Troy University traces its origin to the Troy State Normal School which was established on 26 February 1887, by an Act of the Alabama Legislature. Recognizing the growth of the School's programs, the State Board of Education in 1929 changed the name of the School to State Teachers College, and in 1931, the College granted its first baccalaureate degree.

Continued growth in the College's programs prompted the Alabama legislature in 1957 to change the name to Troy State College, and in the same year, the State Board of Education authorized the master's degree program. On 14 December 1967, Troy State College was officially renamed Troy State University.

Responding to the needs of the people of the area, Troy State University established a center at Fort Rucker in 1961, and another center in Montgomery at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base in 1965. These centers became degree-granting branches of Troy State University in 1966. TSU at Montgomery in 1983 and TSU at Dothan in 1985 were accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award the associate degree, the bachelor's degree, the master's degree, and the educational specialist degree.

Since 1966, Troy State University has established a branch at Phenix City and, under the aegis of University College, offers degree programs at a number of locations in the United States and the world.

In August 2005, Troy State University officially became one University--Troy University—and consists of the merged campuses and sites related to Troy State University (TSU), Troy State University Dothan (TSUD), and Troy State University Montgomery (TSUM). This merger was approved by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) in December 2004 and by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) and Board of Trustees (BOT) in 2005.