A BRIEF HISTORY

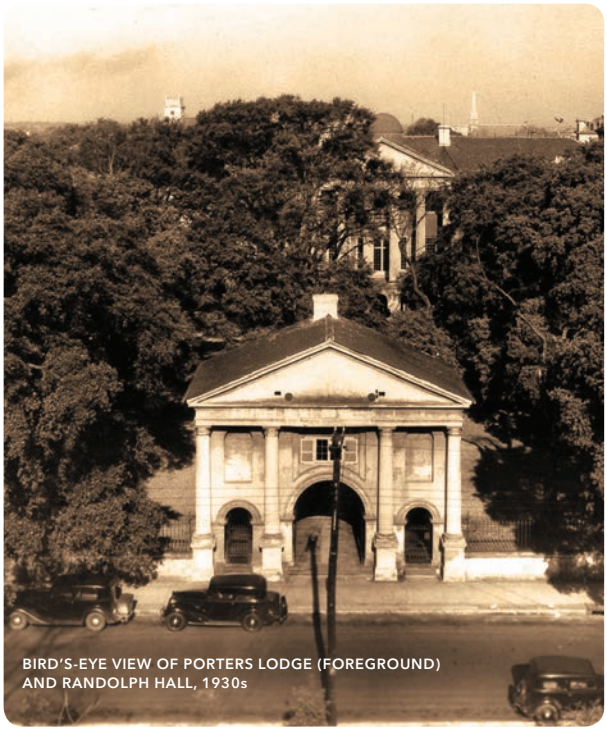
Founded in 1770 and chartered in 1785, the College of Charleston is the oldest institution of higher education south of Virginia and the 13th oldest in the United States. In 1770, the colony's general assembly established a provincial college – but internal disagreements, political rivalries and the American Revolution delayed its progress. After the war, South Carolinians returned their attention to forming the College. On March 19, 1785, the College of Charleston was chartered to "encourage and institute youth in the several branches of liberal education."

Several of the College's founders played key roles in the American Revolution and in the creation of the new republic. Three were signers of the Declaration of Independence and another three were framers of the U.S. Constitution. Other founders were past, present and future federal and state lawmakers and judges, S.C. governors, diplomats and Charleston councilmen and mayors.

In 1785, the College's first classes were held on the ground floor of first president Rev. Robert Smith's home on Glebe Street (now the residence for the president of the College). Rooms for the College were eventually fashioned out of old military barracks on the public land that is now the Cistern Yard, where instruction began in 1790. The College graduated its first class in 1794, which consisted of six students.

In 1837, the College became the nation's first municipal college when the City of Charleston assumed responsibility for its support. The City provided funds, for example, to enlarge the main academic building (Randolph Hall, built under President Jasper Adams in 1828–29), to construct Porters Lodge and to fence in the Cistern Yard, the block that is still the core of the campus. It remained a municipal college until the 1950s, when the College again became a private institution.

Under the presidency of Harrison Randolph, the first residence halls were built, scholarships were created and women were admitted. Enrollment remained at about 500 until the College became a state institution in 1970. During Theodore Stern's presidency, from 1968 to 1979, the College began developing its flagship programs in marine biology and fine arts; the first master's degree programs were introduced; the physical facilities expanded, from fewer than 10 buildings to more than 100; and the number of students increased to about 5,000.



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF PORTERS LODGE (FOREGROUND) AND RANDOLPH HALL, 1930s

The Graduate School was formally "founded" as the University of Charleston, S.C., in 1992 to house the College's graduate program. It offers 19 master's programs, seven certificates, a dual degree and a Peace Corps Master's International option, and coordinates support for the College's many nationally recognized faculty research programs.

Now with more than 11,000 undergraduate and graduate students, the College continues to grow both academically and physically. Under the presidency of P. George Benson, the College is working to ensure that it retains its traditions in the liberal arts and sciences while responding to the needs of its evolving student population with cutting-edge academic programming and state-of-the-art facilities.

COLLEGE of CHARLESTON