

# Yale Firsts

Adapted from [Landmarks in Yale's History](#) and the Association of American Colleges & Universities' *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum* (ed. Gaff Ratcliff; Jossey-Bass, 1996).

- In 1732, the Reverend George Berkeley establishes the Berkeley Scholarships for graduate study, the first such scholarships in America.
- In 1745, knowledge of arithmetic is made an entrance requirement at Yale. Previously, no American colleges had required arithmetic at entrance.
- In 1757, the first church within a college in America is founded at Yale.
- In 1783, Yale rejects an otherwise fully qualified woman applicant for admission because of her sex.
- In 1785, President Ezra Stiles adopts one of the first grading systems in the American Colonies. It is a four-point scale that comprises the following categories: *optimi*, *secundi optimi*, *inferiores boni*, and *peiores* [best; second best; less good, and worse].
- In 1792, John Trumbull, artist and one-time aide-de-camp to General Washington, develops the Brick Row campus plan, in collaboration with James Hillhouse (B.A., 1773), making Yale the first planned college campus in America.
- In 1802, Benjamin Silliman, Sr. (B.A., 1796, faculty 1799-1853), considered the father of modern scientific education in America, teaches the first modern science course (chemistry) in the United States.
- In 1828, the famous Yale Report is issued, in which the purpose of a college education is declared to be to provide "the discipline and furniture of the mind." This report is characterized as a rebuff to other institutions that had begun to offer technical subjects or slighted the classical languages, the latter of which, according to the report, provided "the most effectual discipline of mental functions."
- In 1832, the Yale University Art Gallery opens, the first college art museum in the Western Hemisphere.
- In 1843, the first collegiate rowing races are held in New Haven Harbor. Other college sports firsts occurring at Yale include the first intercollegiate game of modern baseball (1865), the development of modern football (1990), and the first game of basketball played with five-man teams (1897).
- In 1846, Yale makes two faculty appointments in agriculture (apparently "firsts" at a liberal arts college).
- In 1847, Yale takes first steps towards establishing a graduate school — the first such steps in the U.S.
- In 1854, Yung Wing is the first Chinese man to be awarded a degree (B.A.) from an American university.
- In 1861, Yale awards the first Ph.D. in the U.S.
- In 1869, the first university arts institution, the School of the Fine Arts, opens. It was also the first Yale school open to women.
- In 1876, Edward A. Bouchet is the first Black person to earn a Ph.D. in America (in physics).
- In 1899, Yale permits undergraduates to include law and medical courses in their programs of study.
- In 1923, Yale School of Nursing is founded — the first nursing school to have autonomy within a university and to be under university standards and influence rather than under hospital control. And so forth.

## You might also be interested to know

- Bowdoin is the first college at which a **blackboard** or chalkboard was used in a classroom by an instructor (1823, or thereabouts)

- Kenyon was the first college at which each student was assigned a **faculty adviser** (about 1828) — a step previously considered unnecessary in the context of a curriculum with strict requirements and few electives
- Johns Hopkins is the first school to make use of the terms **major or minor** in its publications (1878)
- Harvard's catalogue listed courses for the first time by **subject area** rather than by the student class (freshman, sophomore, etc.)

