

History of New York University and the University Heights Campus

A three-day long "literary and scientific convention" held in City Hall in 1830 and attended by over 100 delegates debated the terms of a plan for a new university modeled on the University of London (1826) which would be designed for young men admitted based on merit, not birthright, status, or social class. The trustees of the new institution sought funding from the city and state, but were turned down, and instead raised \$100,000 privately to start up the college. Albert Gallatin, Secretary of Treasury under Thomas Jefferson, was selected as the school's first president. He served less than a year before resigning over disagreements about the curriculum. Although the desire to found a new school was in large part a reaction by evangelical Presbyterians to what they perceived as the Episcopalianism of Columbia College, NYU was created non-denominational, unlike many American colonial colleges at the time.



Albert Gallatin



***A general view of NYU
The Bronx, New York.***

On April 21, 1831, the new institution received its charter and was incorporated as the University of the City of New York by the New York State Legislature; older documents often refer to it by that name. The university has been popularly known as New York University since its beginning and was officially renamed New York University in 1896. In 1832, NYU held its first classes in rented rooms of four-story Clinton Hall, situated near City Hall. In 1835, the School of Law, NYU's first professional school, was established.

Whereas NYU had its Washington Square campus since its founding, the university purchased a campus at University Heights in The Bronx because of overcrowding on the old campus. NYU also had a desire to follow New York City's development further uptown. NYU's move to The Bronx occurred in 1894, spearheaded by the efforts of Chancellor Henry Mitchell Mac Cracken. The University Heights campus was far more spacious than its predecessor was. As a result, most of the university's operations along with the undergraduate College of Arts and Science and School of Engineering were housed there. With most of NYU's operations transferred to the new campus, the Washington Square campus declined; only the law school remained there until the establishment of Washington Square College in 1914. This college would become the downtown arts and sciences division of NYU. In 1935, NYU opened the "Nassau College-Hofstra Memorial of New York University at Hempstead, Long Island". This extension would later become a fully independent Hofstra University.