Savannah State University, founded in 1890, is the oldest public historically black college in Georgia. Originally named Georgia State Industrial College for Colored Youth, SSU was located in Athens, Georgia for several months in 1891. On October 7, 1891, SSU moved to its permanent location in Savannah. Major Richard R. Wright Sr. served as the institution's first president from 1891-1921.

Under the administration of the school's third President, Benjamin F. Hubert, the college became a full-time degree granting institution in 1928. Four years later, Georgia State Industrial College for Colored Youths was renamed Georgia State College.

During the tenure of the college's fifth president, Dr. William K. Payne, the school became Savannah State College. In 1996, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia granted the school university status and the institution was renamed Savannah State University.

Presidents:

Richard R. Wright (1891-1921)

Cyrus G. Wiley (1921-1926)

Benjamin F. Hubert (1926-1947)

James A. Colston (1947-1949)

William K. Payne (1949-1963)

Timothy C. Myers (Acting, 1963-1963)

Dr. Howard Jordan, Jr. (1963-1971)

Dr. Prince A. Jackson (1971-1978)

Dr. Clyde W. Hall (Acting, 1978-1980)

Dr. Wendell G. Rayburn (1980-1988)

Dr. Wiley S. Bolden (Acting, 1988-1989)

Dr. William E. Gardener (1989-1991)

Dr. Annette Brock (Acting, 1991-1993)

Dr. John T. Wolfe (1993-1997)

Dr. Carlton E. Brown (1997-2006)

Dr. Julius S. Scott, Jr. (Acting, 2007-2007)

Dr. Earl G. Yarbrough, Sr. (2007-2011)

Dr. Cheryl Davenport Dozier (2011-Present)