

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

As you begin exploring the campus of Southeast Missouri State, do you wonder how the university got here? As you glance up at the copper dome of Academic Hall shining brightly on a sunny day, are you curious about how these buildings sprung up near the mighty Mississippi River? And why was Southeast even established in the small town of Cape Girardeau?

In this chapter, you will find answers to these questions and more, as you learn about the history of Southeast Missouri State University. To understand the great history of your university, it is important to understand the region—its environment, culture, and political climate.

founding a COLLEGE

Cape Girardeau (or simply Cape) has evolved from a small village to a bustling river community over the course of almost three centuries. In the 1730s, a Frenchman named Jean Jacques Girardot established a trading post in the area, at the time an isolated region inhabited only by Native American tribes. It is after this explorer and trader that Cape Girardeau would eventually take its name, although with a different spelling of “Girardeau.” But despite the city’s name, the founding father of Cape Girardeau was really Louis Lorimier, a French-Canadian settler commissioned by the Spanish government to establish a trading post in 1793. During Lorimier’s lifetime, Cape Girardeau and the surrounding area belonged to Spain, France, and (eventually) the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Despite this transfer of ownership, Lorimier settled permanently in Cape and even met with Captain Meriwether Lewis as Lewis and Clark began exploration of the lands west of the Mississippi River in 1803. Louis

Lorimier died in 1812 and is buried at Old Lorimier Cemetery, just a few short blocks away from the heart of campus.

Little did Lorimier know that, a few years after his death, America would be transformed by the newly invented steamboat. By 1835, steamboat travel helped Lorimier's small settlement transform into an active commercial town as Cape Girardeau's riverfront became a busy port for trade. In fact, celebrated Missouri author Mark Twain mentions Cape Girardeau in his memoir, *Life on the Mississippi*, describing the very first building the university built as follows:

There was another college higher up on an airy summit—a bright new edifice, picturesquely and peculiarly towered and pinnacled—a sort of gigantic castles, with the cruets all complete.



Third District Normal School 1875–1902

Cape Girardeau continued to be a busy port town until the Civil War broke out and divided the city (and nation) in 1861. Although many prominent residents in Cape Girardeau owned slaves, the Union Army occupied the city during the war, constructing Forts A, B, C, and D to fortify Cape. Visitors can still visit the sites of these forts today, and a plaque marks the location of Fort B, built on the hill where Kent Library now stands.

Cape Girardeau grew slowly in the late nineteenth century as the swampy area surrounding the city kept migration low. There was one particularly important area of growth in Cape during this time: the foundation of a normal school. Normal schools served as training grounds for elementary and high school teachers and were eventually referred to as “teachers’ colleges.” Missouri already had two normal schools in other parts of the state, and so when a group of local businessmen and politicians founded our school in 1873, it was called the Third District Normal School.

The school began with five faculty members and only fifty-seven students! The first president, actually called a principal, of the Normal School was Lucius H. Cheney, who served from 1873–1876. Since this brand-new Normal School lacked physical buildings, teachers conducted classes at the nearby Lorimier School as work started on the “Old Normal Building.” Workers completed construction of this building in 1875, and “Old Normal” was a hauntingly beautiful building. But it was not to last, burning to the ground in 1902. Soon Academic Hall, the university’s landmark copper-domed building, was built in its place. Sadly, also not to last was Cheney’s time as the first principal. During the summer of 1876, to satisfy his lifelong interest in geology, Cheney worked at an archeological camp in Cumberland Gap, Tennessee. While he was excavating a large mound to recover the body of an ancient woman and child, the earth above him collapsed, and he was buried alive. Although his fellow archeologists tried to save him, he died from his injuries.

After the devastating fire consumed “Old Normal,” professors held classes in the courthouse and other buildings around the city while the college completed construction on what would become Carnahan Hall and the Art Building (the two oldest existing buildings on campus today). At the same time, President Washington Dearmont campaigned tirelessly to rebuild Old Normal.

