

FOOTHILL COLLEGE GETS STARTED

When Lamar Johnson first asked me to speak on the "birth of Foothill College" I hesitated, for I could not visualize how a person so closely connected with an institution could avoid giving the impression that everything done in his college was the answer--"the word"--for all future junior colleges.

But I reflected on those first days at Foothill and suddenly realized how helpful it would have been if those with a similar experience had recorded "this we tried and it worked--or it did not work."

Consequently, I agreed to accept this difficult task. But I do ask your indulgence and understanding from beginning to end. I am not attempting to establish Foothill as a prototype for new junior colleges. And if in my presentation I inadvertently give the impression that what we have done is very special, please translate this to a clumsy attempt to explain that what we have done is ONE way to accomplish the objective of establishing a junior college.

Even though I will use Foothill as a skeletal frame around which I will attempt to build chronologically those steps leading to the development of a full-fledged California junior college, I will in many instances compare what we have done at Foothill with outstanding and contrasting accomplishments of other new junior colleges of recent years.

Foothill College fortunately got off to a slow start--fortunately, because it was the fruition of many years of effort on the part of dedicated citizens and was not the result of some local real estate promotion scheme or chamber of commerce development.

Actually, serious proposals for a junior college in the area can be traced back to 1926. But it was not until 1956 that the boards and superintendents of the Palo Alto Unified, Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School, and Fremont Union High School (Sunnyvale and Cupertino) Districts initiated the action which finally resulted in a favorable election to form a new junior college district. Before the proposition was placed before the public the three high school districts asked adjacent free areas if they wished to be included in the proposed district. None had an interest at that time so the original three high school districts petitioned the State Department of Education for a study which might serve as the basis for presenting the proposal to the populace. It might be added here that it has since been the recommendation of the superintendent and the policy of the Board to avoid undue expansion of the District. (There is one small adjacent high school district which might be considered for inclusion if it were educationally advantageous.)

The District was formed by a solid margin of 6 to 1 in January of 1957. The County Superintendent of Schools immediately appointed an interim Board, with representatives from each of the three high school districts. At the regular May election of 1957 the permanent Board was elected and they officially constituted the authority for the new District which legally came into being on July 1, 1957.

The Board immediately acted on six items:

- 1) They obtained the voluntary services of one of the high school superintendents as a "consulting superintendent," particularly on school law.
- 2) They decided that they would not start classes that fall, although they did discuss, and wisely rejected, a proposal to operate a few adult classes at night in one of the high schools.
- 3) They arranged to have students released to adjacent junior colleges on a tuition basis.
- 4) They established a budget within the 35¢ tax limit which included funds for previous year tuition payments (no longer required). But it should be emphasized that it did include tuition funds to pay tuition payments of those students who would be going away to junior colleges during the 1957-58 school year. (Too often this is over-looked by newly formed districts.)
- 5) They appointed a Citizens' Committee of 35 persons representing all communities to make recommendations on the type of curricula and the funds required to construct a suitable campus.
- 6) They decided to defer all other actions of import until after the selection of a district superintendent-president.

The Board then started its search for a superintendent-president. They attempted to use a professional screening committee, but gave that up for a direct interview approach on the basis of names proposed by leading universities. The Board established the usual criteria of degrees, moral character, personality, etc. But it was their expressed desire to obtain a superintendent with California junior college experience which was most significant. It was their feeling that a person would be handicapped in the development of a California junior college without such a background.

Even though the Board originally indicated its intention to not move ahead in other areas until after the selection of a superintendent, they did interview and make a selection of an architect prior to a superintendent being employed. The Board followed its belief that it should have a district architect responsible for the total project instead of a team of architects such as are successfully used in many junior colleges. They also considered the advisability of retaining professional educational consultants. This was postponed so that the superintendent, when selected, could give his view.

Finally, the Board collectively crossed its fingers and selected a superintendent in January 1958, and he got a release from his former position and assumed full-time duties on March 1, 1958. (The use of the first person from now on in this paper is embarrassing but unavoidable.)

Between my selection in January and reporting for duty on March 1, I met numerous times with the hard working citizens' committee and the Board so that I would have some orientation to the community.

Prior to my acceptance of the superintendency, I had a meeting with the Board to discuss the philosophy and objectives of the District and to explain my own. I believe that this is very important; for, if there were basic differences, unfortunate misunderstandings might develop later. (I am distributing copies of the objectives and philosophy I presented to the Board.) Because there was complete agreement on what the objectives and purposes of Foothill College were to be, it was very easy to initiate proposals for Board consideration once I had assumed the position of superintendent.

