From its earliest incarnation, Suffolk University was seen as offering a beacon of hope to people aspiring to better their lives through education.

Founder Gleason Archer had worked his way through college when a benefactor loaned him money to pursue the study of law. He asked only that Archer pass along the favor.

In 1906 Archer began teaching evening law classes in his home, providing access to professional higher education for those with limited time and financial resources.

Machinist and Archer student Roland E. Brown passed the bar in 1908. News of his achievement brought an influx of students, so Archer gave up his law practice to devote himself full-time to the Suffolk School of Law.

The young law professor soon moved the school into his downtown office, a centralized location that made the school more convenient to students and, in time, opened doors to innumerable collaborations with government, business, and cultural entities.

Suffolk Law School received its charter in 1914 and was the largest evening law school in the United States by 1930.
Admission tickets were used to accommodate growing class sizes, 1928.

A neon sign stood atop the Law School building in the 1920s.

The first-year law class of 1911

The first issue of the Suffolk Law School Register, the University’s first student publication, and its editorial staff

Suffolk Law School Class of 1931
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences – later renamed the College of Arts & Sciences – was founded in 1934 in response to the recommended standard that law students possess a college degree and because Archer wanted to create “a great evening university” that working people could afford.

Three years later, in 1937, the College of Business Administration – now the Sawyer Business School – was established.

The three academic units were incorporated as Suffolk University in 1937. In ensuing years, the University began to offer a complete range of full- and part-time programs and an increasingly active campus community. The postwar era brought an influx of veterans amid renewed prosperity for the nation. Extra-curricular activities now flourished – and with them a growing sense of community among the students.
The University Takes Shape

The University’s new mascot is unveiled at Class Day, 1950.

The WSFR radio station crew, 1970s

The Ridgeway Lane alley behind the Archer Building was a favorite student shortcut.

A Suffolk Journal reporter at work, 1950s

The University’s first women’s basketball team debuted in the 1951-1952 season.

Students join the protest movement of the 1970s.

A sampling of books from the Collection of African American Literature, established in collaboration with the Museum of African American History and the National Park Service, 1971

Yearbook and class rings, 1955
Building on the promise of its founding, Suffolk University continues to inspire a diverse student body. Through carefully designed curriculum, mentoring, networking, and service learning, the University creates opportunities that enable students to meet their goals.

The University’s residence halls now allow students to live on campus and fully realize the academic and cultural promise of the urban environment. Classrooms, libraries, theaters, galleries, and offices are housed in buildings clustered in downtown Boston, and the historic Boston Common serves as the unofficial campus quad.

The scope of academic offerings has broadened to include new programs at the baccalaureate, master, and doctoral levels.

Students today hail from across the nation and around the world. Partnerships with institutions across the globe allow for a broad range of international study and internship opportunities.

University officials parade across the Boston Common to a convocation ceremony launching the yearlong Centennial Celebration, 2006.

Suffolk study-abroad students take in the sights in Cordoba, Spain.

A collaborative approach to learning

The dedication of a new Law School building included a reenactment of the Boston Massacre trial, 1999.

Exploring scientific principles in the lab

Seaside class at the University’s R.S. Friedman Field Station in Maine

The new Mildred Sawyer Library, 2006

Students gather in the lobby of the Miller Residence Hall.
The University redeveloped the site of the abandoned Modern Theatre, adding a residence hall tower, theater, and gallery to the campus, while restoring the historic movie house facade, 2011.

Suffolk Law students teach Boston Public School students about constitutional law as part of the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project, 2011.

Students help unveil the newest incarnation of the Ram logo.

Students sweep down on Beacon Hill during Boston Shines City Clean-Up.

Into the Woods, C. Walsh Theatre, 2010

Students and alumni of the Sawyer Business School are finding success as entrepreneurs.

The University redeveloped the site of the abandoned Modern Theatre, adding a residence hall tower, theater, and gallery to the campus, while restoring the historic movie house facade, 2011.