Inspectors determined that “Old Normal” could not be salvaged, so the Board of Regents and President Dearmont began plans for a new building on the same site. The state of Missouri appropriated \$200,000 for the new building, which led to a parade erupting through Cape to celebrate the opportunity to rebuild. J. B. Legg, a well-known architect, was hired to design the building. Having already designed other buildings in Cape and St. Louis, Legg spent time traveling through Illinois and Iowa studying other college buildings for inspiration. And as you can tell from the glorious Academic Hall that stands today, Legg found plenty of inspiration. Construction began in 1903, and this new hall was built in the classic style of architecture. After it was finished, it contained twenty-seven classrooms, rooms for the student literary societies, two museums, two gymnasiums,

an auditorium, and importantly, a formal library. The building would also be adorned with a copper dome (which students can still visit today and sign their names on the wooden support structure inside), and would benefit from Louis Houck's fixation with the World's Fair of 1904 held in St. Louis. Houck, then president of the Board of Regents, purchased many interior supplies for the new Academic Hall at the Fair, including light fixtures that are still in use in the building today. Houck also donated a collection of reproduction sculptures that were exhibited by a German artist at the Fair. This collection was given its own area known as Statuary Hall in the building and added much prestige to the young school. The University still owns Houck's statues, and they can be viewed at the Wehking Alumni Center. Construction on Academic Hall was completed in 1905 and dedicated in May of 1906 to correspond with graduation that year.

This new Academic Hall was a source of great satisfaction and enjoyment for the faculty, students, and residents of Cape Girardeau. Dearmont, president from 1899–1921, was also smitten with the new building and, in 1905, used the new construction as an opportunity to give some friends a tour. The evening watchman, perhaps not recognizing Dearmont, informed the group that no one was allowed in the building past 6 p.m. and ordered them to leave. Dearmont ignored the order, and the watchman punched President Dearmont in the face, twice. The second blow broke the president's jaw! Police arrested the watchman, but he was later acquitted on assault charges. The injury to Dearmont, however, was so severe he was forced to recover at home for several weeks.

While Dearmont is remembered cheekily as “the president who got punched,” he did a lot for the Normal School he so loved. Dearmont modernized the Normal School and oversaw significant growth, both in physical facilities and in student enrollment. He also standardized the time it would take to earn a degree (four years) and set the minimum number of hours required for a bachelor's degree at 120. A lifelong educator, Dearmont emphasized quality teaching during his tenure, and the students responded to his dedication. Early in 1921, whispers began that Dearmont would not be rehired as president. The rumors proved correct, despite significant support from the local residents and student body. Dearmont's contract was not renewed, and the students took to Academic Hall to protest. On “Dearmont Day,” June 8, 1921, around 700 students refused to attend classes or perform any schoolwork, and they blocked the entrance to Academic Hall for hours. Defending the honor of their dear president, the students also constructed dummies and labeled them with the names of members of the Board of Regents and burned them in protest. The sign hanging across the front of Academic Hall read “Dearmont Day,

in honor of our martyred president.” While the protest may not have saved Dearmont’s career at the college, the students certainly let their feelings be known.



***Dearmont Day.** The dismissal of President Washington Dearmont was very unpopular among the student body, which vented its objection by burning the Regents in effigy on the steps of Academic Hall, June 8, 1921.*

Willard Vandiver

Willard Vandiver became the fifth president of the Normal School and the first to be selected by the Board of Regents from the college’s teaching faculty. He was president from 1893–1897 and, while his term in office may have been short, he did a lot to promote the success of the young school.

Vandiver taught natural science at the Normal School before his appointment as president and even served as head of the science department. The Board of Regents tasked Vandiver with student recruitment, as the country was in the midst of the depression spurred on by the Panic of 1893. Vandiver had his work cut out for him. It was understandable how families, especially those in rural areas operating farms, couldn’t spare the labor and expense of sending college-aged students away for further education. Student enrollment at the Normal School was on the decline, and the school was in danger of closing.

Vandiver quickly responded, spending the first half of his presidency traveling around to different groups in the region to try to recruit students. A benefit of his speaking tours around southeast Missouri promoting the Normal School was that Vandiver became a well-known local figure and, in 1896, earned appointment to the United States Congress from the 14th District of Missouri. Upon his election, Vandiver resigned as president of the Normal School.

