

HISTORY OF JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

From modest beginnings, Jacksonville State University has evolved into the educational center of northeast Alabama. The Alabama Legislature, in the 1882-83 session, created a state normal school when Governor Edward O'Neal signed into law a bill creating the school on February 22, 1883. Jacksonville State Normal School acquired the facilities and equipment of Calhoun College, consisting of twelve acres of land and a two-story brick building. The Board of Directors elected James C. Ryals, Jr. as the first president. The school opened with three instructors: W. J. Borden, mathematics; Eliza A. Bowen, English; and Ida J. Woodward, primary department.

The Normal School remained in operation until 1930 when it became Jacksonville State Teachers College, reflecting an increasingly higher education role for the Institution. Five years later, the College earned regional accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In 1957, the name again changed to Jacksonville State College when the first graduate program - the master's degree in elementary education - was created.

On August 2, 1966, the State Board of Education was authorized to elevate the College to university status. On August 17, 1967, the Legislature established an independent Board of Trustees for the University and divested jurisdiction from the State Board of Education.

In December, 2010, JSU attained Level 5 accreditation status when the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges gave approval for the University to begin offering its first doctoral degree, the Doctor of Science in Emergency Management, beginning Fall semester 2011. JSU was approved to begin offering its second doctoral degree, the Doctor of Nursing Practice, effective Fall 2017. JSU was approved to begin offering its third doctoral degree, the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, effective Spring 2023.

Jacksonville State University has been served by 13 presidents:

- James G. Ryals, Jr. (1883-1885) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/james-gazaway-ryals,-jr.-1883-1885.html>)
- J. Harris Chappell (1885-1886) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/j.-harris-chappell,-1885-1886.html>)
- Carleton Bartlett Gibson (1886-1892) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/carleton-bartlett-gibson,-1886-1892.html>)
- J.B. Jarrett (1892-1893) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/j.b.-jarrett,-1892-1893.html>)
- Jacob Forney IV (1893-1899) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/jacob-forney,-iv,-1893-1899.html>)
- Clarence William Daugette (1899-1942) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/clarence-william-daugette,-1899-1942.html>)
- Houston Cole (1942-1971) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/houston-cole,-1942-1971.html>)
- Ernest Stone (1971-1981) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/ernest-stone,-1971-1981.html>)
- Theron E. Montgomery (1981-1986) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/theron-e.-montgomery,-1981-1986.html>)
- Harold J. McGee (1986-1999) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/harold-j.-mcgee,-1986-1999.html>)

- William A. Meehan (1999-2015) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/william-a.-meehan--1999-2015.html>)
- John M. Beehler (2015-2019) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/presidents/john-m-beehler--2015-2019.html>)
- Don C. Killingsworth, Jr. (2019-present) (<https://www.jsu.edu/president/killingsworth/>)