



CAMPUS COMES ALIVE

Whether it's an early morning prayer group, a flag football game or a lively discussion between members of the debate team, Regent University's campus is bustling with activity, thanks in part to the school's growing number of on-campus undergraduate students.

Regent's School of Undergraduate Studies (RSU) began in 2005. Today, it enrolls 1,130 on-campus students, and momentum is building as future students seek RSU's refreshing points of difference: academic excellence, spiritual vibrance, and shaping of the whole student to lead and serve with Christ-centered purpose. Having offered only graduate-level programs for more than 25 years, the addition of an undergraduate program has brought a new vitality to the university.

"It has added more life to the campus," says Tracy Stewart, vice president for Enrollment Management and Information Technology. "And it's good to see more of the people we're serving."

The students are taking full advantage of opportunities to learn and lead outside the classroom. One area this is taking place is in the growing number of student organizations. From honor societies and special interest clubs to service organizations and student government, students are finding niches where they can use their talents. If students have a vision for a club or activity that is not currently offered, they are encouraged to take ownership of it and create it.

Leah Stiles, a junior from Pennsylvania, says she appreciates the freedom students are given to pursue their interests. During her freshman year, she helped start Regent's Undergraduate Debate Association and competed in parliamentary debate, where the team advanced to the national competition. She is also an officer of Pi Sigma Alpha, a political science honor society that gives students opportunities to publish articles in professional journals and brings in renowned guest speakers. In addition to her classes and other student activities, Stiles interns in U.S. Representative Scott Rigell's office.



"REGENT INTEGRATES GOD INTO EVERYTHING IN A WAY THAT PUTS HIM, NOT ME, AT THE CENTER AND DOES SO IN A WAY THAT'S VERY NATURAL AND RELEVANT. ONE THING I REALLY LOVE IS THAT I'M BEING GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP MY PURPOSE AND TALENTS IN WAYS THAT GIVE GOD GLORY."

ABIGAIL ODURO, RSU SOPHOMORE



I FEEL MY TIME AT REGENT IS DEVELOPING ME ACADEMICALLY, SPIRITUALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY. I WANT TO BE A DIFFERENT MAN WALKING THROUGH THE DOOR OF MY HOME.

STEPHEN GAINES, RSU JUNIOR

Opportunities like these are just part of Regent's philosophy of a comprehensive education where the emphasis lies in more than merely academics, says Dr. Gerson Moreno-Riaño, RSU dean. The goal of Regent's undergraduate program is to transform the whole person, rather than just prepare them to succeed in a chosen profession.

He explains that most other undergraduate universities focus solely on giving students measurable skills. However, dating back to the ancient world, education had broader purposes, something he hopes to recapture at Regent: "It wasn't just skills; it was really what I call 'soul-crafting'—shaping and educating the soul of a person to be all that he or she was meant to be to flourish as a human being; and that is holistic." Moreno-Riaño continues, "Students who are simply focused on a set of skills, or just their discipline, are basically robbing themselves morally because a discipline is a very narrow part of one's life."

As a result, school administrators spent months considering the crucial elements that should be at the core of RSU's educational philosophy and curriculum. The mission statement they developed, Cherish Character, Challenge Culture, Serve the World, is woven into everything that takes place at the university.

RSU began with character because the values of honesty and integrity are crucial to becoming a good leader. In addition, leaders must know how to boldly stand for what they believe, which is why the school teaches students to challenge culture.

"Many undergraduate institutions focus on engaging culture, interacting with culture, understanding culture, but I did not see any institution out there that had as part of their undergraduate mission to challenge culture," Moreno-Riaño shares. "We want students to be able to affirm the good things in culture, because there are many, but also to question, to challenge, to shine a light on those practices that are not good, that are not Biblical ... and to do so productively, Christ-like, but firmly and courageously."

The school also emphasizes service as a way of life. "Young people today volunteer more than any other generation in American history, and yet evidence suggests that large numbers of them don't know why they volunteer. They have no mission, vision or focus as to why," the dean says. "What better place for us to give them focus than here?"

Regent also places an emphasis on their spiritual development, offering life groups, Bible studies and student-led chapels to help students grow in their faith, and this spiritual emphasis continues in the classroom as well.



REGENT IS A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN FLOURISH. IF YOU ARE WILLING TO WORK, YOU CAN RISE TO THE TOP OF WHATEVER VOCATION OR WHATEVER CALLING YOU HAVE WITHOUT HAVING TO COMPROMISE YOUR MORALITY.

LEAH STILES, RSU JUNIOR

"Our difference is that we're Biblically grounded. We're Christ-centered," Stewart says. "There's not one class that you can take that isn't trying to give you something that is spiritually transformational about that topic."

RSU senior Robert Torres-Cedillo, from Mexico, says he has enjoyed how professors integrate a Biblical worldview with challenging academics. "I've benefited from the classes, the open discussion," he shares. "You can talk about the secular world but also how the Christian life applies and how we can change the world." It is this sense of purpose, more than just preparation for a vocation, that he feels students are drawn to.

When students retire from a rigorous day's classes, on-campus housing offers a welcoming respite. The Commons, recently renamed Foundation Hall and Constitution Hall, features fully furnished apartments with full-sized kitchens and appliances, a 24-hour fitness center on the premises, student meeting rooms, and an outside grilling area. All amenities are included in the cost.

