

HISTORY

UW-Platteville has a long, rich history. It was founded in 1866 as the first state teacher preparation institution in Wisconsin, then called the Platteville Normal School. Classes were held in Rountree Hall, located at the corner of Main and Elm streets. Rountree Hall was actually built 13 years earlier in 1853 to accommodate the rapidly increasing enrollment of the Platteville Academy, founded in 1839 (even before Wisconsin's statehood) by the city's Presbyterian Church.

The university also has roots in the Wisconsin Mining Trade School, established in 1907 to train specialized technicians to work in the mining operations surrounding Platteville. When the Normal School vacated Rountree Hall for its new quarters in Main Hall, the Mining School moved in. In 1917, a third year was added to the curriculum, making the Wisconsin Mining School the first school in the United States to offer a three-year course in mining engineering, upon completion of which a student received a diploma.

One of the university's oldest traditions originated in the year 1936 when the Mining School students began work on the "Big M" by placing rocks in a pattern on the southwest slope of the mound, located a few miles east of the city. Completed the following year, the "M" measures 214 x 241 feet and consists of some 400 tons of whitewashed stone. The lighting of the "M" is now a tradition at UW-Platteville and is the featured ceremony each fall during Homecoming weekend.

The Mining School became the Wisconsin Institute of Technology in 1939 and later merged with the Platteville State Teachers College in 1959 to become the Wisconsin State College and Institute of Technology at Platteville.

During the 1960s, the college experienced a period of rapid growth resulting in the construction of several new halls. In 1966, the name was changed again to the Wisconsin State University-Platteville. The university and all other public institutions of higher education in Wisconsin merged in 1971 to form the UW System, governed by a single Board of Regents. As a result of the merger, the university experienced its most recent name change to the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

From its beginning in 1866, the university has grown tremendously. Current enrollment at the three campuses and in the Center for Distance Learning is approximately 8,100 graduate and undergraduate students, making UW-Platteville large enough to provide diversity, yet small enough to assure students that they are more than just numbers.

As part of a statewide restructure of the former two-year campuses of the University of Wisconsin-Colleges in 2017-18, the university further grew and strengthened its footprint in Southwest Wisconsin by collaboratively integrating with two-year campuses UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County and UW-Platteville Richland. These campuses share common teaching-centered philosophies, hands-on learning opportunities in small class sizes, academic excellence, affordability, and a commitment to giving back to enrich the community.

UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County celebrated its 50th year in 2018. The campus was originally designed for 300 students, and it now serves many more than that. Over the years, the campus has added a maintenance building, music, greenhouse, and art facilities. Students began living in on-campus housing in 2014-15 after the construction of Fighting Saints Villas. The apartments are fully furnished and feature a study room, fitness center and organized activities. In October 2015, the new science building expansion project was concluded, adding state-of-the-art chemistry, biology, anatomy and physiology space to the campus. A lecture hall with seating for 70 to 100 is a central feature within the classroom spaces.

UW-Platteville Richland opened in 1967 as the Richland Branch Campus of the Wisconsin State University-Platteville. With the 1972 merger of the UW and State University Systems, the campus became part of the University of Wisconsin Center System and was known as UW Center-Richland, until 1983 when the institution became known as the University of Wisconsin Centers. The tradition of higher education in Richland County has deep roots. In 1903, the first college was established in Richland Center. Through various changes and incarnations, the tradition continues.