ABOUT PENN STATE

Mission

The Pennsylvania State University is a multi-campus, land-grant, public research University that educates students from around the world, and supports individuals and communities through integrated programs of teaching, research, and service.

Our instructional mission includes undergraduate, graduate, professional, continuing, and extension education, offered through both resident instruction and distance learning. Our educational programs are enriched by the talent, knowledge, diversity, creativity, and teaching and research acumen of our faculty, students, and staff.

Our discovery-oriented, collaborative, and interdisciplinary research and scholarship promote human and economic development, global understanding, and advancement in professional practice through the expansion of knowledge and its applications in the natural and applied sciences, social and behavioral sciences, engineering, technology, arts and humanities, and myriad professions.

As Pennsylvania's land-grant university, we provide unparalleled access to education and public service to support the citizens of the Commonwealth and beyond. We engage in collaborative activities with private sector, educational, and governmental partners worldwide to generate, integrate, apply, and disseminate knowledge that is valuable to society.

History

As Pennsylvania's only land-grant university, Penn State has a broad mission of teaching, research, and public service. But that mission was not so grandly conceived in 1855, when the Commonwealth chartered it as one of the nation's first colleges of agricultural science, with a goal to apply scientific principles to farming.

Centre County became the site of the new college in response to a gift of 200 acres from gentleman farmer and ironmaster James Irvin of Bellefonte. Founding President Evan Pugh drew on the scientific education he had received in Europe to plan a curriculum that combined theoretical studies with practical applications.

Pugh and similar visionaries in other states championed Congressional passage of the Morrill Land-Grant Act in 1862. The act enabled states to sell federal land, invest the proceeds, and use the income to support colleges "where the leading object shall be, without excluding scientific and classical studies ... to teach agriculture and the mechanic arts [engineering] ... in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in all the pursuits and professions of life." The state legislature designated Penn State the land-grant institution of Pennsylvania.

But not until the 1880s, under the leadership of President George W. Atherton, did the college expand its curriculum to match the Land-Grant Act's broad mandate. From that time onward, curricula in engineering, the sciences, the liberal arts, and more began to flourish. In the early 1900s, Penn State introduced cooperative extension and additional outreach programming, extending the reach of its academic mission.

An even greater segment of the Commonwealth's population had opportunities for engagement in the 1930s when Penn State established a series of undergraduate branch campuses, primarily to meet the needs of students who were location-bound during the Great Depression. Those campuses were predecessors of today's system of 24 Penn State campuses located throughout the Commonwealth.

Penn State began offering systematic advanced-degree work in 1922 with the formation of the Graduate School. Graduate education and research evolved hand in hand. By 1950 the University had won international distinction for investigations in dairy science, building insulation, diesel engines, and acoustics, and other specialized fields.

A college of medicine and teaching hospital were established in 1967 with a $50 million gift from the charitable trusts of renowned chocolate magnate Milton S. Hershey. In 1989 the Pennsylvania College of Technology in Williamsport became an affiliate of the University. Penn State's online World Campus graduated its first students in 2000 and now enrolls more than 12,000. Also in 2000, Penn State and the Dickinson School of Law merged. In 2015, two Penn State law schools, Dickinson Law (in Carlisle, Pennsylvania) and Penn State Law (on University Park campus) were established.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT UNIVERSITY HISTORY (https://www.psu.edu/about/history/)