

TRANSFORMING LIVES



A BRIEF HISTORY OF EASTERN



EASTERN
CONNECTICUT
STATE UNIVERSITY

April 13, 2007

A Message from President Elsa Nuñez

The photograph on the cover of this historical booklet is a wonderful representation of the traditions at our University. These children are the personification of our University's longstanding commitment to the local community. Thousands of children received their grammar school education at the Windham Street Model School and its successor, the Frederick R. Noble School. Today, Eastern students continue this tradition of giving back to the community — in local schools, participating in internships with non-profits and other organizations, and by volunteering thousands of hours each year to those in need.

The cover also reminds us of our roots as a member of the normal school movement in this country. Although we have come a long way from those early years — with more than 30 majors and 50 minors in everything from accounting to visual arts — we still prepare excellent teachers for the essential task of educating Connecticut's young people.

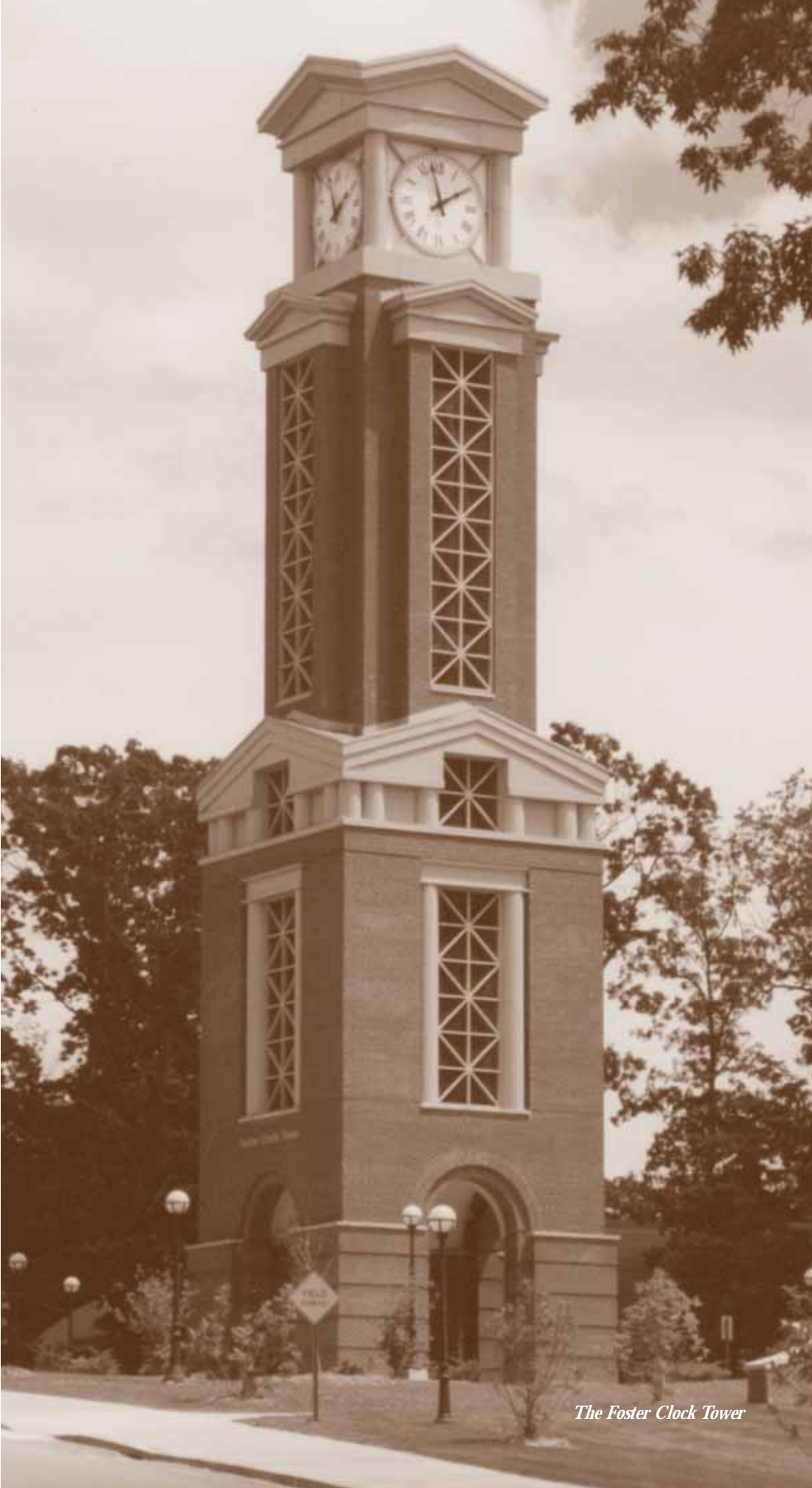
This brief history is a glimpse of the people who have brought life to our campus, and who helped advance the traditions of community, dedication, and innovation, while growing and learning as students, faculty, and staff. "Transforming Lives" has special meaning as our way of honoring a legacy of leadership at Eastern. From the earliest days of Arthur B. Morrill, George P. Phenix, and Henry T. Burr; to the 29 years of leadership under George H. Shafer; to the decades under J. Eugene Smith, Searle Charles, and Charles R. Webb; to the growth era of David G. Carter; this institution has been blessed with leaders who put students first, inspired faculty and staff to give it their all, and never forgot the larger community in which we live.

