

Authorized by the Texas Legislature in 1899, Southwest Texas State Normal School opened its doors in 1903. During the first century, the Legislature retained the regional designation in the name, but as its mission changed it became first Normal College, then successively Teachers College, College and University. These changes reflected the transformation from a teacher-preparation institution to a regional university. In 2003, the Legislature dropped the regional designation and the institution became Texas State University-San Marcos, and in 2013 the place name was eliminated as Texas State University became an emerging research university within the state.

The demographics of the university's student body more closely mirror the population of Texas than any other public university in the state. Texas State became a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in 2010, and continues to expand efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion among all faculty, staff, and students.

While Texas State was originally renowned for preparing public school teachers, today it has grown into a major institution of higher education approaching an enrollment of 40,000. The university's two campuses currently offer programs not only in the College of Education, but also in the College of Applied Arts, Emmett and Miriam McCoy College of Business Administration, College of Fine Arts and Communication, College of Health Professions, Honors College, College of Liberal Arts, College of Science and Engineering, and University College. University College oversees first-year advising as well as other activities of the first-year experience in addition to guiding students who have not yet chosen a major. The Graduate College provides opportunities for continued intellectual growth through advanced and specialized education that develops leaders in the professions and in research up through the doctoral degree.

As Texas State's student population has grown — from 303 in 1903 to nearly 38,376 in 2022 — the campuses, too, have expanded and today Texas State is the seventh largest public university in the state.

Texas State's San Marcos campus is located in a Hill Country community about halfway between Austin and San Antonio. Its location on the banks of the San Marcos River provides recreational and leisure activities for students throughout the year.

Overlooking the San Marcos campus from Chautauqua Hill and serving as a landmark since 1903 is Old Main, a red-gabled Victorian building restored to its original grandeur. In 1979, after adding a number of classroom buildings and residence halls on the San Marcos Campus, Texas State purchased the former San Marcos Baptist Academy adjacent to the original campus. In 1981, South Texas entrepreneur Harry M. Freeman donated a 3,500-acre ranch to Texas State to be held in perpetual trust as the Harold M. Freeman Educational Foundation. The working ranch is used as a laboratory for students in agriculture, animal science, anthropology, biology, and a variety of other academic disciplines. In 1990, the university opened the seven-story Albert B. Alkek Library. The building, conveniently located in the center of campus, is named for the noted Texas rancher, oil man, and educational philanthropist who died in 1995.

Texas State acquired one of the most unique ecosystems in the world in 1994 when it purchased the former Aquarena Springs resort and theme park. The purchase allowed Texas State to serve as steward of the headwaters of the San Marcos River, preserving and protecting one of the oldest inhabited spots in North America for future generations of Texans. Now called The Meadows Center for water and the Environment, the 90-acre property is the site of a wide variety of educational and research

pursuits. The Meadows Center is home to eight endangered species of plants and animals that exist nowhere else in the world.

In 1998, as the lead institution, Texas State joined forces with other area universities to establish the Round Rock Higher Education Center, now known as the Texas State University Round Rock Campus (RRC). The RRC, located on 101 acres north of Austin, houses the majority of Texas State's health professions academic programs, and offers upper-division and graduate educational opportunities in Williamson County and Austin.

Texas State became part of the Texas State University System in 1911. The System, governed by a nine-member Board of Regents, also includes Lamar University, Lamar Institute of Technology, Lamar State College—Orange, Lamar State College—Port Arthur, Sam Houston State University, Sul Ross State University, and Sul Ross University Rio Grande College. The first president of Texas State was Mr. T.G. Harris, who served from 1903 to 1911. He was followed by Dr. C.E. Evans, 1911–1942; Dr. J.G. Flowers, 1942–1964; Dr. James H. McCrocklin, 1964–1969; Dr. Leland E. Derrick, 1969; Dr. Billy Mac Jones, 1969–1973; Mr. Jerome C. Cates, 1973–1974; Dr. Lee H. Smith, 1974–1981; Mr. Robert L. Hardesty, 1981–1988; Dr. Michael L. Abbott, 1988–1989; Dr. Jerome Supple, 1989–2002; Dr. Denise M. Trauth, 2002–2022; and Dr. Kelly Dampousse, 2022–present.