Despite his time at Southeast, Vandiver is probably best known for popularizing Missouri's unofficial state nickname: "The Show-Me State." In a speech given at a naval banquet in 1899, Vandiver stated:



Willard D. Vandiver.
Fifth president (1893–1897)

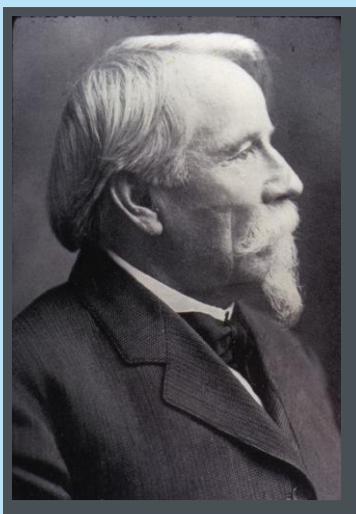
*I come from a state that raises corn and
cotton and cockleburs and Democrats,
and frothy eloquence neither convinces
nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You
have got to show me.*

Louis Houck

If Louis Houck were alive today, he would probably be considered a local rock star. His contributions to the region and the University changed the way people lived their daily lives and still impact us today. As a young man, Houck worked as a newspaper printer alongside his father in Illinois. In 1869, Houck came to Cape Girardeau to make a name for himself as a lawyer. But he soon fell in love with a local woman named Mary Hunter Giboney, daughter to a prominent land-owning family. Houck was certainly "marrying up." The couple wed on December 25, 1872, and two years later the couple inherited all of her family's land and wealth upon her father's death. Houck's marriage to Mary also let him live like a local lord. The couple lived in the Giboney family estate, Elmwood, located roughly five miles from downtown Cape on Bloomfield Road. While it can't be seen from the street, Elmwood is built to resemble a fantastic Scottish castle and is the only structure of its kind in the area. This strategic union with Mary Hunter Giboney gave the ambitious Mr. Houck the capital he needed to launch his historic endeavors.

When Houck developed an interest in bringing railroads to the dense swampland of southeast Missouri and put his plans into action, he permanently changed how residents traveled around the region. The swamps had made it very challenging for people to travel outside of their homes, and Houck's railroads dramatically transformed the demography of the area as more residents moved into the swampland. In 1880, he created his own rail line, the Girardeau Railway Company, running trains from Cape Girardeau down to Delta, MO, about 15 miles away. He kept building, and over the course of his life, Houck was responsible for roughly 500 miles of railroad lines throughout southeast Missouri, helping to change the physical landscape and how people viewed transportation. No longer did they need to travel on the Mississippi River to move around the region.

Louis Houck was one of the early civic leaders that pushed to have Cape Girardeau become the home of the Third District Normal School. In 1886, Houck began serving on the Board of Regents for the school and served as board president from 1889 until his untimely death. As president of the board, Houck influenced all areas of the Normal School development, and after completion in 1930, the Houck Field House and Stadium were named in his honor. Houck was also a prominent author and researcher during



Louis Houck

his life. His most famous publication remains a three-volume set entitled *History of Missouri*, first published in 1908, which he meticulously researched using the early founding documents of the region.

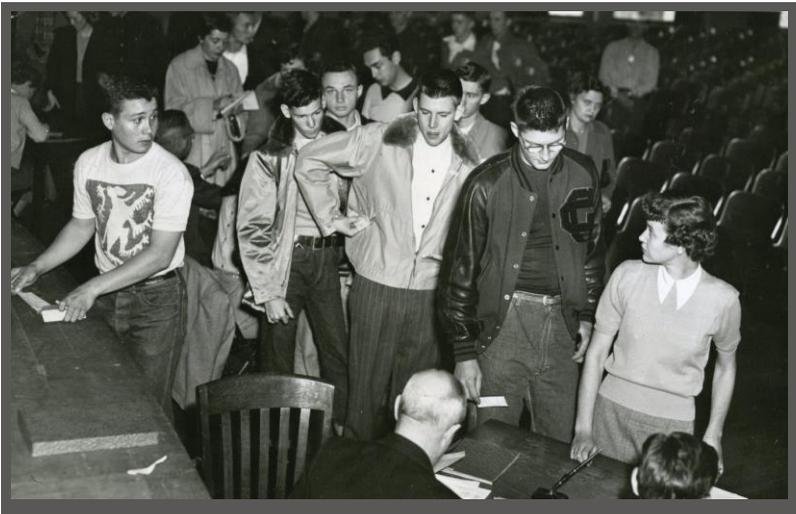
Houck passed away at his home on February 18, 1925, following a bout with pneumonia. His passing was of such importance to the area that the local newspaper, the *Southeast Missourian*, ran several stories about Houck's life and career, covering much of the front page. Described in his obituary as a distinguished citizen, Houck's mark on Southeast Missouri and the University is undeniable.

