

An Overview

OVERVIEW

Penick Academic Complex

The Penick Academic Complex houses the G.M. Savage Memorial Chapel, Fred DeLay Gymnasium, E.T. “Rocky” Palmer Activities Center, Joseph H. Miller III Science Center, the W. D. Powell Theatre, Waldrop Administrative Center, Union Station, Computing Services, and Emma Waters Summar Library.

pus Security), offices of Admissions, Financial Aid, Enrollment Services, Campus Ministries (Missionary-In-Residence), Prayer Chapel, and the Missionary Wall.

The University's History

Union University is an heir of three antebellum Tennessee schools: West Tennessee College and its predecessor, Jackson Male Academy, both located at Jackson, and of Union University, located at Murfreesboro. It is the inheritor of another college in 1927, Hall-Moody Junior College of Martin.

Jackson Male Academy, founded in 1823 shortly after the opening of West Tennessee for settlement, was chartered by the legislature in 1825, making it the earliest school whose roots are linked with what later became the Southern Baptist Convention.

West Tennessee College originated in the mid-1840s when supporters of the Academy secured a charter for a college and received an endowment from the state to come from the sale of public lands. Under its charter, the property rights and governance of the Jackson Male Academy were vested in the trustees of the College. The College offered three degrees—bachelor of arts, bachelor of philosophy, and master of arts—and had four departments: Moral Philosophy, Languages, Mathematics, and Natural Philosophy and Chemistry. West Tennessee College continued until 1874, when at a time of depressed economic conditions, the trustees offered the College's buildings, grounds, and endowment to Tennessee Baptists in the hopes of attracting a southwestern regional university planned by the state's Baptist leaders.

Meanwhile, after years of discussion and the raising of an endowment, the Baptist General Assembly of Tennessee in 1848 established Union University at Murfreesboro, near the geographical center of the state. The school came upon hard times when in 1859 its highly respected president, Joseph Eaton, died and when during the Civil War its campus was badly damaged. It reopened in 1868 only to close again in 1873, largely because of its financial condition and an epidemic of cholera.

Southwestern Baptist University, the immediate predecessor of the present Union University, was established from a desire by Tennessee Baptists, who still had a separate convention for each of the state's three Grand Divisions, for greater unification. Education became the core issue around which such unification was promoted. Committees of the three conventions met jointly in Humboldt in 1873 and issued a resolution supporting the establishment of a first-class regional university. An Educational Convention met in Murfreesboro in 1874, and following that a committee was appointed to select a location for the proposed university. The committee recommended the acceptance of the offer made by the citizens of Jackson to assume ownership of West Tennessee College.

In September 1874, the new institution opened at Jackson as an academy, and in 1875 it was chartered as Southwestern Baptist University. In 1907, T. T. Eaton, a trustee at Southwestern from its beginning, bequeathed his 6,000 volume library to the college. He was a former professor at Union University at Murfreesboro, where his father, Joseph Eaton, had been president. Shortly thereafter the name of Southwestern Baptist University was changed to Union University to honor the Eatons and others from Union at Murfreesboro who had had a major impact on Southwestern as faculty, administrators, trustees, and contributors. In a further move to unify its educational efforts, the Tennessee Baptist Convention in 1925 secured a new charter which vested all rights,

After a major fire in 1912, several new buildings were constructed, including the centerpiece of the campus for the next 60 years, Barton Hall. In 1948 the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools granted Union University its original accreditation. In 1962, at the request of local physicians, Union developed a nursing program with the assistance of Jackson-Madison County General Hospital.

Because of the deterioration of its aging campus, Union in 1975 moved from near downtown to a new campus located along Highway 45-Bypass in north Jackson. Since then, enrollment has increased from about 1,000 students to nearly 2,500; the multi-purpose Penick Academic Complex has been enlarged several times; many additional housing units have been erected; and several buildings have been constructed, including Blasingame Academic Complex, Hyran E. Barefoot Student Union Building, Hammons Hall and Jennings Hall. Part of the reason for growth derived from new academic programs and graduate studies in education and business administration.

Union's presence in Memphis area began with a medical school from 1878 to 1911 with 2,625 M.D. degrees awarded. From the early 1950's to the early 1970's, Union opened an Extension Center at Prescott Memorial Baptist Church near Memphis State University. From 1987-96, Union offered the degree completion program leading to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN track) in Memphis. There were over 300 graduates of this program. The institution suspended its operations in Memphis for one year as it planned the establishment of a stand alone satellite campus specifically for adult students. Under the leadership of President David S. Dockery, who was elected Union's fifteenth president in 1995, Union established this satellite campus in the Memphis suburb of Germantown with programs in nursing, business administration, and education.

To broaden its connection with the wider Christian higher education movement, Union in the mid-1990s joined the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The University also adopted a new campus master plan to accommodate the University's growth well into the twenty-first century.

In the 1990s Union has had its greatest intercollegiate athletic success as Union's Lady Bulldogs basketball team of 1998 finished first in the NAIA National Basketball Tournament.

Also during the 1990s the university reinitiated its graduate programs with the MAEd, the MBA and the MEd. An undergraduate degree completion program in business was added in 1997 which significantly impacted the area business community. Since 2000, the MSN, MAIS, EdS in Educational Leadership and the EdD have been developed and implemented.