

# The History of Columbus State University

The history of Columbus State University is closely intertwined with that of Columbus. The idea for a junior college was first proposed by the Columbus Chamber of Commerce in 1949. Efforts by local citizens kept the idea alive by raising money to purchase the college's current site and developing plans for its administration. In 1958 when the law provided for the establishment of junior colleges in Georgia, Columbus State University opened at the renovated Shannon Hosiery Mill on Talbotton Road. At the time of its opening in 1958 as Columbus College, fourteen faculty members and five administrative staffers joined the college president in welcoming almost three hundred students to the building.

In 1963, The College relocated to a newly built campus in the MidTown area on what was previously a dairy farm. Four modern buildings defined the campus and later became known as Howard Hall, the Woodall Building, Woodruff Gym, and the Tucker Building.

In 1965 the Regents approved the college's application to become a four-year institution, and in 1970, it began to offer master's degrees. This year also saw the first baccalaureate graduation at Columbus College. Physical expansion of the College accompanied this growth in academic programs: in the 14 years following its relocation, Columbus College added a total of 15 new buildings. Between 1988 and 1995, a second wave of substantial growth took place as the school strove to achieve university status. New additions to the campus included LeNoir Hall, a science building, and the Oxbow Meadows Environmental Learning Center. In 1996, the school was renamed Columbus State University as part of a program to restructure four-year institutions within the state's university system.

In 2001, Columbus State University witnessed the start of a third wave of growth precipitated by a joint effort between the community and the University, namely the RiverCenter for the Performing Arts, home of the Schwob School of Music. The University thus began the creation of a new Uptown campus for students of the fine arts located. Thereafter, the Columbus State University Foundation acquired the former Rankin Hotel and adjacent properties to create the Rankin Arts Center as well as student housing. 2006 saw a rapid expansion enabled by donor pledges from the local community toward what became known as the RiverPark campus. This included expanded housing options, a new theater building, a renovated facility for visual arts, and office and administrative space for the departments of art and theater, which moved to the new RiverPark campus in 2007. The Main Campus also welcomed several additions around this period, including the new Center for Commerce and Technology and expanded student housing options, as well as renovations to several buildings, including Howard Hall. In 2013, the University has welcomed the Schuster Student Success Center and Student Recreation Center to its campus.

National attention is frequently focused on our athletic program. In NCAA Division II competition, our teams often achieve national ranking. Our baseball team has participated in the College World Series, and our golf team has won the national championship five times. Many of our athletes are named All-Americans, and last year, three of our golfers were named All-American Scholar Athletes, a testament to the idea that our athletes are scholars first.

As the only four-year institution in the governor's 17-county Economic Region 5, the university provides cultural enrichment, educational opportunities, and economic development assistance to the citizens, businesses, and industries located in the region. This regional perspective offers numerous opportunities for our students to become involved in research and community projects. It also has resulted in several off-campus sites being established to better serve our students.