DID YOU KNOW? In 1922, the Board of Regents approved a campus radio station and promised education by the airwaves. That summer a class was offered in tuning radio receivers for high school principals and superintendents. The college was the first in the state and one of the first in the nation to offer education by radio. The station, WSAB, was also the first broadcasting station in Cape Girardeau and Southeast Missouri. Today's campus radio stations are KRCU and KDMC. KRCU is affiliated with National Public Radio Network.

StudEnt life

Just four years after Louis Houck's death, the nation faced a crippling economic depression. The stock market crashed and thousands of Americans lost everything. Faculty salaries at Southeast were cut by 15 to 20 percent, and enrollment dropped as fewer families could afford to send their children to college. Southeast responded by trying to help their less fortunate students, offering scholarships to those who lost a father or mother because of their service to the United States military during World War I. Also during the 1930s, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal plan allowed for the construction of a new indoor swimming pool in the basement of Academic Hall and a new library on campus—later named Kent Library in honor of longtime librarian Sadie Kent.

Southeast Missouri State grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s under the presidency of Dr. Mark Scully. But Scully was also a stickler for the rules, strictly enforcing his campus-wide ban on kissing while patrolling the campus on horseback to break up offending couples. Unsurprisingly, the student handbook also demanded compliance with a moral code. According to the 1958 edition, students were “expected to pursue their studies with diligence, to attend classes regularly, and to live decent and well-regulated lives.”



Registration line for courses.

Students failing to comply not only faced the possibility of expulsion but were subject to losing their automobile driving privileges. Administrators also expected students to dress appropriately: men in pants and women in long skirts or dresses. Only after 4 p.m., or if the temperature fell to freezing, were women allowed to ditch the skirts.

By the mid-seventies, the dress code had relaxed and students walked around campus, holding hands (and kissing) in public, sporting hip-hugging bell-bottom pants, and tube tops. The student population also changed during this era as many of the male students had served in Vietnam and a number of the women were increasingly outspoken

advocates for women's rights. But while some college campuses witnessed anti-war radicalism in this era, Southeast remained protest-free. College administrators did face some criticism when, in 1968, eight faculty members were forced to leave due to ties to the Students for a Democratic Society—a radical political group then popular on college campuses.

Students in the 1960s and 1970s not only lived through social upheaval but also witnessed a lot of physical change on campus. Today, many students feel lost without a smartphone. But technology was also important to Southeast students in the past. By the 1960s, Kent Library featured more than 1,600 educational films and introduced a small, but growing, record collection for music lovers. In 1962, the first computer arrived on campus, an enormous IBM 1620 leased to the college and stored in the math department. By the end of the 1990s, the university joined a growing number of schools to offer online courses and, in 2003, offered their first online degree. In 2018, over 1,500 students were pursuing degrees completely online at Southeast.

Students at Southeast maintain many traditions passed down through the generations. Beginning in the 1920s, students began celebrating Homecoming, a week of events culminating in a football game and the annual Homecoming parade. The parade highlights many student organizations as well as the Golden Eagle Marching Band—a staple of SEMO sporting events since 1957. Everybody stands and sings along as the band plays the school's alma mater, written in 1931 by an alumnus, who earned a \$5 prize for her lyrics celebrating the blossoms of springtime and the passing of ages. In 1977, the university added Parents' Weekend to the calendar, specifically targeting the families of SEMO football players. It quickly outgrew that group and is today known as Family Weekend, a time when relatives from around the country come to Cape Girardeau to visit campus and cheer on the Redhawks.

DID YOU KNOW? The marching band, “Golden Eagles”, started playing during halftime at home football games in 1926. In 1930, their uniforms consisted of a black coat trimmed in red and Sam Browne belts with white duck trousers and a cap to match. Students received a scholarship to play in the band. It was not until 1957 that a name was decided for the band. Students and faculty were encouraged to send in suggestions for names, and the name “Golden Eagles” was chosen, named after a steamboat that traveled the Mississippi River.



Golden Eagles Marching Band.

So what else did students do for fun? In the 1950s, there was a social life committee for the college, consisting of both students and faculty. The committee set the social calendar for the year, scheduling the Fall Frolic, Sagamore Christmas Ball, Spring Dance, and Saturday night dances. In 1951, campus welcomed the first Greek social organizations—the Delta Kappa fraternity and Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority. By 1960, Southeast housed ten social societies; today there are more than two dozen.

