education is regular subject matter for studies and memorials at district and Synod conventions. And lest we become too myopic and miss many of the blessings, it is encouraging to recreate the study done over forty years ago by Professors Vogel, Lawrenz and Meyer: when current WLS tuition is compared to nine other American seminaries, we see a special measure of God’s blessings poured out on this campus. Not only is WLS tuition the lowest despite having a very low enrollment, we note that the majority of the seminaries listed have gone through repeated ecumenical mergers and lost much of the confessionalism they once had. Praise God that the commitment of God’s people to standing on the rock of His Word has not changed at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Chart 10

One Seminary professor reminisced that during his days as a student at the Mequon campus, a summer job and a month of apple picking during the school year was enough

²¹ “Commitment to Pastoral Education,” John M. Brenner. Delivered at the Symposium on Pastoral Education, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Sept 20, 2004. P. 19.

to cover all of his expenses. While those halcyon days seem to be a thing of the past, God grant that the Wisconsin Synod long continues to use her treasures to confess with Solomon:

Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor. (Pr 4:5-9)

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- “Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary – Operating Budgets.” [Listing years 1970-71 – 2002-03.] As provided by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Business Office.
- “Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Report on Financial Aid.” As submitted to the WELS Board of Ministerial Education. School years 1982-82 – 2002-03.

Addenda

Tables and Charts

Charts: For the sake of comparison, whenever possible the X (horizontal) axis of the charts use reflect the same data measurements (e.g., year numbers 1970-2003). Do note, however, that the values of the Y (vertical) axis vary from chart to chart.

Transparencies of Chart 1 and Chart 2 provided for comparison of key figures.

Table 1: Costs of Attending WLS by category 1930-2005¹

Financial Stats from WLS Catalogues 1930/31 – 2004/05									
<i>Year</i>	<i>Reg.</i>	<i>Tuition</i>	<i>Board</i>	<i>Room²</i>	<i>Dorm fee</i>	<i>Key</i>	<i>Parking</i>	<i>Refrig</i>	<i>Total</i>
04-05	\$410	\$5310		\$4365	\$350				\$10435
03-04	400	4860		4095	340				9695
02-03	375	4455		3870	440				9140
01-02	375	4095		3420	440				8330
00-01	180	3860		1935	365				6340
99-00	145	3660	1800	1020	290				6915
98-99	115	3510	1740	980	245				6590
97-98	100	3390	1680	945	90				6205
96-97	25	3230	1600	900		25	20	30	5830
95-96	25	3080	1530	860		25	20	30	5570
94-95	25	2880	1430	800		25	20	30	5310
93-94	25	2740	1360	760		25	20	30	4960
92-93	25	2550	1360	720		25	20	30	4730
91-92	25	2330	1360	720		25	20	30	4510
90-91	20	2200	1260	700			20	30	4250
89-90	20	2110	1210	670			20	25	4055
88-89	15	1820	1175	640			20	25	3695
87-88	15	1540	1120	610			20	25	3330
86-87	15	1450	1090	590			15	25	3185
85-86	15	1380	1050	570			15		3030
84-85	15	1320	1000	550			15		2900
83-84	15	1200	900	500			10		2625
82-83	15	1090	830	440			10		2385
81-82	15	1030	750	402			10		2207
80-81	15	760	660	300			10		1745
79-80	10	690	600	270			10		1580
78-79	10	625	565	240			10		1450
77-78	10	570	510	220			10		1320
76-77	10	520	475	200			10		1215
75-76	10	455	465	195			10		1135
74-75	7	420	405	170			10		1012
73-74	7	390		490			10		960
72-73	7	365		475			10		857
71-72	7	325		450			10		792
70-71	7	300	410				10		727
69-70	7	300	410				10		727
68-69	7	250	410				10		677
67-68	7	250	385						642
66-67	7	200	375						582
65-66	7	200	350						557

¹ All statistics gathered from *WLS Catalog*, school years 1930-31 through 2004-05

² Or combined Room and Board, when not differentiated

64-65	7	150	325						482
63-64	7	150	325						482
62-63		100	300						400
61-62	5		275						280
60-61	5		275						280
55-56	5		200						205
51-52	5		200						205
49-50	5		180						185
48-49	5		150						155
40-41	2		100						102
33-34	2		100						102
30-31			80						80

Table 2: Tuition 1970/71 – 2002/03 (and adjusted for inflation)³

<i>Year</i>	<i>Tuition</i>	<i>Tuition (adj)</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Tuition</i>	<i>Tuition (adj)</i>
02-03	4455	4557	85-86	1380	2360
01-02	4095	4255	84-85	1320	2338
00-01	3860	4126	83-84	1200	2216
99-00	3660	4041	82-83	1090	2079
98-99	3510	3963	81-82	1030	2084
97-98	3390	3885	80-81	760	1697
96-97	3230	3789	79-80	690	1748
95-96	3080	3718	78-79	625	1763
94-95	2880	3577	77-78	570	1730
93-94	2740	3488	76-77	520	1681
92-93	2550	3343	75-76	455	1556
91-92	2330	3148	74-75	420	1567
90-91	2200	3098	73-74	390	1616
89-90	2110	3131	72-73	365	1606
88-89	1820	2830	71-72	325	1476
87-88	1540	2495	70-71	300	1422
86-87	1450	2435			

³ Base statistics gathered from *WLS Catalog*, school years 1970-71 through 2002-03

