

A Brief History of UMR

The University of Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy (MSM), the institution that in 1964 would become the University of Missouri-Rolla, was founded in 1870 -- the first technological institution west of the Mississippi, and one of the first in the nation. A product of the Morrill Act of 1862 and the land-grant movement of the late nineteenth century, MSM was Missouri's response to the acute need for scientific and practical education in the developing nation. In inaugurating the School, the President of the University of Missouri, Daniel Read, stated its purpose:

"This school is to be a school both of science and of its applications: its purpose is to teach knowledge and art -- first to know and then to do, and to do in the best manner."

Early curricula were focused on the state's mining industry and its immediate technological needs, but by the end of the 1920's, courses of study included mining, civil, mechanical, electrical, and chemical engineering and chemistry, metallurgy, mathematics, physics, and geology.

The School expanded slowly in the first 50 years. Buildings were constructed and a reputation as a training ground for competent practitioners was developed.

The slow, upward trend in enrollment of the first 50 years accelerated in the 1920's as the need for engineering and scientific education grew. This accelerated trend continued, with some fluctuation, into the early 1980's. Enrollment in 1920 was 393 - by 1982, on-campus enrollment reached an all time high of 7,200. After a period of declining enrollments that lasted through the late 1980's and the 1990's, enrollment began to rise again in 2000. Fall 2003 on-campus enrollment is 4,983 with total UMR enrollment, including off-campus and off-schedule, reaching 5,504.

Graduate education and research began to assume greater emphasis on the campus during the 1950's, resulting from the nation's emerging from the Second World War as the economic and scientific leader of the free world. Missouri saw the need to strengthen its technological infrastructure, and the School of Mines and Metallurgy increasingly became a technological university -- one whose impact reached beyond the state and the nation.

In 1964, recognizing its expanded nature and role, the name of the institution was changed to the University of Missouri at Rolla, soon to be altered to University of Missouri-Rolla. UMR, as it quickly came to be called, was one of four campuses comprising the newly reorganized University of Missouri.

The change from "school" to "university" involved three major changes in the campus programs. First, UMR's curricula expanded to encompass the full range of engineering and scientific subjects. Programs in nuclear engineering, life sciences, engineering management, and computer science were offered. Secondly, offerings also included degrees in the liberal arts, with an appropriate growth in the number and quality of faculty and courses. Thirdly, graduate programs strengthened the science and engineering disciplines, and the commitment to research in all areas better enabled the campus to respond to Missouri's needs. Originally a mining school and subsequently an engineering school, the University of Missouri-Rolla has become a major technological university.