

A New Community College

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A growing community expands its instructional program to meet its needs. J. Graham Sullivan, Director of Curriculum, and Phebe Ward, Director, General Education, Contra Costa Junior College District, Martinez, California, give this account of an extended educational program.

CALIFORNIA has a new junior college.

Is there anything significant, one may well ask, about the establishment of another public junior college in California? The reply might be that Contra Costa Junior College is distinctly qualified as an example of a community college. Its whole program, based upon community needs, has actually been planned with, for and by the community.

This junior college has been established to meet the post-high school educational needs in a rather unusual community. Contra Costa Junior College District is a county-wide community of 754 square miles. Population in this district has tripled since 1940 and also has become increasingly heterogeneous in nature and in needs. For example, the eastern part of the county, long known for agriculture and industry, particularly for oil refineries, is now becoming an extensive rural residential area for thousands of city people who commute to the businesses, industries and professional offices in Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley or San Francisco.

Development of this public community college began on December 14, 1948, when the voters of Contra Costa County approved expansion of the free educa-

tional services through the thirteenth and fourteenth years by voting into existence a public junior-college district.

On August 15, 1949 the newly elected board of trustees established administration headquarters of the district in the Hotel James in Martinez, the county seat. Here the new district's one employee (the Superintendent) viewed his county-wide district from the vantage point of a hotel room—without benefit of desk, telephone or staff. And by night, in the adjoining bedroom, he dreamed of the community college that was to serve one of the largest junior-college districts in California.

One year later this same superintendent, now in the district's own administration building, administers a district which can boast a staff of 144 certificated employees and 53 non-certificated employees; two campuses which house 1,300 students; and community services for 3,000 adults, offered in a family life center and in 50 other locations throughout the county.

Staff Represents Wide Experience

The first campus of Contra Costa Junior College was opened in February 1950 with a certificated staff of 25 and a student body of 500. In September the staff was increased to 94 as the student

body grew to 1,100, and the variety of offerings also was increased. This growth was made possible in part by the taking over of the trade school of the city of Richmond.

The second campus was opened in September 1950 with a certificated staff of 25 and a student body of 350. Thus, as more services have been added, work has come to be shared by more and more people. Prior to the actual opening of each campus, however, the district staff has assumed responsibility for doing whatever is necessary to open a college.

Contra Costa Junior College has assembled a staff of interesting people. Two were assistant superintendents of large city schools in California; one was director of a large Chicago public junior college. Many are experienced teachers from high schools, junior and senior colleges and universities; some are neophytes in teaching. Others have come from business and industry. Most of the instructors, even in the so-called academic subjects, have had some experience in fields other than teaching. Staff members were selected because their personality, training, experience and interests seemed to indicate they could make a worth-while contribution to a community college.

Facilities Borrowed from Community

Modern facilities replete with the latest educational equipment have not as yet come into existence for Contra Costa Junior College. This is true because there has not as yet been a bond issue in the district, which operates under a tax limit fixed by the state. Contra Costa Junior College has therefore elected to become a community

college in still another sense of the term by housing its present instructional program for the youth and adults of the community in facilities borrowed from the community. As a result of such cooperation, building-facility costs, based on average daily attendance, are relatively low.

The district for the present must limit its pride in ownership to its administration building, which is a re-converted house; a recently purchased 100-acre site for the Eastern campus; some portable surplus units, which were purchased at handling cost from the U.S. Office of Education and which are now being converted into school buildings on the site; and a re-converted officers' club building, also secured from the U. S. Office of Education.

Facilities currently borrowed from the community constitute a rather surprising array of buildings for school purposes. On the West campus the four buildings in what was formerly Kaiser Shipyard No. 3 in Richmond have been loaned to the district for a period of three years. A rented market-and-grocery store within a mile of the shipyard buildings is being converted into a metal-trades training building. And in the midst of a housing project, situated between the shipyard buildings and the metal-trades buildings, is much of the trade-training program, housed in the administration building of the project. The City Plunge, the Ford Plant turf, and the near-by high school provide facilities for some of the athletic activities. And downtown, a library building borrowed from the city of Richmond houses the Family Life Center, which provides family-centered services for adults.

The East campus is housed in a former grammar-school building. Rented from the city of Martinez, this is the main building of the campus. Other housing includes a re-converted army building and facilities rented from the community—a Camp Fire Girls' clubhouse, the CIO hall, the municipal swimming pool, and high school chemistry laboratories and gymnasium facilities.

Off-campus facilities for community services offered to adults are for the most part provided by various groups participating in the services. Locations include the family life center, chamber of commerce rooms, community centers, city halls, stores, banks, markets, business offices, club rooms, restaurants, youth centers, industrial plants, hospitals, school rooms and auditoriums.

Youth Program Expands

An educational program planned to meet post-high school needs of students must provide for a variety of aptitudes, interests, ages and backgrounds. Such a program must necessarily be based upon goals encompassing needs of the students, the community and the society. Every staff member therefore is dedicated to helping each student toward maturity as an individual, as a worker, as a family member and as a citizen.

Implementing these goals has necessitated the providing of individualized instruction in small classes and extensive use of panel, workshop and discussion methods.

Students who are preparing for a four-year institution find courses to meet the needs of the first two years of college. Those who do not have a spe-

cific educational or occupational objective may enroll in a general education program. Those who are preparing for employment within one or two years find an ever-growing choice of training programs, including business education; distributive education; commercial art; dental assisting; cosmetology; garment construction, care and design; food trades; metal trades; building trades; and oil technology.

A curriculum committee on each campus evaluates current offerings and suggests changes. All programs leading to employment are planned in cooperation with advisory committees from industry.

Personnel services are important in this community college. Teacher-counselors spend half-time counseling students individually and half-time teaching a required course in orientation and personal adjustment. Community counselors in the high schools facilitate transfer from the high school to the junior college by providing information to their students and about their students.

Adults, Too, Are Served

Funds for classes offered especially for adults are necessarily limited in a new college. Both campuses, however, have evening programs of business education and general education classes planned for adults.

The college's most distinctive adult services, however, are the community service programs in the individual communities organized for groups of people who have educational needs in common. As an example apprentices and journeymen in the metal and the building trades take evening apprenticeship

and trade-extension classes. Industrial plants make the college's supervisory-training services available for their employees. Labor requests classes for its membership. In some communities, city management is meeting its long-term needs and its present disaster-prevention needs through civil service training available through the college.

Businessmen and merchants are taking advantage of the distributive education services. Hence, insurance men, real estate men, salesmen, food handlers and bank employees are taking training in such fields as insurance, salesmanship, real estate and display work.

Parents are requesting services. Mothers of pre-school children, for example, are asking for help for their young children through classes for themselves. As high school and college graduates they are interested also in their own continuous personal development through classes in homemaking,

personality development and general education.

One community has organized its own community theatre; another, its symphony orchestra; still another, a family life center—all through the college. The Sixteenth District of California Congress of Parents and Teachers is co-sponsoring a three-county Family Life Education Institute, to be followed with county-wide training given by the college for lay leadership in family-life education. A recreation council is sponsoring a series of workshops offered by the college to develop volunteer leadership for its youth groups.

A growing community is thus turning to its new community college to meet many of its needs. This is a real tribute to the leadership, hard work and pioneering spirit of those who cared enough about people to lead in the creation of a community college, the better to serve them.

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