CHAPTER VII

Accreditation is the lifeblood of a college academically. It is as important to a college or to the students who attend such a college as bank credit is to a business man who tries to carry on his private enterprise in a certain area of the country. In fact, there can be no real business between colleges without some kind of accreditation, either formal or informal.

When a college begins, it has little in the way of accreditation except the faith that other colleges and prominent individuals have in the president and the faculty. After a few years the college establishes itself, as far as accreditation or reputation is concerned, by its first graduates. As has been stated, Boise Junior College was unusually fortunate in the quality of young people who came to its doors in the fall of 1932. These were young folk who were so interested in getting an education that they were willing to do what all people who have become educated in the past have had to do and that is recognize their weaknesses and strengthen themselves by being knowledgeable about the world.

Other collegiate institutions recognize that they will receive students from the new institution within a year or two. These students with a desire for more education, decide to attend other colleges with more prestige than the new college has when it begins its educational program. Usually, institutions in immediate proximity such as the University of Idaho, a public institution, and the College of Idaho, a private one, are the ones most concerned because they are the most likely to receive the students.

Bishop Barnwell saw this need for accreditation immediately and worked out a satisfactory disposition. He made contact with the administration of the University of Idaho through its president, Dr. M. G. Neale, (1930-1937). As a result, President Neale and the State Board of Education appointed a visiting committee whose job it was to observe the work being done at Boise Junior College. * The members of the committee, which arrived during the first days of March 1933, consisted of Dr. Church, history; Dr. Axtell, classics; Dr. Kostalek, chemistry; and Mr. Pritchard, art.

All the classes of this new college were visited by the committee which reported back to the University for its recommendation to the State Board of Education. The interim between the visit and the action taken by the State Board was one of anticipation mixed with fear as all faculty members waited for word of the results from the University. The Bishop reported some weeks later that all except two courses had been accredited. As a result, the following statement appeared on Page 9 of the 1933-34 Boise Junior College Catalog:

Departments for which the college applied and received accreditation by the University of Idaho and the State Board of Education in 1932-33 are as follows: English, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Classical and Romance Languages, German, Physical Education, Music, Art, Education. Accreditation of other departments and specific courses will be sought in the next academic year.

There was some question regarding the chemistry instruction and as a result, the following year two chemistry instructors who had been recommended by the University of Idaho were employed.

For the next three years until 1936-37, a committee came yearly from the University of Idaho. All subjects were accredited

with the exception of women's physical education in 1933-34; art, girls' dancing and swimming and sophomore girls' sports in 1934-35; and engineering problems and drawing in 1935-36.

The committee for the 1936-37 year had been arranged through correspondence and a visit by President Chaffee to the University of Idaho on his way to the meeting of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools in Spokane. This had been ratified by the acting president, Thomas S. Kerr, in a letter of June 16, 1937 when he stated that the main thing the College needed was to insure greater permanence and more adequate salaries.

Chaffee made a suggestion to Kerr's successor, Harrison C. Dale, that accreditation for 1937-38 be waived since the previous year had been favorably considered and little change had taken place in the College and its faculty. This request was denied, but approval was made very simple by having a committee accredit in toto all the courses of the former year plus the following new courses: Engineering 9, Mathematics 1 and 2, Psychology 4, Sociology 4, and Orchestra.¹

Accreditation for the year 1938-39 was taken care of by letters between President Dale of the University of Idaho and President Chaffee. In a letter of June 11, 1938, Dean Messenger, a member of the accreditation committee, stated:

Dean Kerr and I have passed on the recommendation and I presume it will be acted upon by the board. So far as I know then, we have approved all of the courses which you asked for for the year 1937-38. Presumably you will continue with the same arrangements for the year 1938-39 and I suppose these courses will be accredited again, though I may not be appointed to the committee for next year.

