



Aspen—in "the nation's highest junior college district."

By David W. Delaplane

America's Highest Junior College

*Colorado Mountain Junior College District
Has Low Population, Long Distances,
High Mountains—and Big Hopes!*

Not only are the major population centers recognizing the need of junior or community colleges, but also regions which the urban resident might consider less promising. Such a region is Central Western Colorado, where the communities are small, distances between them great, and the terrain rugged.

Last November, the taxpayers of a vast, five-county, mountain region of Colorado created the Colorado Mountain Junior College District by a 3.5 to 1 vote. Approval for this unusual junior college district was received from the Colorado Board of Education, and the school was added to the state system of junior colleges.

The two largest communities in this district (which is 175 miles long and 100 miles wide) are 90 miles apart and have populations of only 7,500 and 5,000. The total population of the district is not over 30,000.

In order to accomplish one of the main purposes of a junior college, that of making both vocational-technical and academic education available to the largest possible number of students in the district at low cost, the governing board is establishing two campuses, one at each of these communities. The

eastern campus will be at Leadville (elevation: 10,000 feet), and the western campus will be at Glenwood Springs (elevation: 5,200 feet).

Of the sixty-five mountain peaks in the United States which are over 14,000 feet above sea level, Colorado boasts fifty. The majority of these fifty, including Colorado's highest mountain, Mt. Elbert, are in the Colorado Mountain Junior College District.

Low population, long distances, and high mountains are not the entire story. Within this district is a wealth of resources, both tapped and untapped, which may not be equalled in any other junior college district. The largest underground metal mining operation in the world is situated in Climax (12 miles from Leadville), and is the world's major supplier of the vital hardening alloy, Molybdenum. The district also has many other operating mines producing minerals and metals such as iron, coal, zinc, and lead.

The vast oil shale regions of Western Colorado, in which many of the giants of the oil industry are now participating in extensive research, are also in this district. It is estimated that there is more oil available from this region than all of the oil that has been produced to date in America.

This district embraces the world-famed ski resorts of Aspen, Vail, and Breckenridge. Two vast national forests (Arapahoe and White River) cover the region which abounds in other recreational possibilities such as the famed hot springs of Glenwood Springs, prime fishing, and big game hunting.

There are vast acreages of productive cattle and hay lands supplied by an abundance of water flowing from the Continental Divide which traverses the district.

All of this provides Colorado Mountain Junior College District with a large assessed valuation (\$108 million). There is also a considerable amount of financial assistance to junior colleges from the State of Colorado.

Colorado Mountain College's governing board is determined to maintain the school as a full-fledged, fully accredited junior college on its two campuses. It has committed the school to provide for the needs of the area in vocational-technical training which may range from engineering courses to serve its mining and oil industries, ski area and resort operation and management, game and fish management, agri-business, and forestry to the more standard occupational offerings such as business courses. The college will also offer the first two years of academic subjects for transfer into accredited four-year colleges at the junior level.

Colorado Mountain College plans to open in September, 1967.