

APPENDIX A
ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY
HISTORICAL INFORMATION

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HISTORY OF ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY

Oral Roberts once said, *"When God is ready to do a new work in the earth, He causes a baby to be born."* The distinctive character and uniqueness of Oral Roberts University is best understood in the person of its founder, Chancellor Oral Roberts, and his parents. From a Methodist background, the chancellor's parents embraced the new Pentecostal movement and pastored churches within the Pentecostal Holiness denomination. Chancellor Roberts' history is told by David Harrell, Jr., in his 1985 book, *Oral Roberts: An American Life*.

The early Pentecostal revival involved a great diversity of people from all walks of life and denominational backgrounds. They found their unity in four cardinal doctrines: Jesus is Savior, Healer, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and soon-coming King. That focus on Jesus and openness to all people is an enduring value God gave to ORU through its founder.

The pivotal moment in Oral Roberts' life was his healing from tuberculosis and stuttering at age 17. He heard God's voice that he

- 1) Would be healed
- 2) Was to take God's healing power to his generation
- 3) Was to *"Build Me a university. Build it on My authority, and on the Holy Spirit."*

God's voice has been monumentally important in the subsequent founding and operation of ORU.

Chancellor Roberts soon began preaching as an evangelist and pastored Pentecostal Holiness churches, but he was never comfortable with the constraints of denominational dogma. In the 1970s a Methodist bishop described him as a maverick they could not control. His openness to all truth later gave rise to incredible academic freedom at ORU. He trusted faculty to honor and live by the Bible, to constantly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to be people of integrity—so different from professors he encountered as a student. In Enid, Oklahoma, while Oral Roberts was listening to a skeptical theology professor, the Holy Spirit spoke to him: *"Don't be like other ministers. Be like Jesus and heal the people."* It was also in Enid that one scripture, 3 John 2, transformed the lives of Chancellor Roberts and his wife, Evelyn. *"Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers."* That plus John 10:10—"The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"—became the core of his message when he began his ministry of healing evangelism.

The chancellor's healing crusades, notable for being among the first to be racially integrated, broke upon America like a prairie fire. ORU is often described as having **been forged in the fires of healing evangelism**. Oral Roberts' name became a household word, second only to Billy Graham. Televised programs from the big tent were seen by millions across many denominations and lifestyles. Soul-winning, described by Oral Roberts as "the greatest miracle," was always the primary emphasis.

In the early 1960s the focus of Oral Roberts' ministry changed dramatically as he announced plans to build ORU. Not knowing how to build a university, he walked the grounds; praying in the Spirit and receiving back picture images of what to do. Partner seminars followed, as ministers from around the world were brought to ORU to learn about the work of the Holy Spirit and God's command to build Him a university. Chancellor Roberts was told he would never find qualified faculty, but the Holy Spirit was already calling Spirit-filled Christians to prepare themselves for careers in higher education.

ORU's first prime directive, the mandate to *"Build Me a university . . . "* was given to Oral Roberts as a teenager. The second came 25 years later and is ORU's most frequently quoted word from God.

"In June 1960, while having dinner with Pat Robertson in Richmond, Virginia, Oral began to write on his napkin. He has repeated the message thousands of times since, rhythmically, as if reciting poetry:

*'Raise up your students to hear My voice,
to go where My light is seen dim,
My voice is heard small, and
My healing power is not known.
Even to the uttermost bounds
of the earth.
Their work will exceed yours
and in this I am well pleased.'*

(From David Harrell's interview with Oral Roberts on February 16, 1983.)

Ground was broken for ORU in 1962. Officially chartered in 1963 with the State of Oklahoma, ORU opened in 1965 with 303 students and seven major buildings. The Reverend Billy Graham was the keynote speaker at ORU's Dedication in 1967.

The chancellor gave high priority to campus architecture. He worked with architect Frank Wallace to create unique campus buildings, especially the Prayer Tower, a campus icon. In the shape of a cross with a crown of thorns, its construction in 1967 was the source of considerable tension, as described by the chancellor in his 1986 address to the regents. Academic leaders feared that ORU would never be able to obtain accreditation with a Prayer Tower in the center of the campus. The chancellor wavered, but

"Lee Braxton stood and fought like a tiger. He said, 'Oral Roberts, you said that God told you to build Him a university, on His authority and on the Holy Spirit. You said that. And you published it and you've sold it to the partners. You sold it to us. You sold it to a bunch of people who could care less about higher education. All they want from you is your sermons and your prayers. Now you went and sold the most unlikely group of people to give you money and support to build a university. You told them you were going to put a Prayer Tower in the center. I'm telling you, Oral Roberts, if I have to walk away it will destroy me.'"

The Prayer Tower cost two million dollars, a considerable sum in the face of other startup needs. Deliberately placed in the center of the campus, students and faculty see it constantly. To illustrate the seriousness of this issue, the chancellor described a three-day period of fasting and prayer for his partners, followed by a chapel service.

