The Sambalpur University Act was passed by the Odisha Legislature on 10th December, 1966 to fulfill long cherished dream of the people of Western Odisha for establishment of a University. The University started functioning from 1st January, 1967 with Prof. Parsuram Mishra as the first Vice-Chancellor. The University was inaugurated on 4th January, 1967 by Hon’ble Chancellor A.N. Khosla. The University started functioning in 1967 in a rented private building at Dhanupali, Sambalpur and in Government building at Ainthapali, Sambalpur from 1968 - 72. In the year 1973 the University was shifted to the present campus named Jyoti Vihar at Burla. The territorial jurisdiction of the University covers 10 districts of the state of Odisha namely Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Bargarh, Bolangir, Subarnapur, Nawapara, Kalahandi, Boudh and Athamallik Sub-Division of Angul District. The University at Jyoti Vihar provides Post-Graduate education in Twenty-seven subjects through Twenty Post-Graduate Departments.

The University Post-Graduate Departments offer one-year study Programme for M.Phil Degree, two years study programme for the Degrees of M.A. / M.Sc. / LL.M. / Business Administration / M.Lib & Inf.Science, One-Year P.G. Diploma Course in Computer Science & Application and Diploma Course in Sambalpuri Studies and Three-Year course in M.C.A. and Executive M.B.A. The P.G. Departments of Chemistry, Life Sciences, History, Economics, Library & Information Sciences and Mathematics have been conferred Autonomous Status by the University. They adopt Semester system based on continuous evaluation. They adopt their own courses of studies. There are Ten Post-Graduate Hostels in the University Campus out of which four are Ladies Hostels and six are Gents’ Hostels. The University provide several facilities to the boarders in the Hostels like Common Room with T.V., Reading Room with Newspaper and Magazine, Guest Room, First Aid, STD Telephone booth, etc. The Central Canteen has been opened near the Hostel Campus for the benefit of students. Besides there are two Nationalized Banks, one Post-Office, one Health Centre, one Auditorium, one Police-Out Post, one Faculty House and one Community Centre have been established in the University Campus for providing services to students/teachers and employees in the Campus. The establishment of Directorate of Distance Education (DEC), Private Education Cell (PEC), One Nodal Computer Centre, Academic Staff College, University Yoga Centre, Professor Bhubaneswar Behera Central Library are acting like the wheels for the University system and would carry the University speedily towards achieving the noble boon for which these are set up. The Directorate of Distance and Continuing Education has started in the year 1998 with only on-campus courses in collaboration with P.G. Departments of Sambalpur University.