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# Points on a Compass: Where We Are, Where We Might Go

Jay W. Rea

*Eastern Washington University*

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PAMPHLET SERIES



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WHERE WE MIGHT GO

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**M**r. Kirschbaum, members of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Zimmerman, Mr. Lambert, my distinguished colleagues in the platform party, members of the university community, members of the general public. I am very grateful, and humbled, by the honor you have bestowed by inviting me to give this address. In view of the tumultuous events of the last four and a half months, I was asked to give some perspective on Eastern's past that might yield some affirmation for our future. (I was also asked to keep this "brief"). One of my favorite movies is *Hoosiers*. The movie is the story of the small, rural high school that won the Indiana State Basketball Championship in the early 1950's. There is a scene in which the coach, played by Gene Hackman, introduces the team of six players to the student body and faculty. He says:

The boys and I are getting to know each other, to see who we are, and what we can be.

It would be difficult to construct a more succinct statement of the purpose and process of education at every level. From kindergarten to graduate school, the first day of the first school year, the first day of fall quarter, the first day of each class, a teacher and a student begin the process of getting to know each other, to see who they are, and what they can be.

The single, most vital taproot of enduring importance for Eastern is the school's one hundred sixteen year commitment to quality public education. The founders of this institution were steeped in the commitment to public education that flowed out of New England, across New York

and Pennsylvania, and into the states of the Ohio Valley and the upper Mississippi region.

The first settlers of Cheney were principally from the Northeast and upper Midwest states. The faculty of the normal school in its first decades were from Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Michigan, and Illinois. A few arrived after a short detour to California.

The rhetoric of these early educators is clear and consistent; democracy can only thrive with an educated public. A public education system is the means to creating such a citizenry. The critical component of a quality education is the teacher—a person who is educated in the liberal arts as well as in the concepts, methods, and techniques of teaching.

This centrality of purpose—to graduate quality teachers for the public schools—provided an institutional focus well into the mid-1950's.

In 1954, in the process of filling out one of those many, pernicious forms that seem to flow interminably out of Olympia, the late Agnes Colton, a professor emeritus of History and English, a graduate of Whitman College, the University of Oregon, and a holder of a Ph.D. in History from the University of Washington, answered the question, "What are your contributions to the improvement of schools in the State?"

I try to do my part in producing literate and informed teachers for the State of Washington. I start my teaching with a view to the needs of prospective teachers.

The conviction that the professional education of the teacher should build upon a sound general education was a central element in the lobbying efforts of the Cheney, Bellingham, and Ellensburg normals to be allowed to grant first, the bachelor of arts in education degree, and later, the bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees. The curriculum from the earliest days of the school includes

courses that we would identify today as humanities and social, or physical science courses.

A review of degrees granted by Eastern over the last ten to fifteen years reveals that the preponderance is professional in nature. This number increases when you consider natural and social science majors, double majors, minors, and students who graduate then return to earn a teaching credential.

The concept that the best professional education is one grounded in a quality liberal arts education is worthy of our consideration as a basis for departmental collaboration toward achieving a distinctive, high quality undergraduate experience for Eastern's students.

To focus only upon the name of the school and the diplomas and degrees granted by Eastern conceals an important dimension of our past.

As a normal school, a college of education, a state college, and even as a university, this school has always provided access to education for the people of Eastern Washington who have, for whatever reason, believed themselves to be "place bound." The normal school provided a means for young people to get more education than they could receive in the public schools before high schools became commonplace across the state. Many students would take two or three years work at Cheney Normal and transfer to the university or the state college to complete their four year degree.

Even after the school was authorized to grant a four year degree, the school promoted a "general curriculum" of two years that was advertised as the equivalent of the "lower division or general college years of other colleges and universities." In short, Cheney Normal and Eastern Washington College of Education provided many of the educational opportunities and services now offered by the community colleges.



Far from being a diminishing aspect of our past, this ability to fill an educational void is evidence of institutional responsiveness to the needs of the people of the region. When operating budgets were vetoed by governors in 1893 and 1913, letters decrying the prospect of diminished educational opportunity peppered the governors' and legislators' offices and were a major factor in the override of these vetoes. You will have noticed a similar case being made in letters and statements of our supporters in the current debate over our future.

This ability to respond to the need is demonstrated in other strategies devised by the school. For many years before and after state authorization to grant the BA in education degree, the school adopted a calendar of four quarters of equal length. The concept was simple. The first three years would earn the student a certificate to teach. She could then complete the fourth year in three summer sessions. For many years, the summer sessions enjoyed the highest enrollment of any quarter up to the 1940's.

Yes, I said "she." Upon reflection it should come as no surprise that women have constituted the majority of the enrollment over the years. The exceptions have occurred principally in the post "war" years. The gender balance in the faculty was fairly even with a slight edge to the male faculty until the 1950's. Rapid enrollment growth, the explosion of graduate programs across the country, and the influx of veterans put more males into the academic market place.

With the hiring policies of the last twenty years and the availability of a growing number of women faculty in many disciplines, we can see a balance being restored which could make Eastern an even more attractive option for female students.

Surely there are additional steps that can be taken to make a reputation for Eastern as a place where women can

gain the educational tools to shatter the glass ceiling in any profession or business.

The quality, character, and commitment of Eastern's faculty and staff have long been major strengths of this school.

