Kansas community colleges have evolved in a short period of years from junior colleges with very limited functions to colleges that are committed to meet the educational and training needs of their communities. The new goals are being accomplished by providing comprehensive programs at a minimal cost to students.

from junior to comprehensive community college—in kansas

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Community and junior colleges have been called "peoples' colleges," "commuter colleges," "open-door colleges," "the now colleges," and "democracy's colleges" by observers trying to describe the special character of those uniquely American institutions. In Kansas they have been referred to as junior colleges and more recently as community colleges. By whatever name, they have made a substantial impact on the shape of post-secondary education in the state. And they have done so in a relatively short period of time—not quite 60 years in terms of when the first one came into being, perhaps the past 10 years if one considers the period of greatest growth and expansion.

The unifying forces contributing to the present status of the Kansas Community Junior Colleges are numerous and varied. At least four forces seem to stand out. The first of these was the establishment of the idea itself, proposed by a succession of deans and university presidents. The second force was the economic wherewithal for community junior college development in a state that was rapidly improving opportunities for education. The third force was the practical feasibility of instituting the idea, the ease with which the junior college machinery could be set in motion. The fourth force was the general public's acceptance of the idea of providing an easy access to higher education for all who could desire it and profit by it.

To have a clear picture of the historical development of the two-year institutions in Kansas, one needs to take a brief look at the historical development of the institutions nationwide.

Formal steps to establish the two-year "junior" college actually had their roots in the questioning minds of early university educators who felt that the first two years of university work were secondary in character, and differed in purpose, content, organization and methods from the goals and purpose of the American university.

Among those early educators advocating such change, history indicates that the first official projection of this idea was made by Henry P. Tappan in his inaugural address as the president of the University of Michigan in 1852. He pointed out the advisability of the transfer of the work of the secondary departments of the university to the high school. Others making similar proposals were W.W. Folwell in his inaugural address as president of the University of Minnesota in 1869, and President James of the University of Illinois, in the eighties.[1]

The present day junior college came into being as a result of the efforts of William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago.[2] Dr. Harper put the concept into action by establishing at the University of Chicago a "university college" (covering the junior and senior years) and an "academic college" (covering the freshman and sophomore years). These designations were subsequently changed to "senior" and "junior" college, and the latter term became generic, for Dr. Harper also sought to encourage the establishment of a network of public two-year post-secondary institutions, envisioning that they might be developed as an extension of the offerings of local school districts.

The public community junior college "movement" may be said to have started when Dr. Harper suggested to school authorities in nearby Joliet that they undertake to offer two years of classwork beyond high school, with the understanding that the student who successfully completed the work could be accepted by the University of Chicago in its "senior college."[3] The ultimate result was the creation in 1901 of Joliet Junior College by the Joliet Township High School Board.

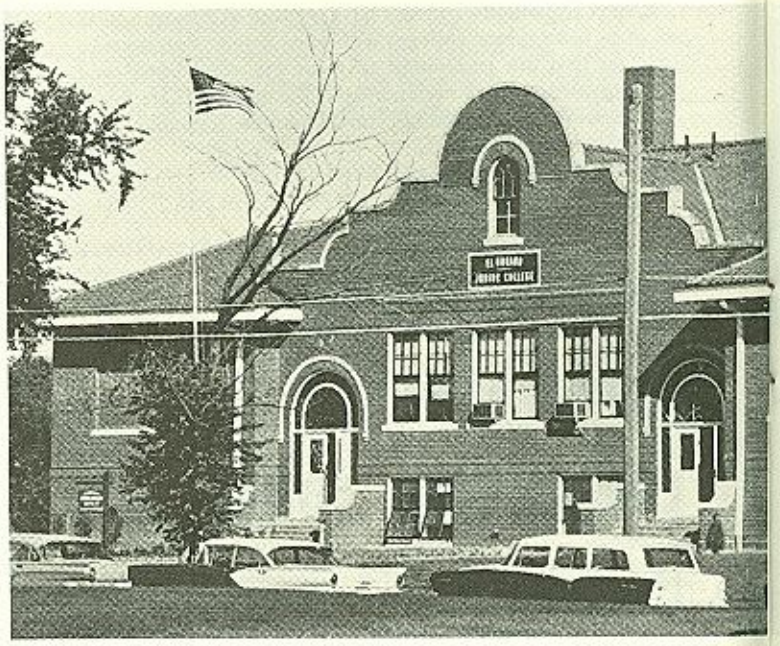
The idea of linking high school and college quickly caught on and for many years was standard. Legislation for the establishment of public two-year colleges started with laws in 1907 in California and was followed rapidly by Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