As early as 1908, this institution was graduating students of color. The first African-American faculty member at Willimantic State Teachers College was hired in 1948. Dr. Carter became the first African-American president of a New England public university in 1988. This past August, I was honored to become Eastern's sixth president and the first Latina university president in New England. These are all vivid symbols of an institution that is dedicated to educational opportunity. Beyond our liberal arts mission and our many accomplishments, our dedication to being a university that serves the people is at the core of our being, and for that, I am very proud.

Please take a moment to read about the University's honored past and join me in helping our students realize an even brighter future.



Elsa M. Nuñez, President
Eastern Connecticut State University



The Foster Clock Tower



ARTHUR B. MORRILL

1889 – 1893

Arthur B. Morrill, a graduate of Yale University, left New Britain Normal School to open the Willimantic program in 1889. He left Willimantic State Normal School (WNS) in 1893 to open the normal school in New Haven. Morrill kept tight reins on students and faculty alike, establishing strict guidelines and a standard notebook for all student work.

THE EARLY YEARS (1889–1918)

The normal school movement in the United States took shape in the 1830s, and flourished through the efforts of such education reformers as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard. The first normal school was founded in 1839 in Lexington, MA. The State of Connecticut opened its first normal school in New Britain in 1849. The goal was to increase the number of qualified elementary schoolteachers in the growing public education system.

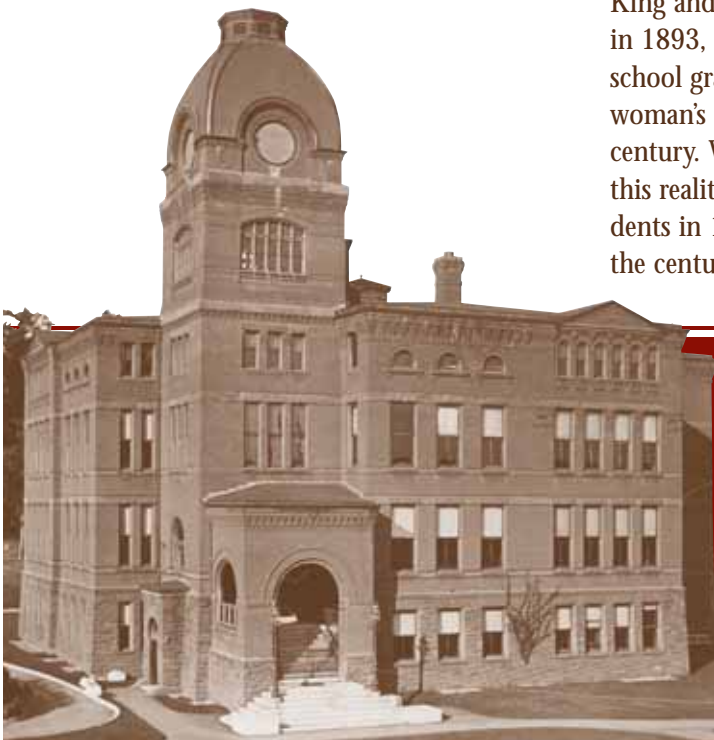
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Beginnings

The second normal school in the state opened in September 1889 on the

third floor of the Willimantic Savings Institute in Willimantic. Thus the Willimantic State Normal School (WNS) was born. What evolved into Eastern Connecticut State University, with a fall 2006 enrollment of more than 5,200 undergraduate and graduate students, began with a class of 29 young women starting their two-year teacher training program under the tutelage of Arthur B. Morrill. In June 1891, the first graduation ceremony sent 22 women out into the world to become schoolteachers in Connecticut's public schools.

Although two young men — Frank King and John McClellan — enrolled in 1893, teaching in the elementary school grades was predominantly a woman's profession at the turn of the century. WNS enrollments reflected this reality for many years: of 62 students in 1900, only one was a male. As the century turned, there were eight



The first Willimantic State Normal School building opened in 1894, and served as the sole classroom and administration building for 48 years before it was destroyed by fire in 1943.



GEORGE P. PHENIX

1893 – 1904

The second principal of the Willimantic State Normal School, George P. Phenix, led the school's move to a new building. He went on to become a faculty member, administrator, and eventually president of Hampton University in Virginia.



members of the faculty. In 1908, the school graduated its first two African American teachers.

In 1894, faculty and students moved up the hill from Main Street to the first dedicated Willimantic State Normal School building, which had been erected on six acres of land given to the school by the Town of Windham in 1890. The building served as the sole classroom and administration building for 48 years before it was destroyed by fire in 1943. A second building, a “model school” to provide on-site student teaching opportunities to WNS students, opened in January 1910. Known for many years as the “Windham Street School,” it stood on land donated by the Town of Windham, which also paid for one-third of the anticipated \$50,000 cost. The model school

The Willimantic Savings Institute on Main Street was the normal school's first home. The building still stands today and is the bank's main location. It is now known as The Savings Institute Bank and Trust.

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burned down in 1924 and was replaced in 1928 with what is now Frederick R. Noble Hall, named for the longtime principal of the laboratory school. It is now a residence hall.

Life on Campus

The young women who studied at the Willimantic State Normal School in its first few decades were witnessing major social changes. Formal clothing such as hobble skirts and other cumbersome



The 1898 women's basketball team won its league championship. Note the long dresses, bows on their shoulders, and tight belts. At the time, players were only allowed three dribbles and three seconds before they had to pass the ball.