Another tradition on campus is the Gum Tree. Located between Towers and Crisp Hall at the top of Cardiac Hill (walk up it one time and you'll understand the name!), the Gum Tree is instantly recognizable. After all, the trunk is decorated with a rainbow-colored assortment of chewed bubble gum. Why did students first start sticking their gum to the original Gum Tree in 1967? No one really knows. Some say it was football players, charged with running up and down the hill, who discarded their used gum on the tree. Others maintain that a chemistry professor forbade his students from chewing gum during his lectures, and so they placed it on the tree before entering his class. Whatever the reason, the Gum Tree is a highlight of any campus tour.

Buildings

- 1875 First academic building constructed
- 1902 Normal School building destroyed by fire
Art Building opened (originally Training School)
Carnahan Hall opened (originally Science Building)
- 1904 Albert Hall completed (all-male dorm)—site of current Dearmont Hall
- 1905 Leming Hall completed (all-female dorm)—site of current University Center
Academic Hall completed (dedicated January 1906)
Serena Hall opened (originally School of Manual Training)
- 1923 Crisp Hall opened (originally Educational Building)—named Crisp in 1988
- 1927 Houck Field House (first one) opened
- 1930 Houck Stadium completed
- 1939 Kent Library opened
Cheney Hall built
- 1948 Houck Field House destroyed by fire
Myers Hall completed (all-male dorm)
- 1950 Memorial Hall completed
- 1951 Power Plant built
Houck Field House rebuilt
- 1956 Brandt Hall of Music opened
- 1958 Dearmont Hall built
Magill Hall built
- 1960 Parker Hall built—originally Women’s Physical Education Building (mid-1960s,
Parker Pool added)
- 1962 Johnson Hall built
- 1966 Grauel Building completed (originally called Language Arts Building)
- 1967 Outer shell of Kent Library built around the original building
- 1968 Towers Complex constructed
- 1971 Scully Building opened (originally called Education and Psychology Building)
- 1975 University Center opened
- 1983 Rhodes Hall of Science opened
- 1987 Show Me Center completed
- 1996 Dempster Hall opened
- 2001 Polytech Building opened
- 2002 Vandiver Hall opened
- 2007 River Campus opened
Henderson Hall acquired

2009	Merick Hall opened
2013	LaFerla Hall opened Academic Hall re-opened
2014	Ken and Jeanine Dobbins River Campus Center Residence Hall
2016	Greek Village

aCadEmiC Programs

While President Scully is remembered for running Southeast Missouri State College like the principal of a high school, clamping down on inappropriate student conduct, he did much to improve the quality of the education the college provided to its students. In 1957, for the first time, the college offered graduate classes during summer sessions in conjunction with the University of Missouri. Since the college was founded as a normal school, it was not surprising that these classes were in elementary and secondary education. This was a big step for the regional college and less than ten years later, in 1966, Southeast Missouri State College achieved accreditation for its own master's degree program by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Dr. Scully hailed the accreditation as "one of the greatest days in the history of the college" because it was another service the college could provide to area teachers who were unable to enroll in a graduate program elsewhere due to expense and distance. This is a prime example of Southeast's longtime mission to provide a comprehensive, quality education to the residents of Southeast Missouri.

Another example illustrating academic changes over time is the physical education classes students were required to take. College administrators began to recognize the importance of exercise for the body, coupled with the notion that "a spirit of sane and manly sportsmanship in athletics" should be fostered in every possible instance. In 1910, students were required to pass gym class during their first two years in order to continue at Southeast. This practice continued for two more decades until the 1940s when the physical education requirement was raised to six terms or three full years! As the college continued to grow and demand more specialized study of its students depending on their major, the requirement for physical education classes was dropped back down to four semesters in the 1960s. Dropping the "activity course" requirement by two units allowed students more time to take classes within their field of study.

athlEticS

For more than eighty years, Southeast students chanted “Fight, Indians, Fight” to cheer on their team as, from the 1920s until the early 2000s, the college mascot was the Indian (or Ohtakian, for the women’s squads). Beginning in the 1960s, universities across the nation began to reconsider using Native Americans mascots, and in 1985, Southeast took action. That year, the college quietly retired Chief Sagamore (a student dressed in full Native American regalia), although they continued to use the Indian name. In 2003, President Kenneth W. Dobbins formed a committee comprised of various members of the campus community to determine whether or not to replace the name as well. After passing on suggested names like the Ninja Squirrels and the Fighting Okra, Southeast introduced Rowdy the Redhawk, hatched on January 22, 2005, at a basketball game against Austin Peay. With Rowdy’s support, the Redhawks prevailed that day, winning 65–52, and now the university’s beloved Redhawk can be found all around campus.