As judged by terminal degrees, Eastern has been able to attract faculty from some of the best graduate programs in the country. In 1926-27, of the 18 masters degrees, three each were from Columbia University and the University of Chicago, two each from the universities of Michigan and Washington. In 1938-39, 11 of 32 masters were from Columbia, five from Washington, and three from Northwestern. There were four doctorates held by faculty in 1926-27—one each from Harvard, Stanford, Illinois, and Washington. In 1950-51, 14 of 19 doctorates were from Stanford (4), the University of California (4), Washington (4), and Columbia (2).

Beyond their credentials, most of the faculty have proved to be active as teachers, as advisors to students, and as scholars in their fields.

*Northwest Science*, the journal of the Northwest Science Association, was edited and published here in Cheney for nearly all its first twenty years. Joseph Hungate, M.S. from Cornell University and head of the Division of Applied Sciences and Arts, published the journal for the first ten years. He was followed as editor by Otis W. Freeman. Freeman's record as a published scholar and leader in his field of geography is one of the most outstanding among all of Eastern's faculty.

A commitment to students by individual faculty and staff is a continuing theme that emerges from interviews with graduates who return for reunions and with "golden" grads at commencement. The same type of testimony has been given by our students in the current debate about our future.

Caring for and working with students has been an important hallmark of an Eastern education. Some of the

most successful faculty research has been the type that has enabled students to join in developing solutions to specific problems. Much of the early research was directed towards making what happens in the classroom more effective. As the schools' programs expanded beyond the field of education proper, research has involved working on solutions to environmental and technological problems. Examples of such research programs are represented by many of those present on this platform and in the community gathered here today.

The importance of character and compassion is also illustrated in the career of George "Doc" Pearce—probably the only head custodian to have a dormitory named for him. "Doc" loved the students. He was virtually a one person orientation program for new students over the thirty plus years he served this school. He was their counselor and friend. Pearce wrote in his resignation notice in 1947,

"Service, loyalty and cooperation" has been my motto during thirty-three years of constant employment.

#### **SERVICE, LOYALTY, AND COOPERATION!**

Perhaps the years prior to 1950 were simpler, in that the institutional mission was more focused. The school was smaller and a more manageable community. State college status and the power to grant bachelors and masters degrees meant an expanding and increasingly differentiated curriculum. Expansion also brought incessant pressures to upgrade the credentials of the faculty. These pressures undoubtedly contributed to the unfortunate "Reese" affair in 1952 and 1953.

I cannot spend time today on this matter, but I have reached two tentative conclusions about the impact of this event on the 45 years that have followed.

First, numerous letters from former students and members of the public in various files as well, as news reports,

document a very significant loss of public esteem for Eastern. It took nearly a decade for this school to return our enrollment to a level comparable to that of Western and Central. We may still suffer from this loss in terms of our lack of acceptance by some segments of the Eastern Washington community.

Second, this event launched this institution on an increasingly adversarial relationship between the faculty and the school's administration. When this adversarial tendency is combined with the proliferation of departments and programs, the sense of community of those "simpler" days is weakened. The institutional focus is blurred, and individuals and groups create their own visions of their future.

It is true that we have experienced some degree of "pulling together" in the face of the most recent turmoil. But the underlying fragmentation of interests remains, I believe, as the greatest obstacle to successfully refocusing our mission.

Today, I have tried to identify some elements from our past that might help inform our discussions about our future.

'Can we, should we strive to provide the highest quality professional education truly grounded in the liberal arts? Can we produce the most "literate and informed" professionals to enter the job market? I think we should. And if many of these graduates are women, so much the better!

Can we, should we continue to provide access for those persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to go elsewhere? Are our exit standards far more important than our entrance standards? Can we be creative and responsive in scheduling to meet our students' needs?

Can we recommit ourselves to the success of our students at every level of our contact with them?

Can we demonstrate continuously **SERVICE, LOYALTY, and COOPERATION**—with our students?—with each other?



It is, indeed, time for us, to get to know each other, to see who we are, and what we can be!

*Jay Weston Rea<sup>ea</sup>*

Jay Weston Rea joined the Eastern Washington University's JFK Library faculty in September, 1970 immediately after graduating from the University of Oregon with a Master of Library Science with an emphasis in archival administration. During his twenty-eight years at Eastern, he has been active in university and community affairs. Mr. Rea was hired as a Cataloging Librarian, and served as Acting Head of Cataloging until 1972. In 1972 Mr. Rea became Documents Librarian, and University Archivist. In the early 1970s the university and the State Archives negotiated the placement of a regional branch of the Washington State Archives on the campus, resulting in Jay becoming Regional Archivist for the Eastern Regional Branch of the State Archives from 1973 through 1990. In addition to developing the university's archives and records management programs, Mr. Rea was appointed by the Governor to the Washington State Historical Records Advisory Board from 1977 through 1998. Mr. Rea relinquished the Documents Librarian responsibilities in 1992, when he became head of the Collection Management and Access Services Division of the library.

In addition to these responsibilities, Jay Rea has been an active scholar, writing a biography of Ceylon Samuel Kingston and publishing it with Kingston's collected works in a single volume. Mr. Rea wrote a proposal for, and was director of a \$45,000 grant by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to appraise, arrange, and describe the records of the City of Spokane. Since retiring, Mr. Rea has been researching the history of the University and higher education in Washington State.