



**Reimagining Eastern: Leaning into the Future
State of the University
Fall 2019**

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the new academic year! Welcome to new students, new faculty and staff—welcome to our Board of Trustees members and to all of you who've been working for our students' success over the years—and welcome to friends in the community who are so committed to Eastern's progress and to our students.

This is the sixth time I've given a State of the University address at Eastern. When I gave this speech in 2014, I was still getting lost in Cheney.

We've made significant and positive changes over the past five years.

--We launched a strategic plan that is guiding key decisions. We created a Multicultural Center and hired our first Vice President for Diversity and inclusion.

--We created CARR, the Center for Academic Advising and Retention, which is doing excellent work to support our students.

--We've initiated the Tech Commercialization Academy, partnerships with Microsoft and Cisco, the online Masters in Education and now online MBA. We've revitalized General Education and First Year Experiences.

--We've planned and launched programs in Computer Engineering and Music Technology Entrepreneurship.

--We've won the Big Sky President's Cup three times, and we went to the national championship in Frisco.

--We have six alumni currently playing in the NFL. The only FCS school with **more than** six is Harvard. Harvard has seven graduates in the NFL.

--We were named a College of Distinction—and have been recognized for our diversity work with the HEED Award—twice.

--We were funded for a beautiful new Interdisciplinary Science Center, opening NEXT fall, and we opened the gorgeous PUB. We have legislative dollars to design the remodel of the old Science Building and to start Computer Engineering.

--We will be the lead tenants in the amazing Catalyst building in Spokane—also opening NEXT fall.

--As always, we need to remember that our institution is located on the homelands of the Spokane Tribal People and the other tribes who are connected through the shared history of this region. Last year I formed a Tribal Advisory Council and our tribal liaison, Nicole De Von, has been working with many of us to strengthen ties with tribes all over the region.

--Also, the legislature gave us some strong support for our Lucy Covington initiative.

--Most importantly, we've graduated about 3,000 students every year. Wow—15,000 more Eagles have flown out into the world since I got here in 2014.

They include people like Valerie Amack, who's now in the doctoral program in Social Work at USC, working on recuperative care facilities for seniors who have no place to go after being discharged from a hospital.

Arick Erechar, who graduated in 2018, is now an AmericCorps VISTA worker. As part of his service, he's leading a team of student volunteers at the EWU Food Pantries.

Our graduates are serving our community in the Native Project; they're working in city government; they're city planners and attorneys; they're working in the arts, in small start-ups and large companies such as Microsoft. They're the backbone of the professional workforce at Providence, Avista, STCU, F5, and almost every company, organization, and school in this region.

When I speak to the campus every year at this time, I'm really summing up all the great work that YOU have done—our faculty, staff, current and former students, and community supporters. It is YOUR work that is having such tremendous impact on our students, on our region, and beyond.

It's an honor to lead an institution focused on learning and on transforming lives.

And our university plays an **increasingly** vital role. We live in disturbing times. As I've said to you in past years, every segment of our economy and society is in upheaval: from banking to healthcare, from the retail industry to the music, manufacturing, and publishing industries—and higher education.

Facing profound change all around them, many people are afraid and angry. We see increased polarization, suspicion, distrust, and fear.

Sadly, some of that anger is directed at universities. But, truly, the work we do in our classrooms and labs, on our playing fields and in our communities—exchanging knowledge, teaching critical thinking and communication skills, helping students

and our communities understand and embrace difference, preparing them for success in an uncertain world—that work is incredibly important.

It's vital for the future of our students. It's also essential for maintaining a civil society. For example--

--I'm very proud of the work Dr. Scott Finney and others have done—taking students on a Deep South Civil Rights Tour through five states over spring break. Students raised in the West may not really know our history of slavery, segregation, and the Civil Rights movement.

--Dr. Laureen O'Hanlon and others have worked to found an EWU club wheelchair basketball team.

--Our Dental Hygiene Clinic provides care to more than 2,000 underserved people each year. The Dental Hygiene faculty and students partner with Head Start to do dental screenings for all the Spokane Head Start Kids. This past year our students reached 470 kids.

--Our Doctor of Physical Therapy students provide a free weekly medical clinic at Union Gospel Mission.

