

HISTORY OF THE COLLEGE

Founded by American public education pioneer Horace Mann in 1840, Bridgewater State College has grown from its first home – a single room in the basement of Bridgewater Town Hall in 1840 – to become the largest of the nine Massachusetts State Colleges and the fourth largest of the 29 public colleges and universities in the commonwealth.

More than 10,000 full-time and part-time undergraduate and graduate students are enrolled at the college; the full-time faculty numbers 306, representing a net gain of 54 since fall 2002; and more than 90 undergraduate and graduate programs are offered by the college's four schools (School of Arts and Sciences, School of Education and Allied Studies, School of Business and School of Graduate Studies). The 270-acre campus is home to 38 academic, administrative and residential buildings.

Alumni and friends have raised more than \$18 million to support faculty and student research, a myriad of undergraduate and graduate scholarships, international study opportunities and award-winning publications. These private investments complement growing levels of public support for the institution.

In recent years, the college and the commonwealth have committed nearly \$3 million for classroom upgrades, \$7 million for an extensive library renovation, \$38 million for a new residence hall and a top-to-bottom renovation and expansion of two residence halls. Over the next several years, the college will construct a \$100-million science facility.

Vital to the long-term success of the institution is its recognition throughout the state and nation as an educational leader in the use of technology to improve teaching and learning. The first step in that direction took place in 1992, when Bridgewater State College secured a \$10-million federal grant to build what has become the John Joseph Moakley Center for Technological Applications.

Today, all incoming students are required to carry and use notebook computers. For two consecutive years, *Yahoo! Internet Life* magazine named Bridgewater State College among the "100 Most-Wired Universities and Colleges in America," and the college earned the number six spot on Intel Corporation's "Most Unwired College Campuses Survey" in 2005.

Together, these developments have combined to strengthen the college's academic mission and expand its public service role. They were built on a series of initiatives that trace

back to 1960, a watershed year in the life of the college when a full-scale transition from an exclusively teacher-training institution to a comprehensive liberal arts college began.

Until that time, the college had been relatively small – approximately 500 students – but enjoyed a national and international reputation for excellence in teacher preparation. The preparation of the next generation of quality teachers remains a top priority for Bridgewater State College, as evidenced by the institution's celebration of 50 years of accreditation by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

During its time as a normal school, countless faculty and administrators nurtured the school carefully, despite varying degrees of support from the state, and overcame a host of difficult and sometimes dire situations, including a disastrous fire in 1924 that destroyed several of the few buildings that existed on the campus at that time.

While the college's earliest years were times of great challenge, the efforts never flagged to continue strengthening the curriculum, and each succeeding generation left Bridgewater stronger than the generation that went before. The thriving and dynamic institution we see today is the best evidence of the success of that enduring commitment.

