

HISTORICAL NOTE

The University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland which became the University of Rhodesia on 1 January 1971, was incorporated by Royal Charter on 11 February 1955.

The original impetus for the founding of a University in Rhodesia was given by an offer in 1945 by Mr. J.F. Kapnek of £20 000 for such a purpose. This encouraged Mr. L.M.N. Hodson, QC, to gather together a group of men and women under the title “Friends of the University of Rhodesia” to publicise and foster the idea. This group, which shortly changed its title to “Rhodesia University Association” faced some opposition and much indifference, but with enthusiasm and perseverance under Mr. Hodson’s leadership continued their efforts and gained their first official recognition in 1946. On 26 October 1946, the Legislative Assembly of Southern Rhodesia accepted a motion, introduced by Mr. Hodson as a private member, that a university should be established as soon as practicable to serve the needs of Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia and neighbouring territories and that a Board of Trustees should be appointed. On 19 May 1947, His Excellency the Governor of Southern Rhodesia established by trust deed the Rhodesian University Foundation Fund and appointed as trustees the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Secretary for Internal Affairs and Mr. Hodson.

Twenty-four offers of sites for the University were made by municipalities and other local authorities, by companies and by independent landowners. On the advice of the Trustees, who visited most of the sites, the Legislative Assembly in 1948 chose the 250 acres offered by the City of Salisbury.

In the meantime, the activities of the Rhodesian University Association had increased and regional committees were established to assist in publicity and fund raising. In 1952 the association promoted a private bill in the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly, which was enacted on 29 August, 1952, for the incorporation and constitution of the University. This Act established an Inaugural Board which met for the first time in January 1953, by which time the College had received £100 000 in grants from territorial Governments and £74 000 from private and other contributors. Classes for part-time students in Accountancy had been started in 1952 and the premises of St. Joseph’s Home at 115 (later 147) Baker Avenue (now demolished) were purchased to accommodate these classes and to serve as the headquarters of the Inaugural Board.

The Central African Council, quite independently of the Inaugural Board, had decided on the recommendation of a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Harold Cartmel-Robinson, to appoint a commission to report on the needs of higher education for Africans in Central Africa. This commission, under the chairmanship of Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders, visited the three territories in November 1952, and presented its report in February 1953. It recommended the establishment of a university, beginning as a University College, on an inter-racial basis, either in Salisbury if this proposal could be appropriately associated with the plans of the Inaugural Board, or if not, in Lusaka in Northern Rhodesia.

In June 1953, the Inaugural Board made its decision that the sole test for admission to the University would be educational attainments and good character. On 13 July 1953 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother laid the foundation stone on the Mount Pleasant site. Her Majesty later graciously

consented to accept office of President, when the Charter was granted, and so continued until February 1970.

In September 1953 at the invitation of the Inter-University Council of Higher Education a delegation of representatives of the three Central African Governments and the Inaugural Board visited London for discussions with the Inter-University Council, the University of London and the British Government. Her Majesty's Government announced its willingness to contribute £1 250 000 towards capital costs of the College on condition that the recurrent costs were provided from other sources.

This condition was met by the grant of £150 000 per annum by the Federal Government towards the recurrent income of the College for the five years beginning 1 January 1956. The British Government later increased its capital gift by a further £150 000, making a total grant of £1 400 000. The City of Salisbury increased its gift of land from 250 to 474 acres.

These generous grants enabled the College to erect buildings to house the Faculties of Arts, Education, Science and Social Studies, the Halls of Residence, the Students' Union and staff houses. Other major benefactions for buildings were:

The Library (Anglo American Corporation, B.S.A Company, Rhodesia Selection Trust)	£200 000
The Beit Hall (Beit Trust)	£36 000
Basil Fletcher Court Flats (Ford Foundation)	£24 000
College Chapel (Dulverton Trust)	£15 000
Sports Pavilion (Rhodesia Breweries)	£10 000

In November 1953, Dr. William Rollo, formerly Professor of Classics at the University of Cape Town, was appointed interim Principal for two years and was succeeded in December 1955 by Dr. Walter Adams, formerly Secretary of the Inter-University Council. During Dr. Rollo's tenure of office as Principal, appointments were made to the first ten headships of academic departments and to the post of Librarian. The basic layout plan of the site was formulated and approved and the first buildings begun. Publicity and fund-raising campaigns increased the total of the benefactions received by the College (other than the grants from the British and Federal Governments) to over £300 000.

The year 1956 was devoted to detailed planning and preparation. The college was admitted to the privilege of Special Relation with the University of London. The original heads of departments, joined by others, formed the Academic Board which negotiated with the University of London the entrance requirements for the admission of students, special syllabuses in each teaching subject adapted to local conditions, examination arrangements and other academic matters. Research projects were started. The Library made substantial acquisitions by purchase and by gifts. The science departments acquired their initial stocks of apparatus and equipment and established ancillary services such as a botany garden and herbarium. The Federal Government gave the College 1 200 acres, part of the Archie Henderson Agricultural Research Station in the Mazoe Valley, for development as a farm for teaching and research. A few years later it acquired 60 square miles of virgin country on the shore of Lake Kariba on which a research station was established in association with the Universities of Oxford, Glasgow and Witwatersrand. This is on lease from the Government.