Table 3: WLS Operating Costs 1970-2003 (and adjusted for inflation)⁴

<i>Year</i>	<i>Operating cost</i>	<i>Operating cost (adj)</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Operating cost</i>	<i>Operating cost (adj)</i>
02-03	1,992,860	2,038,695	85-86	1,006,521	1,721,150
01-02	2,084,651	2,165,952	84-85	919,324	1,628,122
00-01	2,358,270	2,520,990	83-84	884,948	1,634,498
99-00	1,993,427	2,200,743	82-83	825,663	1,574,539
98-99	1,965,604	2,219,166	81-82	766,976	1,552,359
97-98	1,919,125	2,199,317	80-81	691,358	1,543,802
96-97	1,805,602	2,117,971	79-80	617,957	1,565,903
95-96	1,579,752	1,906,760	78-79	597,275	1,685,510
94-95	1,464,596	1,819,028	77-78	529,857	1,608,645
93-94	1,474,105	1,876,535	76-77	504,975	1,633,089
92-93	1,356,473	1,778,336	75-76	454,669	1,554,967
91-92	1,235,841	1,669,621	74-75	439,982	1,642,012
90-91	1,175,327	1,654,860	73-74	389,816	1,615,397
89-90	1,127,235	1,672,816	72-73	343,519	1,512,170
88-89	1,089,897	1,694,789	71-72	314,386	1,428,255
87-88	1,069,266	1,732,210	70-71	275,123	1,304,633
86-87	1,039,147	1,744,727			

Table 4: WELS Subsidy of WLS 1970-2003 (and adjusted for inflation)⁵

<i>Year</i>	<i>Synod Subsidy</i>	<i>Synod Subsidy (adj)</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Synod Subsidy</i>	<i>Synod Subsidy (adj)</i>
02-03	1,344,730	1,375,658	85-86	610,219	1,043,474
01-02	1,579,866	1,641,480	84-85	560,929	993,405
00-01	1,728,545	1,847,814	83-84	554,037	1,023,306
99-00	1,388,535	1,532,942	82-83	518,070	987,959
98-99	1,447,482	1,634,207	81-82	463,635	938,397
97-98	1,362,660	1,561,608	80-81	461,198	1,029,855
96-97	1,218,265	1,429,024	79-80	407,144	1,031,702
95-96	1,072,721	1,294,774	78-79	379,583	1,071,183
94-95	919,547	1,142,077	77-78	346,142	1,050,887
93-94	952,641	1,212,711	76-77	336,334	1,087,704
92-93	973,646	1,276,449	75-76	296,404	1,013,701
91-92	846,427	1,143,522	74-75	295,615	1,103,235
90-91	786,735	1,107,722	73-74	265,823	1,101,570
89-90	681,123	1,010,786	72-73	226,044	995,046
88-89	675,643	1,050,624	71-72	221,219	1,004,998
87-88	638,565	1,034,475	70-71	182,843	867,042
86-87	611,263	1,026,310			

⁴ Base statistics provided by WLS Business Office⁵ Base statistics provided by WLS Business Office

Table 5: Financial Aid / Student 1982-2003 (and adjusted for inflation)⁶

<i>Year</i>	<i>Financial Aid/Student</i>	<i>Financial Aid/Student (adj)</i>
02-03	4,557	4,612
01-02	4,255	4,020
00-01	4,126	4,270
99-00	4,041	4,368
98-99	3,963	4,851
97-98	3,885	4,486
96-97	3,789	7,554
95-96	3,718	4,429
94-95	3,577	3,881
93-94	3,488	3,710
92-93	3,343	4,361
91-92	3,148	3,789
90-91	3,098	3,131
89-90	3,131	3,278
88-89	2,830	2,680
87-88	2,495	2,655
86-87	2,435	2,342
85-86	2,360	2,180
84-85	2,338	2,332
83-84	2,216	2,382
82-83	2,079	2,048

Table 6: Student Indebtedness at WLS 1997-2005⁷

<i>Year</i>	<i>Ave. debt per indebted student</i>	<i>Percentage of students with debt</i>	<i>Percentage of students with credit card debt</i>
04-05	9,155	62%	38%
03-04	7,127	58%	36%
02-03	7,658	51%	29%
01-02	7,855	53%	24%
00-01	10,677	44%	25%
99-00	9,479	46%	21%
98-99	7,932	45%	23%
97-98	6,896	51%	26%

⁶ Base statistics gathered WLS "Report on Financial Aid" to the Board of Ministerial Education, school years 1982-83 – 2002-03

⁷ Figures provided by Professor Forrest Bivens, WLS Financial Aid Officer

Table 7: Martin Luther College Tuition 1996-2005 (and adjusted for inflation)⁸

<i>Year</i>	<i>Tuition</i>	<i>Tuition (adj)</i>
04-05	8,500	8,500
03-04	6,020	6,020
02-03	5,190	5,309
01-02	4,750	4,935
00-01	4,610	4,928
99-00	4,380	4,835
98-99	4,130	4,663
97-98	3,990	4,573
96-97	3,800	4,457

⁸ Base statistics gathered from Martin Luther College Catalog, school years 1996-97 – 2004-05

