

# HISTORY OF ESPERANZA COLLEGE

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**Esperanza College of Eastern University** was birthed from a tugging at the heart to impact the lives of people beyond the Sunday morning pulpit. It was, and is, a college unique to any other, an institution of redemption, grace, and hope. In 1987, Esperanza, Inc. (Esperanza), a community development organization located in North Philadelphia, was established with the purpose of strengthening Hispanic communities. At the core of its mission, both then and today, is education – the key to empowering communities to improve their conditions. Esperanza believes that education positions individuals and families to become economically stable and allows communities to thrive. One way in which Esperanza has displayed its commitment to education is through the establishment of Esperanza College of Eastern University.

In 1996, The Reverend Luis Cortés, Jr., President of Esperanza, began earnestly working on his vision to have a college within the neighborhood. After visiting many colleges and universities, he finally met with then president of Eastern University, Dr. David Black. Both visionaries and joined by a similar mission to serve, they initiated the planning of a partnership between Esperanza and Eastern University, a Christian university dedicated to ideas, inquiry, and the development of people of faith. The result was a junior college called Nueva Esperanza Center for Higher Education (NECHE). The first cohort, made up of 28 students, was admitted in Fall 2000 with a special and unique curriculum that served the language needs of the Latino students while still being couched within the academic integrity of Eastern University's CORE curriculum.

NECHE continued to grow and has since transitioned into Esperanza College, a fully accredited branch campus of Eastern University and a federally recognized Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Today, Esperanza College serves approximately 425 students through its English Institute, CDA program, and through its ten different academic programs, including Accounting, Business Administration, Community and Human Services, Criminal Justice, Digital Communication, Early Childhood Education, Health Sciences, Media and Technology, Medical Assisting, Natural Science. In addition to providing a contextualized urban program with built-in support systems, such as a bridge program, a Spanish language transition track, and a Student Success Center, Esperanza College offers courses that transfer to any university or transition seamlessly into Eastern University's four-year bachelor's degree programs and as a result many students choose to continue their studies at Eastern University's main campus or its different branch campuses.

One of the things that is unique about Esperanza College is that it is part of the Esperanza family of services. These services include k-12 educational academies, the Esperanza Barrio Youth Initiative, housing counseling, neighborhood revitalization, immigration legal services, the AMLA music school, Teatro Esperanza, and the North Philadelphia CareerLink among other things.

Since its inception, Esperanza College has focused on developing its students and the continual improvement of services offered. Now with two decades of experience in offering high quality services, we trust that, by the grace of God, the institution will continue to prosper, thrive, and bring change to many more lives along the way.