

1965-1968

Laying the Foundation: Sheridan College Takes Shape, 1965-1970

On May 21, 1965, Ontario's Minister of Education William G. Davis introduced Bill 153 to the Ontario legislature and called for the creation of new system of community colleges. The colleges of applied arts and technology would serve the needs of local communities and provide students with the skills they required to thrive in a rapidly evolving economy and a world experiencing an incredible rate of technological change. With the passage of the bill, Sheridan and 20 other new community colleges were born.

January to April 1967:

What's in a name? Sheridan started off as College No. 8, but its first Board of Governors spent the first months of 1967 debating a proper name. Would it be Halton and Peel College – the geographic area College No. 8 was to serve? White Oaks College? Mississauga College? Credit Valley College? Winston Churchill College? William G. Davis College was a popular choice for a while, before the minister rejected the honour. Finally, someone mentioned the name Sheridan, the nineteenth-century hamlet that sat on the boundary road between Peel and Halton, which the local blacksmith had named after his favourite bard, the Irish playwright, Richard Brinsley Sheridan. The Board had a winner!



“We are dedicated to educating people of all ages, and of many backgrounds, towards competency and full understanding of a specific field of endeavor. We try to relate very closely to the total needs of the community and the people within it. We attempt to make our courses ‘real’ and ‘applicable’, yet at the same time allow our students to develop their full potential as citizens and responsible human beings.”

Sheridan President, Jack Porter | 1970



April 1967:

While Sheridan had a name, it still had to be built from the ground up. The job fell to the first President, Jack Porter, who held the position for 14 years. He started with no building, no staff and no faculty. No one did more to lay the foundations of Sheridan College.

A tireless worker, Porter was remembered by his colleagues as a “visionary and an educator;” a “sensitive, fair, imaginative, and perceptive” leader who embraced a “high-energy creative personal style.” He encouraged innovation and creativity at Sheridan – in the design of its physical spaces, the development of new programs and in teaching. He wanted Sheridan's students to “get their hands in the dough” – a personal motto of his – and actually “doing not just listening.” From the start, Porter asked his instructors to get away from the “the black-board and the book and the piece of chalk” and continuously experiment with new ways of delivering course material.

Sheridan's Original Programs

Technology Division: Engineering Technology, Mechanical Drafting Technician, Industrial Chemistry Technician, Laboratory Technician, Electronics Technician

Business Division: Business Administration, Secretarial Science, General Business, Data Processing, General Secretarial

Applied and Visual Arts Division: Commercial Art, Fashion Technique and Design, Community Planning Technician, Hotel and Restaurant Administration

Meanwhile, in Lorne Park, Sheridan's School of Design, led by renowned furniture designer, Don McKinley, welcomed 48 new students, ready to be trained in Textiles, Metal and Jewelry, Furniture, Ceramics.



“There was a concern that Ontario, even Canada, was not creating its own unique designs in craft and industry; we were too much a nation of copiers of the design of others. [The School of Design is] unique in Canada; it is attempting (and determined) not only to embody the best of European and American design schools, but to create its own Canadian character...The graduates of the school will not be all of one mould, but each will be an individual who has developed his craft and/or design potential as far as he can within a school environment...the challenge is indeed great; no second-rate institution can suffice or the designers of Ontario will never compete.”

The Educational Aims and Proposed Development of Sheridan College of Applied Arts and Technology | May 1968

January 1968:

Dean Don Hamilton's Continuing Education program brought “Night Life” to Sheridan and the people of Halton and Peel. The College strived to take “education to the people, instead of making people come to the college for education,” holding classes in church basements, elementary schools and the lunch rooms of factories. Community members could take night and weekend courses on a vast array of subjects – from sailing to amateur photography.

April 1968:

Sheridan's Heavy Equipment School opened in Milton. Students could take a pipeline welding course or learn to operate cranes and bulldozers. The faculty had to work hard developing new courses, and devoted extra time chauffeuring students from the campus to their homes in Toronto. In time, students from the school would build Sheridan's tennis court, football field and parking lots at Trafalgar.