HENRY T. BURR

1904 – 1918

Henry T. Burr served as WNS principal during the World War I era and oversaw construction of a model school where student teachers could practice their craft. The school's first dormitory was built in 1921 and named in his honor.



attire was giving way to looser, more comfortable clothes. The suffragette movement was in full swing and the 1910s became known for ballroom dancing. Room and board cost about \$200 a year in 1910. The first dormitory was constructed in 1921 and named after the school's third principal, Henry T. Burr.

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Out in the World

Life in the United States during the normal school's early years was hard. Americans were working 60-hour weeks, life expectancy was less than 50 years at the turn of the century, and Sunday get-togethers were a cherished family activity. There were signs of

The Windham Street Model School opened in 1910 to provide a laboratory experience for WNS students. It had its own principal and served Windham-area children. It was destroyed by fire in January 1924 and rebuilt in 1928.

progress as well. William Barrows, manager of the Willimantic Thread Company, offered his workers free snacks during breaks, and provided





MIRIAM SKIDMORE

1904 – 1928

Another key figure in the early years was Miriam Skidmore. Even though she was not the principal, she was responsible for the practical training experience that student teachers received. It was a time when “learning to be a lady” was an important element of a student’s training.

them with a library, dance pavilion, and The Oaks housing project. During World War I, WNS graduates taught in a state that was heavily involved with the war effort. With companies such as Remington Arms, Winchester Repeating Arms, and Colt Firearms Company, Connecticut produced 54 percent of the nation’s munitions. It also led the nation in Liberty Loan and savings drives. The divorce rate in the United States in the 1910s? One-half of 1 percent!



(above) Members of the Class of 1917, escorted by faculty member Jennie Dennehy, venture out of Willimantic to visit the State Library in Hartford. In keeping with the times, everyone was dressed in style from head to toe.

(below) The class of 1912 sits on the steps of the normal school building. Class sizes had grown from 29 students in 1889 to more than 50 students in 1912.



(left) This small group of talented, hardworking faculty members poses in 1902. They were highly dedicated to providing Connecticut with well-prepared school teachers.



GEORGE H. SHAFER

1918 – 1947

In 1918, George H. Shafer began the longest tenure of any of Eastern's leaders. Faculty member C. Francis Willey described him as a man "with deep social insight who guided the college throughout the difficult Depression years of crisis and legislative battles." Shafer served 29 years as the school's principal and president.

THREE DECADES OF SERVICE (1918–1947)

In addition to dealing with the Depression and World War II, George H. Shafer and his colleagues had many other challenges, including thwarting threats by the Connecticut General Assembly to close the school because of operating costs that legislators felt were too high (\$239,105 in 1939), and responding to the loss of the normal school building to fire in 1943.

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But Shafer's years were also good years. He opened the first dormitory, which could house 80 women, and named it after Henry T. Burr, the normal school's third principal. It remained exclusively the home of female students until fall 2006 when it went co-ed following an extensive renovation.



Eighteen members of the class of 1920 take time for Junior Story Hour in 1919, led by faculty member Alma K. Sayles.

In January 1924, fire destroyed the Windham Street Model School. Funds were appropriated (\$200,000) in 1925 to purchase land and rebuild. The new laboratory school opened in 1928. For many years, Frederick R. Noble was the new school's principal; the lab school was renovated and named in his honor in 1957. Today the building serves as a residence hall for upperclassmen.



Drama was a popular campus activity from the very beginning. The cast members of the production *Spark Plug* are only too happy to pose for this 1923 photograph.



GEORGE & GRACE SHAFER

“The Shafers (George and Grace) ‘adopted’ me. I would go with them in the summer to their family home in Pennsylvania. They treated me as part of the family. I remained close friends with Mrs. Shafer after George died. She gave me a family heirloom, a hand-carded wool quilt made by President Shafer’s mother.”

Josephine Stein '38

Shafer also directed the school’s transition to a four-year curriculum in 1937, which brought about a name change — from Willimantic State Normal School to Willimantic State Teachers College (WSTC). Shafer was installed on Sept. 27, 1937, as the college’s first president. Legislator Margaret Hurley (a WNS graduate), Willimantic Mayor Pierre Laramee, former WNS principal Henry Burr, and Helene Miller, dean

of the faculty all were on hand for the ceremony and the Teachers College chorus sang.

Tuition was free if graduates committed to teaching two years within Connecticut; if they wanted to teach after that, a bachelor’s degree was mandated. By 1929–1930, room and board averaged approximately \$325 a year for the 173 students who attended WNS.

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(above) Mary Quinn (left) and Ann Buchanan, two faculty members of the Willimantic State Normal School, are shown here in 1923 standing by the model school building, with several grade-school children and the normal school in the background.

Life on Campus

Cecile Lafreniere Allen '32: “We were not allowed to leave Burr Hall, not even to go to the library (across the patio in the Normal School), without signing out with the proctor in the foyer and then signing in at the library



Cecile
Lafreniere
Allen '32



George Shafer poses with the faculty in 1924. Of note: Mrs. (Grace) Shafer (bottom row, far left); Miriam Skidmore (second row, third from left); and Frederick R. Noble (top row, third from right).

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with another proctor.” Even family members had to wait in the Burr Hall lobby or living room; they weren’t allowed in the dormitory rooms themselves. Trips to Main Street, all of two blocks away, were also escorted. Ice cream sundaes — a special treat on Wednesday nights — were delivered up the hill by Hallock’s Restaurant.

Students at the new teachers college went downtown to the Capitol Theatre to watch *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which came out in 1937. By 1939, 80 percent of American households had radios, which no doubt was a popular entertainment



(above) The “Daisy Chain” tradition started in the 1920s and ended in the early 1940s. Being selected to work on the chain was an honor, with juniors dispensed to Hosmer Mountain to pick daisies the day before Commencement so that the chain could be woven and used the next day. The chain became two chains, with seniors walking to Commencement between two rows of daisies held aloft by juniors.

