The University of Oregon's Erb Memorial Union, located in the heart of campus, is the physical, social, and political center of the University. From its opening date in the 1950s, the EMU has thrived and evolved to meet the needs of the university community. Over the years, the EMU has undergone several renovations and additions, including the addition of a food court, student union, and event space. The EMU is the location of a number of student organizations and clubs, as well as a popular meeting spot for students, faculty, and staff.
Land Acknowledgment: The University of Oregon is located within the traditional homelands of the Southern Kalapuya. Following the Willamette Treaty of 1855, Kalapuya people were forcibly removed to the Coast Reservation in Western Oregon. Today, descendants are citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon.

Inception Era (1876-1913)

This first era marks the establishment and early development of the university with the construction of the first building in 1876 (University Hall).

1 - The Collier House was built in 1886 and served as the home to Dr. George Haskell Collier, a physics professor at the university from 1879-1895. Dr. Collier had purchased 9.5 acres on the edge of campus for his family’s residence. Soon after the house was completed, it played a central role for community gatherings, meetings, and parties. In 1900 the Board of Regents voted to have it permanently house the university president. In 1976 it was designated a Eugene City Historic Landmark and survives as a remnant of the late-Victorian era of Eugene’s development.

2 - The Old Campus Quadrangle was the center of the original 18-acre campus and is home to the oldest buildings on campus, such as the first dormitory, Friendly Hall (1893) to the east, the first library, Fenton Hall (1906) to the west, and the administration building, Johnson Hall (1915) across 13th Ave. The “Pioneer” statue (remove June 2020) was designed by Alexander Phimster Proctor (1919). The Old Campus Quadrangle is illustrative of the Picturesque Era of campus planning. Once a barren knoll, it was planted with trees, the majority of which were coniferous, and lawns, providing the informal forest-like appearance seen today. The eastern sidewalk between Fenton and University Halls is known as “Hello Walk” because everyone was obligated to say “Hello” on this once central and active walkway. As you approach the third stop, notice the Big Leaf Maple tree in front of the University Hall east entrance. It is the only remaining “Dollar Tree” planted in 1884 by the university’s janitor under an agreement in which he was paid $1 for every tree planted and another $1 if it survived.

3 - The first building on the university campus, University Hall, was built in 1876. University Hall is a National Historic Landmark, the highest ranking for any historic building. It is one of only fifteen in Oregon. University Hall was designed with staircases at separate ends of the building—one for men and one for women.

The original wood floors were two feet thick and filled with earth to deaden sound and provide a source of radiant heat after the wood stoves cooled down. The building looks much like it did when it was originally constructed with the exception of missing wooden decorative elements and the sand paint finish applied in 1891 to match Villard Hall (to the north of University Hall).

4 - Another National Historic Landmark, Villard Hall, was the second building constructed on the campus in 1886. Villard was designed in the Second Empire style with a dual-pitched mansard roof and ornate decorative elements on the building’s facade. Notice the similarity in styles between Villard Hall and University Hall. Both buildings have benefited from meticulous restoration work assisted by Historic Preservation graduate students.

In addition, notice the Oregon Oak, known as the Condon Oak, the last of the three original Oregon Oaks at the north end of the Old Campus Quadrangle. When the university was established, these three were the only trees on this once barren knoll.

5 - The University Hall Walk Axis connects the Eugene community to the first university building, University Hall. Around 1896 the alley of Douglas fir trees was planted on either side of the concrete walk. Underfoot you will notice historic concrete sections with inscriptions from past annual University Days—a continuing tradition for students, faculty, and staff to join together and spruce up the campus.

6 - McKenzie Hall was completed in 1970 to house the Law School, which had outgrown its previous home, Fenton Hall. With its exposed concrete construction, it was intended to be a modernist interpretation of Fenton. McKenzie Hall is a fine example of the Brutalist style with its over-scale geometric massing and use of roughcast concrete for a textural effect. Currently the building houses a mix of academic departments and classrooms.

Mid-Century Era (1947-1974)

7 - The Dads’ Gates Axis was to be one of Ellis F. Lawrence’s formal entries to the campus, connecting 11th Avenue to 13th Avenue and the Memorial Quadrangle. It was planned to be an important entry to the campus, with the train station to stop where the current EMX transit station is located. Dads’ Gates to the north is a rare example of quality ironwork in Eugene and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Subsequent development has done little to reinforce this axis; however, the Lillis Business Complex acknowledges the axis through Lillis Hall’s glazed atrium providing a connection to and view of the Memorial Quad beyond.

8 - Peterson and Anstett Halls were designed as twin “entry pylons” for the Memorial Quadrangle. Peterson Hall (1916) and Anstett Hall (1921) were designed in Exotic styles reserved for primary campus buildings, while secondary campus buildings were designed in the colonial style.

Peterson Hall, formerly the Education Building and then Oregon Hall, was the first of many campus buildings designed by Ellis Lawrence during his tenure as campus planner and architect from 1914-1946. Anstett Hall was formerly Commerce Hall, then Gilbert Hall.

9 - As early as 1914, the Memorial Quadrangle was part of Ellis Lawrence’s campus plan to be a more formally designed campus open space. It continues to function as an active and well-liked space within the academic core. The distinctive ‘X’ and ‘O’ paths of the quad, along with the Knight Library’s terrace and fountain, were designed by Frederick Cuthbert in 1932. The Memorial Quadrangle and Knight Library are both listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

10 - Knight Library, is located at the southern terminus of the Memorial Quad. The library, built in 1937, has been referred to as Oregon’s best example of integrated art and architecture. It is the most fully executed of Lawrence’s buildings, incorporating sculpture, painting, and metalwork, much done by students, graduates, and professors. Take a walk through the library’s front section to experience the interior metalwork and artwork.