Within the first month, the following recommendations were approved, and I, as superintendent, was authorized to implement each one as rapidly and adequately as possible:

- 1) To open with some type of college courses in the fall.
- 2) To attempt an election to approve bonds for the construction of a college.
- 3) To employ necessary administrators, including a public information assistant, as rapidly as possible.
- 4) To employ a teaching staff commensurate with the program which could be offered and to formulate a salary schedule designed to attract an outstanding staff.
- 5) To prepare a catalog.
- 6) To prepare a release policy for students for the year 1958-59.

It will be noted that budget discussion was not included at this early date.

Now, three years later, when I look back over that list, it startles me. I am not going to attempt to elaborate in detail on each one, for Dr. Johnson carefully limited me to thirty minutes, but I will try to touch on each. The question of starting classes that year was basic to most of the other items. In this regard there seems to be three choices, as is illustrated by Cabrillo College, which started classes the first year the District came into existence, by Foothill which started classes one year after the existence of the District, and by College of the Desert, which will not start classes until its buildings are completed--three years after the formation of the District.

The pattern I recommended for Foothill seemed to be appropriate for there were adequate funds to start a substantial operation and the community wanted and expected it. Also, I argued that getting under way

would make available a staff which could help plan facilities for the new campus and also this staff would serve as a nucleus for the very large staff which would be required the year we moved to our new campus.

The only question was whether we might find a temporary facility of our own or we should use high school facilities in late afternoon and evening. I had had experience with starting a junior college in a high school in the late afternoon and evening in Monterey and, therefore, I was not adverse to this plan. But fortunately, an elementary school which had been declared unsafe was available. Arrangements were rapidly made to purchase and rehabilitate the facility for three years of temporary use by the College.

The program for that first year had to be developed rapidly so that the necessary staff might be employed; and this is a primary consideration, for top faculty candidates are usually committed by April of each spring. We estimated 600 freshmen, so I obtained the class schedules of three typical junior colleges of about this size and developed a program on the basis of their experience and it worked. The next requirement was to assure cooperation of the high schools and adult programs of the area. To bring this about I invited all high school superintendents, principals and adult principals together and gave them assurance that we wanted to have only a college level type of program and that we would do all possible to assist them in retaining and improving their adult programs.

But it was in my second recommendation--that of a bond election--where I soon discovered that I had set a monumental task. We were to attempt the bond election within two months. We followed the advice of the Citizens' Committee in seeking \$10,400,000, and the Board readily accepted the argument that we should have a bond election instead of an over-ride tax. This has been a controversial question in some areas, but I believe the arguments in favor of construction via a bond issue have a strong weight.

The steps here were, I am certain, those used by many districts. We established a Citizens' Committee from all areas of the District and started a hard driving campaign which had full support of all and opposition from none.

The third responsibility was to implement my recommendation that I obtain necessary administrators. My task was eased because I had had junior college experience. The positions were Dean of Instruction, Dean of Students, Business Manager, and Director of Technical Education. All but the Dean of Students were selected and on the job within three weeks.

A part of this assignment was the employment of a public information director. I emphasized the need of this to the Board and I emphasize it again now. The junior college is not yet as well understood as it should be,

and it is my belief that the public information officer should be attempting to keep people informed of everything which is developing in the college-- this is not a propaganda attempt. As a part of the philosophy that the public has a right to know everything which is going on in the college, we have never had a closed session of the Board or a Board committee and we report everything to the public.

Quite obviously, we had to hire a staff and again, I am certain that we followed the usual pattern of considering all possible candidates. The salary schedule is the key to success here. The Foothill Board not only adopted a salary schedule which measured favorably when compared with others, but it also allowed the administration to grant full credit for seven years of experience. The schedule also recognized advanced degrees as a basis for higher pay.

The preparation of an original catalog was simply a matter of falling back on experience and doing a lot of plagiarizing from other catalogs-- a situation to which nobody objects.

And then the last of the first group of recommendations which I was to implement was the preparation of a release policy. We felt that all students already attending another school should be permitted to continue if he wished and we felt obligated to release students for any program which we did not offer. Our release policy was based on such premises. (I am distributing copies of this release policy to you.) Possibly I should add that the test of your release policy is your willingness to enforce it strictly--one unjustified exception and you are in trouble.

You will note that a budget was not made an item for recommendation during my first month at Foothill, although I can assure you that it was discussed informally a number of times in open Board meetings. This delay was intentional. To give impressions concerning tax rates which may later prove to be inadequate has many hazards. So the Business Manager and I got more accurate projections on long-range enrollment, as well as the County Assessors estimates on assessed valuations for the next 20 years. We also retained a consultant firm--California Municipal Statistics--to project the tax rate for the bonds. You can see that the base for all my budget suggestions was information from specialized authorities.

