Founding
1958-1969

**Location:** Cabinet B, Drawer 3

**Quantity:** 2 cubic ft.

**Access:** Open for research

**Date Processed:** circa 1990s

**Arrangement:** This collection is arranged by format.

**Historical Note:** (The following information has been summarized from Dr. Erma Ruth Chestnut’s PhD dissertation, "The Involvement and Influence of Voluntary Community Organization in the Development of a Community College: The Schenectady Community College", 1973.)

Schenectady County Community College officially opened in 1969 as the 35th community college established under the State University of New York system. However, long before the college opened its doors, the community had to come together to convince Schenectady County and SUNY of the need for a community college in Schenectady.

In the mid-1950s, community organizations in the Schenectady area began to do research into educational opportunities offered in the area. In 1957 Ralph J. Cordiner, the President of General Electric, gave a speech in Schenectady where he stated his desires of turning the Schenectady area into a epicenter of research and development for the entire General Electric corporation. The one thing standing in the way of achieving this, however, was that Cordiner believed that Schenectady lacked enough “cultural opportunities” to become such a site. Motivated by Cordiner’s assessment, local community organizations began to get together to discuss the feasibility of opening up a community college in Schenectady.

In 1957 the Schenectady Chamber of Commerce Education Committee started to do surveys of local high school students to determine if they would attend a college should it be opened. The response was overwhelmingly positive, although the numbers were not high enough to sustain enrollment, and the committee determined that use of nearby educational facilities like Hudson Valley Community College, 12 miles away, would be sufficient.

In 1964 and 1965 another study was completed which showed that students were looking for more opportunities for vocational training. In response a sub-committee was formed off of the Chamber of Commerce Education Committee to deal exclusively with the issue of starting a community college. Individuals active in the community made up this committee, including representatives from the League of Women Voters, the Department of Education, local businesses, and local media outlets. In 1965 the sub-committee petitioned that a higher-level committee be created by the Chamber of Commerce to conduct official studies that proved the need for a community college, the first step in accreditation from the SUNY system.
Although it took a lot of pressure and lobbying from the community college sub-
committee, by July of 1965 the official Community College Study Committee was appointed by
the Schenectady Board of Directors. This board, also made up of influential community
members, did research and distributed their findings to the community through pamphlets. A
study published in late July of 1965 revealed that 75% of the taxpayers surveyed in Schenectady
County supported the development of a community college. By May of 1966 the Board of
Supervisors determined that Schenectady County would be the sponsor for the community
college, and the process of finding a site and obtaining accreditation could begin.

On January 26, 1967, the Schenectady Board of Representatives passed Resolution 21
approving the establishment of a community college. Shortly after approval had to be sought
from the NY Board of Regents, the Governor, and SUNY. By October 12, 1967, all approvals had
been secured. Later, the former Hotel Van Curler was chosen as the site of the college, and SCCC
opened its doors to the first class of freshman on September 17, 1969.

**Scope/Content Note:** The founding collection contains Erma Ruth Chestnut’s doctoral
dissertation on the founding of SCCC, an important document that chronicles the steps taken by
the community to begin the college. It also contains collections of news clippings collected by
Charles Elston, an original trustee, as well as documents collected by John K. Balevic, one of the
members of the community college study committee. Also contained are letters sent and

**Folder/Item List:**

- **Folder 1:** The League of Women Voters Looks at Schenectady Community College, 1966
- **Folder 2:** News Clippings, 1966
- **Folder 3:** Dissertation of Erma Ruth Chestnut: “The Involvement and Influence of
  Voluntary Community Organizers in the Development of a Community College” 1973
- **Folder 4:** Report from SUNYA Doctoral Students, 5/29/1969
- **Folder 5:** Historical Documents
- **Folder 6:** “The Founding of Schenectady County Community College” materials compiled
  by John K. Balevic, member of the Committee to Study the Feasibility of Establishing a
  Community College in Schenectady
- **Folder 7:** News Clippings compiled by Charles W. Elston, 1958-1969
- **Folder 8:** Donald Sayles – Materials complied for Higher Education Subcommittee of the
  Education Committee of Schenectady County Chamber of Commerce, N.D.
- **Folder 9:** Community College Study Committee, N.D.
- **Folder 10:** Charter, SCCC, 1968
- **Folder 11:** Resolution 21 Approving the Establishment of a Community College (copy)
  1968
- **Folder 12:** Budget 1968/1969
- **Folder 13:** Letters Received 1968-1969
- **Folder 14:** Letters Sent Out 1968-1969