

SUCCESS STORY

In 1954 concerned citizens of Horry County met to consider ways in which an urgent need of its people--access to opportunities for higher education--could be met. They recognized that the future development of the area would be dependent in large measure upon the level of education of its people. They were concerned that many students graduating from its high schools with demonstrated capacity for college training were not enrolling in existing institutions either in-or out-of-state. They knew that many who did enroll dropped out before achieving their educational goals because of financial, social and other pressures involved in attending college away from home.

This group moved fast. Within two months of its first meeting in July, its members had determined to establish a two-year college as a first step toward rectifying the situation, had formed the Coastal Education Foundation, Inc., to act as its agent and governing body, had successfully presented its case to the College of Charleston for professional guidance during the formative stages, and had opened its doors to 53 students.

The Coastal Educational Foundation secured permission to operate the college in the physical plant of Conway High School, utilizing its classrooms and laboratories in the afternoons and evenings. The college was granted minimum space of its own for offices and a library. The Foundation recognized the deficiencies of this arrangement and that it could not be tolerated indefinitely. No sooner was the first goal of opening achieved than it began to consider ways and means of acquiring its own plant.

30

The members of the Foundation were providing leadership, but it became apparent at once that they had the people solidly behind them. For the first three years the funds necessary for operation were provided by large and small gifts from individuals, civic organizations, and businesses. The depth of this commitment was proven in 1958 when the continued existence of Coastal Carolina was put to the crucial test: the taxpayers were asked to vote a three-mill levy for its support. They not only approved the tax by a four-to-one margin but have since added another mill for this purpose.

The College of Charleston, which had consented to supervise the operation during the first two years, extended its agreement through the completion of the 1957/58 academic year. In 1958 the Horry County Higher Education Commission was created by legislative act and assumed responsibility for the operation of the college as an independent institution. The members of the Coastal Educational Foundation were named the first commissioners, but the Foundation also continued its existence in a supportive role, taking the initiative in developing the financial and physical resources necessary for educational excellence.

The Commission aimed for regional accreditation at the earliest possible date, relying in the meantime on state accreditation through approval of its program by the state university. There were two alternatives: to go the road of independence which might delay full accreditation until the college had a separate plant, or to affiliate with an accredited institution. The University of South Carolina was then considering the establishment of two-year feeder institutions to relieve enrollment pressures on the campus in Columbia and the Commission entered into negotiations to become a regional campus.

The University of South Carolina began supervision of the academic program in the fall of 1960, freeing local leadership for the task of developing a permanent home for the college. The Foundation purchased forty acres and the Burroughs Timber Company and the International Paper Company donated adjacent tracts providing a total site of 185 acres, sufficient for future expansion and ideally located just off Highway 501 between Conway and Myrtle Beach. The Foundation's campaign to raise \$300,000 for the first building was oversubscribed by the people. By the opening of the 1963/64 academic year the college had moved to its new home.

As long as the college remained in cramped quarters enrollment did not grow: 53 students entered in 1954; there were only 65 in the student body in 1962. Since it has had its own plant, enrollment has increased 400%, there now being 313 students during the current academic year and substantial numbers in the summer programs. A recent study (Speth) shows a potential of 950 first and second year students from Horry County alone by 1972.

In 1966 a general purpose building designed to meet the needs of the larger student body was added. It incorporates a lecture hall-auditorium, a campus shop, a student lounge, a language laboratory, a conference room, a kitchen-snack bar-eating area, and office space. This building is designed to foster the important extracurricular activities and campus life which round out the experiences of the students.

Plans for a third building are already going forward. Basic to the development of a good academic program is the provision of a good library. The new building will provide the physical setting for it with ample room for growth as the college expands into a four-year program.