

Quality Students Keep Eastern Growing



What do Harvard, Berkeley and Eastern Washington University have in common? Having spent parts of my life in all three places, I can answer with assurance – great students – current and former students like you. I was an undergraduate at Harvard, then a graduate student and instructor at Berkeley, and both are “names to conjure with” in my field, history. I remember many fine instructors and discussions in both places. But after several decades of teaching at Eastern, I can say with assurance that my most memorable classroom moments have come right here in Cheney.

As Eastern embarks on its 125th year, it’s a good time to ponder, “Where does this quality come from?” I can’t say exactly. To some extent it comes from our wonderful blend of students, including a substantial number of adults returning to school. Recently, for example, I had one of those students who asks such good questions and makes such good observations that he enriches an entire class. Late in the quarter, he told me his story: He had been in the crab fisheries in Alaska for 20 years, was washed overboard in a storm and only saved by a lucky break – of a wave, which washed him back on board. He was only in the water for 90 seconds, but lost three toes. The episode was the wake-up call that brought him back to college and to Eastern, where he studied to become a teacher in Alaska.

My sense of gratitude for my students extends also to the beginning students in my American history survey. At first they struggle over writing historical essays, then each week they gain confidence. Halfway through the quarter, I can look out over them during their weekly exam and see 60 or 70 faces wrapped in thought, “student-centered” learning happening before my eyes!

I’ve learned volumes from my students over the years, including the value of supporting them. I am proud to join thousands of others who gave to the University in the past year (you can look up our names in the Honor Roll of Donors starting on page 35). It’s that type of generosity that got Eastern off the ground 125 years ago and keeps it going strong to this day.

It is an old saying that by your students, you will be taught. At Eastern I find that additionally I am energized, inspired, and, well, kept young by my students! As you turn the pages of this issue and take a walk through Eastern’s past, you should feel a sense of pride – and perhaps energized, too – knowing that Eastern has high-quality students that will ensure another 125 years of achievement. It is something I have been fortunate enough to experience firsthand.

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