



“In 1965 only 26 out of every 100 college-age Georgians were enrolled in college.... The challenge is to close this gap.”

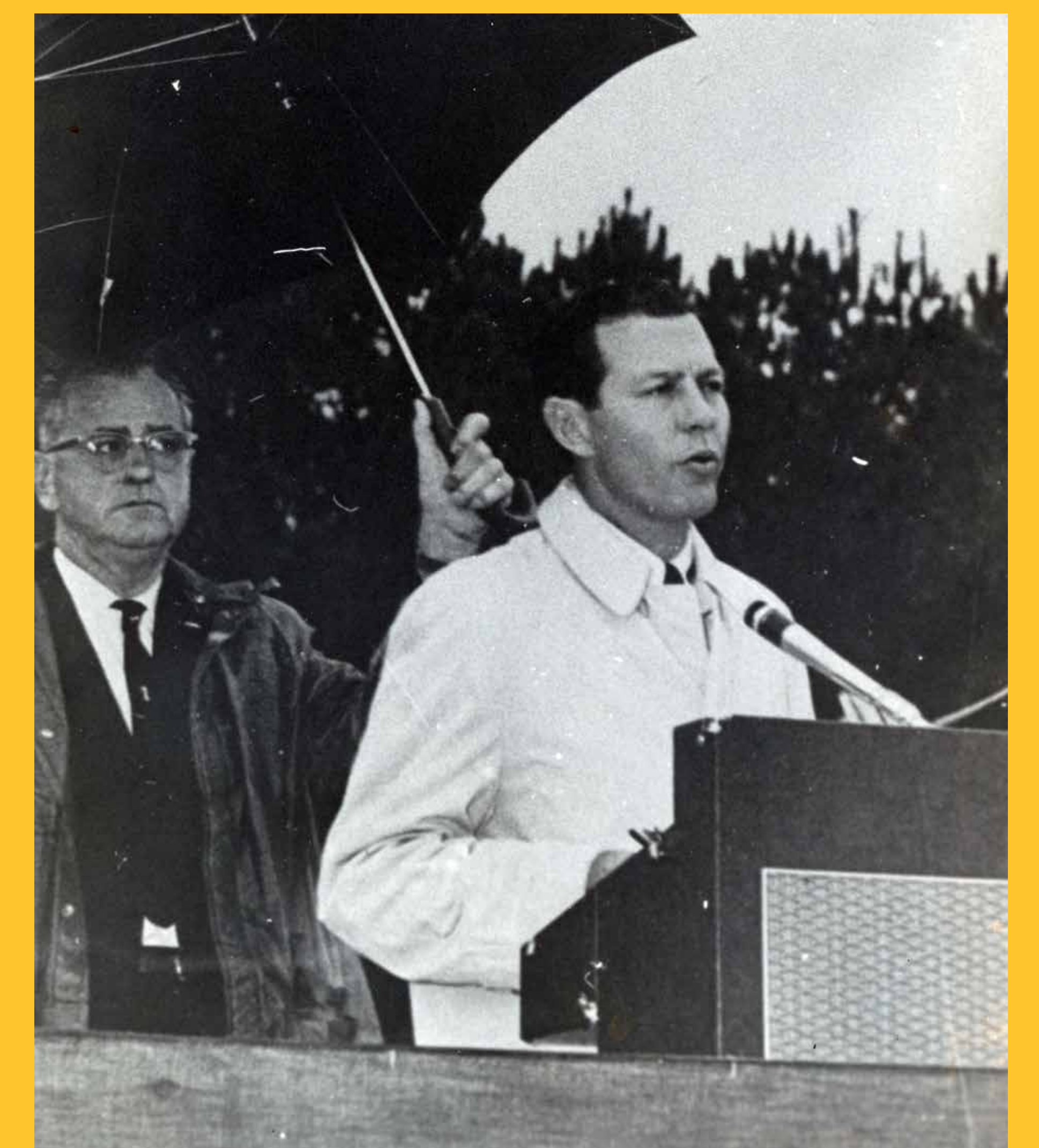
—GEORGIA EDUCATION JOURNAL, OCTOBER 1967



