

## **Documents: Columbia College Charter of 1787**

CHARTER OF 1787.

an act to institute an university within this state and for other purposes therein mentioned.

passed april 13, 1787. laws of 1787, chapter 82

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Recites that:—"Whereas, by two acts of the legislature of the State of New York, the one passed the first day of May, and. the other twenty sixth day of November, one thousand seven hundred and eighty four, an university is instituted within this State, in the manner and with the powers therein specified. And whereas from the representation of the regents of the said university, it appears there are defects in the constitution of the

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said university which call for alterations and amendments. And whereas a number of acts on the same subject amending correcting and altering former ones, tend to render the same less intelligible and easily to be understood. Whereof to the end, that the constitution of the said university may be properly amended and appear entire in one law, it will be expedient, to delineate and establish the same in this, and repeal all former acts relative thereto." The act provides for the establishment of a university to be called and known by the name or style of "The Regents of the University of the State of New York," and creates the regents a corporation, with power to visit and Inspect all the colleges, academies or schools which are or may be established in the State, to confer diplomas, and to grant charters. The act further repeals the acts passed May 1st and November 26th, 1784, and provides:

*And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the charter heretofore granted to the governors of the college of the province of New-York, in the city of New-York, in America, dated the thirty-first day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and fifty-four, shall be, and hereby Is fully and absolutely ratified and confirmed, in all respects, except that the college thereby established, shall be henceforth called Columbia College: That the style of the said corporation shall be, The trustees of Columbia College, in the city of New-York; and that no persons shall be trustees of the same, in virtue*

of any offices, characters, or descriptions whatever; excepting also such clauses thereof as require the taking of oaths, and subscribing the declaration therein mentioned; [**1787 charter specifically discards religious conditions of 1754 charter**] and which render a person ineligible to the office of president of the college, on account of his religious tenets, and prescribe a form of public prayer to be used in the said college; and also excepting the clause thereof which provides, that the by-laws and ordinances to be made in pursuance thereof, should not be repugnant to the laws and statutes of that part of the kingdom of Great-Britain, called England; except also, that in all cases where fifteen governors are required to constitute a quorum for the dispatch of business, thirteen trustees shall be sufficient. Provided always, That the by-laws and ordinances to be made by the trustees of the said Columbia College, shall not be contrary  
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to the constitution and laws of this state. (Repealed by Laws of 1810, Chapter 85.)

*And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That* [**30 named trustees**] James Duane, Samuel Provost, John H. Livingston, Richard Varick, Alexander Hamilton, John Mason, James Wilson, John Gano, Brockholst Livingston, Robert Harpur, John Daniel Gross, Johan Christoff Kunze, Walter Livingston, Lewis A. Scott, Joseph Delaplaine, Leonard Lispenard, Abraham Beach, John Lawrance, John Rutherford, Morgan Lewis, John Cochran, Gershom Seixas, Charles McKnight, Thomas Jones, Malachi Treat, Samuel Bard, Nicholas Romein, Benjamin Kissarn, and Ebenezer Crossby, shall be, and they are hereby constituted and declared to be the present trustees of Columbia college, in the city of New-York, and that when by the death or resignation, or removal of any of the said trustees, [**fixing future board size to 24**] the number of those trustees shall be reduced to twenty-four, then and from thenceforth the said twenty-four trustees shall be, and they hereby are declared and constituted trustees of the said Columbia college, in perpetual succession, according to the true intent and meaning of the said charter; and all vacancies thereafter shall be supplied in the manner thereby directed. (Repealed by Laws of 1810, Chapter 85.)

*And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That all and singular the power, authority, rights, privileges, franchises, and immunities, so heretofore granted to, and vested in the said governors of the college of the province of New-York, in the city of New-York, in America, by the said charter, excepting as before excepted, shall be, and the same hereby are granted to and vested in the trustees of Columbia college, in the city of New-York, and their successors forever, as fully and effectually, to all intents and purposes, as if the same were herein particularly specified and expressed; and all and singular the lands, tenements, hereditaments, and real estate, goods, chattels, rents, annuities, moneys, books, and other property, whereof the said governors of the college of the province of New-York, in the city of New-York, in America, were seized, possessed, or entitled, under and in virtue of the said charter, or with which the regents of the said university were invested, under or by virtue of the said acts, for the use or benefit of the said Columbia college

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shall be, and the same hereby are granted to and vested in the said trustees of Columbia college, in the city of New-York, and their successors forever, for the sole use and benefit of the said college; and it shall and may be lawful to and for the said trustees, and their successors, to grant, bargain, sell, demise, improve, and dispose of the same, as to them shall seem meet. Provided, always, That the lands given and granted to the governors of the college of the province of New-York, in the city of New-York, in America, by the corporation heretofore styled, The rector and inhabitants of the city of New-York, in communion of the church of England, as by law established, on part whereof the said college is erected, shall not be granted for any greater estate, or in any other manner, than is limited by the said charter. (Repealed by Laws of 1810, Chapter 85.)

*And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That when any special meeting of the trustees of the said college shall be deemed necessary, it shall and may be lawful to and for the senior trustee of the said college, then in the city of New-York, and taking upon himself the exercise of his office, (which seniority shall be determined according to the order in which the said trustees are named in this act, and shall be elected hereafter,) and he is hereby authorized and required, on application for that purpose in writing under the hands of any five or more of the said trustees, to appoint a time for such special meeting, in some convenient place within the said city, and to cause due notice thereof to be given in the manner directed by the said charter. (Repealed by Laws of 1810, Chapter 85.)

*And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the act, entitled, An act for granting certain privileges to the college heretofore called King's college, for altering the name and charter thereof, and erecting a university within this state, passed the first day of May, 1784; and the act, entitled, An act to amend an act, entitled, An act for granting certain privileges to the college heretofore called King's college, for altering the name and charter thereof, and erecting an university within this state, passed the 26th day of November, 1784, be, and they are hereby severally repealed.*

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**Source:** John B. Pine, compiler, Charters, Acts and Official Documents of Columbia College (June, 1895), pp. 36-39.