During this period of time the junior college movement was receiving its principal impetus from private two-year institutions, though they had various backgrounds, having been called academies, seminaries, or finishing schools, and some were former four-year institutions that for financial reasons chose to become two-year institutions. These private two-year schools flourished during the early part of the 1900s. As late as 1930 the private junior colleges outnumbered the public junior colleges 258 to 178. However, this trend has not continued, for example, the *1974 Directory of Community and Junior Colleges*[4] lists a total of 1,165 two-year institutions, 933 public and 232 private. This is an increase of 61 public institutions and a decrease of 7 private institutions from the 1972 listing.

The pattern of establishment and early growth of the junior college in Kansas was quite similar to that of other states. Kansas established its public junior colleges by the high-school extension method.

In 1917, the first enabling act for junior colleges was enacted.[5] This law, with only slight modifications, remained in the statutes of the state until its repeal in 1965. The 1917 law, permissive in nature, authorized boards of education in first- and second-class cities and community high schools to extend, by a vote of the people at a general or special election, the high school's course of study to include grades thirteen and fourteen. The words "junior college" were never a part of the law, the terminology of "high school extension" soon lost its support except in matters of legal reference, and the title of junior college was commonly applied in educational reference.

The 1917 law authorized boards of education to levy a tax not to exceed two mills on the assessed valuation of the district to maintain the extension courses. This law was changed in 1933 and again in 1957.



Butler County Junior College before 1965.

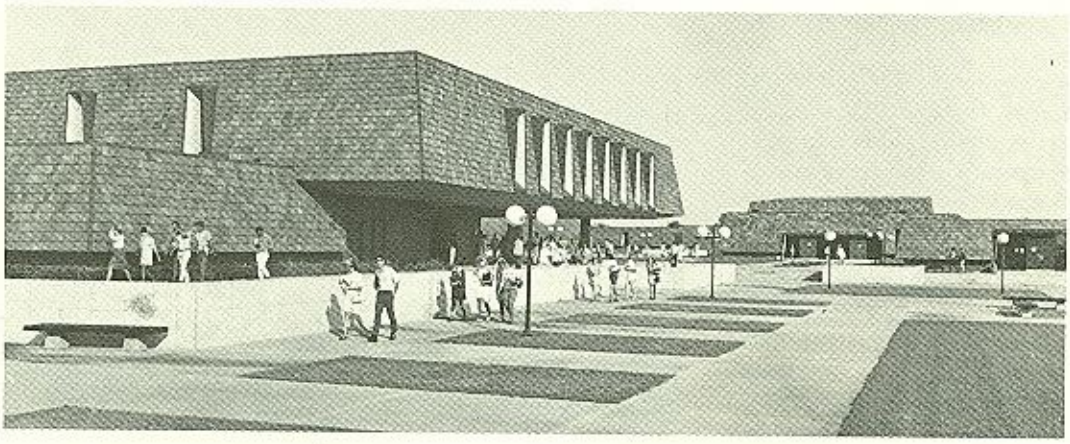
The 1917 law gave the State Board of Education the responsibility to prescribe the curriculums for the high school extension programs. The course of study in the two-year extension programs was approximately equivalent to the course of study in the first two years of accredited colleges. Thus, the early day extension programs were college parallel liberal arts programs.

There seems to be very little data which would point out definite factors which influenced the Kansas Legislature to pass the 1917 law. Some of the influence came from the residence of Holton, where Campbell College had ceased to function as a denominational college and had been succeeded by a private two-year college. The people of Fort Scott also advocated the junior college movement. Dr. William A. Black, a strong advocate of the junior college movement, later became a faculty member at Fort Scott.

Since the 1917 Legislature omitted any form of state support and made provision for a special levy, it is obvious that they expected the junior colleges to be financed by local support. They also specified that the provision for the extension of high schools was applicable to first- and second-class cities and county high school districts; thus, they were insuring a large enough tax valuation to provide financial stability.

The first attempt to obtain state aid for junior college support was made in 1926. The State Board of Education did not seem very interested and the institutions were too new to command sufficient support. From time to time after 1926, the Kansas Public Junior College Association (now the Kansas Association of Community Colleges) as well as several individuals encouraged passage of legislation to provide some form of state support. However, it was not until 1961 that the efforts of the past thirty-six years were successful in achieving the first state support for the operation of junior colleges.