(below) Members of the class of 1926 gather on the lawn of the normal school to show off the daisy chain that they had made.



In 1930, “Keep off the grass” was the extent of the environmental movement on campus, with hillside fields and trout streams dominating the landscape up the hill from the normal school.



The new Windham Street Model School opened in 1928, replacing the model school destroyed by fire in 1924. It was renovated and renamed the Frederick R. Noble School in 1957 in honor of its first principal. Today the building serves as a residence hall.

option for WSTC students. On Oct. 30, 1938, they joined the nation in listening to H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* on the radio; more than a million Americans panicked that night in fear of what they mistook for an actual newscast.

Other entertainment of the time included big band music and Broadway musicals, replacing jazz, the fox trot, and the flapper dancers of the Roaring Twenties.

In George Shafer's early years as principal, WNS graduates and other schoolteachers were earning less than \$1,000 a year, or \$250 less than the average American worker. By the end of his tenure as president, schoolteachers were earning almost \$1,500 a year, slightly better than the average U.S. salary of \$1,299.



The Archery Club holds practice on the lawn of the Willimantic Normal School and Burr Hall in 1928.

It wasn't until 1939 that the renamed Willimantic State Teachers College had enough men in attendance to form a men's basketball team. The second of the University's major fires took down the original Normal School building in 1943. It had served for 48 years as the normal school/college's sole classroom and administration facility.

The school's 1930s swim team is shown here, fresh out of the pool. Today, the women's swim team maintains a strong tradition of student-athletes competing in NCAA Division III competition.





The 1943 fire that ravaged the Willimantic State Normal School can be seen in this shot of firefighters trying to stop the blaze. After the fire, classes continued in the model school while WNS graduate and legislator Margaret Hurley rallied the Connecticut General Assembly to rebuild. Through her efforts and those of others, a new building was erected on the same site, opening in 1948.

Legislator Margaret Hurley rallied support in the legislature to rebuild the facility. A new building opened in September 1948, and it was later named in George Shafer's honor.

Out in the World

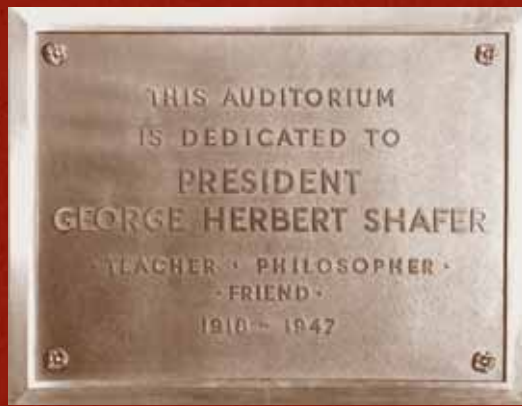
Only recently has Eastern Connecticut State University, with its public liberal arts designation, drawn a significant number of students from across the state. In George Shafer's time, the normal school's students were primarily from the local region, and local politics and economics heavily influenced the school's prosperity. In 1925, the American Thread Company in Willimantic endured a nine-month strike after 3,000 workers walked off the job in March because of an announced 10 percent pay cut. By

1930, Connecticut was in the throes of an international depression, with as much as 26 percent of the state's workforce idle in 1932. The flood of 1936 and the hurricane of 1938 were two natural disasters that further tried the will of the people of Willimantic. Even then, the normal school stretched its legs and transitioned to a four-year, bachelor's degree-granting institution.

World War II came, and amidst the stories of devastation and misery abroad, the war meant economic prosperity for Connecticut. The state's aviation and munitions industries brought more than \$8 billion in war contracts into Connecticut during the war. Nonetheless, everything from gasoline to spam was rationed. In fact, *The Chronicle* (Willimantic) noted that "Spam was more treasured than caviar." And Willimantic had a positive impact on lives far across the sea. In 1943, the



These students are part of the student senior play *Campus Quarantine*. The play took place on March 4, 1938, at the auditorium within the Willimantic State Normal School building.



This plaque, originally placed in the foyer of the new administration and classroom building named in George Shafer's honor, now rests in Shafer Auditorium, which also bears his name. It offers a simple salute to a "Teacher, Philosopher, and Friend." The auditorium was dedicated in April 1949 and is still in use.

Willimantic State Teachers College hosted the Army/Navy Fitness Program, and made other contributions during the war. After the war's outbreak in 1939, some of the women of Windham had knitted clothing and blankets for the people of Great Britain. The clothing found its way to Gateshead, a city in north-eastern England. In January 1942, Willimantic's Relief Society received the following letter:

"As I have been helping distribute some of the beautiful clothes received from you through the British Soldiers and Sailors Families Association, I would like to say



The class of 1932 stands on the steps of the normal school. In the 1932-1933 academic year, students were required to purchase their own paper, pencils, books, and paint boxes, as well as their own gymnasium uniforms.

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thank you and tell you how very much they are appreciated. Many of the Willimantic gifts have gone to people who have been bombed out and come to relatives in Gateshead. There is one patch-work quilt that I am saving for some special case, as I think it will be a comfort to anyone who has lost everything in the bombing."



The Willimantic State Teachers College men's basketball team was division champion in 1942. The N.E.T.C. on the ball may stand for New England Teachers Conference.



