The opening of its doors was the culmination of a 20-year effort by its founding mothers, including activist Sallie Reneau. The school’s original name was The Industrial Institute and College (II&C), and it was created to provide the unique hybrid of a high-quality collegiate education for women and specialized vocational training.

Three hundred and forty-one girls attended the first classes in October of 1885 in Columbus, which donated the buildings and grounds of the Columbus Female Institute, a private school founded in 1847. Four years later, the first graduates were granted their diplomas. In 1920, The Industrial Institute and College was renamed Mississippi State College for Women, and in 1974, it became Mississippi University for Women.

The school was the first state-supported public institution exclusively for females established in the United States and is known as “The W” by alumni and friends; nevertheless, it began admitting men in 1982. Presently, the student population includes men and women not only from all over Mississippi but also from 19 states and 24 countries.

MUW faithfully follows these guiding principles:

- MUW provides high-quality instructional programs that emphasize teaching and learning.
- MUW is student oriented.
- MUW values research, scholarship, and creativity.
- MUW is committed to diversity among its faculty, staff, and students.
- MUW endorses sound organizational principles.
- MUW meets regional, state, and national needs for higher education.
- MUW is committed to public service.

MUW ranks in the top 16% of 1,362 U.S. colleges and universities in terms of student-body diversity. About 31% of MUW’s students are minorities, 28% of whom are African-Americans.

In 1979, the paralegal studies program at Mississippi University for Women was instituted, and it was granted its initial American Bar Association approval in February 1987 as the first ABA-approved program in the State of Mississippi. The program was re-approved by the ABA in 1992, 1997, and, most recently, in 2002.

MUW offers a four-year baccalaureate degree in paralegal studies. Currently, the program is taught by an excellent faculty consisting of two full-time professors and four adjunct professors, all of whom are attorneys, as well as a computer technology instructor who holds a master’s degree. H. J. Davidson, Jr., is the director of the program.

MUW offers a solid legal education through small classes with the best instruction and resources and a full complement of legal courses. The program sponsors a club open to all paralegal students called Bench & Gavel and a chapter of Lambda Epsilon Chi, a national honorary fraternity for paralegals.

**ON THE NET**

Mississippi University for Women  
www.muw.edu/about

Columbus, MS  
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbus,_Mississippi

American Association for Paralegal Education  
www.aafpe.org