A letter from President Dale on February 27, 1939 stated:

The Board of Education has referred to the University, the accrediting of courses offered in the Boise Junior College during the academic year of 1938-39. I have every reason to believe that the accrediting committee will approve this year's program. Dean Kerr will be in Boise sometime in March and will wish to visit the junior college as a representative of our accrediting committee.

On March 9 President Chaffee sent a complete list of the subjects offered at Boise Junior College during the academic year of 1938-39, with a list of the instructors and semester hours of each course, to the Accrediting Committee of the University of Idaho. As a result, he received the following letter from President Dale on April 17, 1939:

The faculty committee, of which Dean Kerr was chairman, has made its report on accrediting of the work of the Boise Junior College for the year 1938-39. This was unanimously approved by the Academic Council and reported to the Board of Regents for confirmation. The Board has not yet held its spring meeting, but I have every reason to believe that it will accept the committee's report.

This letter came just three weeks after the people of the Boise area had approved a public junior college by a vote of 2219 to 235.

The Junior College still had problems of accreditation regardless of the fact that it was now a public institution rather than a private one. The difference was that the law made accreditation of the College by the University mandatory, which meant that they had a legal duty to appraise the work of the Junior College as to its quality. On November 1, 1939, a list of the courses to be accredited was sent to the University of Idaho Accrediting Committee. The fact that the College was a public institution resulted in the addition of a number of courses; art, botany, business, and forestry, and some additional courses in psychology and music.

The forestry courses were of a vocational nature and resulted in some two months of correspondence exchange between President Dale and Dean Jeffers of the Forestry School, and President Chaffee speaking for the forestry faculty and the administration of Boise Junior College. In his letter of December 11, 1939, President Dale stated that all regular academic courses had been approved by a committee which had visited the College on November 2nd and 3rd. In this same letter, the University president included a direct quotation from the report of the Committee:

The Committee visited the Boise Junior College on November 2 and 3 and received the full cooperation of President Chaffee with respect to data needed for the accreditation of courses. During the current year, five new instructors have been added to the faculty and courses offered have been expanded, particularly in the fields of art, business administration, education, and psychology. The enrollment has now reached 410. The budget that has been set up indicates a sound financial condition.

The Committee feels that junior colleges operating under the new state law should require of its teaching personnel a minimum training of two years above a bachelor's degree. As explained to President Chaffee, this is the general policy of the University of Idaho with respect to lower division courses. Throughout the history of the Boise Junior College, most of the courses have been accredited by the University of Idaho and in more recent years all of the courses have been given full accreditation. The Committee's recommendation this year includes all the courses requested for the accreditation except a few in forestry.

The plans of the Boise Junior College include a new building, new equipment, and an expansion of courses, particularly in vocational lines. The Committee believes that this institution is now on a more stable basis and is in a position to render real service to the community.

All was peace and quiet as far as accreditation for the year 1939-40 was concerned.

In the meantime, the Boise college president had written Dr. Frederick E. Bolton, Chairman of the Higher Commission for Secondary and Higher Schools of the Northwest, informing him and the Commission that four days prior to the writing of this letter, the people of the city of Boise had, through an election, approved Boise Junior College as a public district and that the College now met the requirements given by the Commission in a letter of April 11, 1936 to President Chaffee's predecessor, Dr. Myron Clites, which stated:

On the basis of your present plant, equipment, and staff, I should personally recommend provisional accreditation. Improvements in all these factors are desirable, but I believe the quality of funds necessary for stability and the payment of adequate salaries, however, is very vital. If the people of Boise desire a college they should provide these fundamental resources. No educational institution can exist on a high plane on tuition fees alone.²

In his letter to Dr. Bolton, President Chaffee added:

For the past two years, the University has accredited this institution without sending a committee down here and Dean Kerr

explained in a recent conversation with me the fact that he regarded our work as outstanding. Inasmuch as we have now established the quality of academic work and acquired stability for the institution through public financing, it would appear that Boise Junior College is now in a position to ask for permanent accreditation by the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools.

