

Regent University Celebrates 25 Years of Spirit-Filled Education

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Regent University will celebrate its 25th anniversary in September, while reflecting on the graduate institution's unprecedented growth, both at its Virginia Beach, Va., campus and its new Northern Virginia Graduate Center near Washington, D.C.

The growth trend is reflected in both student enrollment and facilities, which include a new \$35 million state-of-the-art communication building and \$5 million student center.

Regent's School of Divinity, the 14th largest seminary in the United States, has reported an enrollment increase of 35 percent in 2002. Dean Vinson Synan says the growth reflects a revival among Spirit-filled churches and movements.

"The fastest-growing sector of the church in the [United States] today is the charismatic sector," Synan told Charisma. "Most of our students come from these churches."

The School of Divinity recently received accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools for a doctoral program. "Regent will now become the first Spirit-filled seminary in the world to offer a Ph.D. in divinity," Synan said.

Rita Pratt, a second-year divinity student from Alexandria,

Va., says she chose Regent for several reasons—the most important being its accreditation. “It is important to me that my degree be accepted by any university in case I want to go on for my doctorate,” Pratt said. “Regent stood out above all the others.

“Regent is also unique because they care,” she added. “Everyone is concerned about your spiritual growth as well as your education. That means a lot when you’re trying to hold down a job, meet family obligations and trying to go to school all at the same time.” Pratt also enjoys the convenience of being able to take coursework online and attend classes at Regent’s new Northern Virginia Graduate Center.

The five-story, 28,000-square-foot graduate center opened in the fall of 2000. Director Jeff Pittman said the center has tripled its enrollment in the last three years—the School of Divinity showing the largest increase.

“The northern Virginia campus is really a microcosm of Regent, even down to its traditional redbrick, Georgian-style architecture,” Pittman said. “The campus is designed mainly for working adults who either want to obtain an advanced degree in their field or make a career change.”

Debbie Lee of Baltimore is a fifth-year divinity student at Regent who takes classes at the northern Virginia facility. “Most students I know are not planning on leaving their career to become pastors,” Lee said. “They just want to learn more about their faith.”

Lee says she has noticed a growth in enrollment among women, particularly black women. “For the first two or three years I

was the only black female in my classes, but over the last few years more and more black females are enrolling at Regent," Lee said.

Regent University was founded in 1977 by Pat Robertson, shortly after he began the Christian Broadcasting Network in Virginia Beach. Classes began in September 1978. Today the school has an enrollment of nearly 3,000 students from around the world and was expecting to see its largest graduating class ever in the spring.

Regent has seen a 41 percent increase between 1999 and 2001 in the number of inquiries for enrollment. Though Regent is still considered a graduate school, the first class of students enrolled in its degree-completion program—for those with at least 60 credit hours—graduated in May 2002.

The momentum is expected to continue with the addition of the Northern Virginia Graduate Center. The school boasts five Cs at its core: Christian mission, career advancement, credibility, convenience, caring environment.

"We offer something different in D.C. that no one else is offering," Regent Marketing Director Mark Begley said. "I don't think there are any other educational institutions that are, across the board, emphasizing faith and learning. We have our niche."

Sandra K. Chambers