The junior college idea was not popular at first and two of the first institutions, Marysville and Holton, soon closed because of low enrollments and high costs per student. Fort



The new Butler County Community College is a comprehensive community college.

Scott and Garden City, the two oldest remaining institutions, did not have an easy time. Enrollments ranged from 10 to 30 students the first few years. Another problem faced by these newly founded institutions was the unfriendly and uncooperative attitude of the four-year institutions of higher education.[6]

Kansas followed the practice of many states of having the state university accredit junior colleges. This form of accreditation provided standards and assisted students with the transferability of credit. The Faculty Senate of the University of Kansas in their May 2, 1922 meeting, accepted the recommendation of the Advanced Standing and Examination Committee that the acceptance of credit be approved.[7]

The standards set up by the State Board of Education for the approval of the establishment of a high school extension course as provided in the 1917 law and the procedure used in accreditation by the University of Kansas were very similar.

The State Board of Education revised the standards several times during the period from 1917 to 1954. In 1954 a major revision to update the standards was completed. Very little was done until the mid 50s to work toward North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools Accreditation, the main reason being that the expense of the North Central inspection was almost prohibitive. Also the colleges were getting along with the accreditation plan they had with the University of Kansas and the standards required by the State Department of Education.

Dr. R.H. Hughes, a long time supporter of the two-year colleges in Kansas should be given special recognition for his efforts and guidance in the 1965 legislation which replaced the provisions of the antiquated 1917 law. By the action taken in 1965, Kansas had taken a big step toward regaining some of the prestige it formerly had as a leader in the junior college movement.

The first state plan for community junior colleges developed by the newly organized advisory council (as prescribed by the 1965 law) was submitted and approved by the state superintendent of public instruction on March 11, 1966. The main responsibilities of the community junior colleges as stated in the plan were to take the institution to the student and to provide comprehensive, diversified programs of studies which include not only academic or general education, but vocational-technical and adult education programs for the people of their service area.

The state plan set forth the procedure for the establishment of new institutions. The process required a comprehensive study to determine the need for the proposed institution. The need was to some extent determined by the answer to the following questions.

1. Are potential students available in the area?
2. Is there an adequate financial base to operate the institution?
3. Is there evidence that existing post-secondary educational institutions are not meeting the total educational needs of the community?

The community junior colleges in Kansas were not established to compete with other post-secondary institutions, but to complement them and the total higher educational system in the state. Since 1965 three new community junior colleges have opened that were established under the procedures as outlined in the new law and set forth in the state plan. All community junior colleges which were organized prior to 1965 are now completely separate from high school extension, having elected their own boards of trustees who in turn have hired presidents. All of the nineteen community colleges now in existence in Kansas have expanded their taxing district to include one county except two which share equally one county. Kansas now has eighteen counties served by a community college and one county with two institutions.

The local districts and the state have jointly accepted the responsibility of providing funds for the cost of operation of the junior colleges. The provision of funds for repairs and improvements of old buildings and construction of new campuses has not been a joint responsibility. The local districts with the assistance from the federal government have provided the total cost of building programs. Through this plan 15 of the 19 colleges have completely new campuses and the remaining four have new and remodeled buildings. The facilities of the Kansas institutions are excellent.

Since 1965 a number of Legislative accomplishments have occurred. These legislative acts have dealt with increased state assistance: by increasing the operating mill levies; by changing the voting election laws; by revising procedures for election of boards of trustees; by improving out-of-district

tuition provisions; and by legislating minimum and maximum tuition to be charged.