J. EUGENE SMITH

1947 – 1966

J. Eugene Smith helped broaden the scope of WSTC offerings from a focus on teacher preparation to include liberal arts and graduate programs. During his tenure, the school also “moved up the hill,” building dormitories and classroom facilities, and purchasing other needed buildings.



The new classroom and administration building, built on the site of the original normal school building, was completed and classes opened during the 1948 fall semester. Named in 1969 after George Shafer, the school's first president, the building is still in use. This 1950 photograph was taken at the corner of Windham and Valley Streets.

MOVING UP THE HILL

(1947-1966)

James Eugene Smith became the president of Willimantic State Teachers College in 1947. He first came to Willimantic in 1935 to teach at Windham High School, moving down the street in 1937 to begin teaching at WSTC. He received his doctorate from Harvard University in 1943. Luva Mead Hoar '42 recalls the day she met Smith in September 1938: “A few of us had stopped by to visit with him in his office after class. We looked out the window and the trees were falling down, and he said in his unflappable way, ‘I believe we are having a hurricane.’ He escorted us through the tunnel that connected the administration building to the boiler room in Burr Hall.”

According to Hoar, Smith was “most responsible for this school being student-centered because he was always willing to listen to what you had to say. He had a wonderful empathy with people.” Smith also had a way with the violin. An excellent musician, he enjoyed playing violin with the Willimantic Symphony Orchestra in the 1940s and the 1950s.



This 1951 photograph was taken at the Connecticut Intercollegiate Student Legislature meeting. WSTC student Phil Patros is shown addressing legislators about matters important to his fellow students at WSTC, and in the Willimantic community.



J. Eugene Smith with Juliette Burstermann, who was the first African American professor at WSTC when she joined the faculty in 1948. They are shown attending an event in the 1990s. (Dr. Smith passed away in April 2000.)

In 1971, several years after Smith's retirement, the institution dedicated the original J. Eugene Smith Library in his honor. It has since been transformed into the Alvin B. Wood Support Services Center, which houses the many support services available to students, i.e. registrar, financial aid, veterans affairs, and housing. A new state-of-the-art library was dedicated to Smith in 1999.

Interestingly, it was the school's library that had attracted Smith to campus in the first place. While still teaching at the local high school, he would visit campus to make use of the library, where he made friends with members of the staff, including the librarian and President Shafer. They encouraged him to apply for a vacant teaching position, and "the rest is history."

During President Smith's tenure, the campus began to grow up the hill,

beyond its roots between Valley and Prospect Streets. In addition to opening the new administration and classroom building that was to become Shafer Hall in 1948, the Knight House and 20 acres of land were purchased in 1947; a new student union/dormitory was built (Winthrop Hall in 1959); and construction of the Goddard Science Building commenced. (It opened in 1967.) The first men's dormitory — Beckert Hall — was also opened. Smith also saw the value of supplementing state funds and tuition by establishing a foundation to seek private support for the institution.

Life on Campus

Compared to the decades of depression and two world wars of the past, and the tumultuous times of the Vietnam War and early 1970s that would follow, campus life was relatively stable during President Smith's administration. Freshmen beanies could be seen



Shown here in 1952, the WSTC study tour bus went to many destinations along the eastern seaboard, including locations in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.



*Predating Eastern's designation as Connecticut's public liberal arts university by more than 40 years, President Smith told graduates in the 1955 yearbook *Sustinet* to consider themselves "as 'liberally-educated persons' . . . men and women who are prepared, and in some way morally obligated to 'make a difference' . . . in the lives of the families you will build, in the children you will teach, in the teachers with whom you will work, in your churches, and in your communities."*



throughout campus, and student life flourished, with clubs, outings, and athletics filling students' leisure time. WSTC students also had begun to stretch their wings, and study tours to Canada, Cuba, and Mexico became a standard part of the curriculum. The 1950s saw the advent of commercial television; by 1951, 17 million American families owned a set, and television brought the world into people's living rooms as never before. However, the days of student lounges dominated by big screen TV's were yet to come.

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Economic prosperity settled on the nation, but America's youth were restless. A rebellious spirit, symbolized by movie stars such as James Dean and given voice by a new musical form called rock 'n' roll, was ready to alter the country's landscape. And *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954) changed the course of American history.

Out in the World

In the late 1940s, the country was adjusting to the postwar era. At one point, some 56,000 Connecticut workers lost their jobs in one week as defense contracts were terminated. The return of thousands of servicemen and



Hermione Blinker (second from left), Jenne Clyde Cobbath (second from right), and Marie Noble (far right) sit in the Burr Hall dining room for a light lunch. During the 1950s, Burr was the main dining spot on campus and offered students the opportunity to socialize with fellow future teachers.





Presidents Charles R. Webb, J. Eugene Smith, and David G. Carter, representing 55 years of presidential leadership, shake hands during a CSU Board of Trustees meeting in 1988.

women who had been overseas aggravated the situation. However, the GI Bill allowed veterans to go to college, and the number of men enrolling at WSTC grew dramatically. A teacher shortage sparked the Emergency Teacher Training Program and gave veterans another incentive to become teachers. As the college continued to grow, the first graduate program — in education — was offered in 1957–1958. In 1957, the renovated lab school was dedicated to Frederick R. Noble, principal of the school for more than a quarter century. Because more diverse academic programs were being offered, a name change occurred in 1959, to Willimantic State College.



(above) President David G. Carter dedicates the new J. Eugene Smith Library in 1999; the portrait of Smith, shown on the left, can be found today hanging in the library.

