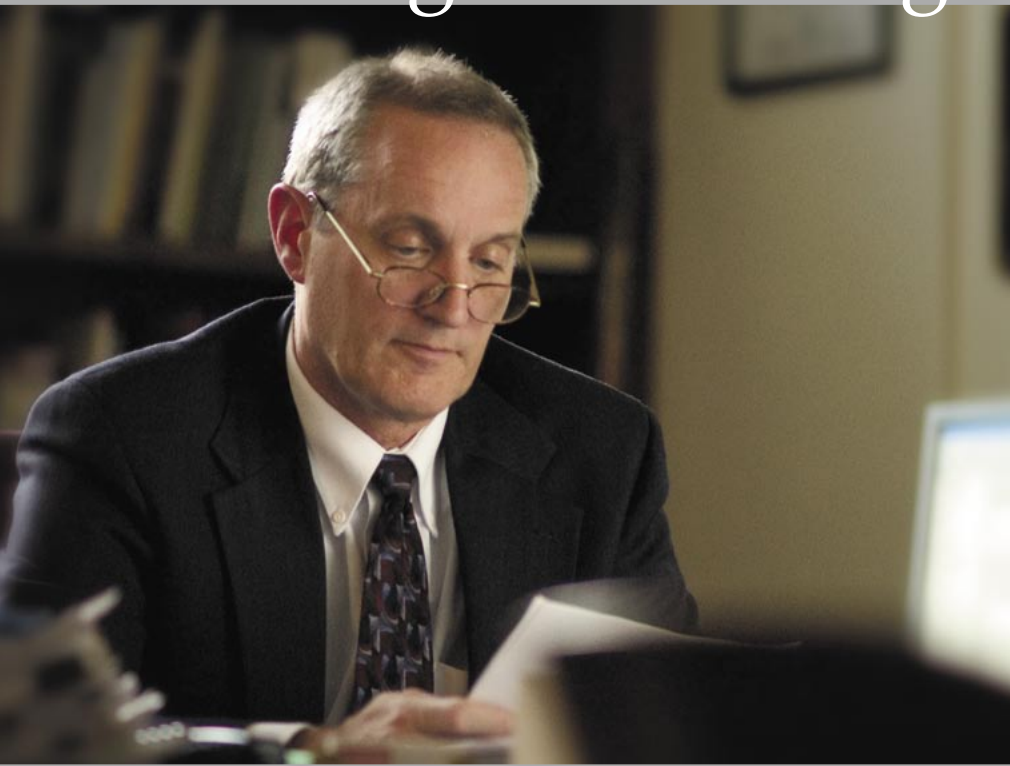


Leading a Winning Team



Dr. Brian Levin-Stankevich

He might not have known it 40 years ago, but Sunday afternoon car rides in upstate New York would play a big role in Brian Levin-Stankevich's future – it was on those excursions with his father that he learned the value of the question “Why?”

“We’d talk about things and Dad would always ask, ‘Why is that?’” Levin-Stankevich recounted. “I think it rubbed off on me – I want to understand why we do things.”

The family inquisitiveness that helped the father design better windshield wiper blades for the newest Detroit automobile models rolling off the assembly line helped the son navigate a career that led him from his hometown of Buffalo to the Cold War-era Soviet

Union, to the warm sea breezes of Florida and eventually to his current post as interim president at Eastern.

Chosen by the EWU Board of Trustees to guide the University between the departure of Stephen Jordan and the hiring of the next president, Levin-Stankevich continues to be the man people reliably turn to during times of change.

After working as director of enrollment management at Florida Atlantic University, Levin-Stankevich took on duties as dean of undergraduate studies when changes there dictated the need. During his time at Eastern, he took a leadership role when Jordan needed an interim provost – eventually competing for and being named to the position in 2002. His contributions in Academic Affairs made it a natural for Jordan to recommend him to the Trustees as interim president.

“Brian is the natural choice – you just have to look at his leadership in the academic strategic planning process,” Jordan said. “Plus, he’s got experience in student affairs – he has a great sense of what a student-centered university should be.”

That sense is rooted in a strong belief in community that was established in the ethnic Eastern European neighborhood of his boyhood in Buffalo.

