

Medical University Of S.C. Is Sixth Oldest In U.S.

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The Medical College of South Carolina (now the Medical University of South Carolina), the sixth oldest medical college in the United States, was founded in 1824 in Charleston.

Before the establishment of the Charleston institution, most South Carolina physicians apprenticed themselves to a local doctor or studied elsewhere. The largest number seem to have studied in the British Isles, especially at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Others got medical degrees from the University of Pennsylvania or Harvard College.

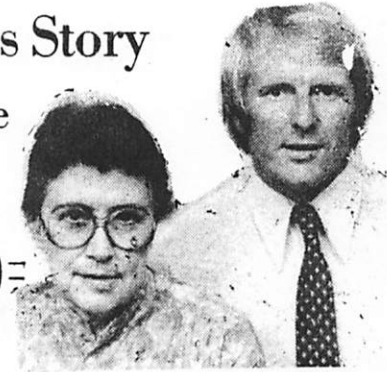
There had long been a demand for a South Carolina medical school when, in 1823, a group of doctors led by Dr. Samuel Henry Dickson, with the cooperation of Thomas Cooper, president of South Carolina College, petitioned the legislature for a charter. The group also asked for an appropriation of funds. The legislature ignored the petition.

The following year, requesting no funds, the doctors tried again the were granted a charter. The college opened in November 1824 with the following faculty: Dr. John E. Holbrook, professor of anatomy; Dr. James Ramsey, professor of surgery; Dr. Samuel Henry Dickson, professor of the institutes and the practice of medicine; Dr. Thomas G. Prioleau, professor of obstetrics and dean of the faculty; Dr. Edmund Ravenel, professor of chemistry and pharmacy; and Dr. Henry R. Frost, professor of materia medica.

None of the faculty worked full time, a situation that existed until the state took over the college in 1913. Although it was named South Carolina Medical College, the college was in reality a private college owned by the doctors who instructed in it. Occasionally the city of Charleston would supply funds, and there were a few legislative appropriations, but such support was erratic at best.

South Carolina's Story

The making of a state



J. Marion Sims of Lancaster District, later to become "the Father of Gynecology," entered the college in February 1833. Sims felt that there were too many dry lectures and not enough "hands on" instruction. Sims liked best his work in the "dead house." He said there were usually 10 or 12 bodies in the dissecting room. Serious students like Sims had only the light of a single candle to work by if they dissected after dark.

The college closed its doors when the Civil War broke out, but opened them again immediately after the war. Times were hard. The college lost its faculty and equipment during the war.

In 1881 the state amended the charter to add a college of pharmacy which was slow to open, not having the necessary supplies and facilities until 1894.

In 1900 the college had a faculty of eight, only two more than when it opened its doors, but soon it experienced a growth spurt. By 1909

there were 34 part-time faculty and 213 students. Still, student fees completely supported the institution. A visiting committee that year observed that the equipment in the chemistry, pharmacy, and anatomy laboratories was inadequate.

There was no dispensary, and the dissecting room was in bad condition. The only praise came in the committee's endorsement of Roper Hospital, which participated in the training of the students.

With the threat of having to close its doors, the college applied to the University of South Carolina to take over its operation in 1911. The university did not respond, probably because it had barely enough state appropriation to operate its own programs.

Finally, 90 years after its funding by the state, the college became a state institution in 1913. The first state appropriation was \$10,000. The college was not able to improve its B rating until 1955, when an expansion of facilities greatly improved conditions.

In 1969 the name was changed from Medical College to Medical University of South Carolina.