September 1968:

In 1967, Jack Porter, Bill Firth and Scott Turner introduced a Visual Arts program to Sheridan – the kind of program no one had envisioned a community College providing. The Visual Arts program was one of the most successful in Sheridan's first year. Turner remembered that “they just showed up: young people looking for a good applied arts school. That was the nucleus.” The program's success sparked the creation of a Classical Animation course, the start of a new program, the first of its kind in North America.

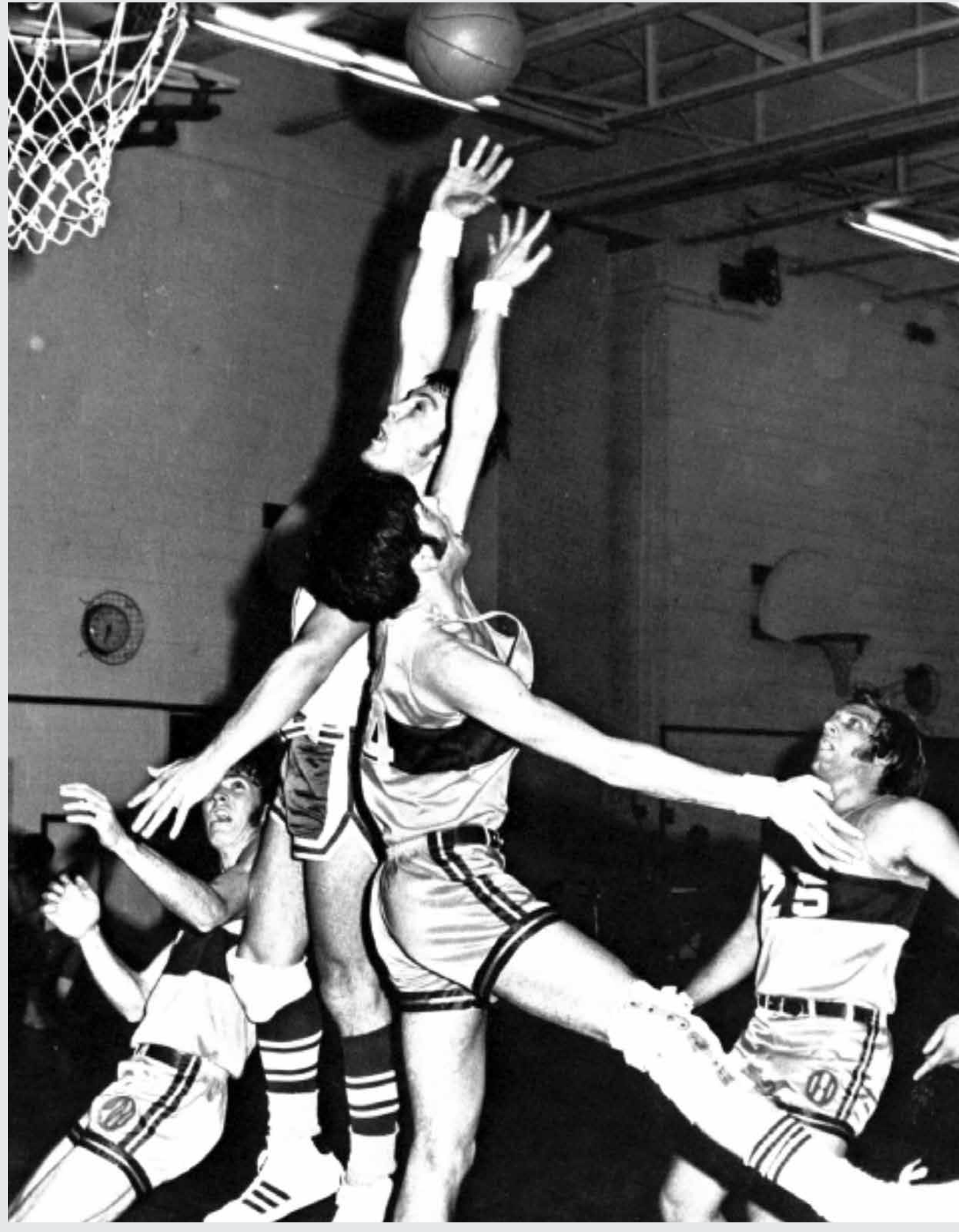
1968-1969

“Sheridan is not an Ivy League College, whatever the Board of Governors likes to think. Students here do not walk around talking in hushed tones about Tolstoy, Yeats or Existentialism. Here, in spares or at lunch, many guys and girls go to the T-bird for a few, or play hearts and ping-pong. In other words, this newspaper would have a readership of zero if it listed chess tournament results as a feature.”