(below) One of the stalwarts of the Eastern faculty, Robert K. Wickware was known affectionately as “Mr. Science.” He served the University from 1941 to 1974, as a faculty member and later dean of academic affairs. Here he gives a demonstration at the F. R. Noble School in March 1966.



Today the Eastern Warriors have a national reputation on the baseball field, having won four National NCAA Division III championships. In 1961, these proud Warriors display the College's athletic name on their game jerseys.



SEARLE CHARLES

1966 – 1970

During his brief tenure as Eastern's third president, Searle Charles led the school through another name change: to Eastern Connecticut State College. He also saw the completion of Goddard Hall and Hurley Hall and the opening of Keelor Hall, the school's first early childhood education facility. Charles left Eastern to become the executive secretary of the Connecticut Community College System.

BECOMING A UNIVERSITY

(1966–1988)

Searle Charles was president from 1966 to 1970. During his tenure, the school became Eastern Connecticut State College. In 1968, Charles was present for the Faculty Senate's first meeting. Goddard Hall was built during his administration, as was Hurley Hall and Keelor Hall.

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Charles Richard Webb led the University from 1970 to 1988. A graduate of the University of California–Berkeley, he also holds master's and doctoral degrees from Harvard University. Prior to coming to Eastern, he was chairman of the History Department at San Diego State College.

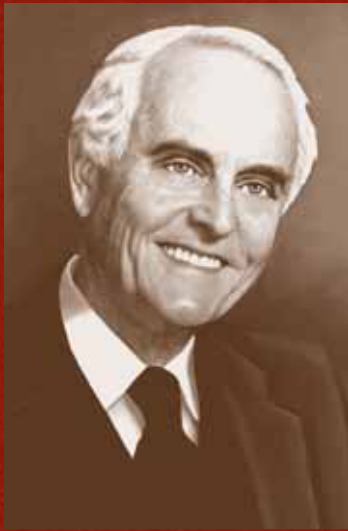
Eastern's enrollment went from fewer than 1,000 students to more than 4,000 during Webb's tenure. He also

oversaw the construction of nine buildings on the North Campus, and created majors in Environmental Earth Science, Communication, and Computer Science. During his administration the college also reorganized itself into three distinct schools: Arts and Sciences; Education and Professional Studies; and Continuing Education. In 1983, Eastern Connecticut State College completed its metamorphosis and became Eastern Connecticut State University.

President Webb presided over the University during a time of dramatic change in the United States. The impact of the civil rights and women's rights movements, as well as other cultural and social trends, could be seen across the country, as well as at Eastern. Campus activities and study abroad programs reflected the adventurous spirit of the times as well as student interest in such issues as



The 1970s brought an air of freedom, and the students taking this Ecology of New England course are getting just that. They are standing with faculty member Barry Wulff (center) on Mount Washington in New Hampshire.



CHARLES R. WEBB

1970 – 1988

President Webb continued the student-centered traditions of George Shafer and J. Eugene Smith, scheduling “open door” hours when faculty and students could visit him in the library.

“I was particularly impressed with how much he was concerned about the personal welfare of faculty members.”

Professor Timothy Swanson

the environment, women's rights, and affirmative action.

A staunch supporter of NCAA Division III athletics during his administration, Webb was instrumental in increasing Eastern's varsity teams from four (all for men) to 11, including six for women. One of his first initiatives was launching construction of the \$2.7 million Sports Center in February 1971. A national softball championship in 1981 was the beginning of nine national Division III championships in baseball and softball.

President Webb enjoyed and contributed to the campus culture. His musical group, “Grooves of Academe,” often played at campus events, and featured Professor Kenneth Parzych on



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The Eastern campus grew in leaps and bounds during the administration of Charles Webb. In 1970, Burnap and Crandall residence halls were built, as was the original J. Eugene Smith Library, dedicated in 1971. That same year saw the construction of the High Rise and Low Rise Apartments. The Francis E. Geissler Gymnasium (1973), the Wickware Planetarium (1975), the new Student Center (1976), and another residence hall (Occum Hall in 1984) were also constructed. This aerial photo was taken in 1980; note the baseball field in the upper left of the photo.



The Eastern Connecticut State College men's 1977 cross-country team is shown here with coach John Kelleher.



On Oct. 15, 1999, Charles Webb and his wife, Andrée, came from California to attend the naming ceremony of Webb Hall. President David G. Carter was there to congratulate his predecessor.

drums, Professor Ed Drew on bass, and President Webb on xylophone. Ever the humorist, at his retirement reception in April 1988, Webb announced, "I have been going to school since I was five and I think it is time for me to graduate."

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In October 1999, the University named its newest classroom building after Webb. He and his wife, Andrée, traveled from California to attend the ceremony. At the event, President David G. Carter commented, "It is clear to me, that when you consider all that transpired during the time of your leadership, you are a person of vision. It is only fitting that we name an academic building after a man whose soul is about teaching and learning. Dr. Webb knew that the most effective learning is active learning."



Learning outside the classroom flourished in the 1980s, with many clubs meeting on campus and planning off-campus activities. Patty Owen (left) and Linda Whittlesey (right) are shown here scuba diving at Avery Point.

Around Campus

Eastern students in the 1970s had their share of mood rings, lava lamps, and pet rocks while wearing shoulder-length hair, bell bottoms, platform shoes, and mini-skirts. You might have found some members of the Eastern faculty dressed in the same garb, along with the occasional polyester leisure suit. Vinyl records gave way to cassette tapes, and students went out to the movies on Friday nights to see *Star Wars*, *Rocky*, *Saturday*



The new Spree Day tradition (May 1980) was a weekend-long event that hosted musical stars such as Stevie Wonder and was open to students, faculty, staff, and the local community.