Rapid progress was made in developing the Mount Pleasant site. The Science Research Laboratories were occupied. On 3 December 1956, the Governor-General, Lord Llewellyn, opened the south wing of the Arts Building. Early in 1957 the College was able to vacate the premises at 115 Baker Avenue and transfer all its activities to Mount Pleasant, and in March teaching for full-time students began in the Faculties of Arts and Science and for graduates taking the one-year programme for the Certificate in Education.

In 1963 the Medical School was opened, the cost being raised by the College from the Nuffield Foundation. It was affiliated to the University of Birmingham and thus students for the degrees of MBChB, obtained a Birmingham qualification. In 1968 the school was named the Godfrey Huggins School of Medicine in honour of Lord Malvern, who had been Chairman of Council from 1958 to 1968.

The dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland at the end of 1963 raised questions on the future of the University College, which were considered at meetings between the governments of the United Kingdom and Southern Rhodesia in April 1964. It was then agreed by them that the University College should continue as “an independent institution of learning, open to all races, serving not only the higher education requirements of Rhodesia but also contributing to the advancement of knowledge, science and research in Central Africa and within the international community of Universities”.

The Government of Rhodesia agreed to give financial support to enable the College to continue, and the British Government agreed to contribute £250 000 for each of the three succeeding years. The main finance for the University is now provided by block grant from the Government of Zimbabwe.

In January 1970 the College and the University of London agreed to a phased termination of the Scheme of Special Relation so that the last intake for degrees of the University of London was that of 1970. In April 1970 the formal association of the University of Birmingham with the College was also terminated and the last intake for medical degrees of the University of Birmingham was that of 1970. In September 1970 the University College Council enacted new Statutes in terms of the Charter establishing the University of Rhodesia, governed by a Council and Senate. Full university status was achieved on 1 January 1971. At the end of 1973 the first full year of students with University of Rhodesia degrees graduated in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Social Studies.

In March 1974 the first student for a four year honours degree were accepted into the Faculty of Engineering and the first graduates, eleven in number, completed their degrees in 1977.

At independence, the University of Rhodesia became the University of Zimbabwe. In January 1980 the Faculties of Agriculture and Commerce and Law were established, these disciplines having previously been included in the Faculties of Science and Social Studies respectively.

In 1982 a Bill to make further and better provision for the governance of the University was enacted by Parliament thereby replacing the Royal Charter. That same year, the Faculty of Veterinary Science was established with an intake of eighteen students, eleven of whom graduated in 1986.

In 1988, the Faculty of Commerce and Law split into two distinct faculties, namely the Faculty of Commerce (with two departments, Accountancy and Business Studies), and the Faculty of Law (with three departments, Procedural Law, Private Law and Public Law).

In 1989, the University assumed responsibility for the Bachelor of Technology programmes at the Bulawayo Technical College and Harare Polytechnic.

In 1990, the University of Zimbabwe Amendment Act was enacted.

The overall number of students enrolled in the University increased from the first intake of 68 in 1957 to 2 240 in 1980, to 9 300 in 1990 and to 12 500 in 2004.

Out of the 48 474 students who had graduated from the University by the end of 2004, 43 572 of these graduated after the attainment of independence.

The post-independence era also saw the expansion of the physical infrastructure at the University and this included the construction of the Great Hall and five new halls of residence increasing the number of resident students from about 800 to 4 500 at the beginning of 2005.

Currently, the University has 10 Faculties, namely: Arts, Agriculture, Engineering, Commerce, Law, Science, Medicine, Social Studies, Education and Veterinary Science.

Since Independence, the range of medical degrees has also expanded to include Medical Laboratory Sciences, Nursing Sciences, Radiology, Rehabilitation, Dentistry and BSc Health Education and Health Promotion among others.

In the Faculty of Commerce new courses and degree programmes introduced since 1982 include Government Accounting and Law, Business Studies, Business Studies Computing Degree and a Master's degree in Tourism and Hospitality Studies. The Master of Business Administration Degree was introduced in 1986.

Over the years the University has been putting emphasis on research mainly through its non-teaching units which include Lake Kariba Research Station, Institute of Development Studies, Development Technology Centre, the African Languages Research Institute, the Institute of Environmental Studies and the Centre for Defence Studies.

The University of Zimbabwe helped start four new State Universities namely Chinhoyi University of Technology, Masvingo State University, Zimbabwe Open University and Bindura University of Science Education.

The University also has associate institutions which include teachers' colleges, technical colleges, agricultural colleges, nursing colleges and seminaries where it provides quality control and opportunities for further training. In 2004, 6 446 students from teachers' colleges graduated with the University of Zimbabwe Diploma in Education.