

EWU HISTORY

A History of Eastern Washington University

In 1882, the Benjamin P. Cheney Academy opened its doors to more than 200 enrolling students. A generous contribution of \$10,000 from Benjamin P. Cheney, a wealthy transportation industrialist, had at last fulfilled the dreams of Cheney citizens who had long desired an institute for higher learning in their community.

The academy became the State Normal School at Cheney in 1889, the same year in which Washington was given its statehood. The school was proudly designated as an institution “for the purpose of instruction of persons, both male and female, in the art of teaching the various branches that pertain to a good common school.”

By the time it became Eastern Washington College of Education in 1937, Eastern was already a fully accredited four-year, degree-granting institution, offering majors in numerous subjects.

The campus grew rapidly in size and program offerings in the decades following World War II. In 1961, the name was again changed, this time to Eastern Washington State College. It was increasingly evident that the region needed professionals in many fields; in response, Eastern added a wide range of undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Finally, in 1977, the state Legislature changed the school’s name to Eastern Washington University.

In 1978, Eastern Washington University began to offer classes in Spokane renting space in the Bon Marche Building. The University established a more permanent footprint with the opening of the Spokane Center in 1983, the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Center (SIRTI) in 1994, and the Catalyst Building in 2020. Programs using the Spokane campus include those in Business Administration, Health Sciences, and Urban Planning.