Southeast first fielded a football team in 1904 and, eight years later, helped found the fourteen-team Missouri Intercollegiate Athletic Association. In 1937, under head coach Abe Stuber—an inaugural member of the Southeast Athletics Hall of Fame—the Indians recorded an undefeated 9–0 record, giving up zero points combined in their first seven games. In 1955, the team again went 9–0, this time under the tutelage of Coach Kenneth Knox, another Athletics Hall of Famer. In 1991, the team joined the Ohio Valley Conference, making the jump to Division I-AA (now known as the Football Championship Subdivision, or FCS).



Southeast Missouri State Teacher’s College football players, 1934.

For all its success on the gridiron, Southeast had a stronger reputation on the hardwood. Four times between 1943 and 1989, the Indians' basketball team advanced to the national championship game (once in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and three times in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division II). Unfortunately, Southeast posted a 0–4 record in those games, including a heartbreaking four-point loss to Wittenberg (OH) College in 1961. Before that game, a group of students earned national attention by dribbling basketballs all the way from Cape Girardeau to Evansville, Indiana—the site of the title game and 140 miles from Cape.

In 1975, Southeast added women's basketball. Although they struggled to a 0–10 record in their first season, the Ohtakians became a strong squad under Coach Ed Arnzen, winning multiple conference championships and advancing to the NCAA Division II finals with a 31–4 record in 1990–91.



Ohtakians Basketball Team, 1989.

In that same year, the softball team advanced to the Final Four and the gymnastics squad earned the United States Gymnastics Federation (USGF) Division II title. The latter also helped Southeast become the first Division II gymnastics program to qualify for the NCAA Division I Central Regional, thanks in large part to six All-Americans, led by Cheri Peterson, the national vault and all-around champion.

Southeast also boasts a long history of quality track and field athletes. In 1937, Wayne Goddard became the first “First-Team Little American” athlete in SEMO history, earning eight letters at Southeast—four each in track and football—before returning to his alma mater as a football coach. In 1964, Curtis Williams broke the color barrier at Southeast, becoming the first African-American to play intercollegiate sports for the college. Williams fought against racism



Southeast Missouri State University students.

both on- and off-campus but managed to persevere and became a conference champion in the high jump, long jump, and triple jump—all while earning four letters in track and three in basketball. Twenty years later, Rob Thomas won the NCAA Division I indoor 600-meter and qualified for the Olympic trials as the Indians won the 1985 Division II Indoor Nationals. Also in 1984, the cross country team won the NCAA Division II championship and became the first team inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame.

In recent years, the baseball team has achieved remarkable success, winning at least 20 games in each of the five seasons from 2014–2018. Perhaps the best team in the school’s history, though, participated in the mid-1970s as the 1976 Indians made it all the way to the College World Series, finishing third in the Division II tournament.

Many of the sports teams at Southeast play home games in either Houck Stadium or the Show Me Center. Houck, named after longtime Southeast regent Louis Houck, cost \$150,000 to construct and first held football games in 1930. Today, with new turf field and a Daktronics video scoreboard (installed prior to the 2011 season), Houck seats 10,000 Redhawks fans, although a stadium record 11,126 piled in to watch Southeast defeat UT–Martin in October, 2010. In addition to hosting the SEMO basketball teams, the Show Me Center features concerts and other community events. Shortly after it opened in 1987, Tina Turner and Bob Hope performed (separately) at the Center, and Hope took advantage of the opportunity by hitting golf balls off the Show Me Center roof.

DID YOU KNOW? Houck Field House was completed in 1927. Houck Field House was named in honor of Board of Regents member Louis Houck, who served as Board of Regents president (1889–1925). Houck Field House is home of the Department of Athletics and the original home of Southeast’s championship basketball teams. Women’s volleyball and gymnastics are hosted in the Field House, as well as locker rooms for baseball, softball, soccer, and volleyball.

What's in a Name?

Just as you've seen how Southeast Missouri State University has grown and changed since its founding in 1873, its name has also changed to reflect the university's role in the community. Southeast was originally started as a training school for teachers (otherwise called normal schools). By 1870, the Missouri legislature had passed a bill establishing the first two normal schools in the state, one each north and south of the Missouri River. It soon became apparent that a third school would be needed in the southeastern part of the state and in 1873, the Missouri legislature voted to establish a third normal school. Thus, the Third District Normal School was born in Cape Girardeau.