--I'm delighted with the work of Brian Davenport and many others to create and stock campus food pantries to help reduce students' food insecurity. (In the weeks before Labor Day, our campus staff contributed hundreds of pounds of food to the President's Food Drive for our food pantries. Wonderful work, everyone!)

--With leadership from our coaches, our student-athletes spend quality time in schools to inspire kids to go to college.

--Last spring, Mechanical Engineering students traveled to Michigan State University to participate in E-Fest, an annual engineering festival. Our EWU team took home the first prize in the Innovative Additive Manufacturing 3D Challenge.

--The Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival showcases the work of talented student performers. Out of thousands of student artists who compete, 125 are selected to continue on to the JFK Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. This year, two of those 125 were EWU theater students—MJ Daly and Irene Ryan.

--For ten years, Communication Sciences & Disorders students have created literacy centers in kindergarten classes.

--Dr. Andrea Castillo in Biology mentored EWU's first-ever Goldwater Scholar: Marcos Monteiro. Marcos is currently working with Dr. Castillo and Dr. Ochoa-Repára, in Biology on a probiotic to mitigate the symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis.

--This fall our Therapeutic Recreational Program will hold a practice trick-or-treat event for neurodiverse kids to help them get comfortable before going out into neighborhoods on Halloween. These kids don't often get to participate in Halloween activities, so this will be a huge help.

And these are just a FEW of the amazing things we do as a university. Each of you has stories, examples of the work we do and the EWU folks who are having significant impact. Eagles are making our communities, our society, better places to live, work, and play.

I'm delighted with the work that continues to help our students be successful and graduate in a timely fashion, to enhance their experiences on our campuses. We've invested in advising and in technologies to track students' progress and provide timely advice and counseling.

I'm pleased that faculty groups and departments are working to re-think academic programming, course delivery methods and scheduling.

We're working on reorganization plans that will help provide more on-the-ground support for students and closer collaboration among offices and areas that need to work together to ensure that our students get the assistance they need, when they need it.

All I can say is THANK YOU. I'm so grateful for all the work we do at this university. This year Eastern is 137 years old. As this is my State of the University speech, let me say clearly: **the state of our university continues to be strong.** We're doing the right things—we are working to ensure that Eastern will be here serving students for *another* 137 years.

Sometimes people say to me—"Tell us exactly what our mission is. WHO ARE WE? We don't understand where Eastern is going. Just **tell** us." Well, our goals, our mission, aren't changing. They have never changed:

--We are this region's public university.

--We are here to serve students and the region.

--We are the pipeline for the highly skilled professional workforce needed in this region and beyond.

--We are here to support and enhance the diversity and the economic and cultural vitality of this region. We are providing huge benefits to students, families, and communities.

Our mission is rock solid. However, as I've said to you in years past, we've been a strong institution for so long *because* we've continually re-examined ourselves. While our mission remains focused and steady, we've continued to serve the needs of a changing economy and society, changing students, and the changing role of public regional universities.

I want to digress a little bit here. Many of us have heard the story of Benjamin Cheney. In the late 19th century, he worked in transportation--in the stagecoach business. But he saw the future wasn't in stagecoaches, so he changed to work as an executive with the railroads. He saw the potential for an educational institution here near an important railroad station—and donated \$10,000 to get the school started. Well, while I was at an Eastern alumni event in Atlanta last week, I met Benjamin Chance, the great-great-great grandson of Benjamin Cheney. He told us that actually it was Benjamin Cheney's **wife**, Elizabeth Cheney, who insisted on an academy specifically to educate women—and she stayed on the ground for two years to get the school started.

Mrs. Cheney's story has been lost over the years--but SHE was the person who really got the job done. Isn't that a great piece of our history?

For 137 years, we've been continually examining what we do and how we do it. We're coming together to promote student success, to enhance campus climate, to support diversity and inclusion, and to ensure fiscal responsibility and stability. We're grounded in our strengths, but we're on the move. We're leaning into the future. We're creating the University of the Future. Campus change can't be just cosmetic. As our physical campuses evolve, so must our university progress and change.

So what's changing?

Well, as you know, we're greatly expanding our footprint in Spokane by being the lead tenants in the Catalyst Building. Our faculty and students in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, and Visual Communication Design as well as Computer Engineering will be in an amazing high-tech and environmentally green building, able to work collaboratively with creative engineers and high-tech professionals.