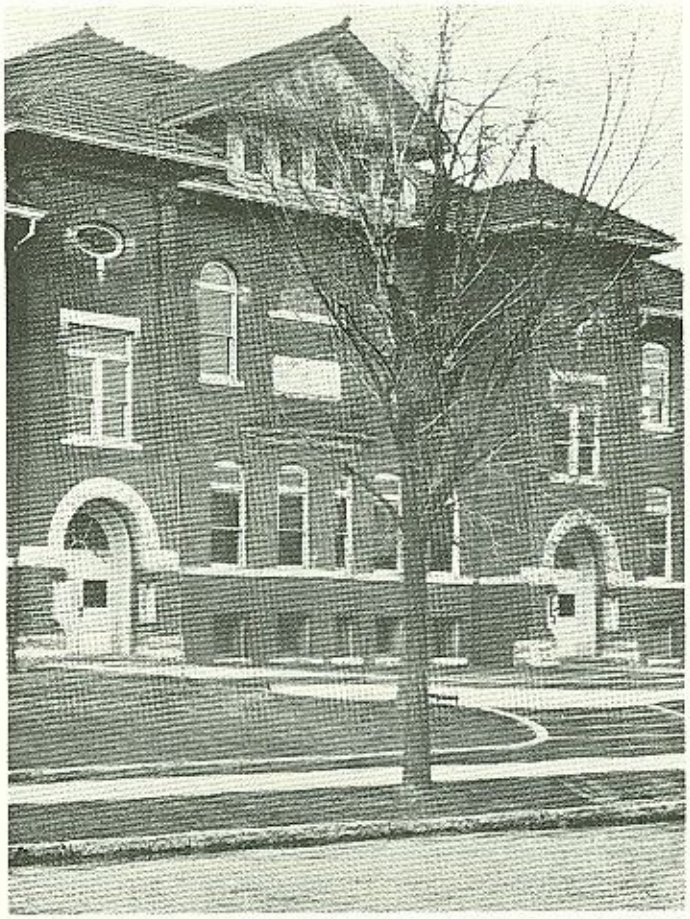
The operational revenues for community junior colleges are obtained from four major sources. These include local ad valorem tax, state aid, out-district tuition, and student tuition. A fifth source but very small for operational expense comes from federal aid. For the 1974-75 academic year the percentages from each source in relation to the total are approximately 38 percent state aid (including out-district tuition), student tuition 20 percent, federal aid 2 percent, with the remaining 40 percent being provided by local property tax.

Kansas junior colleges have, since their inception, not been as liberal arts oriented as junior colleges in many states; therefore, they have to some degree from the beginning accepted the responsibility of offering comprehensive programs. Even though these colleges provided not only the liberal arts curriculum, and some vocational-technical programs, we have seen a great increase in the emphasis on terminal curriculums since the early 1930s. There are several reasons for the expansion of occupational programs in the junior colleges. The leadership of state agencies for vocational education, set up under the Smith-Hughes and related federal legislation, was especially effective in this state. Widespread unemployment during the depression of 1929-1937 encouraged the spread of occupational education, in fact, Pratt Community College was established as a result of the realization that specific training beyond high school would give an applicant an advantage in the job market. Kansas was able to take advantage of the fact that the Vocational Education Act of 1963 recognized the junior colleges by removing the restrictions of courses of "less than college grade" that had appeared in earlier legislation. Kansas community junior colleges still have not become as involved in occupational education as those institutions in states that do not have vocational-technical schools. With 14 vocational-technical schools in the state the community colleges have tried not to duplicate programs offered in the vocational-technical schools. Kansas does not have any public community colleges that offer only academic curricula.

Since the Kansas colleges all practice an "open-door" policy some students need some type of remedial study. They require help in learning to express themselves, in basic mathematics, in reading, and simply in understanding how to study and learn. The community colleges in Kansas, like those thoughout the nation, have innovated in remarkable ways to help students. The learning skills centers and special programs established have removed much of the stigma of "remedial work" to the point that students seek out the help without being referred by a teacher.

As early as 1936 Kansas junior colleges were offering such vocational programs as: machine shop, auto mechanics, carpentry, office practice, printing, costume design, salesmanship to name a few.

From the early 1950s to the present, the Kansas community junior colleges have offered more than seventy-five different vocational-technical programs. However, all of the nineteen community colleges do not comply with what the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education calls "comprehensive."

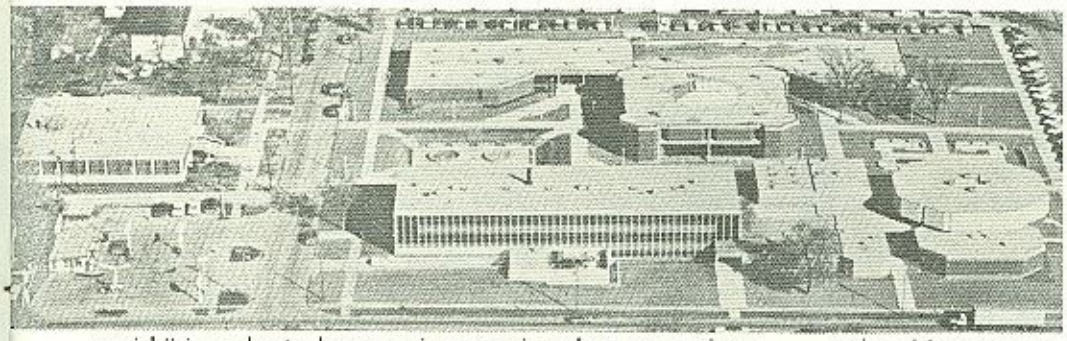


Coffeyville Junior College was located in an old high school building.

