

McNeese State University Timeline

- July 4, 1843 John McNeese, the namesake of McNeese State University was born in New York City.
- July 6, 1938 Governor Richard Leche signed the bill creating a junior college in Lake Charles.
- September 11, 1939 Registration began for the first class of the Lake Charles Junior College.
- January 2, 1940 The Administration Building (later named Kaufman Hall) was officially opened, although it had been in use for several months.
- January 19, 1940 The Auditorium (later named Bulber Auditorium) was dedicated.
- December 15, 1940 Francis Bulber directed the first performance of Handel's *Messiah* in the McNeese Auditorium.
- 1941 The U.S. Army used the junior college campus for part of its Louisiana Maneuvers. Lieutenant General Walter Krueger made the Auditorium his headquarters. Liaison planes took off from and landed on a temporary airstrip marked off on the grass. Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower also participated in the exercises, lodging at the Majestic Hotel in downtown Lake Charles and bivouacking on the McNeese campus.
- February 7, 1941 Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist H.R. Knickerbocker gave a public lecture titled, "At the ringside of history" in the Auditorium.
- May 29, 1941 The first John McNeese Junior College class graduated.
- March, 1942 Male students formed an independent military drill unit to prepare themselves for military service. Registrar W. B. Nash, a reserve officer, supervised the unit and other faculty gave lectures on military courtesy, bomb disposal, and first aid.
- Summer 1942 The first summer school session took place. The summer sessions helped students graduate faster so they could enter the military or the civilian work force quicker.
- Fall 1942 The Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) unit began.
- November 1942 The all-female McNeese Auxiliary Corps (MACs) began with drills twice a week, a drum and bugle corps, Red Cross activities, and special courses about ways in which women could help with the war effort. This was the only unit of its kind in the state.

1943-1944	McNeese hosted 200 Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) students. This was a wartime program which brought especially talented young men from around the country to selected sites to give them additional education so that they could be of even greater service to their country. Kaufman Hall was hastily remodeled to provide sleeping space for the men on the second and third floors. During this time, the regular McNeese enrollment was around 100 students who were far outnumbered by the ASTP students.
Summer 1944	McNeese experienced its lowest enrollment: 63 students.
Fall 1944	Lether E. Frazar appointed Dean of the Junior College.
1945	McNeese purchased the land where Cowboy Stadium would one day stand and the Howell property, where the President's Home now stands.
November 1945	The first Homecoming was held (called "McNeese College Day") and was sponsored by the Lake Charles Lions Club. Governor Jimmie Davis crowned the Homecoming Queen, Adrienne Managan, at the football game played at the Lake Charles High School Stadium.
November 25, 1945	The Don Cossack Chorus performed in the Auditorium.
January 1946	Tenor Jussi Bjoerling performed in the Auditorium. McNeese held its first exhibit of student artwork.
February 14, 1946	Tex Ritter and his Western Hill Billy Gang, plus his horse White Flash, performed in the Auditorium.
March 1946	The Veterans' Club held a dance with Governor Jimmie Davis in attendance, who sang "You Are My Sunshine."
March 7, 1946	Birch the Master Magician performed in the Auditorium. The highlight of his act came when he suspended a Shetland pony above the stage and made it disappear.
Fall 1946	10 temporary buildings (former military barracks) and 10 trailers were erected on campus to house student veterans and for classrooms. Some of these would remain on campus until 1970. A Quonset hut served as a student center.
January 8, 1947	Dave Rubinoff played his Romanoff-Stradivarius violin in the Auditorium. Rubinoff returned several times to perform at McNeese.
May 1947	Operatic mezzo soprano Rise Stevens performed in the Auditorium.

April 1949	An inebriated Hank Williams, scheduled to perform in the Auditorium, sauntered onto the stage, ate a biscuit with syrup, and strummed a few chords, but never played a song.
May 3, 1949	Tommy Dorsey performed in the Auditorium.
January 24, 1950	Spike Jones performed in the Auditorium.
March 22, 1950	Ernest Tubb, Minnie Pearl, Rod Bradfield, and other Grand Ole Opry stars performed in the Auditorium.
October 24-25, 1951	Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys were scheduled to appear in the Auditorium. Unfortunately Bob Wills himself did not perform as he was incarcerated in the Lake Charles jail for drunkenness. The band performed without its lead singer.
December 1956	Blue Key Honorary Fraternity established.
December 10, 1956	New athletic wing and basketball court in the Arena dedicated by Lieutenant Governor Lether Frazar.
April 1957	The Student Senate was Reintroduced.
March 23, 1957	The Science Building (Frasch Hall) opened.
August 1957	The McNeese Arena sheltered more than 1,000 refugees of Hurricane Audrey.
October 1957	The Catholic Student Center was dedicated.
November 1957	The first men's dormitory, the Blue Dorm (Watkins Hall), was built. A second women's dormitory, Beta Hall (Bel Hall) was constructed.
January 1959	Julie Christ became the first female student body president.
March 16, 1960	Contract awarded to start construction on a new library (formerly located in Kaufman Hall).
May 16, 1960	Lether Frazar died at Lake Charles Memorial Hospital. The McNeese State University Lether E. Frazar Memorial Library is titled in his memory.
September 1, 1960	Master's degree in Education approved by the State Board of Education.

