

# University History

The citizens of Joplin, who in the late 1930s asked the public school district to offer college classes, could not have envisioned the sprawling campus and multidiscipline curriculum that today is Missouri Southern State University. From that initial request came Joplin Junior College, founded in 1937 as part of the Joplin school system. Nine faculty members and 114 students began classes under the auspices of the Extension Division of the University of Missouri in the new high school building.

In the spring of 1938, voters approved almost 5-to-1 a bond proposal that would assure the continuation of the junior college. During the next 25 years Joplin Junior College established a national reputation for outstanding academic strength, a strong foundation for what was to come. By the mid-1960s, area citizens again recognized the need for expanded educational opportunities.

In 1964, the citizens voted in an 8-1 majority to create the Junior College District of Jasper County with a Board of Trustees to govern the newly named Jasper County Junior College. The following year, the Missouri General Assembly established a two-year senior college to be funded by the state. The district would continue to provide the freshman and sophomore years.

The area again responded with enthusiastic and generous support with the building of a new campus on the site of the Mission Hills Farm to house the growing college. Administration and faculty, working with other college educators around the state, began developing the new curriculum. In August 1967, students gathered for the first time on the new campus of Missouri Southern State College.

The dual funding arrangement with the state continued until 1977 when on July 1 the State of Missouri officially took on the responsibility of funding the entire College.

With growing global interdependence, it became clear that Missouri Southern must prepare its students to function successfully in the emerging global economy. So in June 1990, plans were announced to pursue the expansion of the College's mission to incorporate an international emphasis in all its academic and special programs. In 1995, the Missouri General Assembly approved House Bill 442, directing the institution to "develop such academic support programs and public service activities it deems necessary and appropriate to establish international or global education as a distinctive theme of its mission." Many new programs in international education that enrich and complement the existing programs are now in place.

On July 12, 2003, Missouri Governor Bob Holden officially signed Senate Bill 55, which renamed Missouri Southern State College as Missouri Southern State University-Joplin. August 28, 2003 marked the official date the name changed. The legislation was sponsored by Gary Nodler in the Senate and Bryan Stevenson in the House. Provisions of the legislation also allowed MSSU to begin offering cooperative master's degree programs.

Today Missouri Southern State University remains a proud member of the state's higher education family while continuing to serve the region that is an integral part of its past.

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