“It was the same neighborhood my parents grew up in, where people watched out for each other,” he said. “It was one of those

2005 (so far)

- A Grand Opening held for the refurbished one-room schoolhouse, renamed the Cheney Normal School Heritage Center.
- Eastern becomes the only public comprehensive university in the state to gain permission to offer a baccalaureate electrical engineering degree.
- The Washington State Government Digital Archives building opens on campus; it is the first such facility ever constructed in America.
- A group of Pakistani educators comes to EWU under a USAID grant program for training in educational reform.
- The Eagles football team wins the Big Sky Conference championship and goes on to postseason play.
- Academic Strategic Plan approved by EWU Board of Trustees.
- The EWU Alumni Association tabulates statistics about alumni (including degree- and non-degree-holding alumni) – of whom there are 77,899 living in all 50 states and U.S. territories, as well as 60 foreign countries (from Argentina to Zimbabwe).
- The *Get Lit!* spring literary arts festival features writer Salman Rushdie.
- The Washington State Patrol's new crime lab opens on Eastern's campus.
- EWU is the presenting sponsor of the Washington Technology Summit in Seattle.
- An agreement is signed with Bellevue Community College in which

places that wherever you were when dinnertime rolled around, that's where you ate."

Although today's world seems to be losing some of that sense of community, university campuses stand as the exception, he observed.

"This University should be a community because we best succeed as one, as a family," he said. "That's one of the reasons I try to continue teaching periodically, as well as being an administrator. It's important to connect with students in the classroom." (He taught history and is working to develop a master's in student affairs.)

Just as he wants students to choose Eastern, that's just what he did himself a decade ago when he turned down a job offer in New York and instead looked to Cheney.

"Eastern was the right fit," Levin-Stankevich said. "People here accept you based on what you contribute, not on your title – that's the kind of place where Debi and I wanted our kids to grow up."

Levin-Stankevich has always seen himself as a problem solver, and he certainly had his work cut out for him when he arrived at Eastern in 1995. The University was sliding down a slope that nearly led to merger into WSU.

Drawing upon his experience at Buffalo and FAU, Levin-Stankevich began constructing an enrollment and recruiting strategy where none really existed before. Eastern had traditionally relied upon location, low price and accommodating admissions requirements to draw students.

That model wasn't working anymore and enrollments started shrinking, eventually prompting the state to discuss the merger issue. But by the time the merger talk was hot, the framework of Levin-Stankevich's plan was in place.

The next fall, after Jordan arrived, the plan started to take hold and a growing population of high school graduates led to the biggest freshman class at Eastern in a decade.

All those high-pressure situations and the steady, deliberate moves toward alleviating them gave Levin-Stankevich a bit of a reputation as a "serious guy," someone who is all business. His academic discipline, the dauntingly serious-sounding topic of 19th century Russian history, might have added to that perception. (His interest in Russian history led him to the Brezhnev-era Soviet Union in 1977 on a yearlong Fulbright-funded research project.)

While he is certainly serious about his work, both professionally and academically, those who work with him know firsthand his relaxed sense of humor. And then there's hockey.

As unlikely as it might seem for a man who came to Cheney from Florida, he founded the Eagles club hockey team and continues to serve as assistant coach. His passion for the sport notwithstanding, it's all about community, engaging students in yet another way as part of the Eastern family. He takes a personal interest and watches pretty closely to be sure his players keep up on their studies.

And, he notes, "it's amazing how much you can learn about the University on a bus trip with 25 students to Salt Lake City and back."

As Levin-Stankevich steps in to lead Eastern, he understands that a successful interim president is one who understands the University and believes in its future – and, like a good hockey coach, knows what to do with momentum and how to lead a winning team.



Brian Levin-Stankevich coaching the Eagles club hockey team.

Eastern will offer the second year of a baccalaureate degree in four disciplines on the BCC campus; more degrees are planned for this 2-plus-2 partnership. EWU gains its own building at BCC.

- Spring quarter sees the 15th consecutive quarter of record enrollments.
- EWU students vote to assess themselves an annual \$165 fee to help pay for half of a \$20 million recreation center to be built in proximity to the Pence Union Building; the project will come up for a vote by the EWU Board of Trustees in June 2005.
- EWU President Stephen M. Jordan announces his departure for the presidency of Metropolitan State University of Denver; EWU Provost Brian Levin-Stankevich named interim president.

- EWU graduates its first class of physical therapy doctoral students.
- Strategic planning component focusing on growth, capacity and resources scheduled for Board of Trustees' approval in June 2005, bringing full circle the Trustees' 2002 charge to the institution to create a blueprint for the future matched to the ability to fund it.

A year-by-year history of major events at Eastern, going back to the beginning, is available at www.ewu.edu/x14012.xml (courtesy of EWU Library Archives & Special Collections).