CHART 1 - WLS TUITION 1970-2003

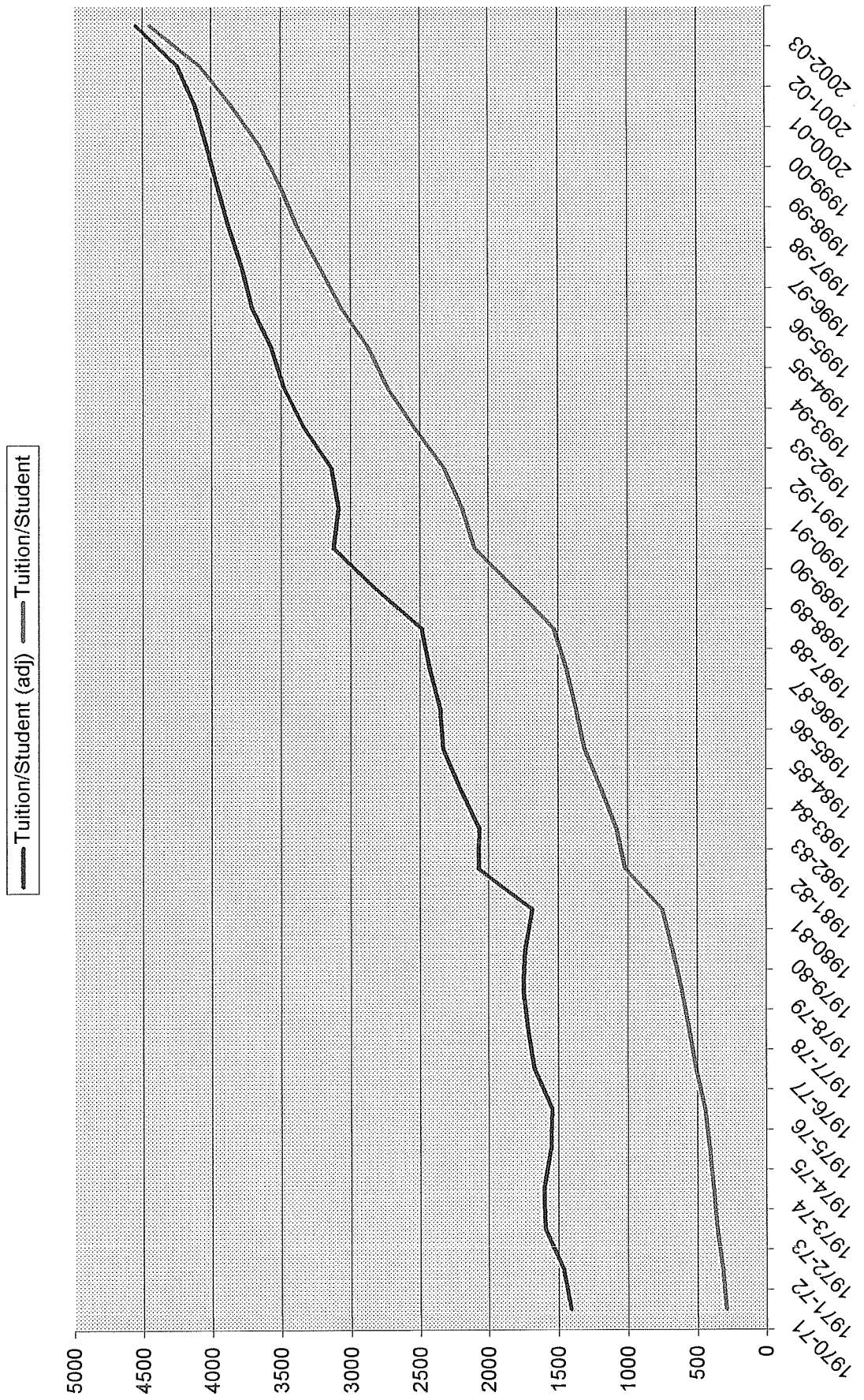


CHART 2 - WLS STUDENTS ON CAMPUS 1970-2003

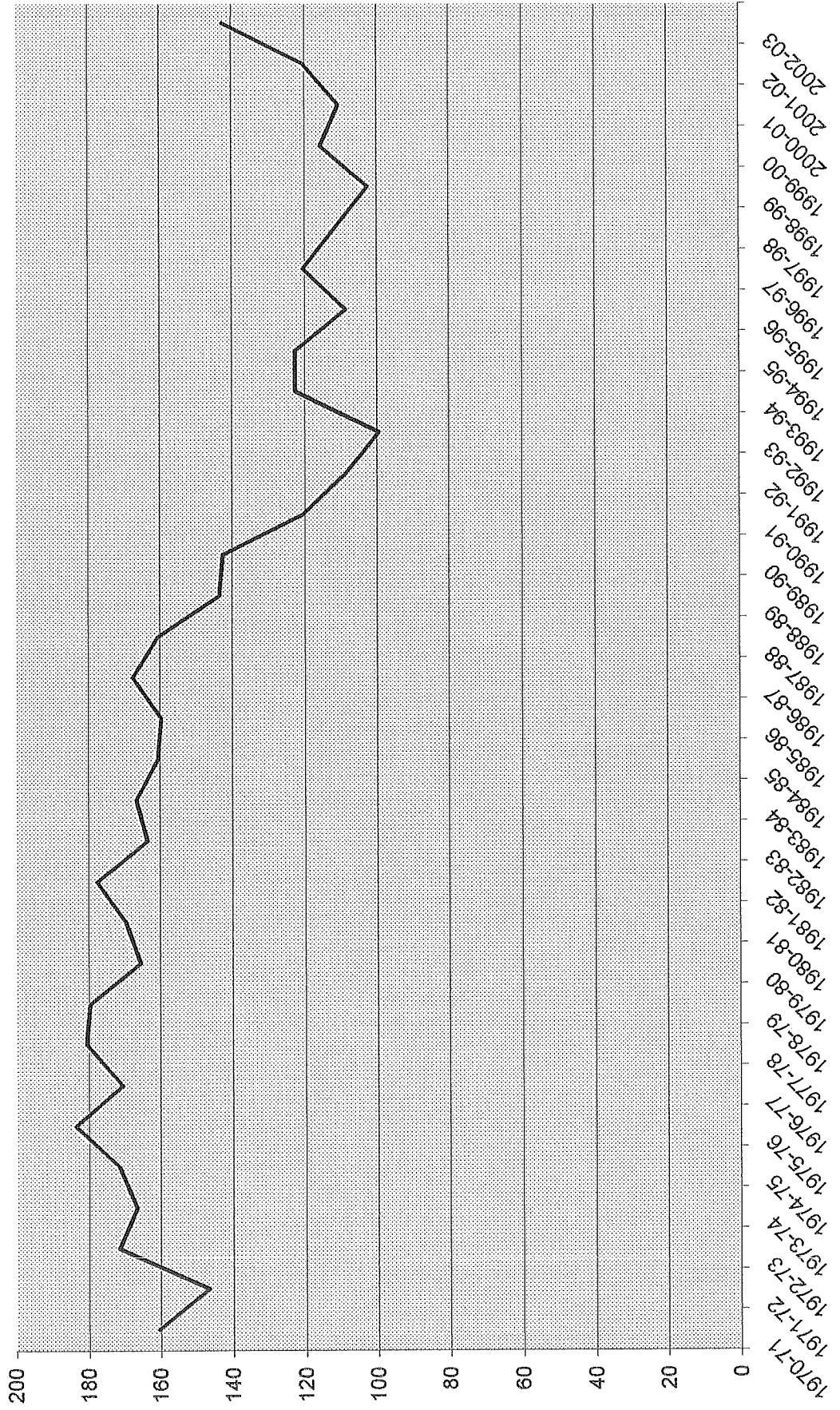


CHART 3 - WLS OPERATING BUDGET 1970-2003

— WLS Operating Expenses — WLS Operating Expenses (ADJ)

