

## **ASU-Beebe History**

BEEBE, Ark. – ASU-Beebe's history began in 1927, when State Senator William H. Abington, a medical doctor and a prominent member of the Beebe community, proposed and successfully lobbied for legislation to establish an agricultural school in the center of the state. The legislation was written specifically to set up such a school in Beebe, the only town that met the precise criteria.

Established as the Junior Agricultural School of Central Arkansas, the first classes were held in October 1929 with 38 students enrolled. The first graduating class was in 1933. With the need for funding beyond that provided by the legislature, the college soon began charging tuition at \$7 per semester.

During the Great Depression years, the college and the [Beebe] high school shared the facilities and faculty. In fact, the college began running buses to pick up students who could not afford to live on campus. Even though this partnership eventually ended, the focus on student success was clearly a part of ASUB culture from the beginning.

In 1955, the university was renamed Arkansas State College-Beebe Branch after it joined with Arkansas State College in Jonesboro, now known as Arkansas State University. In 1967, the university was renamed again to Arkansas State University-Beebe Branch. Then in 2001, the Arkansas General Assembly removed the term 'branch' from the university's name.

William Echols became the first to hold the title of Chancellor from 1977 until 1981. William H. Owen, Jr. served as Chancellor from 1981 until his death in 1994. The Owen Center was renamed in his memory. Dr. Eugene McKay was appointed chancellor in 1995, and served in that

capacity until his retirement in January 2016. He was honored for his 50 years of service to the university, and the ASU System renamed the Student Center in his honor.

#### Expansion Relationships:

ASU-Beebe began offering classes at the Little Rock Air Force Base in 1965. This became the college's first expansion campus. As the college looked to expand its mission further, it merged with White River Vocational Technical School to form ASU-Beebe/Newport in 1991. In 2000, ASU-Newport became a stand-alone campus upon approval by the ASU Board of Trustees, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

By the late 1990's, plans were underway toward offering courses at Heber Springs. In 1997, ASU-Beebe began using classrooms at the Heber Springs High School. Later, in 1999, the Heber Springs campus was officially established, and classes were held for a time in the Courthouse Annex on Main Street using part-time faculty along with compressed or interactive video courses. In the year 2000, the first facility was built in the Cleburne County Industrial Park, known as the John L. Latimer Skills Training Center. ASU-Beebe later purchased 249 acres on the east side of the city of Heber Springs, and construction on the Heber Springs campus located at the base of Sugarloaf Mountain was completed in 2007. The new ASU-Beebe Heber Springs Campus consists of the Academic Center and a combination Student Services/Administration Building.

ASU-Beebe further expanded its offerings through its partnership with Arkansas State University-Jonesboro in 1995 and began offering upper level business courses. Today, students may take baccalaureate and graduate degree coursework in areas, such as education, nursing, and business. The university also began delivering courses via the Internet in 1999. Since then, the demand for this alternative, online form of

educational delivery has grown substantially.

The ASU-Beebe Searcy Campus was added in 2003, following a merger with Foothills Vocational Technical School, which had operated at the site since 1966. The technical focus continued to prepare students for entering the workforce, and now has added other certification and degree options. The Searcy campus continues to serve a range of students from high school through the Regional Career Center, to students completing their General Educational Development (GED) diploma, to traditional and non-traditional students earning technical certificates or associate degrees.

ASU-Beebe celebrated its treasured history of 90 years in education, and the relationship it shares with the communities surrounding each campus in 2017. The university presented a series of community events situated either on campus or in the community near each of its campuses. This commemoration celebrated “90 Years of Education, with 90 Days of Celebration.”

“Our objective was to thank our communities for the great support provided to this university throughout the past 90 years. We were glad to host those events and celebrate with everyone who came to join with us at these great events,” said Roger Moore, interim chancellor at ASU-Beebe.

Arkansas State University-Beebe is an operationally separate, two-year institution of the Arkansas State University System. With campuses located in Beebe, Heber Springs, Searcy, the Little Rock Air Force Base, and online. The university offers associate degrees, certificates, and non-credit training for business and industry. The Beebe campus also collaborates with Arkansas State, a four-year university in Jonesboro, to offer baccalaureate and graduate degrees on the Beebe campus.

For more information about ASU-Beebe, the programs offered, or registration information call (501) 882-3600 or view the website at [www.asub.edu](http://www.asub.edu).

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