

History of UWA

The University of West Alabama (UWA) is located within a rural area known as the Black Belt. The area is a segment of the larger Black Belt Region of the Southern United States, which stretches from Texas to Virginia. This region includes the poorest counties in Alabama and the United States. The name referred originally to the thin layer of exceptionally fertile Black soil which encouraged cotton farming in the pioneer period of Alabama history. Now, the descriptive title is often mistaken as a reference to the exceptionally high proportion of Black residents in Black Belt counties.

UWA was chartered in 1835 as a church-related female academy with students first admitted in 1839. After the Civil War and Reconstruction, the school reopened in the late 1860's. From 1881-1910, the school was under the direction of noted educator and reformer Julia Tutwiler, who succeeded in getting a small appropriation from the State Legislature in 1883 to establish normal school training for girls. In 1919, all state normal schools were placed under the supervision of the State Board of Education. During these years the school offered secondary education and normal school programs for the training of teachers. In 1967 an act of the Legislature created Livingston University, with its own Board of Trustees. In 1995 the institution recognized its broader mission as a regional university serving the educational needs of all the citizens of the area by changing its name to the University of West Alabama.

The University of West Alabama (UWA) is a state-supported regional institution, accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools serving the educational needs of all the citizens of West Alabama. For over 175 years, the University has served not only as a center for higher education, but a gathering place for community and cultural events; the hub for meeting community healthcare needs; and training for business and industry. Located just 20 miles from the Mississippi state line and 57 miles from Tuscaloosa, the university serves a major portion of the Black Belt Region. UWA recognizes the unique cultural traditions of the region, along with the natural resources that make the Black Belt a region rich with potential research, economic, and social opportunities.

Key Dates

- 1832 – Sumter County created
- 1833 – Livingston named county seat
- 1835 – Livingston Female Academy (1835 – 1883)
- 1843 – First diploma issued to Elizabeth Houston
- 1883 – Name changed to Alabama Normal College for Girls and Livingston Female Academy
- 1890 - Julia Tutwiler recognized as President of Alabama Normal College
- 1910 – G.W. Brock assumes presidency, men officially admitted as regular students, name changed to State Normal College
- 1922 – Foust Hall built as example of new elementary style school building

- 1928 – Bibb Graves Hall and Brock Hall added
- 1957 – name changed to Livingston State College, awards master's degrees in professional education
- 1967 – name changed to Livingston University, Board of trustees
- 1995 – name changed to University of West Alabama