More than the plush surroundings, students enjoy the sense of community that comes from living together on campus. At 350, the number of total residents is still small enough that students get to know nearly all of their neighbors, and they become close very quickly.

"A lot of my friends who went to bigger schools didn't have that experience freshman year, and they didn't feel connected," Stiles says. "I could say when I went home for my first fall break that I had a family away from home."

Abigail Oduro, a sophomore from Ghana, West Africa, agrees, noting how resident assistants (RAs) and life group leaders work hard to connect with students and assist in any way possible.

"The Commons is not your usual dorm experience; it helps build community," she explains. "It's like a family; you grow together in God in all areas of your life."

Through programs like Discover Regent and the school's Summer Orientation Advising & Registration (SOAR), prospective students can learn more about the school and experience Regent firsthand. During these events, high school and transfer students spend time on campus, visit a class, meet faculty and other students, and learn more about the programs available at Regent.

However, the undergraduate program is currently growing on its own, already having received approximately 1,000 applications for the next school year. "It's exciting. Great kids attract other great kids, so that's what is happening," Stewart says.

Moreno-Riaño shares that he recently spoke both to an RSU graduate and a group of current students, and each described their experiences at Regent as life changing. With an impassioned sense of vision he adds, "I hope that we can say that now, that we can continue to say that, and these students will come back 20 or 30 years from now and say the same thing." ■



MAKING THE PARENT CONNECTION

Fun, fellowship and family—Regent had it all at the first annual Parents Weekend held November 4-6, 2011. Approximately 200 parents and students attended the events, which gave families a chance to experience firsthand the exciting life of a Regent University student.

The families toured the campus and experienced mock classes, attended a live broadcast of *The 700 Club*, and enjoyed dinner and a movie together. They also heard from Regent's president, Dr. Carlos Campo, and met with staff and university leaders.

Regent's School of Undergraduate Studies (RSU) planned the event to help parents stay connected. "Parents Weekend provided Regent with the opportunity to develop and nurture relationships with the parents of our undergraduate students," explains Dr. Gerson Moreno-Riaño, RSU dean. "Such relationship building is critical for the academic success of our students, as well as for the long-term success of the university."

His goal was to provide parents with the full "Regent experience" and integrate them into the community. "Parents are going to invest a tremendous amount of emotional, moral and financial capital in the institution of their sons and daughters," he says. "We want to ensure that these parents feel a part of the university, not just now, but for a long time."

Jeffrey Kay and his wife, Sharon, came from Ohio to attend Parents Weekend with their sons Tim (Cinema/Television) and Ben (Biblical Studies), both seniors at RSU. Hearing Dr. Campo's vision for Regent to remain a Biblically based university was a highlight for Jeffrey. "Knowing that Regent is founded on the truth of God's Word and that they believe in absolute truth is very important," he shared. "Some universities don't believe in truth anymore."

He also appreciates the opportunities that Regent provides for students to interact with high-caliber faculty and guest speakers like those who come to campus each year for the Clash of the Titans® debate. "You won't get those interactive opportunities at a larger school. They may have some of the visiting professors, but you would not have the opportunity to have a one-on-one conversation with them."

Meeting the faculty was also a highlight for Theresa Plastino who came from California to attend Parents Weekend with her son Thomas, an RSU senior studying business. Shortly after her son started classes he called her to say how impressed he was with his teachers. "I think it's their love for the Lord that has inspired him the most," she shared. "He has grown so much spiritually since he's been at Regent."

She also enjoyed the sense of community that the weekend provided. Families were able to visit with university leaders and other parents in an informal setting during a western-themed dinner held on Saturday night. The celebration featured barbecue, music, line dancing, prizes and even a bull.

"We rode the mechanical bull together, [Dr. Campo's] wife and I," Plastino recalls. "It was fun. We just had a ball that night."

Families also enjoyed Regent's Chili Bowl on Saturday, which featured the championship game of the university's intramural football league as well as a variety of food, cotton candy, a chili cook-off, and face painting and inflatables for the kids.

The weekend ended with a moving service on Sunday giving parents, students, faculty and staff an opportunity to worship and pray together.

"Everyone truly enjoyed the weekend," says Ann LeBlanc, vice president for advancement. "It gave our leaders a wonderful opportunity to hear from parents, learn what is important to them and share their hearts for the students."

Building on this year's success, RSU plans to make Parents Weekend an annual event. "Thanks to everyone who planned it. It was wonderful," Plastino says with a smile. "I'd come every year, but my son is graduating in May." [CU](#)

Photos: 1. Parents and students enjoy time together at the Chili Bowl Championship game. 2. Participants mingle at the western BBQ. 3. Reuniting with friends and family. 4. Parents, faculty and students at the Regent Hoe Down. 5. Dr. M.G. "Pat" Robertson tosses the coin to start the Chili Bowl. 6. RSU flag football team winners. 7. A proud mom cheers on the game. 8. The Electric Slide brings the crowd onto the field at half time. 9. Students get their fill of football, food, fellowship and fun at Regent's first annual Parents Weekend.