

How Southeastern University Defied Liberal Trends to Become the World's Largest Pentecostal University

Higher education rarely makes headlines unless there's some kind of controversy. It's certainly not newsworthy to say that colleges across the nation are becoming more and more left-wing. But in response, a growing number of Christian colleges and universities across the country are growing and educating a new generation of Christian leaders.

Southeastern University is one such place. The school, located in Lakeland, Florida, is the largest Pentecostal university in the world. Recently, I had the opportunity to visit and speak with Southeastern's president, Dr. Kent Ingle. The full interview is embedded below on today's episode of the "Strang Report" podcast.

In 2010—when Ingle first became president—he estimates 2,000 students attended Southeastern. Today, over 4,000 students attend the main campus, and another 4,700 attend extension campuses around the country. He says the school's growth has been fueled by two major factors. First, Southeastern made itself very financially affordable to students and their families. Second, about five years ago, Southeastern began developing extension campuses nationwide. Ingle calls it "unrestricted education."

"We had no campuses other than our Lakeland campus five years ago," Ingle says. "Now we have 112 campuses nationwide, where we provide educational resources and educational programs to those communities."

Ingle was also proud of significant growth in the school's

athletic programs, noting that during his tenure, Southeastern has added eight collegiate teams, including a football team that just celebrated its third straight conference title. Southeastern's new Health Science Center has also allowed the school to add new health care majors, bolstering its academic side.

Of course, universities change all the time, but many of them change for the worse. Schools can easily slide to the political left. After all, Harvard originally trained Puritan ministers, and look where it is today! Ingle has no intention of seeing Southeastern take that same trajectory.

"I think it is absolutely our intentional effort to make sure we are always committed to being Christ-centered in everything we do, and that filters down to every aspect of our culture," Ingle says. "So when students come on this campus, there is no question we are able to create, cultivate and design ways that will absolutely be committed to that Christ-centered value.

"We always want to make sure we are welcoming anybody and everybody who wants to come to Southeastern University, but we always also make sure that if you come here—and that is a choice you make—you will understand our value is all about being Christ-centered. When you understand and know that, and then we live that, that's what makes us, I think, stay strong in being that kind of a faith-based university that really does integrate faith and learning with life service."

I have a personal connection with Southeastern. My father actually worked as a professor at Southeastern from 1962 to 1969. We moved there when I was 11 years old, and for months, I lived on the campus itself, in a little house that has since been torn down, until my father could buy a house.

When it eventually came time for me to go to college, I chose to go to a secular university, and I believe that was God's plan for my life. But two years later, I met a Southeastern

student. Her name was Joy Ferrell, and she later became my wife. Furthermore, my brother-in-law James was also a faculty member at Southeastern and served as the head of the education department for roughly three decades.

This school has been near and dear to my heart for nearly six decades, and I pray that God will continue to use it mightily in the decades to come. I pray the leadership of Southeastern will stand strong on the Word of God and not give in to the trends of the day. To learn more about Southeastern, visit the university's website [here](#).

Additionally, I'm excited to share with you my new podcast, "In Depth With Stephen Strang." The show will tentatively start next Friday, Feb. 1, but for my column's readers, I have a special sneak peek. To hear a preview episode of the new series, [click here](#).