



Brief History of Western Washington University

Early Years, 1893-1941

1893- The state legislature passes a bill establishing a State Normal School in the town of New Whatcom, Whatcom County and considers various building sites.

1895- State legislature provides \$40,000 to construct a three-story, 36-room building (Old Main).

1899- Legislature appropriates \$33,500 for the equipment and maintenance of the school for two years. Institution opens September 6 with Edward T. Mathes as Principal.

1901- Institution becomes the State Normal School at Whatcom, as the city changes its name.

1904- Whatcom and Fairhaven vote to incorporate as Bellingham; institution name changes to Washington State Normal School at Bellingham.

1914- George W. Nash appointed to replace Mathes, adopts the title "President."

1922- Dwight B. Waldo appointed President

1923- Charles H. Fisher appointed President.

1928- College library built.

1933- Institution authorized to grant Bachelor of Arts in Education.

1937- Name changes to Western Washington College of Education. Four-year education now officially the standard for students.

1939- President Fisher terminated by Board of Trustees and Gov. Clarence D. Martin following a campaign condemning him as anti-American and un-Christian, setting off a storm in educational circles. Dr. William W. Haggard appointed President, September 1, 1939.

1941- Attendance drops nearly 50 percent as the United States enters World War II.

Middle Years, 1942-1967

1946- Enrollment doubles. Male freshmen outnumber females at Western for the first time as many returning soldiers take advantage of the G. I. Bill.

1947- State Legislature authorizes institution to grant both an M.A. in Education and a B.A. in Liberal Arts.





1949- Western turns 50.

1959- James L. Jarrett appointed President.

1960-61- Installation of first item in Western's acclaimed Outdoor Sculpture Collection. Institution renamed Western Washington State College. Enrollment exceeds 3,000.

1965- Harvey C. Bunke appointed President.

1967- Campus Elementary School closes.

Recent Years, 1968 – present

1968- Western Professor Charles J. Flora appointed President following tenure as Acting President. Fairhaven College opened; Huxley College established; Bachelor of Science degree authorized.

1970- Enrollment exceeds 10,000 for the first time. Huxley College of Environmental College founded, continuing Western's trend toward "cluster" colleges. Students protesting the Vietnam War block highway Interstate 5 on a spring afternoon.

1973- College of Arts and Sciences established, produces 60 percent of today's graduates.

1975- Paul J. Olscamp appointed President. College of Fine and Performing Arts combines art, music and theatre departments.

1976- College of Business and Economics established; Department of Education ends becomes School of Education.

1977- Institution renamed Western Washington University.

1982- President Paul Olscamp resigns to become the eighth president of Bowling Green State University.

1983- G. Robert Ross appointed President.

1988- Kenneth P. Mortimer appointed President following death of Ross (Nov. 1987) in plane crash that also kills administrators Don Cole and Jeanne DeLille.

1989- College of Education established and named in honor of Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus Paul Woodring.

1993- Karen W. Morse appointed President, effective August 1.

1999- Western celebrates its Centennial.

2003- College of Arts and Sciences divided to form the College of Humanities & Social Sciences and the College of Sciences & Technology

2008- Karen W. Morse retires; W. Bruce Shepard becomes 13th president of Western, September 1, 2008.