“Editor’s Desk,” SCAT | February 1968

Spring 1969:

When Sheridan first opened its doors, the Athletic department consisted of one football, two basketballs and one volleyball net. By the spring of 1968, Sheridan had agreed to League play in soccer, basketball, volleyball and hockey. A football team was soon to follow.



September 1968:

Sheridan’s enrolment reached 882, and the school had to open a 14-room classroom in St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church.

November 1968:

Official sod turning ceremony held at the location of the new Oakville Campus, a 102-acre site on Trafalgar Road.

December 1968:

First issue of SCAT, Sheridan’s first student newspaper, released. The newspaper was called *Tree* for a few months, before taking the name *Sheridan Sun* in October 1970.

April 1969:

School of Design held its first Craft Sale, bringing student and faculty creations to the community. The sale proved so popular it became an annual event.

June 1969:

Sheridan’s first graduating class convocated. 145 students received their diplomas and enjoyed a keynote speech from William Davis.



June/July 1969:

Sheridan’s Malton Campus opened for business. At first, the campus served the needs of the local aircraft industry, teaching students the delicate process of aircraft assembly. Its activities soon expanded to include metal-working, fibre-glass, quality control training and sports repair. Malton Campus closed in March 1973.

November 1969:

Sheridan received its first IBM/360 Computer – which had to be moved in through a second story window of the Brampton High School campus. By 1969, Sheridan’s Electronic Data Processing Division was running the Computer Systems Technology and Computer Science Technology programs.



“[The computer] seems destined to become a powerful instrument for making business, industry and government more creative and efficient, for reducing drudgery and for increasing man’s leisure and range of choices... There is a great need for a massive influx of qualified young people to harness the potential of the computer.”

Electronic Data Processing Division, Sheridan College of Applied Arts and Technology, Calendar | 1970-1971

1969-1970



“Situated on a 200-acre site, a stone’s throw from the Niagara escarpment, the Milton campus is surrounded by natural beauty – there are miles of outlying forest, a natural pond with fish, turtles and waterfowl, Canadian geese roam the campus with an air of propriety, and it’s not unusual to spot deer on the property.”

Kaleidoscope | 1991

March 1970:

On March 2, Sheridan's School of Visual Arts held its first classes in the new Oakville Campus Visual Arts Wing. When the campus officially opened in April, more than 6,000 people toured it, including Bill Davis, who noted that, "For a college to be built as cheaply as \$23 a square foot, this structure was well planned for initiative and creativity." To cut back on costs, the furniture, drapes and clocks were all the work of Sheridan students.

President Porter explained that the open concept design of the building would allow for "total student involvement." Modular bays provided large open studio spaces, which encouraged interaction between faculty, students and artists, with small demonstration rooms for problem solving and consultation. Unfortunately, teachers struggled with noise in the bays when multiple courses were taught at once.



“I try to use whatever influence I have to make certain this school prepares young people to earn a living. A lot of these kids dress pretty far out but don’t let that fool you; many of them are real thinkers who will eventually make a genuine contribution in whatever field they decide to work.”

Bert Hinton, Board of Governors | April 1970.



April 1970:

Oakville South Campus opened at 216 Lakeshore Road East, once Oakville's Public Library. The campus offered classes in Teller-Cashier, Finance Clerk, Nurses' Aide, Sales Orientation, Security and ESL.

September 1970:

Tuition at \$150, activity fees at \$35. By the end of 1970, Sheridan's frantic early phase was beginning to wind down. When President Porter reflected on the time of rapid growth and development, he remembered the energy that infused the entire institution. "What has happened at Sheridan has something to do with freedom of action, and transferring that freedom to people who wanted to be free to act responsibly. If there is any key to success in this place, it was that strange thing that happened – grassroots, imaginative development. You see it everywhere you turn."

“It’s certainly no hippie place now, and the students – whose ages run the gamut from 16 to 59 – are seriously working to improve their English and basic skills and to learn new ones to fit them for new jobs. The student body is a miniature United Nations.”

Sheridan Intercom | November 1971