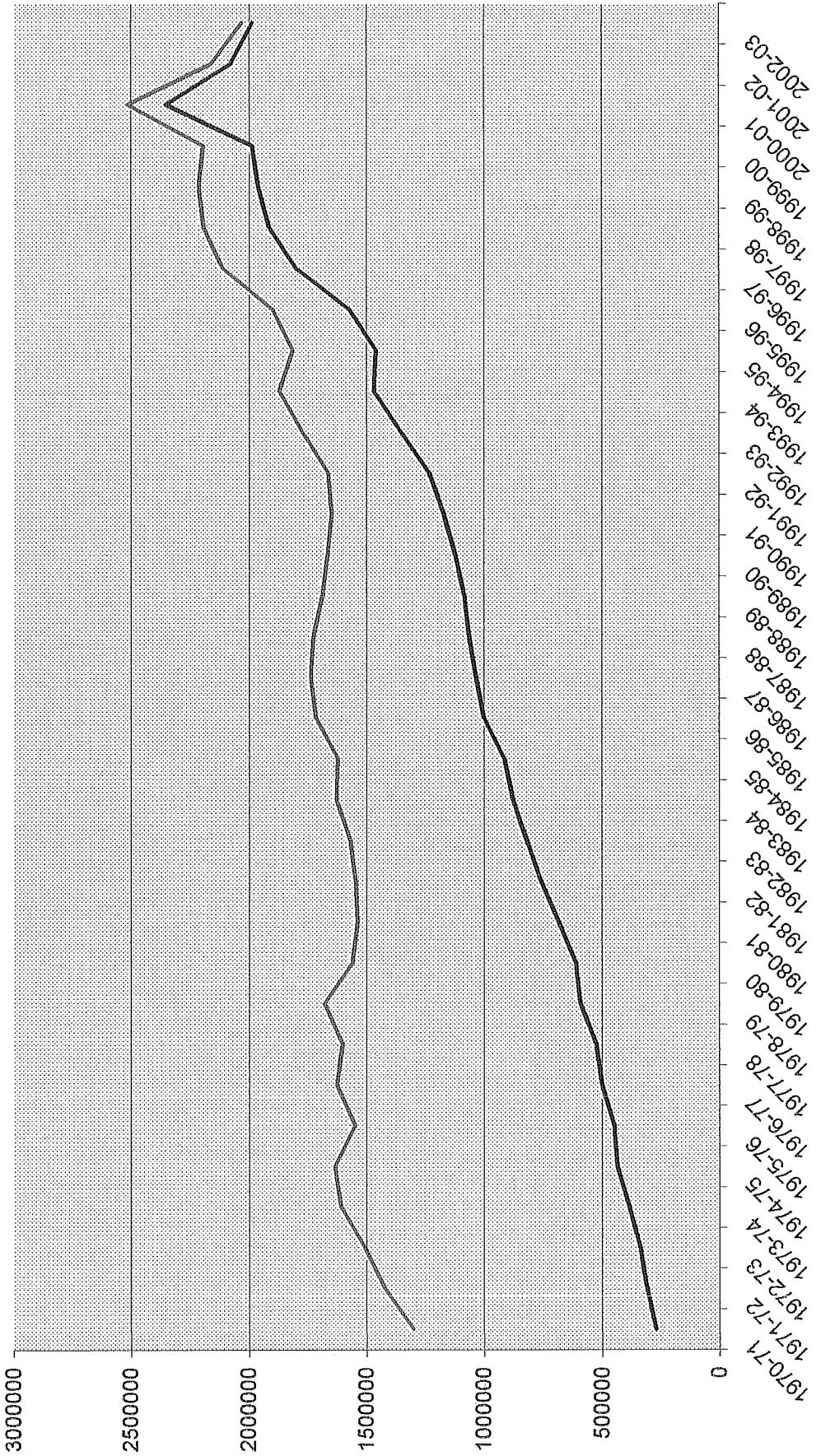


CHART 4 - SYNOD SUBSIDY 1970-2003

— Actual Synod Subsidy — Subsidy Adjusted for Inflation