Left photo: Campus green, ca. 1970

Right photo: Students walking to class at KJC, 1970s

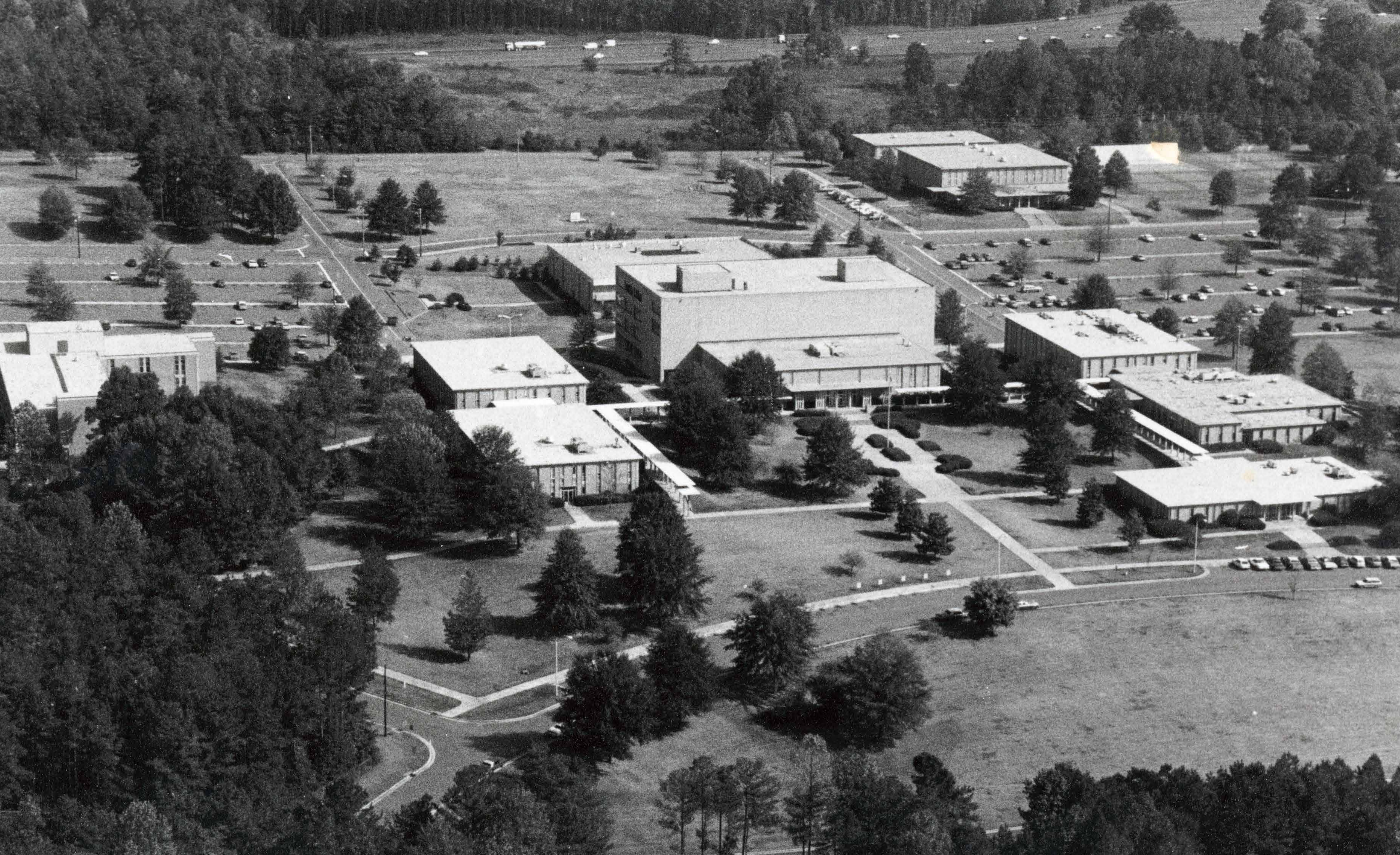
Bottom photo: Governor Carl Sanders speaking at groundbreaking ceremony for new junior college in Cobb County, 1964



The Junior College Boom

In decades prior to the 1960s, liberal arts education in Georgia was generally limited to flagship universities and satellite campuses of these institutions. In the late 1950s, however, the Board of Regents began favoring the idea of junior colleges as means of spreading higher education to its citizens. Politicians, such as Governor Carl Sanders, provided further momentum for the junior college movement by advocating for the

development of public colleges within commuting distance of nearly every Georgian. By 1967, nine out of every ten Georgians lived within 35 miles of a higher education institution. Kennesaw Junior College, which would later become Kennesaw State University (KSU), was a direct result of the junior college movement and helped transform a rural area of Cobb into a thriving and well-rounded metropolitan city.