April 11, 1961	The City of Lake Charles observed Ralph Ward Day. Ward led the basketball team to four GSC championships and one national title in nine years.
November 14, 1961	McNeese dedicated the new two-story library named in honor of Lether Frazar. Dr. Samuel Marino was the Director.
April 1962	Ralph Squires died from Hodgkin's Disease. The new auditorium in the Fine Arts Building was dedicated to him.
December 1962	State Board of Education authorized Master's degrees in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, English,...
May 1963	First master's degree outside of Education awarded to Mrs. Althea Davis Pitre.
March 1965	Campus streets named after Southwest Louisiana parishes. Administration became Kaufman Hall and is named after Leopold Kaufman. The Science building was named Frascch Hall after Herman Frascch. The Student Center became known as "The Ranch" and Holbrook Ranch after W.A. Holbrook. Alpha Dormitory was renamed Sallier Hall after Caroline LeBleu Sallier. Bel Hall, formerly Beta Dormitory, was named in honor of Della Goos Bel. Blue dormitory was renamed Watkins Hall after J.B. Watkins. Fred B. Zigler had the honor of having Red dormitory named Zigler Hall.
April 1965	Funding provided for the conversion of Chennault Air Base buildings for use as Engineering classrooms and laboratories. Federal funds received for grants to students from low-income families.
September 1965	Dr. Joseph Farrar died.
January 1966	The establishment of a Division of Commerce was authorized.
January 27, 1966	A fire breaks out in the offices of campus printing, the Log, and the Contraband, destroying many...
November 1967	McNeese became authorized to grant a Doctor of Education degree.
September 11, 1969	Dr. Thomas Leary from the Engineering Department named President.
January 1971	Campus Security Building was completed (now called the H.C. Drew Center).

March 1971	President Leary vetoed a petition to form a Young Republican chapter on campus.
February 17, 1972	The last basketball game is played in the McNeese Arena. The games were played in the Lake Charles Civic Center for 14 years, then in Burton Coliseum.
March 1972	The last stock show in the Arena. The shows would now be held in the new Burton Coliseum.
April 1974	Construction of fraternity and sorority homes on Auburn Street.
May 19, 1974	Lake Charles Mayor James Sudduth declared "Francis Bulber Day."
November 1975	Memorial fountain was placed near Gayle Hall A fountain dedicated to the memory of Seaman A. Knapp was placed in front of Gayle Hall.
October 1976	Groundbreaking ceremonies held for the alumni center in memory of William Gray Stream.
December 1977	Another annex added to the Holbrook Student Union (The Ranch).
February 1978	Parra Ballroom named after Leland Parra.
July 1978	New tennis courts constructed.
July 1, 1980	Jack V. Doland became the fourth President of McNeese.
September 30, 1980	Ground-breaking ceremonies for the renovation of the Arena.
November 1982	Opening of the Intramural Recreation Complex Includes an indoor/outdoor pool, racquetball courts, steam room & sauna, basketball courts, and indoor track.
February 1983	Groundbreaking ceremonies held for the Business Economic Center.
February 1, 1987	Academic Vice President, Robert D. Hebert, became acting President.
March 1989	McNeese basketball team makes first appearance at the NCAA tournament.

- September 2005 Campus closed due to mandatory parish evacuations for Hurricane Rita which caused major destruction – almost \$30 million - to campus facilities. The campus was closed for one month but McNeese maintained a continuous Web presence, reopened, completed its fall academic term and graduated a class of 752 students just days before Christmas.
- July 1, 2010 Dr. Philip C. Williams became the sixth President of McNeese.
- October 25, 2012 John McNeese Park opened. The park is situated between Smith Hall and the Burton Business Center and features a bronze statue of John McNeese by Janie Stine.
- May 1, 2013 The new 865-vehicle student parking garage opened.
- August 16, 2013 The new Burton Hall dormitory opened. The original Burton Hall sustained significant wind-driven rain and roof damage during Hurricane Rita in September of 2005 and never reopened. In 2008, McNeese decided that it would not be cost-effective to repair the building and plans were made to utilize a \$7.2 million combination of disaster recovery and insurance funds to demolish the damaged building and reconstruct on the same site. The demolition took place in the summer of 2012 and construction of the new Burton Hall took a little more than a year to complete.
- August 16, 2013 The \$13 million Southwest Louisiana Entrepreneurial and Economic Development (SEED) Center opened.