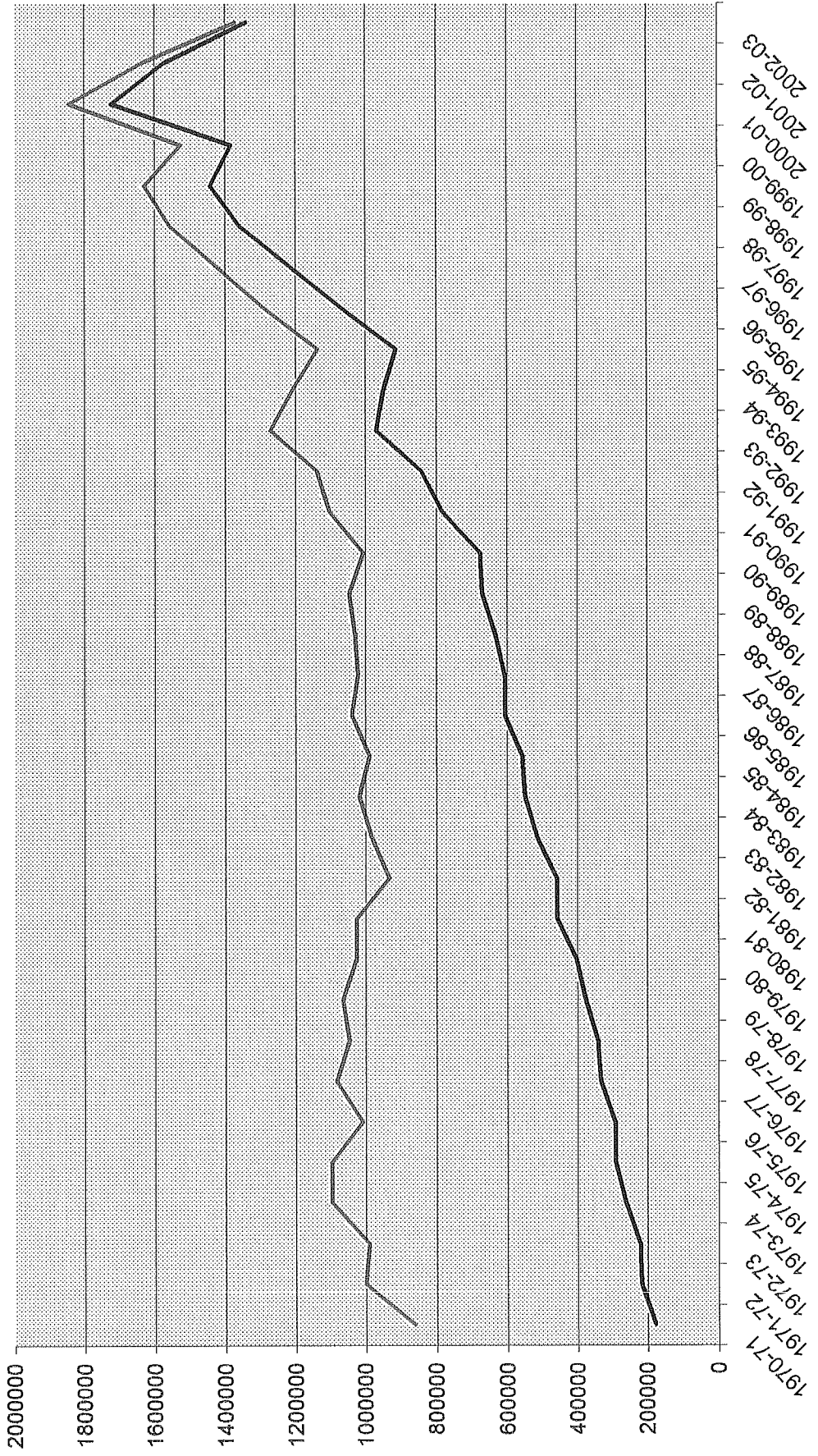


CHART 5 - SYNOD SUBSIDY AND STUDENT TUITION 1970-2003

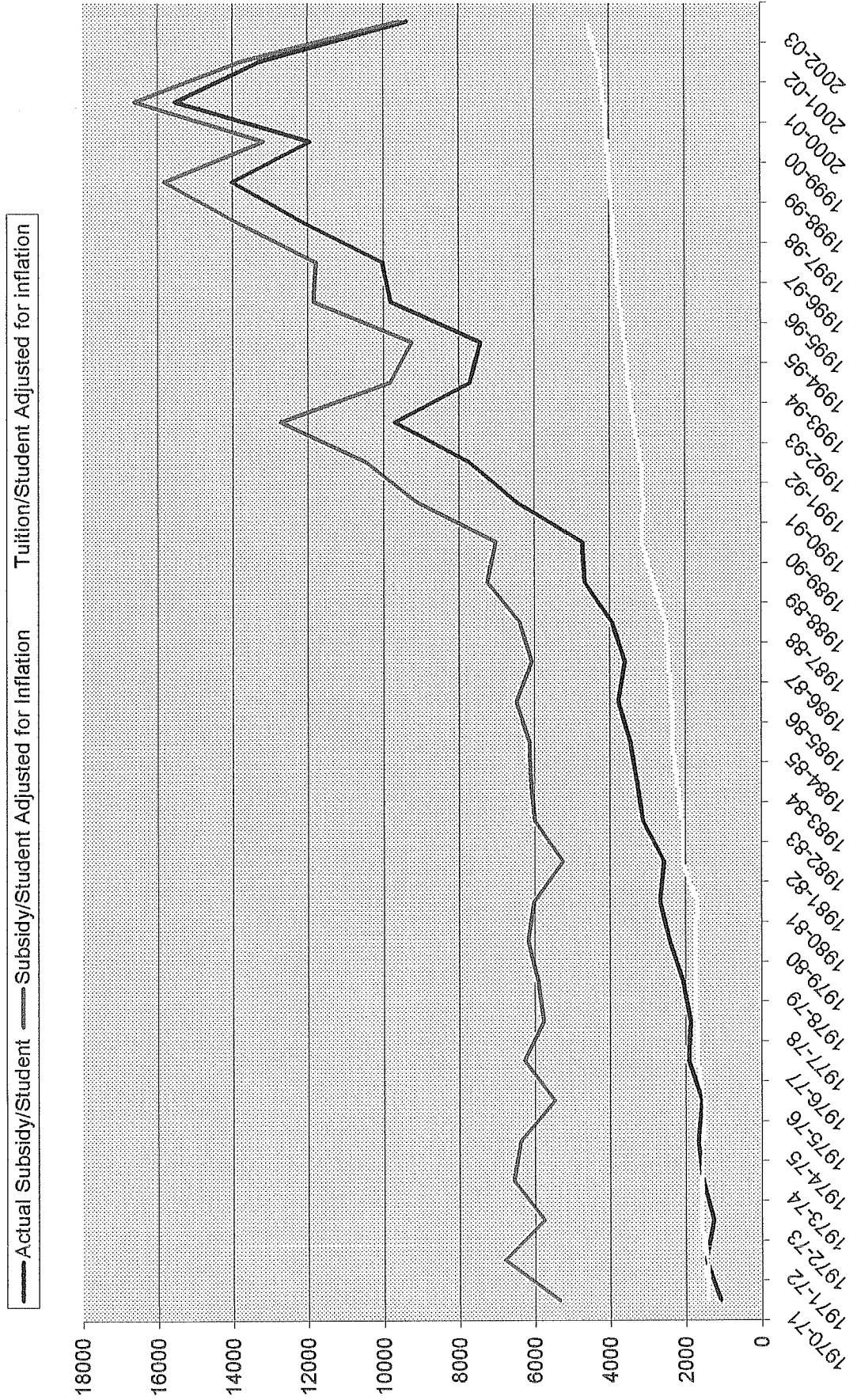