Left photo: Aerial view of campus, 1970s. The center building is Sturgis Library, and the below driveway was at the time called Frey Lake Road (today, Campus Loop Road)

Right photo: KJC Day, 1970



A New Junior College Comes to Cobb

In 1963, discussions surrounding the establishment of a liberal arts college in northwest Georgia were well underway. On October 9, 1963, the Board of Regents passed a resolution approving the creation of a new junior college in Cobb County. Eighteen months later, the Board of Regents appointed Dr. Horace Sturgis as the first president of Kennesaw Junior College (KJC).

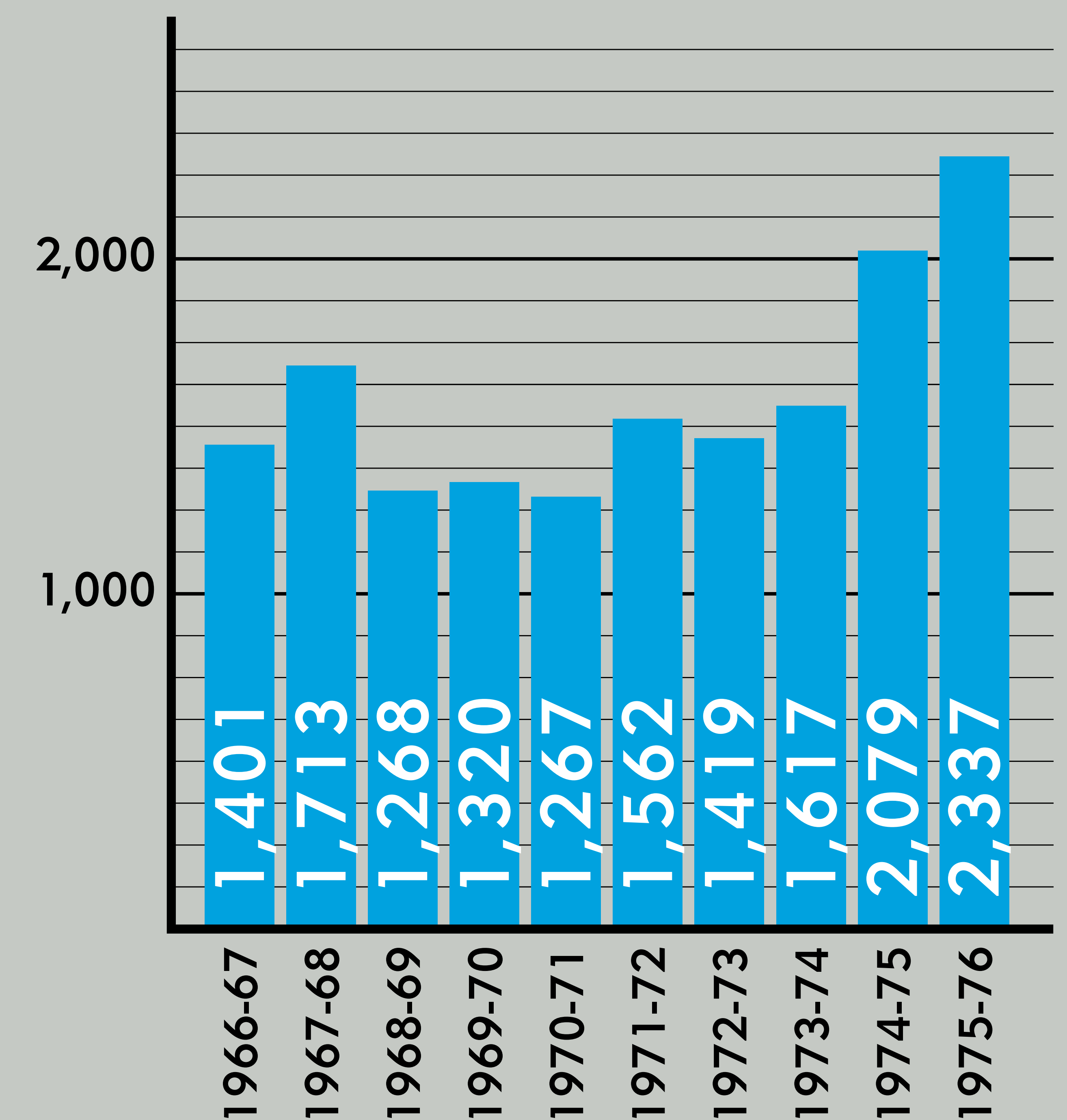
The groundbreaking for KJC took place in November 1964 with a goal of opening the school in fall 1966. Due to labor strikes and other construction issues, the campus was not finished in time for the 1966 fall quarter. KJC held its inaugural quarter on Southern Tech's campus, welcoming 47 faculty members and 1,014 students. The average student age was 27. In January 1967, KJC officially opened for classes and later that year, held its first graduation ceremony.

