

THE ACADEMIC BOARD FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

ADVICE REGARDING REGIONAL COLLEGES
COMMENCING IN TEMPORARY PREMISES

In keeping with the Academic Board's statutory powers to advise the appropriate authorities on orderly development of colleges established under the Public Schools Act, the following items are submitted for consideration by regional college planning committees.

Regardless of local plans, the conditions for the establishment of regional colleges as set forth in the Public Schools Act should be adhered to in every respect. Any institutions established outside these terms would not receive recognition as a regional college as defined by the Act.

Opening a regional college in a secondary school or other temporary premises is at best a temporary expedient until more suitable premises become available. The only justification for such an arrangement is that each year the opening is delayed many secondary-school graduates are deprived of the opportunity to continue their education at the post-secondary level. However, there should be no presumption on the part of the planning committee or college council that such occupancy can defer the immediate planning and prompt provision of suitable college premises. Although college premises need not be elaborate, the public should be dissuaded from any impression that the college can manage all right in school premises for a protracted period. No college can attain its full stature and identity as long as it shares secondary-school premises.

There are several conditions that should be given the most careful consideration by those planning to open a regional college. Some of these are briefly outlined below, and the Academic Board is available for any further consultation that may be needed to elucidate such matters.

1. College enrolments

Being located in a secondary school may lead to some false impressions regarding the educational purpose and nature of a college. A college is much more than simply a means whereby students may obtain credits in a number of courses. Also it should be stressed that the college program is no mere addition to or extension of the secondary-school program. A college is a separate institution with its own distinctive identity beyond the secondary-school level and should not be confused with any idea of Grades 13 and 14. One important consideration in establishing such identity is to define the students for whom the college is established.

College enrolments should be limited to senior secondary-school graduates, and those who lack not more than two subjects of complete graduation. Some exceptions may be made for students over 20 years of age, but the college should avoid being regarded as an alternative means for obtaining secondary-school graduation. Only those students whose secondary-school records indicate that they are likely to succeed in a college program

should be admitted. Others can seek educational opportunities through correspondence or daytime and evening secondary-school courses, or at a vocational school. Too much leniency in admitting students makes it difficult for a college to maintain acceptable educational standards, and works to the disadvantage of the students for whom the college program is designed.

2. The College Faculty

The college faculty in Arts and Science must be fully qualified to provide instruction that is equivalent to first and second year university work. If circumstances should force the college during the first year of its operation to offer only first-year courses, it is still essential that any appointments to the faculty should be capable of instructing at the second-year level. The appointment of unsuitably qualified people, even on temporary terms, can make for embarrassment as the college develops.

The minimal academic qualification for those who teach academic subjects should normally be an M.A. or M.Sc. in their teaching subjects, or a recently obtained honours degree with high standing in their teaching subjects. In addition, those who are appointed should give evidence of their continued development in their fields of specialization as indicated by their participation in scholarly associations, their knowledge of current, scholarly books and journals, and their familiarity with recent developments in their fields. These considerations are of more significance when selecting faculty than is teaching experience because they show an alert and scholarly attitude. Also, it has been found that in-service training conducted by senior members of the college faculty is an effective means for readily overcoming any lack of teaching experience.

The selection of senior administrative staff is likewise of great importance. The college principal should have superior academic qualifications and some record of scholarly work. He should be supported by other competent staff such as a registrar, librarian and director of studies.

The success of a college depends above all upon the quality of the faculty and staff who are appointed at the outset, and expert advice should be sought from persons competent in various fields when selecting those to be appointed. Those initially appointed will largely direct the development of the college, consequently a core of well-qualified, full-time members of the faculty should be appointed at the outset who will be engaged in many college activities beyond their classroom teaching. Any persons appointed on a part-time basis should be given no assurance of continuing except on a year-to-year basis.

The appointment of teachers on a part-time basis who are actively engaged in secondary-school teaching is not likely to provide the level of instruction which would be accepted by Universities as the equivalent of first and second year university work. The instruction provided in a college differs in a number of important ways from any that is given in a

secondary school, although some secondary-school teachers may fail to realize the difference. Even Grade 13 is largely a continuation beyond Grade 12, whereas the first year of university marks a very significant transition in the educational development of the students. For most students, university is a definite turning point in their approach to study; unfortunately some students fail to adjust to the different educational environment and fall by the way even though they possess the ability to succeed. Consequently, it is essential that college students taking first or second year college level courses should be taught in a manner that will enable them to fit readily into second or third year university courses. University courses are not closely prescribed and in both content and method they depend in very large measure upon the personal initiative and intellectual scope of the teachers. Lengthy written assignments, wide reading, independent investigation, tutorial sessions and teacher-student consultations are integral features of college instruction. All of this requires constant preparation and study by the teachers to keep abreast of developments in their fields.