The school kept the name "Third District Normal School" for forty-six years. But the school grew and its mission continued to change. Student enrollment tripled from 1910 to 1920 (roughly 1500 students during the 1920–1921 school year). Additional campus buildings were built (in particular Academic Hall) and the student newspaper, *The Capaha Arrow* (now known as the *Arrow*) was founded. The Normal School now had the look and feel of four-year, degree-granting college. Reflecting this growth, the college elected to change its name to Southeast Missouri State Teachers College in 1919.

Following a national trend to remove the word "Teachers" from the school name (to more accurately describe what they did), Southeast Missouri State Teachers College became simply Southeast Missouri State College in 1946. The Southeast Missouri State College was also allowed to grant master's degrees at this time, since these advanced degrees were now commonly required for teachers.

One final name change occurred in April 1972 to more accurately describe the function of the school. Universities are typically made up of several smaller colleges, and this more correctly described the makeup of the school at that time. It was also thought that incorporating the word "university" would attract a higher caliber of faculty to teach there and would improve job prospects for graduates. As Southeast's identity has transformed to echo changing times and values, the university's name fluidly changed with it. It appears that Southeast Missouri State University will accurately describe our school's mission as a comprehensive, regional university serving a wide variety of students for quite some time.

a MultiCultural CamPus

In 1954, shortly after the Supreme Court decision in the case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the first African-American students enrolled at Southeast: Roberta Cleasta Slayton and Helen Carter. Since then, recruiting minority students has been a priority at Southeast. And while the percentage of African Americans (8 percent), Hispanics (2 percent), and Asian Americans (1 percent) has remained relatively constant over the last decade, Southeast remains committed to institutional diversity through a Task Force on Diversity and increased training opportunities for faculty and staff to support campus-wide diversity.

Under the presidency of Dr. Dobbins, the college increased its emphasis on recruiting students from around the world. In 1999, when President Dobbins took office, the university had barely 200 enrolled international students. In 2016, Southeast boasted almost 1,000 international students from 44 countries around the world.



International Students at Southeast Missouri State University

Not all multiculturalism comes from overseas. In 2004, Southeast entered into an agreement with Three Rivers Community College. As a result, Southeast acquired three regional campuses, located in Kennett, Malden, and Sikeston, which increased our

presence in the Missouri Bootheel. Currently, a few hundred students attend the Kennett and Sikeston campuses.

Presidents

1873	1st president	Lucius H. Cheney
1876	2nd president	Alfred Kirk
1877	3rd president	Charles Henry Dutcher
1881	4th president	Richard Chapman Norton
1893	5th president	Willard Duncan Vandiver
1897	6th president	John Sephus McGhee
1899	7th president	Washington Strother Dearmont
1921	8th president	Joseph Archibald Serena
1933	9th president	Walter Winfield Parker
1956	10th president	Mark F. Scully
1975	11th president	Robert E. Leestamper
1980	12th president	Bill Stacy
1989	13th president	Robert W. Foster
1990	14th president	Kala Stroup
1995	15th president	Bill Atchley
1996	16th president	Dale F. Nitzchke
1999	17th president	Kenneth W. Dobbins
2015	18th president	Carlos Vargas-Aburto

a

a



Dr. Adam Criblez arrived at Southeast Missouri State in 2012 and currently serves both as an associate professor in the Department of History and the director of the Center for Regional History.



Roxanne Dunn, Special Collections and Archives librarian at Kent Library, joined Southeast Missouri State University in July of 2013 after graduating from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign with a master’s degree in library and information science. She also earned a master’s degree in journalism from the University of Illinois in 2005. Dunn considers the effects of hoarding on archival acquisition and providing library services to prisoners among her research interests. At Southeast, Dunn is responsible for acquiring and preserving archival collections that document the history of the university and the fourteen counties that make up the region of Southeast Missouri.

DID YOU KNOW? The decline of literary societies during the 1930s and 1940s led to the rise of social fraternities and sororities. In 1949, Delta Kappa, a local fraternity, held their first meeting. Two years later, in 1951, Sigma Sigma Sigma became the first National Panhellenic Council (NPC) sorority on campus. In 1952, Sigma Tau Gamma became the first Interfraternity Council (IFC) on campus.