I have been with this institution during its existence and have, for the past three years, been its administrative and academic head. I could furnish all the information that you requested at the time Dr. Clites headed the institution and present that at the Spokane Inland Empire meeting. I hope some steps can be taken at this particular meeting, though I recognize the lateness of my application. The only reason for this delay is due to the fact that the Boise Junior College District was only created last Friday, March 24, and factual material on such a district was not at hand until today.³

A letter received two weeks later from Dr. Bolton requested a copy of the new junior college law for establishing districts in Idaho and added:

As I told you at Spokane, no definite action can be taken until the annual meeting a year hence. It seems to be that you have rather ideal conditions for the development of a junior college in Boise and I hope that it will be supported in such a way by the city that it will warrant accreditation by the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools.4

In Chaffee's reply to this letter he stated, "We are sure of adequate financial support and the general citizenry of this town is strongly behind this institution as illustrated by the recent campaign and election."

Other letters followed between Dr. Bolton and the Boise Junior College president until finally, on November 24, 1939, Dr. Bolton replied to a letter from Boise saying:

I am much interested in your letter of November 16th asking that initial plans be taken up for an evaluation of Boise Junior College, which is desirous of securing accreditation next year by the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools. In a few days I will send you a copy and suggestions for submitting documentary materials relating to the College.

After the documentary material has been received, then, if it is promising, an inspection would follow by two or three members of the accrediting commission for higher institutions.

President Chaffee's reply on January 19, 1940 contained 14 copies of data giving the background of the College, the

financial statement and budget, and a complete listing of instructors' schedules giving the title, subject, and teaching hours for each.

On February 6, another letter from Dr. Bolton indicated that he was waiting for additional suggestions from the University of Idaho.

You will understand that the Commission would in all probability not go over the head of the State University. Inasmuch as the State University has not given full accreditation up to this time, it looks to me as though it were a little improbable that it would be wise to have the matter come before the Commission at Spokane. However, I will write you just as soon as I can get further word from the University of Idaho.

The Boise president then wrote President Dale of the University of Idaho on February 8 indicating that action for accreditation was being delayed because of the misconceived idea that the University of Idaho was not giving full accreditation to the junior college and was in fact, opposing the accreditation. He added that he would appreciate a statement from the University regarding the status of Boise Junior College at that time.

Two days later a letter was received from President Dale stating:

I am glad to correct any misapprehension regarding the attitude of the University of Idaho toward the admission of Boise Junior College to the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools. I can say emphatically and categorically that the University will not oppose in any way Boise Junior College's application for accreditation when it appears to have met the qualifications and standards set up by the Association.

In our own accrediting activities the University's attitude toward all colleges in Idaho, whether junior or senior, is based solely on an insistence on academic standards comparable to those prevailing in the State University. The reason for this stand is twofold. In the first place, the University is concerned that higher education, like other Idaho products and enterprises, shall be on a quality basis. In the second place, for the University to accredit and consequently to accept courses of inferior grade seriously endangers the national accredited status of the University of Idaho which has been built up over forty years . . .

Whether or not this is the opportune time to seek accreditation by the Northwest Association is, of course, a matter for you to judge. I am not on the accrediting committee, but I am told that they have consistently followed the policy of accrediting not on the basis of what an institution proposed to do but on what it was actually doing and the faculty and facilities it enjoyed at the time it sought accreditation . . . No doubt a year hence you will have your own building and will have secured adequate laboratory and other equipment and facilities. Under these circumstances, I should think you might prefer waiting until 1941.6

One week later a letter came from Dr. Bolton⁷ which enclosed a copy of a letter written February 13 from the University of Idaho.

The University has accredited nearly all the courses now being given at the Boise Junior College, but there are a few which are obviously vocational courses; very useful for students who are looking for a practical job without reference to a college course. These courses are without reference to a college course. These courses are very desirable and the University is glad to support a movement to provide education of this type for students who do not intend to go to college. It does not seem to us that such courses should be given college credit.