The 1978 graduation procession was headed by President Webb (left) and Governor Ella Grasso, who gave the keynote address. The procession moved from the Student Center along the Media Building across the street to the lower campus.

Night Fever, and other hits. *Saturday Night Live* began its “30 years and counting” run on NBC. By the 1980s, MTV was just one of dozens of new cable networks, and VCRs were bringing Saturday night movies to the dorms. Stevie Wonder and other national performers came to campus, and students put on their own entertaining events, “Spree Day” for one.

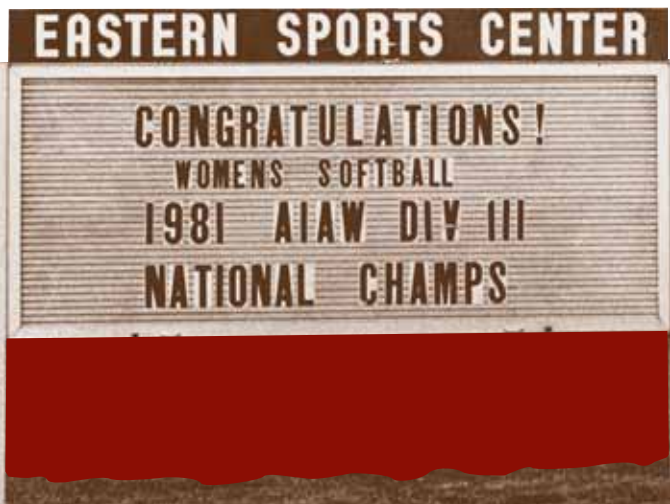
Out in the World

During Webb’s administration, the average salary of American workers almost doubled from \$7,564 in 1970 to \$14,757 in 1980. The 1970s saw the women’s rights and environmental movements in full swing — one example was the election of Ella Grasso in 1974 as governor of Connecticut. In 1978, Grasso gave the keynote address at Eastern’s 88th commencement.



Webb Hall, a new classroom building, opened its doors in 1992. It was built on land that had been used as athletic fields.

Times changed; the 1980s was the decade of the “me” generation, with mergers, buyouts, and hostile takeovers marking a business climate that had consumers purchasing every new electronic and leisure product they could find. And even though Connecticut had become one of the most affluent states in the nation, the American Thread Company moved from Willimantic to North Carolina in 1985, delivering a blow to the local economy that is still being felt.



This sign congratulates the 1981 women’s softball team for winning the national championship. Since that time, the softball program has won four more national championships.



DAVID G. CARTER

1988 – 2006

David G. Carter, the University's fifth president, was inaugurated in September 1988 and led the school for almost 18 years. On Jan. 20, 2006, Carter was appointed chancellor of the Connecticut State University System.



President Carter enjoyed visiting classrooms to engage students in their learning. Here he takes his tie off to become "Student for a Day," while some lucky student takes over his office as "President for a Day."

INTRODUCING A NEW MILLENNIUM (1988-2006)

The period 1988 to 2006 brought tremendous growth to Eastern Connecticut State University under the leadership of David G. Carter. Early in his administration, President Carter was forced to quell sentiments that Eastern should be merged into the University of Connecticut or otherwise shut down. This political debate echoed a similar discussion from more than 40 years prior, and like the earlier discussion, eventually came to naught, thanks largely to Carter's tireless advocacy.

Under President Carter's leadership, Eastern soared, with a campus transformation that saw 15 new and renovated buildings added to the campus footprint, doubling the University's square footage. Included

in the growth were Webb Hall (1992); Noble Hall (renovated in 1992); Niejadlik Hall (1998); Mead Hall (1999); Arthur Johnson Unity Center (1997); a baseball stadium/sports complex (1998); the Admissions building (1999); the Foster Clock Tower (1999); the J. Eugene Smith Library (1999); Gelsi-Young Hall (2002); a parking garage (2003); Constitution, Laurel, and Nutmeg residence halls (2004-2005); and the Child and Family Development Resource Center



Luva Mead Hoar '42 (left) and Bernice "Bunny" Niejadlik stand with President Carter in front of the construction of two new residence halls in 1997. Niejadlik graduated from Willimantic State Normal School in 1930 and went back to school to get her bachelor's degree from WSTC in 1950. Mead and Niejadlik Halls were named respectively in their honor in 2001.



Noted social activist Jesse Jackson was the keynote speaker at Eastern's 1992 Commencement exercises. Jackson also received an honorary degree from the University.

(2005–2006). This growth in facility space was in direct response to enrollment growth of more than 40 percent during Carter's tenure.

During this same period, Eastern's academic reputation was enhanced, with a more focused public liberal arts mission approved by the Connecticut State University System Board of Trustees in 1998; membership in the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges in 2004; and an updated Liberal Arts Core Curriculum developed by the faculty. Academic programs expanded to 33 undergraduate majors, 49 undergraduate minors, and 3 graduate programs. In addition to reaccreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the University also sought and was granted accreditation of its teacher preparation programs by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.



The Eastern Warriors baseball team celebrates its 1990 national NCAA District III Championship.

The University initiated exchange agreements with universities in Sri Lanka, France, Japan, Uganda, Brazil, and elsewhere, and the number of international students on campus grew to 145 in 1995.

The beautiful Foster Clock Tower (left) is the visual symbol of Eastern's campus, and stands tall next to the J. Eugene Smith Library. Both construction projects were completed in January 1999.





