

UNC-CHAPEL HILL: AN INTRODUCTION

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is the most comprehensive institution in North Carolina, both in the range of its programs at all levels and in the breadth of its specialized research and public service programs. Its 14 schools and the College of Arts and Sciences provide instruction in more than 100 fields, offering 74 bachelor's, 104 master's, 65 doctoral, and 7 professional degrees, as well as 16 certificates, in academic areas critical to North Carolina's future: business, dentistry, education, information and library science, media and journalism, government, law, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, public health, and social work, among others.

Since 1795, when its doors first opened to students, the University has remained faithful to its founders' charge to duly encourage and promote all useful learning for the betterment of humanity.

The University was anticipated by a section of the first state constitution drawn up in 1776 directing the establishment of "one or more universities" in which "all useful learning shall be duly encouraged and promoted." State support, it directed, should be provided so that instruction might be available "at low prices." The American Revolution intervened, and it was not until 1789, the year that George Washington became president of the new nation, that the University was chartered by the General Assembly. Despite constitutional instructions to the contrary, no state appropriations were made, and the trustees were left to secure land and money themselves. On October 12, 1793, the cornerstone was laid for a brick building on a hilltop near the center of the state amidst the colorful fall foliage of dogwood, oak, and tulip trees.

The site, lying at the crossing of north-south and east-west roads, was marked only by a small Anglican chapel that soon shared part of its name — New Hope Chapel Hill — with the community that developed there. Legislator and trustee William R. Davie, who had been instrumental in securing passage of the charter, took the lead in organizing the University. Davie presided over the Masonic ritual of the laying of the cornerstone. In time he came to be called "the Father of the University." Many years later a large poplar or tulip tree, first mentioned in 1818 and still standing near the center of the old campus, was called Davie Poplar in his honor.

The first building and, indeed, the only building for two years, was a two-story brick structure that came to be called Old East. It is now a National Historic Landmark, the oldest state university building in America. Opened to students on January 15, 1795, the University of North Carolina received its first student, Hinton James of New Hanover County, on February 12. By March there were two professors and 41 students present.

The second state university did not begin classes until 1801, when a few students from nearby academies assembled under a large tree at Athens, Georgia, for instruction. By then four classes had already been graduated at Chapel Hill, and there were to be three more before the first diplomas were issued in Georgia. The next building on the Carolina campus was Person Hall, begun in 1796 and long used as the chapel. The cornerstone of Main or South Building was laid in 1798. All three are older than any other American state university building.

The Young University

During the early 19th century the trustees began a period of strong support in the development of the young University. Even though their

proclaimed initial goal for the University had been to provide trained leadership for the state, the curriculum followed the customary classical trend. In 1815, however, the natural sciences were given equal place, and in the 1820s Professors Denison Olmstead and Elisha Mitchell prepared the nation's first geological survey. In 1831 the first astronomical observatory at a state university was built under the direction of President Joseph Caldwell. Student enrollment increased steadily, and by 1860 only Harvard, Yale, and the University of Virginia had more students.

Young men from many states came to Chapel Hill for their education, particularly those from families who had recently left North Carolina to settle elsewhere in the South. The University of North Carolina provided governors not only for North Carolina but also for many other states; countless professions and occupations were represented among its graduates, including cabinet members, clergymen, diplomats, engineers, geologists, judges, legislators, surveyors, teachers, and a president and a vice president of the United States.

Though the Civil War closed many colleges and universities, the University at Chapel Hill remained open throughout the war, though its students were few. During Reconstruction, however, it was closed from 1870 until 1875. When it reopened, the University's leadership began to inaugurate programs that once again marked it as a leading university.

The General Assembly in 1931 consolidated the University with the Woman's College at Greensboro and North Carolina State College at Raleigh under a single board of trustees. As an economy measure during the Depression and as a means of eliminating duplication, the trustees allocated each unit specific roles in higher education for the state. The offices of the Consolidated University were established on the Chapel Hill campus and University President Frank Porter Graham became the Consolidated University's first president.

The period of the Depression in the 1930s saw a great deal of new construction on the campus as federal funds became available to create jobs for the unemployed. New dormitories, classroom buildings, a gymnasium, and other buildings and improvements were built in part from this source. World War II also resulted in some new construction and alterations on campus as the University's facilities were used to train military personnel.

Expansion continued throughout the 20th century, and today UNC—Chapel Hill ranks among the great institutions of higher education in the nation. Beginning with one building, 41 students, and two professors, the University has now grown to more than 300 buildings, 30,011 students annually, and 3,887 faculty members.

Top Rankings

The University has been recognized for the quality of its undergraduate and graduate programs in every national survey conducted in the last third of the 20th century and into the 21st. *U.S. News and World Report's* survey of American colleges and universities consistently ranks the University among the best colleges in the nation and among the top research universities.

These accolades reflect the quality of the curriculum and of the faculty, whose research orientation allows them to share with their students not only the thrill of discovery but also the latest advancements and new knowledge. Another asset that contributes to this reputation is UNC—Chapel Hill's superb library system containing more than nine million print and electronic volumes. It is ranked among the top research libraries in the United States and Canada by the Association of Research Libraries.

Commitment to Diversity

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill strives for excellence both in academic engagement and co-curricular support. Sustaining a diverse and inclusive community is critical to achieving educational excellence.

Framework for Understanding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at UNC–Chapel Hill

The work of the University in the 21st century functions in a global context. The historical, political, economic, and educational backgrounds of the University, the state, and the nation shape our present circumstances and inform the measures we must take to accomplish our highest aspirations. We acknowledge that we face an ongoing challenge to overcome the effects and influences of adverse historical, social, political, and economic factors. The University engages in teaching, research, and service to expand and discover knowledge, promote educational enlightenment, and improve understanding with the ultimate end of uplifting humankind. Education takes place most productively among persons with differing social backgrounds, economic circumstances, personal characteristics, philosophical outlooks, life experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and expectations. The University works to assure that we have a complement of students, faculty, and staff that broadly reflects the ways in which people differ. We believe that “diversity matters” within and beyond the campus community.

UNC–Chapel Hill’s commitment to inclusive excellence began in the 1960s through the support of minority programming and continues today through the establishment of the University Office for Diversity and Inclusion (UDI).

The University Office for Diversity and Inclusion (<https://diversity.unc.edu/>) serves as a resource to the entire Carolina campus and partners with all student, faculty, staff, and organizational entities. UDI collaborates with University officers and campus units to identify and implement strategies and initiatives for achieving the goals of increased diversity, with the goal of building an inclusive and equitable environment that values and respects the contributions of students, faculty, and staff. UDI provides diversity education, opportunities, and development for faculty, staff, students, and community members; develops, implements, and supports recruitment and leadership programs that facilitate access and retention and promote inclusive excellence across institutional segments (e.g., student enrollment, faculty hiring, staff development); conducts diversity research, assessment, and reporting to generate and inform the campus and beyond on diversity-related issues; and provides consultation and project management to promote and enhance diversity and community engagement.

Partnerships and collaborations with vice chancellors, deans, and other unit heads are leveraged to accomplish the University’s goals for establishing diversity within the faculty, staff, and student cohorts and for fulfilling the public university mission of service, outreach, and engagement. Additional information can be found at diversity.unc.edu (<http://diversity.unc.edu>).