There is a technical point about this, concerning which I am not clear. If the Northwest Association accredits a college, does that imply that any course which that college may give will be accepted for college credit? Or can we make a distinction between purely vocational courses and those courses which meet the ordinary requirements for college credits? If so, should not the distinction be indicated by the college as is done in the California colleges? Unless the other members of the commission have a clearer idea about this than I have, I think it would be worthwhile for us to discuss the question at the April meeting.

There is another point connected with the Boise College which seems to me to be important. Their plans are very good and they expect to have new buildings with adequate equipment for a junior college, but they do not have that plant yet and their laboratories are not at present what they should be. However, they have a very good faculty and the University has accredited nearly all of their work for this year. It is fully expected that they will succeed in building and equipping a college worthy of accreditation and it is fully expected that the University will then put the institution on our accredited list. We have given them temporary accrediting by courses merely in order to give them time to do what they have proposed to do. We believe it is better for them to have a standard to work toward than it would be to have on record a statement which seemed to indicate they already had come up to the junior college standards.

In the letter from Dr. Bolton which accompanied the above copy, he recommended,

My advice is to wait another year before asking for accreditation by the Northwest Association. The Association does *not* accredit courses. All work or *none* is the practice.

Your students will doubtless be given an opportunity to transfer to any of the Idaho higher educational institutions and by another year when you have your new buildings and equipment, you will be in a much stronger position to seek acceptance by the Northwest Association. I feel confident that the Commission as a whole will be guided by the attitude of the University of Idaho.

However, if you insist on having you application considered by the Association at the coming annual meeting, April 1, and will guarantee the traveling expenses of the three inspectors, I will arrange for the inspection.

After receiving Dr. Bolton's letter with the enclosure from the University of Idaho and Dale's February 10 letter referred to previously, President Chaffee wrote to President Dale stating that in spite of his statements and others from the University of Idaho, the idea still persisted that they were opposed to consideration of the accreditation of Boise Junior College and that the letter just received from Dr. Bolton suggested waiting another year. Chaffee continued:

You probably remember my stating in a conversation in the lobby of the Owyhee Hotel that if credit were withheld for a few vocational courses, this would be used as a basis for the statement that our courses were not accredited. This, you note, is the general impression Dr. Bolton has received. I do not believe he clearly understands that all of our courses except the vocational were accredited by the University of Idaho and that in the immediate years past, every course has been accredited by your institution. The very fact that we are trying to do a type of vocational work results in a penalty for the rest of our courses, non-vocational in nature.

This uncertainty regarding our accreditation status persists not only with Dr. Bolton and the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools, but prevails also among certain universities of this area to which our students have transferred this year or plan to transfer to in the immediate future . . .

Never before have our students had any difficulty in transferring and receiving full credit for these courses . . . This year the notion persists on the part of these schools that our accrediting status is not as good as in former years. Yet, from the closing remarks of recommendation for accreditation by your committee of 1939-40, our position is better: "The committee believes that this institution is now on a more stable basis and is in a position to render real service to the community."

In all previous accreditation reports from your committee at the University of Idaho, one item that was singled out as preventing permanent accreditation at that time was the position of financial insecurity in which the Junior College found itself. That condition certainly does not exist today when one considers that we have a permanent source of revenue that cannot be cut off. I cannot understand why our academic credits are questioned when in former years under less favorable circumstances than exist at Boise Junior College today, our work was accepted without question by the colleges to which students transferred. There is some source of misinformation that has brought about this questioning of our academic status. Since the University of Idaho is the source of our accreditation, it seems to me that the only way this doubt can be removed from the minds of the institutions to which our students transfer is from a very definite, positive statement from yourself or the Registrar stating our improved condition and our accredited status. On the surface, the fact that we are a public institution appears a detriment to our accreditation rather than an asset.7

On the following day, February 21, a letter was written from Boise to Dr. Bolton. "Since the University of Idaho has taken the attitude it has regarding our accreditation under the Northwest Association, I am dropping this year our application for accreditation by your Association."