So in presenting the budget I took some time to present the method of financing junior colleges and then I explained how I had arrived at our needs for the next 20 years. I was able to say that we should not, in the foreseeable future, have to go over the 35¢ tax rate unless a real change from projected enrollments did occur. But I did add very carefully that the District portion of the retirement payment and any monies required for community service programs would have to be above the 35¢ legal limit. Not including these two items can lead to misunderstandings at a later date. And then I had the California Municipal Statistics manager

explain the tax necessary to redeem the bonds. So from this the newspapers and tax payers associations could see what we predicted our maximum tax should be for the next 20 years. So far we are lucky. After this preliminary, the preparing of a proposed budget was easy--and I might add that it has been easy ever since. But a warning here--do not forget to provide for tuition payments in the current year. The fact that an area establishing a junior college is relieved of a County Junior College Tuition tax to pay the tuition of its students attending other junior colleges in the previous year, does not in any way take away the responsibility of the new District from paying the tuition for its students for the current year if they attend a junior college which requires, by contract, such payments.

By this time our bonds had passed; the question of buying a site, planning a campus, or campuses, became urgent along with our continued efforts on the items listed above.

During the time of the bond campaign the Board had discussed at length the optimum number of students for a junior college campus. The Board felt strongly that a campus which was "too" large might have undesirable characteristics in light of the educational objectives they had established. Consequently, they said that no campus should have more than 3,500 full-time day students. But in a large geographic district such as Foothill, the location of one or more campuses often causes heated controversy. Therefore, during the bond campaign we refused to discuss sites or locations. Again, the use of specialized consultants seemed appropriate, so the College retained the DeLeuw-Cather Co., to give a more exact estimate of population trends and then to break the District into as many regions as necessary in order to have each campus serve only 3,500 students and to then indicate within a limited radius about where the first, the second, and possibly the third campus should be located.

Armed with all of this data, the Board augmented itself--and this is a significant approach--with a citizens' group made up of three persons from each of the six communities in the College District. We then asked real estate brokers and others interested, to list with the College proposed sites within the radius suggested for Site #1 by DeLeuw-Cather.

Some twenty-one sites were proposed. To establish rules for evaluating sites the Augmented Board adopted a set of criteria. (A set of these criteria are being distributed to you.) Then the entire Augmented Board, State Department officials, District architects, and administration gathered for a day of inspections of the twenty-one sites, beginning with a breakfast meeting to again firmly establish in mind the criteria to be used. The first tour had the objective of screening the twenty-one proposed sites to three or four preferred ones. This turned out to be an easy task. Then the engineers and architects studied each of the sites from every feasibility standpoint: arterials, utilities, terrain, soil conditions, etc.

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The augmented Board was again brought together for an all-day session. They visited again the four preferred sites, listened to the reports of the consultants and finally suggested to the Board the order of preference they felt should be considered by the Board. The Board at its next meeting considered all of the discussions and chose a site--entirely in accord with the feelings of the citizens' group. During all of these trips and meetings the press was an integral part of the group--although a group without a voice.

I do not wish to infer that some other procedures might not work just as well or better. Cabrillo College pin-pointed the projected location of its site before the bond issue was presented to the people and this was perfectly sound for Santa Cruz County because of a local situation.

The second site for Foothill was selected in exactly the same manner as the first, and again without any criticism or even question by the press or civic groups. The second site is being obtained on an unusual option-purchase basis.

Immediately following the purchase of the first site the question of the type of campus to be built became foremost. It was decided not to use educational consultants so the responsibility of determining number of classrooms, types of facilities, and sizes of each became mine. I obtained the schedules of four outstanding junior colleges which were in similar socio-economic areas and had approximately the same assessed valuation as Foothill and which had a full-time enrollment of approximately 3,500. From these schedules approximate academic programs were easy to determine. Also, during the entire first two months the Director of Technical Education was on the job he had been conducting a survey in the District to ascertain our probable technical programs. Again, citizens committees were used extensively as advisory bodies.

Next, it was necessary to indicate to the architects the "type" of campus desired by the Board. (The "feeling" of the Board was expressed in a statement which has been reproduced for distribution to you.) In addition to this the architects were told that the campus must have flexibility and expandability, for no one knows the future from the standpoint of change in requirements or actual trends in enrollment.

Armed with all of this preliminary data, the administration arranged a series of tours for Board members, architects and faculty members to twelve of California's fine junior colleges. The purpose of these trips, which took 34 days in total, was to orient all concerned to what a junior college is and what it can be. From this point forward it was the responsibility of the architects to formulate a plan in conformity with educational specifications outlined by faculty and administration and financial limitations established by the Board. A goal was set to complete and move into this

new campus exactly three years from the date of purchasing the site--
this will have been accomplished by September 1, 1961.

Thus ends the story of how a college was born.

I recognize that I have left out many details of how we started athletics, our centralized insurance procedure, requirements for high academic standards, written Board policies, getting student government and store started, etc., but in thirty minutes I could cover only the most significant points.

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