3. Premises and facilities

A college can commence operations in simple quarters, but preferably in a separate structure devoted wholly to college purposes. If a college commences in secondary-school premises, the provision of suitable facilities will undoubtedly present some problems. An adequate college library is essential and relatively large expenditures for books and scholarly publications are necessary well before instruction is commenced. The library resources for a college are very different from those for a secondary school, and much more expensive. Careful planning is necessary from the outset in order to procure a proper selection of source and reference materials, and advice should be obtained from the librarians of the universities and the British Columbia Institute of Technology. The initial acquisitions should amount to about 10,000 volumes, to be kept up to date by a systematic plan for additions that usually have to be procured each month. The procurement of books and periodicals should be commenced well in advance of the time for college opening.

The college library should be accessible to college students during a large part of each day, because college students will not find sufficient time to consult reference materials and do library study during the limited hours when the school premises are being used exclusively for college classes.

Adequate study space, free from interruptions, is necessary for students to do the amount of independent work that is required for college level courses. Many students who live at home find it impossible to have conditions that are conducive to concentrated study over long periods of time.

Science laboratories will have to be equipped for college level courses, and, because of delays in delivery, laboratory supplies and equipment must be ordered well in advance of the commencement of college courses.

The premises assigned to the college should be wholly devoted to the work of the college during the hours when college courses are in session. As far as possible the area occupied by the college should be distinguished from other space so that the college may have some identity of its own even though located in school premises. It should be made clear from the start that there is no intention to have the college occupy the school premises indefinitely and, if possible, a terminal date should be announced.

4. College courses

District and regional colleges are required by statute to provide two years of university tuition and such other courses, principally at the post-secondary level, as may be deemed desirable. Some of the latter courses are desirable in order to meet the educational purpose of the college.

The range of courses that is necessary to parallel the first two years of university tuition is wider than that required for Grade 13, although it will not include all of the first and second year courses given by a university. The advice of university deans, heads of departments and college faculty members should be sought when planning the courses in Arts and Science. Representatives of business and industry and of the British Columbia Institute of Technology should be consulted when planning the technical program.

With the secondary-school premises available for college classes on only a part-time basis, the structure of the curriculum and the timetabling of courses is of particular importance if students are to obtain adequate instruction in a full program of college studies. Also the arrangement of the time of the teaching staff needs very careful planning so that faculty members may provide classroom instruction and give individual attention to their students without having to adhere to an excessive schedule which would limit their own development as college teachers.

Those who are appointed to the college faculty should be active participants and given a major responsibility in designing the curricula, selection of textbooks and all other matters pertaining to college instruction.

5. Financing

Some of the more optimistic assumptions regarding financial savings to be made from operating in secondary-school premises are undoubtedly misleading. It is true that a large capital outlay for college buildings can be deferred for a short time. Nevertheless, capital expenditures for library, laboratories and the refitting of school premises will be required on a considerable scale. However, the largest expenditure will be for salaries. The quality of the college faculty is fully as important - if not more so - when operating in school premises as when in a separate college building designed for the purpose. The less suitable the premises are, the greater are the demands made upon the faculty. Consequently,

a major financial commitment is necessary for the procurement of suitably qualified faculty, and this must be provided well in advance of any proposed date for opening. Fully qualified faculty will not be easy to obtain. They are in great demand, and their salary scale must be adequate to retain their service in order to ensure that the level of instruction can be set and maintained at an approved standard. Any idea that the college can commence operations at the college level with a part-time faculty, most of whose members are otherwise employed, should be dismissed at once as being impracticable. A strong core of well-qualified, permanent full-time faculty members is essential for the successful establishment and operation of a college.

In conclusion, the planning and commencement of a college is a major undertaking under any circumstances, and requires a long range perspective. The Academic Board offers the above advice in order to assist those who bear the responsibility, in the hope that it may be of some help in avoiding the pitfalls that lie in their way. The Board will place its services at the disposal of any college council or planning committee in order to be of any further assistance.

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