Charles R. Webb, Eastern's fourth president (1970-1988), joined President Elsa M. Nuñez in celebrating Chancellor Carter's inauguration on Oct. 20, 2006.

Reflecting President Carter's interest in the environment, Eastern also created the Institute for Sustainable Energy and established an endowed chair in Sustainable Energy Studies. Distance learning technology was implemented, as were course offerings at the submarine base in Groton. A close relationship with Connecticut's community colleges was forged in support of students' transfer opportunities.

President Carter also believed in asking the University's friends to support Eastern through philanthropic opportunities. In addition to hiring a full-time alumni affairs director, the efforts of the ECSU Foundation, Inc.,

were enhanced. "Fun*Ding," the major fund-raising event each year, brought in such stars as Tina Turner, Paul McCartney, and Fleetwood Mac.

Life on Campus

President Carter was known for rolling up his sleeves and being part of the students' lives on campus. Whether it was donning a rubber cap and willingly submitting himself to the "dunk tank" at Springfest, playing billiards after hours with students in the residence halls, or making himself available to students for counsel and advice, Carter was someone students knew was literally at their side.

As enrollment grew in the 1990s, more students lived on campus and residential life prospered. More than 60 student clubs and 17 varsity athletic teams provided students with a variety of options for on-campus activities. At the same time, the World Wide



In another life, President Carter was a mason. Here he shows he still can lay a brick or two as he enjoys a few minutes on the scaffold at the construction site of the Child and Family Development Resource Center.





MICHAEL PERNAL

Executive Vice President Michael Pernal served Eastern admirably as interim president from January to August 2006. He has been at the University since 1969 and has held numerous positions, from instructor and counselor to executive dean and executive vice president.



(above) The Eastern Warrior Cat joins President Carter on July 4, 2001, for Willimantic's annual Boom Box Parade, first established in 1986. According to local legend Wayne Norman of radio station WILL-AM, the parade "captures the true spirit of Independence Day."

Web, grunge and hip hop music, cell phones, and instant messaging converged to create a new generation of students — "the millennials." These students demonstrate some of the same ideals of their parents' generation; environmental concerns, social justice, and service to the community have risen again as issues Eastern students care deeply about.

Around the World

War in the Middle East, the horrors of Sept. 11, 2001, and a changing world economy that has seen U.S. manufacturing jobs move off-shore to China and other countries have dominated the news over the past decade and a half. Eastern students are graduating to join a global society brought together as never before by technological and economic forces.

(below) Stephanie Maldonado '08 is active in the Organization for Latin American Students and works as a resident assistant in Winthrop Hall. "If the professors see you when you're walking on campus, they actually say, 'Hello, Stephanie,' and 'How are you doing?'"



A major initiative during President Carter's administration was to engage students in serving the community. These students brave the winter cold to build a house in East Hartford as members of the University's Habitat for Humanity chapter. Eastern resident students donate more than 20,000 volunteer hours each year to area nonprofits and social service agencies.



ELSA M. NUNEZ

Elsa M. Nuñez joined Eastern as the University's sixth president in August 2006. She is the first Latina university president in New England.



THE NEXT CHAPTER

Prior to her becoming president of Eastern Connecticut State University, Elsa M. Nuñez was the vice chancellor of the Maine University System. Her academic career began as a member of the faculty at Ramapo College, the public liberal arts college of New Jersey.

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(above) Student Government Association officers Shelley McCauley-Browning and Benjamin Sanborn enjoy getting to know Dr. Nuñez as they walk together to the press conference announcing her appointment as president on May 18, 2006.

(left) President Nuñez outlines the University's strategic planning process on Jan. 26, 2007 to members of the Committee on the Future of Eastern. The group is composed of faculty, staff, students and members of the community at large, and is supported by four subcommittees that represent the University community.

During her first year, President Nuñez has been active in getting to know members of the Eastern campus community and the Connecticut community-at-large. She is also leading the University's new strategic planning initiative, which will serve to guide

Eastern over the next five years as it continues to refine its mission as Connecticut's public liberal arts university.

Dr. Nuñez takes time out from her schedule to participate in Reading Hour at the Child and Family Development Resource Center. "Education for a lifetime" starts at an early age at Eastern!



A brief history of Eastern Connecticut State University's 118-year history is an appropriate memento of the inauguration of Elsa M. Nuñez, Eastern's sixth president. This digest-sized book links the University's rich past to its aspirations for a bright future. We hope that you enjoy it.

We are indebted to the Student Government Association for their generous financial support. Special thanks are also extended to the Office of University Relations and the Office of Archives and Special Collections. Finally, we wish to thank *The Chronicle* (Willimantic) for use of its archives.

In addition, other information used to create this historical booklet includes:

- Various publications of Eastern Connecticut State University and its predecessors, including annual reports, catalogs, and alumni magazines.
- David M. Roth Center, *Remembering Willimantic* (Eastern Connecticut State University, 1999).
- Forst, Arthur Charles, *From Normal School to State College: The Growth and Development of Eastern Connecticut State College from 1889 to 1959* (Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Connecticut, 1980).
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- Robillard, Ronald, *Windham and Willimantic* (Arcadia Press, 2005).
- Willey, C. Francis, "Willimantic State Teachers College," *Teacher Education Quarterly* (Fall 1949).
- www.ctheritage.org, a program of the Connecticut Council on the Humanities.

We welcome comments and additional information regarding the history of Eastern Connecticut State University. Please contact the Office of University Relations at (860) 465-5735.



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