CHART 6 - WLS SUBSIDY FROM WELS OPERATING BUDGET

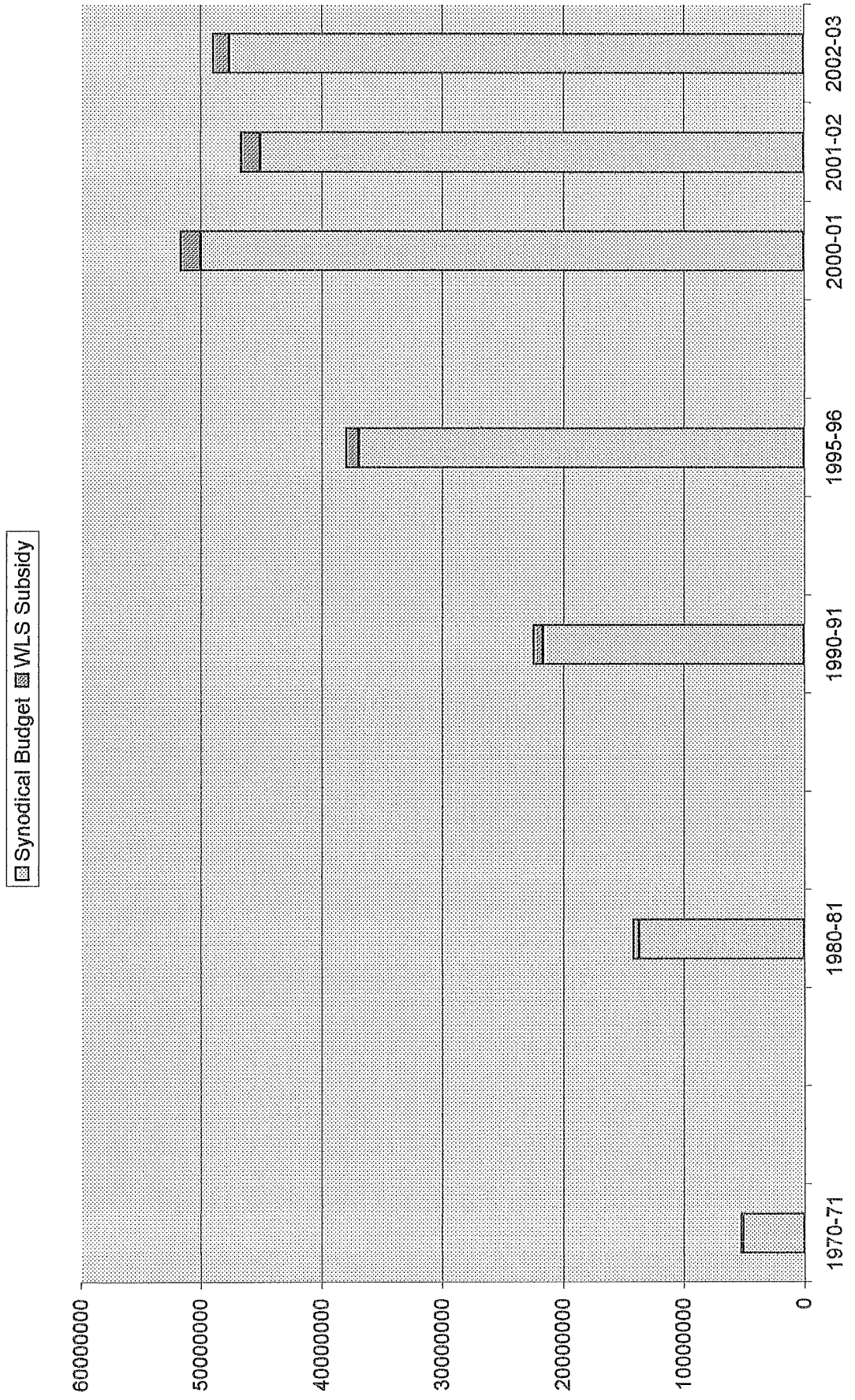


CHART 7 - TUITION and FINANCIAL AID 1970-2003 (adjusted for inflation)