Because of small enrollments and lack of finances it is not possible for some of the colleges to be comprehensive. This does not mean that many of the institutions do not offer a smorgasbord of courses, ranging from the traditional liberal arts to such strictly vocational subjects as computer management, secretarial science, dental technology, data processing, automotive repair, and welding.

If one looks at the qualifications of the faculty members in terms of academic degrees the Kansas community colleges rank quite well with the national averages. Between five and eight percent of the faculty members have doctorates; another 70 percent hold a master's; about ten per cent have a bachelor's; the rest less than a B.A. degree. Most of those in the latter two categories are vocational teachers, whose professional skills count for more than their academic credentials. With fewer job openings on four-year campuses and more Ph.D.s being graduated to fill them, the percentage of faculty holding a doctorate can be expected to increase—probably to 10 per cent or more by 1980.

Few, if any, famous research scholars are found on community college campuses throughout the country and this is true for Kansas. The faculty members spend their time in the classroom, many teaching from 15 to 18 contact hours per week. The emphasis on the community college campus is on what happens with students, not on what happens in the laboratory. For that reason, there is no pressure to "publish or



Coffeyville Community College offers a comprehensive program from its new campus.

perish" in order to have an increase in salary or receive a promotion.

Kansas community colleges like most institutions also rely on part-time faculty members. Some are "moonlighters" from local high schools or from neighboring four-year schools; some hold full-time jobs in the community. There are many advantages in using part-time staff. For example the curriculum can be broadened by bringing in specialists to teach one or two classes but there is not a need or money to hire such a person full time. Some institutions use part-time faculty members as a way to save money. Hiring a local lawyer to teach a business law course, or hiring a local CPA to teach an accounting course is an excellent form of public relations for the college.

If one visits the campuses of Kansas he would observe that many of the buildings have been designed with the idea in mind to keep class size small. This has been one of the selling points for community colleges, class size being smaller than four-year schools. Generally community colleges have been bolder than four-year colleges in employing technology to help students on an individual basis. The new campuses were designed to use such teaching techniques as the "audio-tutorial" method in biology; computer-assisted English and mathematics instruction and typing and shorthand courses are completely on tapes.

The days when a junior college consisted of a few dingy rooms on the third floor or in the basement of the local high school are a far cry from the ultramodern campuses that exist in Kansas community colleges today.

Most of the colleges have elaborate plants of their own, with fully equipped science labs, libraries, classroom buildings, study facilities, auditoriums, student unions, and some institutions now have their own dormitories. The community colleges get more mileage out of their buildings than most four-year institutions. To meet the needs of students many courses are taught in the evening, community groups are encouraged to use the campus facilities like the auditoriums, and gymnasiums, free or for a minimum charge.

Even with the increased cost of tuition, students can attend a Kansas community college far cheaper than attending a four-year school. The 1973 legislature increased the minimum tuition from $5 per credit hour to $8 per credit hour and the maximum that could be charged from $10 to $13 per credit hour. The cost of an education is still much less because a large number of the students live at home.

After many years of struggling for acceptance, community colleges in Kansas are now recognized and accepted as a vital and necessary part of the educational system of the state. The question of transfer of credit to senior colleges and universities appears to be resolved in a mutually satisfactory way.

Probably the two most important issues facing the community college movement in Kansas are finances and the reorganization of post-secondary education. In order to broaden the tax base for community colleges and area vocational-technical schools and to prevent unnecessary duplication, a number of plans and proposals have been submitted from various committees. At this time there does not appear to be one acceptable plan. However, the 1975 legislature will probably take some action. Some of the proposals have been to place the 19 community junior colleges under the state board of regents with the existing 6 state four-year institutions; another plan is to divide the state into 20 districts with a community college or vocational-technical school in each district. Another plan is to divide the state into 10 districts.

At this point it is imperative that a determination of the roles of the post-secondary educational institutions, simplifying, if possible, the financial and administrative structure, and eliminating duplication at both the state and local level, be resolved.

The Kansas community college has in a short period of years evolved from a junior college with very limited functions and purposes into colleges that are committed to meet the present and future educational and training needs of the citizens in their communities and the state. The new goals are being accomplished by providing comprehensive programs at a minimal cost to students. These institutions have not only set out to respond to change but to influence the directions that change may take.

Kansas Community Colleges—They mean many things to many people.

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