History

Carolina University is a testimony to the vision and leadership of Dr. Charles H. Stevens, former pastor of Salem Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. Dr. Stevens, who fervently loved God's Word, was long noted as a "walking Bible." His intense desire "to teach the Scriptures as they are, to men as they are" led him to lay the foundations of what was to become Carolina University.

In September 1945, Dr. Stevens established Piedmont Bible Institute to accommodate returning war veterans eager to begin long-delayed Bible studies. Classes were held in the educational facilities of Salem Baptist Church for a number of years.

In January 1947, CU was officially chartered, and under the direction of the Board of Trustees, plans were formulated for the enlargement of facilities and equipment. John M. Deeds Hall was the first major project to be completed in accordance with these plans.

In response to the recommendation of mission boards and leaders in the field of Christian Education, the institute enlarged its faculty and expanded its curriculum to include a Bible college in the spring of 1948. The first college students were enrolled in the fall semester of that year.

In 1956, Carolina University became an accredited member of the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges, remaining affiliated with that organization until 2002.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, the college continued to grow. New facilities were constructed, including Griffith Hall, a residence for single men located south of Deeds Hall. Classroom space was also added to Deeds Hall.

Dr. Donald K. Drake became president in 1970, succeeding Dr. Stevens who had served as president since CU's founding. An expanded emphasis on international missions characterized his presidency. The campus continued to grow in 1973 and 1974 with the addition of Lee Hall, a residence facility for single women, and the Chapel-Gymnasium complex next to Griffith Hall.

In 1987, Dr. Howard Wilburn succeeded Dr. Drake as president. Under his leadership, the institution was accredited by the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools, and in August 1994, the first graduate class was offered. Carolina University also began offering classes in Bangladesh.

Dr. Charles W. Petitt was inaugurated as president of Carolina University in 2002, and the influence of CU has continued to expand significantly. In 2004, Spurgeon Baptist Bible College merged with CU. In 2008, Atlantic Baptist Bible College in Chester, VA, merged with CU.

In conjunction with the establishment of the PhD program in 2006, Carolina University (Piedmont Baptist College at the time) experienced a name change, becoming Piedmont Baptist College and Graduate School. In January 2012, recognizing its continuing dedication to a strong general education core, its expanding emphasis on graduate education, and its passionate commitment to international education and ministry, Piedmont Baptist College and Graduate School became Piedmont International University.

On April 30, 2015, Tennessee Temple University merged with Carolina University, expanding the student body and the curricular offerings. The Moore School of Education was approved to offer the historic, award-winning Tennessee Temple BS in Sign Language Interpreting, and the university grew to include the School of Leadership.

Southeastern Bible College of Birmingham, AL merged with CU on October 31, 2017. Additionally, John Wesley University of High Point, NC merged with CU on June 1, 2018, resulting in the addition of the Patterson School of Business and the renaming of the School of Leadership to the John Wesley School of Leadership.

Desiring to honor the story of how several Christian colleges and universities came together to form a stronger institution, the Board of Trustees voted on June 24, 2020 to rename Piedmont International University as Carolina University.

Carolina University continues its rich heritage by preparing leaders worldwide through exceptional teaching, scholarly research, creative innovation, and professional collaboration.