RICKS COLLEGE

Ricks College is a private, two-year accredited college owned and operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Rexburg, Idaho, an agricultural community in the heart of the Upper Snake River Valley (less than 100 miles south of the Yellowstone/Grand Teton National Parks). With approximately 7,500 students and 300 faculty, Ricks is one of the largest private two-year colleges in the United States. It is a liberal arts college with a broad curriculum in the arts and sciences, and it is also noted for its career programs in technology, agriculture, nursing, and other disciplines.

Ricks College grants the associate degree in arts and sciences, emphasizing general education to students who plan to pursue bachelor’s degrees at four-year colleges or universities, as well as degrees in specialized programs.

HISTORY. LDS settlers in the Rexburg area were faced with sending their children to public schools where sentiment was strong against them. In November 1888 the settlers established the Bannock Stake Academy, an elementary school with eighty-two students and three teachers, with Thomas E. Ricks, the president of the Bannock Stake, as Chairman of the Bannock Stake Academy Board of Education. In 1898 it was renamed the Fremont Stake Academy and high school courses were added. On October 1, 1903, the school was named Ricks Academy after Thomas E. Ricks. In 1915 college courses were first taught. During the Great Depression it was rumored that the school would be closed. The Church offered to give the college to the state of Idaho, but that offer was rejected, and the Church continued its operation. Under John L. Clarke, president of Ricks from 1944 to 1971, the college expanded from a student body of 200 to 5,150. In the late 1940s the Church Board of Education approved third and fourth college years, and for six years the college graduated students with four-year degrees. However, in 1956 Ricks discontinued its junior and senior years. Since 1984 the college has again experienced rapid growth, and in 1989 the Board of Trustees set the 7,500 enrollment ceiling.

MISSION. The mission of Ricks College is officially declared to be (1) to build testimonies of the restored GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST and encourage living its principles; (2) to provide a high-quality education for students of diverse interests and abilities; (3) to prepare students for further education and employment, and for their roles as citizens and parents; and (4) to maintain a wholesome academic, cultural, social, and spiritual environment.

GENERAL EDUCATION. The Ricks College General Education program is designed to help students develop the ability to think and write clearly, maintain lifelong patterns of effective living, appreciate aesthetic and creative expressions of humanity, gain knowledge of the social and natural world, understand themselves and their relationship to God, and cultivate sensitivity to personal relationships, moral responsibilities, and service to society. Students seeking associate degrees study religion, English literature and composition, natural and physical science, social science, and health and physical fitness, and they must demonstrate proficiency in mathematics.

PHYSICAL PLANT, MATERIALS, AND EQUIPMENT. The Ricks College main campus is located on 255 acres at the south edge of Rexburg. In 1999, the main campus had forty-six buildings with about 1.6 million square feet of space and a replacement value of nearly $110 million. These buildings contained equipment valued at over $21 million.

The library, a building of 98,000 square feet, includes a serials collection of 750 titles and con-
tains nearly 141,000 volumes, excluding bound periodicals and government publications.

The college owns a livestock center as part of its agricultural program on 140 acres, including 21 buildings, a few miles west of Rexburg. The college also owns a 160-acre outdoor learning facility on Badger Creek in Teton Valley.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHURCH. The Ricks College Board of Trustees is composed of Church leaders and is chaired by the President of the Church. The Church provides approximately 70 percent of the operating funds for the college. Student tuition and fees, campus auxiliary income, and gifts to the college provide the remainder of college operating funds.

Currently (1990) thirty-six students were in four stakes function at Ricks College. Students are required to take religion courses every semester. Graduates of Ricks consistently remark on the unique spirit of the college, the commitment of faculty to the progress of students, and the overall sense of community and caring they experienced there.

STUDENTS. Ricks College has an open admission policy. Selectivity is used only as it applies to the Code of Honor, which each student must promise, in an ecclesiastical interview, to observe. Since Ricks has academic programs spanning a wide range of ability levels, the goal has been to admit any student who could benefit from the Ricks College experience.

Currently the Admissions Office admits 95 percent of those who apply. Of those admitted, approximately 80 percent actually enroll. Students from all fifty states and thirty foreign countries attend Ricks.

The attrition rate at Ricks is higher than at most two-year colleges because many Latter-day Saint students attend Ricks for one year and then serve a Church mission. Once they complete the mission, many desire to move to a university. In 1989–1990, Ricks College graduated 1,557 students.

RIGDON, SIDNEY

Sidney Rigdon (1793–1876) was one of Joseph Smith's closest friends and advisers. He was also a renowned early convert to the Church, its most persuasive orator in the first decade, and First Counselor in the First Presidency from 1832 to 1844. Following the Prophet Joseph Smith's martyrdom, Rigdon became one of the Church's best-known apostates.

Rigdon was born February 19, 1793, on a farm in St. Clair Township, near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the fourth child and youngest son of William and Nancy Bryant Rigdon. In 1817, while supporting his widowed mother on the family farm, Rigdon experienced Christian conversion and a year later qualified himself to become a licensed preacher with the Regular Baptists. He moved to eastern Ohio to preach under the tutelage of Adamson Bentley, a popular Baptist minister, and in June 1820 he married Phoebe Brooks, Bentley's sister-in-law. After ordination as a Baptist minister, Rigdon became pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pittsburgh in 1821. Famed for his dynamic preaching, Rigdon attracted listeners until his congregation became one of the largest in the city. One of his critics, William Hayden, described him as being of "medium height, rotund in form; of countenance, while speaking, open and winning, with a little cast of melancholy. His action was graceful, his language copious, fluent in utterance, with articulation clear and musical" (quoted in Chase, p. 24).

Throughout his early ministry, Rigdon kept looking for the pure New Testament church that practiced laying on of hands for the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST and healing the sick. Drawn to Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott, fellow ministers with similar views, Rigdon associated with leading members of the Mahoning Baptist Association, the forerunner of the restorationist Disciples of Christ movement (see RESTORATIONISM, PROTESTANT). In 1826 he became the pastor of a Grand River Association congregation in Mentor, Ohio. In 1830, however, Rigdon broke with Campbell and Scott, who went on to form the Disciples of Christ, while Rigdon established a communal "family" near Kirtland.

In late October 1830 four Mormon missionaries visited Rigdon in Ohio. One was Parley P. Pratt, whom Rigdon had converted to the reformed Baptists a year earlier. Pratt told Rigdon

BIBLIOGRAPHY


SCOTT SAMUELSON