



Educational History of Cumberland County

Learning Objectives

- Identify the key higher education institutions in Cumberland County.
- Identify the key figures that founded the higher education institutions in Cumberland County.
- Analyze the primary sources and discuss the relation between higher education and desegregation efforts in downtown Fayetteville.

Background

In 1789, the North Carolina General Assembly, held in Fayetteville, ratified and established the University of North Carolina, the state's first public higher education college and the United States' oldest public university to open its doors to students. In 1867, the Howard School (later to become Fayetteville State University) was established, dedicated to the education of its black students in Cumberland County. In 1972, Fayetteville State University joined the University of North Carolina and was established as the Fayetteville branch of the UNC system.

Discussion Questions

- What factors may have contributed to the smoother desegregation of Fayetteville compared to other counties and cities? Consider the timing of desegregation efforts, city demographic, and protest attendee descriptions.
- Compare and contrast the history of Fayetteville State University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Activities

Looking at the newspaper articles provided, students can answer some of the questions below:

- What are your first impressions when reading it?
- What is the story about? What tone does it set? How do you know for either?

Resources

- "[FSU: Celebrating More Than 150 Years](#)," Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville State University, 2025.
- Jones, Mildred P. History of Fayetteville State College: 1867-1969, Self-published, 1969. In the Local & State History Department at Cumberland County Public Library.
- "[An Act to Establish a University in this State](#)," November 2, 1789-December 22, 1789, in The Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 25, ed. William L. Saunders or Walter Clark, 21-25. Accessed on July 7, 2026.