

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Mission Statement

Texas A&M University is dedicated to the discovery, development, communication, and application of knowledge in a wide range of academic and professional fields. Its mission of providing the highest quality undergraduate and graduate programs is inseparable from its mission of developing new understandings through research and creativity. It prepares students to assume roles in leadership, responsibility and service to society. Texas A&M assumes as its historic trust the maintenance of freedom of inquiry and an intellectual environment nurturing the human mind and spirit. It welcomes and seeks to serve persons of all racial, ethnic and geographic groups as it addresses the needs of an increasingly diverse population and a global economy. In the 21st century, Texas A&M University seeks to assume a place of preeminence among public universities while respecting its history and traditions.

History and Development

Texas A&M is the state's first public institution of higher education. With a student body of more than 79,000 and more than 5,200 acres on the College Station campus alone, Texas A&M is also among the nation's largest universities.

Our origins, however, are much humbler. We owe our existence to the Morrill Act, approved by the U.S. Congress on July 2, 1862, which provided for the donation of public land to the states. The land was to be sold at auction, with the proceeds set aside in a perpetual fund, and the interest generated supporting a college "to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and mechanical arts . . . in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life."

In November 1866, the Texas Legislature agreed to provide for the state's land-grant college. Five years later, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas was established through an act that appropriated \$75,000 for the construction of buildings and that bound the state to defray all expenses of the college exceeding the annual interest from the endowment. Proceeds from the sale of the 180,000 acres of land scrip received under the Land Grant College Act were invested in \$174,000 of Texas gold frontier defense bonds, forming a perpetual endowment for the institution. A commission created to identify a location for the college accepted the offer of 2,416 acres of land from the citizens of Brazos County in 1871, and the college opened its doors five years later.

In 1888, the faculty initiated programs of instruction at the graduate level, and in 1890, two Master of Science degrees were conferred. Initially, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas emphasized graduate programs in agriculture and engineering, which were administered by a faculty committee for graduate studies. In 1898, a single Master of Science degree in horticulture was awarded, followed by a scattering of Master of Science degrees in agriculture over the next 22 years. The acceleration in the awarding of Master of Science degrees after 1920 prompted the college to establish the graduate school in 1924, with the dean of the college serving as graduate dean.

In 1936, the Board of Directors approved "certain programs of study and research leading to the doctorate." That same year, the Academic Council established the graduate faculty, and in 1940, the first Ph.D.

was awarded. In the 1960s, the Board of Regents created programs of graduate instruction in each of the academic colleges.

In 1963, the Texas state legislature officially changed the college's name to Texas A&M University, with the "A" and "M" being a symbolic link to the school's past but no longer officially standing for "Agricultural and Mechanical."

Texas A&M underwent many other significant changes in the 1960s, as well. Under Gen. Earl Rudder's administration, Texas A&M opened its doors to African American students and formally admitted women. Participation in the Corps of Cadets was made voluntary.

Since then, Texas A&M has become an academic powerhouse. It is one of only three Tier 1 universities in the state (along with Rice University and The University of Texas at Austin). Texas A&M was designated a sea-grant institution in 1971 and a space-grant institution in 1989, making it among the first four universities to hold this triple distinction, and one of only 24 nationwide.

In 2001, Texas A&M became a member of the Association of American Universities, which is restricted to the 71 top public and private institutions of higher learning in the United States and Canada. In 1949, the Texas A&M Chapter of Phi Kappa Phi was established and in 2004, the Kappa of Texas Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa was installed at Texas A&M.

As the state of Texas has grown, so has the university. In fall 2024, the university enrolled over 79,000 students across its various locations, and membership in the Corps of Cadets was more than 2,300. Historically, the Corps of Cadets has produced more officers than any other institution outside the military academies. The George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum opened on West Campus in 1997, making Texas A&M one of only a few universities to host a presidential library.

Texas A&M has a presence in all 254 Texas counties through its extension agencies, teaching sites in Washington, D.C., and McAllen, Texas, and has two branch campuses: a marine campus in Galveston and an engineering campus in the Middle Eastern country of Qatar (fully funded by the Qatar Foundation and planned to close in 2028). Research conducted at Texas A&M generated annual expenditures of more than \$1.278 billion in fiscal year 2023.

Classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a Research Intensive University, Texas A&M embraces its mission of advancing knowledge and human achievement, helping to drive the economic engine of the state and nation, and preparing students to be lifelong learners and leaders in today's knowledge-based, global society.

Texas A&M's focus on excellence and innovation in teaching, research and service has led to rankings among the nation's top universities. Today, Texas A&M seeks even greater preeminence among the nation's top universities, while continuing to respect the history and traditions that define us.