The three years following the move downtown were among the most critical to the future of Portland State. The success of the institution still relied on the combined efforts and dedication of students--both past and present--faculty, administrators, and community members. Once again, survival required legislative action; once again, it was Stephen Epler who led the charge.

Although many students and community members campaigned for the establishment of a four-year public college in Portland, the post-war Baby Boom also played an important role. With the flood of veterans back from the war and starting families, educational leaders realized that, by the mid-1950s, there would be a critical shortage of qualified teachers. The Oregon Board of Higher Education commissioned a consultant's report, which, in 1952, recommended expanded teacher training, including the establishment of programs at Portland State. The report prompted Epler to draw up a proposal for a four-year college in Portland. Two legislative sessions later, Portland State College was born.

Governor Paul Patterson signed House Bill 27 on February 14, 1955, granting four-year status to Portland State College. It had been nearly nine years since the first class opened its "temporary" doors in Vanport City. Students and faculty celebrated with a parade from Old Main through downtown Portland and back. Students were elated that they no longer needed to transfer to other state institutions to obtain a bachelor's degree. State teacher accreditation for Portland State quickly followed to meet the critical need for public school teachers. As a result, teacher education students provided a majority of the first graduating class of 1956.