The request for accreditation by the Northwest Association was therefore dropped until October 12, 1940, when the president of Boise Junior College wrote a letter to Burton K. Farnsworth, President of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools, enclosing the previous year's letter of application. He asked for suggestions as to the forms for tabulating the status of Boise Junior College. Farnsworth replied that President Chaffee's letter had been sent to Dr. Freeman Daughters, the newly elected chairman of the Commission on Higher Education¹⁰—Dr. Bolton's successor.

Dr. Daughters indicated that the old reports furnished the year before could be brought up to date and used as a base for accreditation.¹¹ This was done on November 27, 1940 with revised reports showing a much more substantial budget and growth including occupation of the new campus and the completed Administration-Classroom Building. The visitation took place on March 17 and 18, 1941. Dean Messenger felt so

knowledgeable concerning the College that he had visited as a member of the committee from the University of Idaho that he composed his report without a visit to Boise.

After the visitation, President Chaffee was asked to furnish additional material which he sent to Dr. Freeman Daughters on March 22. It consisted largely of financial matters and the composition of the College Board of Trustees. This proved satisfactory and as a result, on April 9, President Chaffee sent the following telegram to Mr. O. O. Haga, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, from Spokane where he had presented the case for the College at the annual Northwest Association meeting:

Boise Junior College elected to membership in the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools and accredited as a junior college. This association one of the five regional associations covering the U.S. hence this recognition is highest in the accreditation field. This, plus permanent accreditation granted last fall by Idaho State Board of Education, gives Boise the ultimate in scholastic recognition.

As usual, there were certain recommendations made by the Higher Commission, but at the very same April meeting, President Chaffee was elected to the Higher Commission of the Northwest Association as the representative of junior colleges for the State of Idaho. This meant that he could speak for his college as well as other junior colleges at every meeting of the Higher Commission.

The College continued with this recognition until the Northwest Association adopted a policy of re-visiting every college and university in the Northwest Association at a stated period of time. Boise Junior College was re-visited 15 years later in 1956 and granted a ten-year accreditation on a re-evaluation—the maximum granted any college or university in the Northwest. In 1966, on the scheduled re-visitation to the junior college portion of Boise College, the College received its periodic accreditation. At the same time, the newly created

upper division of the four-year Boise College was accredited under Candidacy-for-Membership, giving the College and its work full accreditation until the next visitation which should occur within three years. That visitation took place in September of 1968 and the whole institution was accredited for a maximum period of four years the following December.12

^{*} Other colleges and institutions usually accept the evaluation of the state university until the college is ready to request full-scale accreditation from its

university until the college is ready to request full-scale accreditation from its regional accrediting association.

1 Letter of May 27, 1938 from Dean Messenger to Eugene B. Chaffee.

2 Letter of April 11, 1936 from Dr. Frederick E. Bolton to Dr. Myron Clites.

3 Letter of March 28, 1939 from Eugene B. Chaffee to Dr. F. Bolton.

4 Letter of April 14, 1939 from Dr. F. Bolton to Eugene B. Chaffee.

5 Letter of April 21, 1939 from Eugene B. Chaffee to Dr. F. Bolton.

6 Letter of February 10, 1940 from President Dale to Eugene B. Chaffee.

7 Letter of February 17, 1940 from Dr. Bolton to Eugene B. Chaffee.

8 Letter of February 20, 1940 from Eugene B. Chaffee to President Dale.

9 Letter of February 21, 1940 from Eugene B. Chaffee to Dr. F. Bolton.

10 Letter of October 16, 1940 from Burton K. Farnsworth to Eugene B. Chaffee.

11 Letter of October 29, 1940 from Dr. Daughters to Eugene B. Chaffee.

12 This was accomplished at the annual meeting in Reno on December 8, 1968.

¹²This was accomplished at the annual meeting in Reno on December 8, 1968.