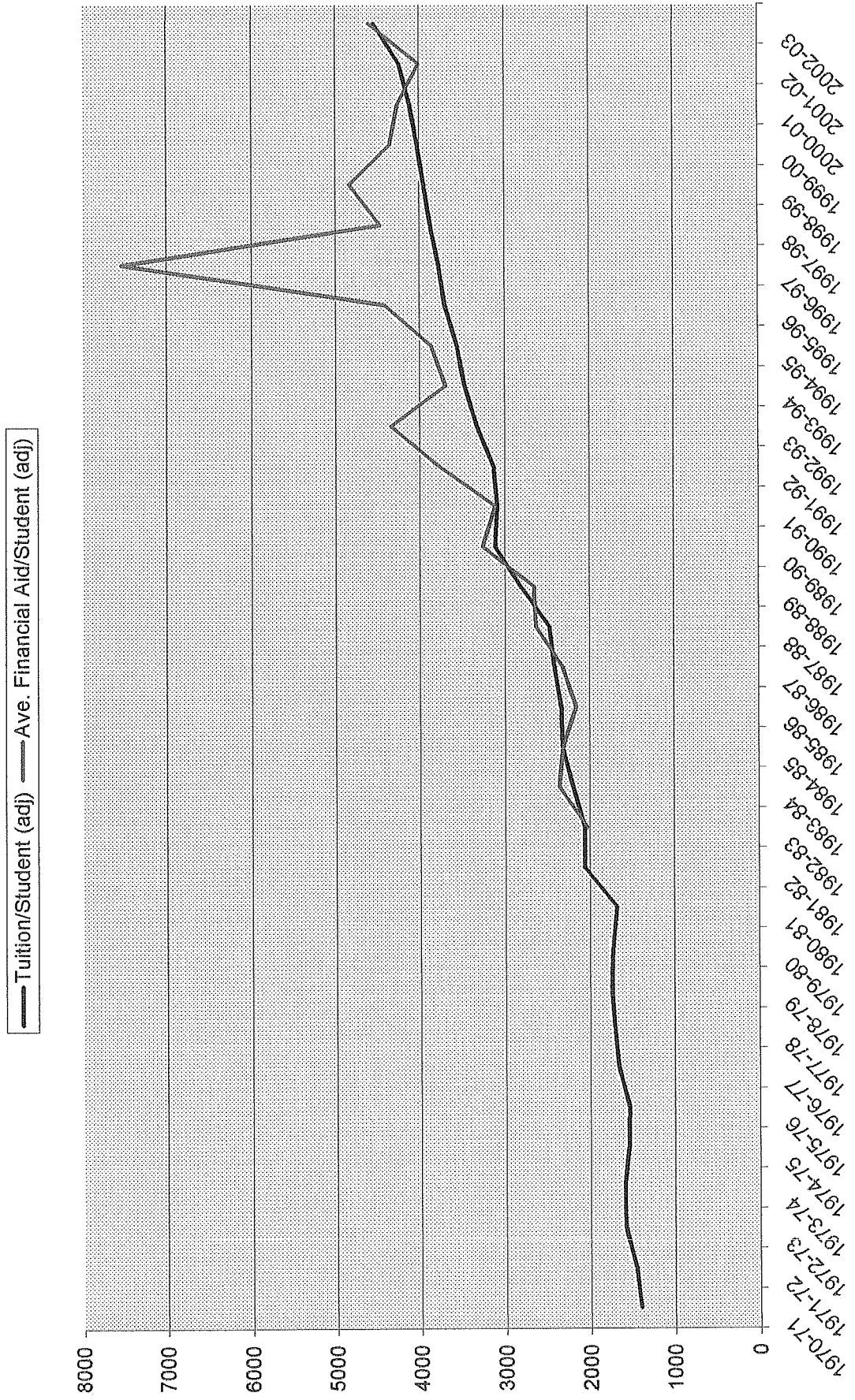


CHART 8 - WLS STUDENT INDEBTEDNESS 1

— Ave. Debt/ All Students — Ave. Debt/ Students in Debt