This KJC Day photograph helped bring attention to Kennesaw in 1970. The "KJC Day" tradition began in 1968 and served as an afternoon of fun and games for students at the end of the spring quarter. Activities often included a cookout, music, and club-sponsored competitions such as tug-of-war and tricycle races.

This photograph of students enjoying KJC Day prompted many media outlets around the country to frame KJC as a carefree institution that was untouched by the Vietnam War, in stark contrast to other universities of the time that were erupting in anti-war violence. The woman featured in the photograph, Stella Merritt, became particularly popular after Vietnam War soldiers saw the photograph. Many of these soldiers wrote love letters to Stella from Vietnam.



Left Photo: "Don't Call Us Junior Anymore" Bonfire, 1981



"Don't Call Us Junior Anymore!"

During its first ten years, KJC steadily grew in numbers and academic rigor. As the population in Cobb County and other areas of northwest Georgia continued to grow, KJC students and faculty petitioned for the transition to a four-year school. Many other schools within the University System of Georgia were concerned about the addition of another four-year institution competing for funds and students. Nonetheless, the tireless work of KJC's campus community and external

supporters paid off in 1977 when the Board of Regents approved KJC's conversion to senior-college status and its subsequent name change to Kennesaw College.

A major milestone for Kennesaw College occurred in 1981 when Dr. Betty Siegel became the first woman president in the school's history and the first woman president of a University System of Georgia school. Shortly after President Siegel's arrival, she established the View of the

Growth of class enrollment at KJC during its first ten years.

Future Committee designed to restructure academic departments and positions. These changes improved many aspects of student life and prioritized areas such as first-year experience opportunities, graduate degrees, intercollegiate athletics, and diversity. In 1988, Kennesaw College became Kennesaw State College and by 1990, the student population had grown to 10,000 students.



Left photo: International Students at KSU, 2011

Right photo: Dr. Betty L. Siegel cutting "KSU" cake, 1996



Becoming a World-Class University

After years of consistent student and academia growth, the Board of Regents elevated Kennesaw State College to university status and sanctioned the school's name change to Kennesaw State University. This long-awaited change propelled KSU to the next level. The end of the 1990s and the early 2000s brought changes to KSU's academic program, including the restructuring of schools and colleges and the creation of new master's degrees. To match its maturing academic

program, campus expansion included the lease of a former outlet mall that would eventually become the KSU Center and the creation of the first residence halls. In 2003 and 2004, respectively, the women's soccer team and men's basketball team both won division championships, which helped put KSU's intercollegiate athletics on the map.

Over the years, KSU has continued to flourish both on- and off-campus. KSU now maintains international partnerships with

KSU PRESIDENTS

Dr. Horace Sturgis (1965 – 1981)

Dr. Betty Siegel (1981 – 2006)

Dr. Daniel S. Papp (2006 – 2016)

Mr. Sam Olens (2016 – 2018)

Dr. Pamela Whitten (2018 – Present)

countries including China and Italy, offers more than 150 degree programs, and boasts a population of more than 35,000 students, making it the third-largest university in the University System of Georgia.



Left photo: Students cheering at KSU football game, 2016, courtesy of University Relations, KSU

Right photo: Fifth Third Bank Stadium entrance sign, 2016, courtesy of University Relations, KSU

Bottom, right photo: KSU spring 2019 Commencement Ceremony, courtesy of University Relations, KSU



A New KSU

The stories of Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) and Kennesaw State University (KSU) reflect the development of higher education in post-World War II Georgia. Although KSU and SPSU were established for different reasons, both schools experienced high levels of growth that transformed Cobb County in complementary ways. SPSU provided much-needed education for engineers and technicians in the heart of Marietta,

while KSU brought new opportunities for northwest Georgians seeking accessible and affordable education. Over the years, the paths of these two institutions crossed many times, eventually leading to their consolidation in January 2015. What began as two schools has grown into one university. The diverse people, places, and achievements of Kennesaw State University guarantee the continued success and longevity of this wide-reaching institution.

