

# THE COLLEGE AND ITS HISTORY

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Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts is the public liberal arts college of Massachusetts. As one of the nine state colleges within the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System, it is a small and primarily residential college of approximately 1,500 undergraduate students.

Surrounded by the beautiful mountains and valleys of Berkshire County, the College is located in North Adams, a city of about 15,500 in the northwest corner of Massachusetts, close to Vermont and New York state. North Adams is readily accessible by automobile from all parts of the Commonwealth (Boston is three hours away) eastern New York, and southern Vermont, and by regular bus service from Boston, Springfield, New York City, Troy, and Albany.

The College was founded in 1894 and was initially known as North Adams Normal School. The first student body numbered thirty-two women and three men. They were instructed by a faculty of four in a two-year diploma program for the preparation of teachers. The campus consisted of two buildings, now known as Murdock Hall and Smith House. In 1932 the Normal School became the State Teachers College at North Adams and was authorized to offer a four-year program leading to the Bachelor of Science in Education. In 1937 graduate courses leading to the degree Master of Education were added to the curriculum.

In 1960 the name of the College was changed to North Adams State College, signaling its newly-acquired authorization to also grant degrees in the liberal arts and professional fields. A period of rapid expansion began in 1968 after the establishment of the Board of Trustees of the Massachusetts State College System. By 1976 the student body had grown from 800 to over 2,000. As academic programs expanded, the physical plant was enlarged to now comprise 20 buildings, including a nearby and extensive athletic facility.

Throughout its history, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts has stressed the dual importance of liberal education and professional preparation. In 1992, the College reaffirmed this emphasis on a strong liberal arts foundation for its professional programs. In recognition of its commitment to the liberal arts, it was officially named Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts on August 14, 1997.