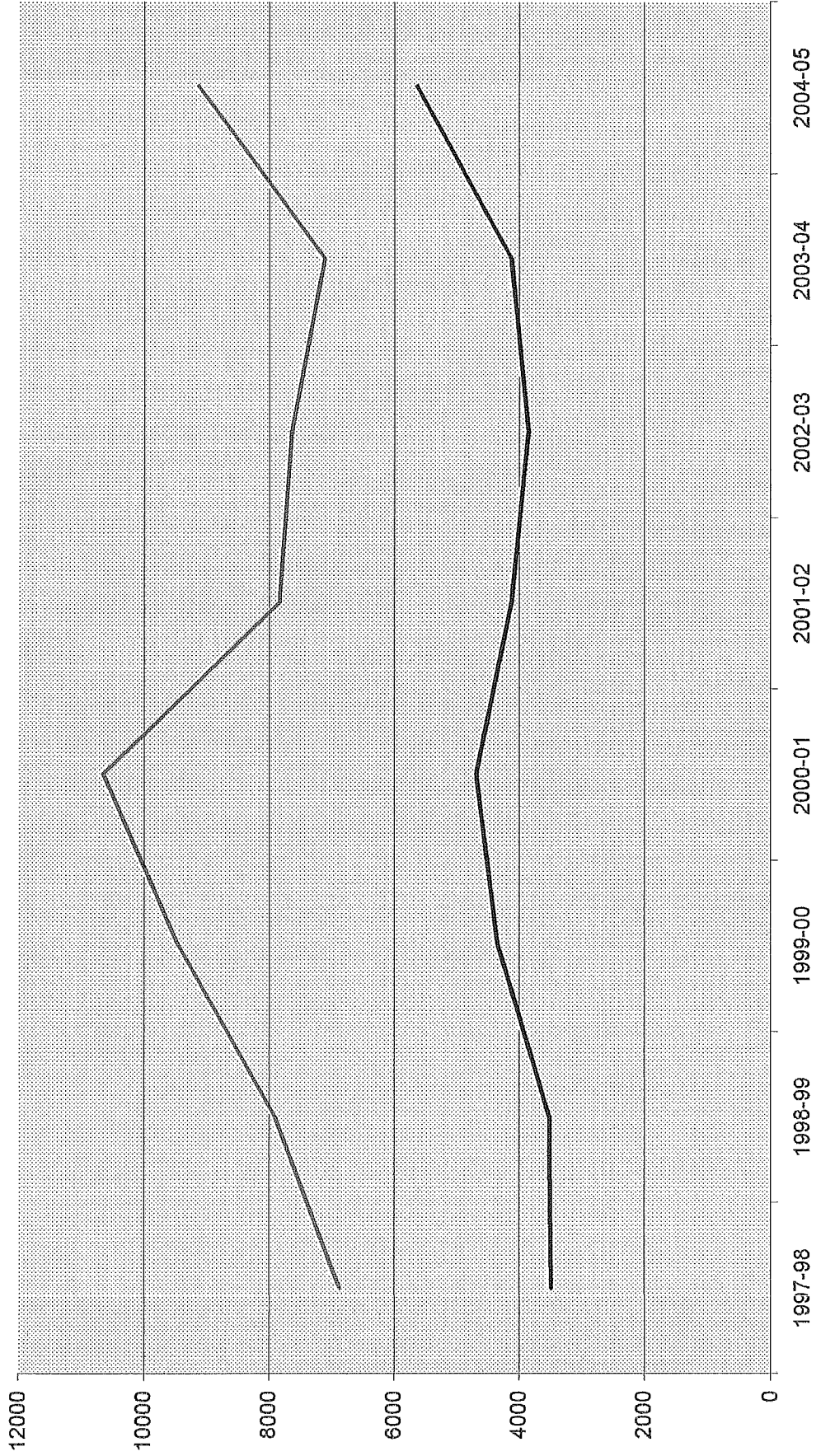


CHART 9 - WLS STUDENT INDEBTEDNESS 2

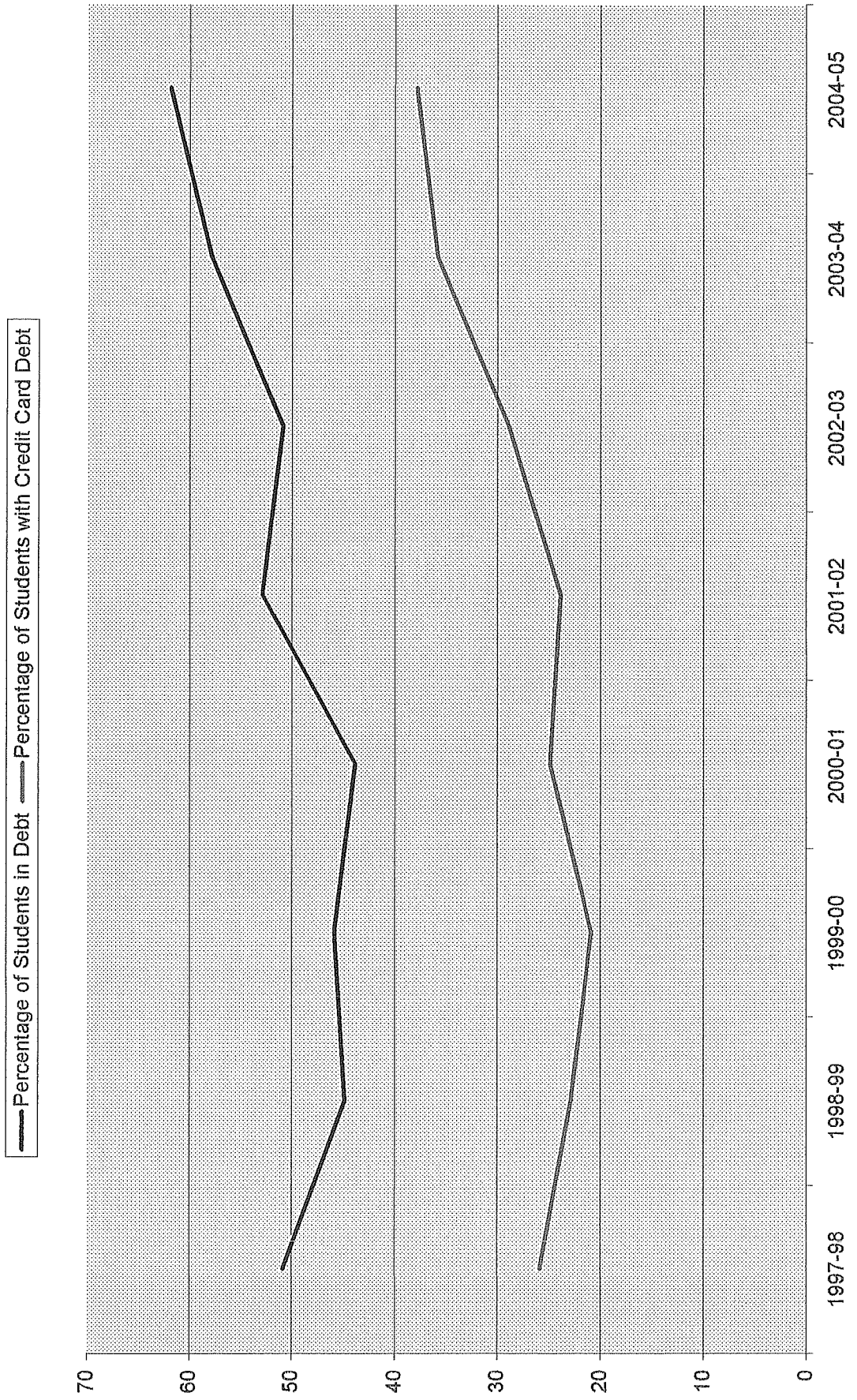


CHART 10 - COMPARISON OF SEMINARY TUITIONS 1970-2004

