Immediately after the flood, Epler and his colleagues scrambled to keep the center alive. Portland Public Schools offered the use of Grant High School in northeast Portland for the 1948 summer session. Grant certainly was the largest and most accommodating space that the struggling young college had ever had, but there was a much larger problem to solve: finding a location for the coming fall.

The federal government came to the rescue. Space for the new campus was found on North Burgard Street in buildings formerly occupied by the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation. The new campus soon came to be known affectionately as "Oregon Ship." During this uncertain time, the masthead of the student paper, Vanguard, began to appear with the subhead "The College That Wouldn't Die," inspired by a national story in the Christian Science Monitor about Vanport's post-flood success. The school's commitment and fighting spirit furthered its growth at Oregon Ship from 1948 to 1952.