



by Ron Brown

Liberty University's® Distance Learning Program has been ranked among the nation's elite.

Liberty University ranked third in the second annual Online College Ranking by the *Online Education Database* released Wednesday, January 23, 2008.

Liberty's Distance Learning Program, a non-profit program, ranked ahead of well-known online programs at the University of Phoenix, Grand Canyon University, Regent University, Walden University, National University, Colorado Technical University, ITT Technical Institute, Kaplan University, and Capella University.

The rankings evaluated the universities on their acceptance rates, financial aid packages, graduation rates, peer web citations, retention rates, scholarly citations, student-faculty ratios and years accredited.

Liberty University was unranked in OEDb's initial ranking.

Upper Iowa University received the top ranking with LeTourneau University coming in second.

"To be ranked third kind of backs up what we've been doing," said Ronald S. Kennedy, Liberty University's executive director of Distance Learning and Graduate Studies. "It affirms the testimonials we get from our students as to the quality of our program. We knew we were competitive with the for-profit programs out there. We didn't have a way to substantiate it. This ranking brings credibility to the things we have known internally."

The Distance Learning Program has already reached a significant milestone in the 2007-2008 academic year. In early December the program's enrollment topped 20,000 for the first time.

Currently, Liberty University's Distance Learning Program has nearly 23,000 students.

"Our growth has basically been across the board," Kennedy said. "We are seeing double figure growth in most of our programs. God is a big part of why we rank third."

LU Chancellor Jerry Falwell Jr. credits the Distance Learning Program's success to the program's strong leadership.

"We should all be proud of what Liberty's Executive Vice President, Dr. Ron Godwin, and Executive Director of Distance Learning and Graduate Studies Ron Kennedy, have accomplished in their leadership of Liberty's Distance Learning Program," Falwell Jr. said. "I have recently become better acquainted with many of the faculty and staff in distance learning and have been impressed with their professionalism and competence.

"The enrollment has nearly doubled to 22,000 students in less than a year without sacrificing quality or academic excellence. Given the performance of our faculty and staff, I am not surprised to learn of how highly Liberty University was ranked nationally today among distance learning programs. Congratulations to the entire faculty and staff of the Liberty University Distance Learning Program!"