After shipyard workers and their families left Vanport following World War II, the make-do and well-worn city gained a new purpose with the establishment of a temporary college. Officially designated Vanport Extension Center, but popularly named Vanport College Center and Vanport College by students and faculty, the school's primary purpose was to educate servicemen and women returning from the war. Housed in begged and borrowed classrooms in Vanport City, the school was overcrowded and understaffed from day one. Founder Stephen Epler didn't sugarcoat it. "As you know," he wrote to one of the first professors, "we are starting from nothing."