While we miss our former Provost, Scott Gordon, and former Vice President for Student Affairs, Angela Jones, we have continued outstanding leadership from David May and Rob Sauders.

We're working on reorganization plans to ensure strong interdisciplinary work, enhanced emphasis on diversity, creative curricula, applied research, programing, and support that respond to today's students' needs and interests—and to the needs of the rapidly changing, diverse professional workforce.

We're working together as a campus to ensure we're fiscally responsible as the model of state support for higher education has changed. Our new budget model **must** include increased fundraising and partnerships as well as careful conservation and deployment of the resources we have.

We're intensifying our fundraising to increase resources for supporting our students and increasing their access to higher education through scholarships; we're enhancing campus athletic facilities; we're working toward a dynamic and diverse Honors College with a focus on social justice.

We're strengthening our partnerships. We've partnered with Gonzaga Law School to create smoother pathways for Eastern students who want to be attorneys. We've strengthened ties with community colleges. We're working closely with tribes and companies in the region.

We're re-launching the online expert's directory that will connect our faculty to news media and community partners who are looking for subject matter experts. Showcasing our experts in video podcasts and Eastern Edge community forums will significantly extend our region's understanding of the great work going on at Eastern.

We're making progress on an interdisciplinary project to bring our campus wheat fields back to their original prairie environment. This multiple-year project involves faculty and students from a wide array of disciplines as well as campus staff, community members, and tribes.

I've asked Dr. Jim Perez, who has a long history on our campus, to help lead us in the early steps of our multi-year plan to become an Hispanic-Serving Institution. Gaining that designation will help to ensure strong services and supports for **all** our students.

We're talking with students as we re-think student orientation and student-focused events, processes, and support systems: we need to ensure that we're doing everything possible to help our students be successful from the day they show interest in Eastern through their years at EWU to their lives after graduation. We need to be thoughtful and creative. With our values and mission as touchstones, we must continually ask ourselves—"Is what we're doing now truly helping our students and our communities in this changing environment?" We need to examine, reflect on, and, if necessary, upgrade, re-think, or re-organize policies and processes, curriculum and scheduling.

We're re-examine our technologies, budget model, marketing and communication, admission and financial aid processes, fundraising and regional partnerships. Yes, this is a heavy lift. No one ever said change was easy. However, much of this work is already going on, **has been** going on. Faculty groups have been working hard on innovative and exciting curriculum and pedagogies. Leadership in Academic Affairs has been working with faculty, staff, and students as well as with all other areas of the university to ensure we have an academic organization that best serves our students.



Our Vice President for Advancement and her staff and the Foundation Board have been working together to create a dynamic fundraising machine.

Leadership in Student Affairs and in Business and Finance has been re-organizing as needed, re-thinking budget priorities to ensure that our campus and our students are supported by the most effective mix of technologies, that Housing and Dining Services and Student Life offices are serving students in the best ways possible.

Our Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion as well as the Multicultural Center and the Pride Center continue to create programming that supports and enhances our campus culture of diversity and inclusion and also reaches out to students in schools throughout our region.

To support our fundraising and recruitment efforts, we're launching a brand positioning campaign, **The New Think**, which challenges prospective students, alumni and the community to think differently about EWU. We're no longer the shy institution located in the West Plains quietly serving the region. We're burgeoning with new ideas and approaches toward teaching, learning, and research. We're changing the demographics of Eastern Washington. We're challenging the status quo.

In short, we're leveraging our campus creativity. We're working with internal teams and external partners to ensure that Eastern continues to make a huge and positive difference for our students and the communities we serve.

I so deeply appreciate the history and achievements of Eastern. And I deeply appreciate the vision and energy this campus has demonstrated as we build on the past and anticipate the future.

Working together, we're forging the new American university. We are the university of the future, powering the region.

We have a lot to thank Benjamin AND Elizabeth Cheney for. Eastern will serve our region for decades to come. The work is hard, but it's the most important work we can do—ensuring that the next generations of Eagles will fly as successfully as the many generations before them.

Thank you all so much for being here this morning. We will have another tremendous academic year. Go Eags!