A History of Eastern Washington University

More than 100 years ago, with a contribution of $10,000, the wealthy transportation industrialist Benjamin Cheney helped the citizens of the local community fulfill their dream of an institute of higher learning. The Benjamin P. Cheney Academy opened its doors to more than 200 students in 1882.

The academy became the State Normal School at Cheney in 1889, the same year that Washington gained 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.”

The school was a fully accredited four-year degree-granting institution, offering majors in numerous subjects, when it became Eastern Washington College of Education in 1937.

The campus grew rapidly in size and program offerings in the decades following World War II and in 1961, reflecting these changes, was renamed Eastern Washington State College. As the regional needs for professionals in many fields grew, Eastern added a wide range of undergraduate and graduate degree programs. In 1977, the state legislature changed the school's name to Eastern Washington University.

Since its inception as a teacher's academy more than 120 years ago, Eastern has steadily responded to the higher education needs of the Inland Northwest. Today Eastern provides career preparation in diverse fields including business, technology and health care, education for civic and community leadership and engagement in the fine arts.

As a leader in the life and culture of the region, Eastern enrolls students from nearly every state in the union and more than 20 countries. The diversity and vitality of the university community has as its foundation a talented and dedicated faculty. Three-quarters of Eastern's full-time faculty hold doctoral degrees. Maintaining a student-to-faculty ratio of approximately 21:1, Eastern continues to offer small classes, personalized instruction and individual attention.

Eastern Washington University is a major force in the civic, cultural, scientific and economic development of the state and region.