"I stood before that group of (500) students—in the midst of an academic university of which the Ford Foundation had already published that the brightest star on the academic horizon is the new university in Tulsa—I walked into the midst of an academic university where there was no compromise on academic excellence, but where we had the heart of a Bible college—and I testified to what God had done in my spirit up in that Prayer Tower. We validated the Prayer Tower in the lives of our people. Today I get the feeling that people are as proud of that Prayer Tower as they know how to be." (Meleen, *Enduring Values*, p. 34)

ORU graduated its first partial class in 1968, and its first four-year class in 1969—the period in which it encountered its first crisis. Chancellor Roberts announced plans to join the Methodist Church. This was a direct result of his leadership in the growing charismatic renewal. Spirit-filled adherents of denominational churches rejoiced, but his Pentecostal followers felt abandoned. The crisis passed, and was soon supplanted in March 1971 by the greatest day in ORU's history: the granting of full accreditation for 10 years by the North Central Association.

In many ways the first decade was ORU's golden era. Chancellor Roberts was intimately involved with every aspect of ORU life. Looking back at the first twenty years, mathematics professor Dr. Verbal Snook described a team effort by faculty, administration and president.

"As we worked together on committees, we developed respect for each other... This mutual respect, coupled with competence in our disciplines, made us effective.

"By the early '70s, we had excellence within our grasp. Not because of scholarly activity, but because a nucleus of adequate scholars with adequate funding developed compatibility, and congealed solidly behind the challenge to build a university worthy to be called 'God's University.'"

Enrollment climbed rapidly during this time. In keeping with its mission, ORU began a summer missions program that continues to this day. More buildings were added—Mabee Center, four new residence halls, Howard Auditorium, the Aerobics Center, Christ's Chapel, J.L. Johnson Stadium and the "Baby Mabee" Television Production Studio. Graduate and professional schools in business, dentistry, education, law, medicine, nursing, and theology were opened. The Learning Resources Center was greatly enlarged by the Graduate Center addition, and a different kind of student became common: highly intelligent, with a greater focus on academic work. ORU always has been blessed with a core of highly committed Christians, but student quality, spiritually and academically, has varied with the times.

In the midst of everything good that was happening at ORU, tragedy struck the Roberts family with the 1977 deaths of Marshall and Rebecca (Roberts) Nash. A few months later Chancellor Roberts shared the vision God gave him for the City of Faith Medical and Research Center, citing God's promise that "I will rain on your desert." The center opened in 1981. (During this time, ORU became the number-one tourist attraction in Oklahoma and was considered a major economic leader in the city of Tulsa.) The economic model proposed for the City of Faith was soon challenged by a severe recession. The financial health of the Oral Roberts Ministries was also weakened by a decrease in donations, partly due to the number of televangelists who began using the new medium of cable television.

In November 1985, the Board of Regents voted to transfer the ORU law school to Regent University. In 1986, the university closed its dental school. A year later, scandals occurred at two major television ministries, and that had a negative effect on the attitudes of many who supported Christian organizations, including ORU and the Oral Roberts Ministries. Faced with inadequate income to support all of its operations, ORU closed the City of Faith in 1989 and announced that the medical school would close at the end of the 1989-90 academic year. Today, the City of Faith is known as CityPlex Towers and serves as a commercial office center.

Athletics and aerobic exercise have always been a major part of ORU. Chancellor Roberts' stated goal was to win the national championship in basketball. Mabee Center and Johnson Stadium are clear witnesses to the chancellor's desire to be competitive in intercollegiate athletics. He saw this as a tool for soul-winning and promoting his healing ministry, often stating that most men turned first to the sports section of the newspaper. However, the success that ORU teams enjoyed in the 1970s declined in the 1980s. In 1989, a period of financial challenges, ORU left the NCAA and joined the NAIA.

In 1991, ORU rejoined the NCAA and began its climb back into the national spotlight. In 1994, President Richard Roberts hired a director of Athletics, marking a turnaround in the direction of this department. ORU joined the Mid-Continent Conference (now the Summit League) in 1997 and will be joining the Southland Conference in 2012.

The transition to Richard Roberts as president came on the chancellor's 75th birthday, January 24, 1993. President Richard Roberts' first years were effective, as he assembled a quality team of vice presidents and deans to run ORU. He went out of his way to show his love for the students.

In 1998, ORU marked three noteworthy achievements: two new graduate programs, the Master of Management and the Doctor of Education, were established; the NCA continued ORU's accreditation for another ten years; and the university became affiliated with Livets Ord University in Uppsala, Sweden and Peniel College of Higher Education in Brentwood, Essex, England. In subsequent years, ORU started a highly successful honors program, a Leadership Academy, and a service-learning program. Individual departments, schools and programs continued to impress their respective accrediting agencies and achieve sought-after approvals.

Most recently (2007), the School of Business received accreditation from the Association for Collegiate Business Schools and Programs.

In 2001, ORU finished retrofitting one of its oldest residence halls, Shakarian Hall, and renamed it the Gabrielle Christian Salem Residence for Women. Other welcome initiatives in the past decade have included small pay increases for faculty and staff, campus-wide summer renovations, new scholarship programs and the launch of a cutting-edge, award-winning student assessment program called ePortfolio.

ORU welcomed another HLC site team to campus in November 2007, which indicated at the exit interview that they would recommend continuing accreditation for ORU. However, that site team cited three major deficiencies: leadership, finances, and governance, and recommended a return site visit in 2009 to measure progress toward correcting those deficiencies.

In November of 2007, President Richard Roberts resigned and is now devoting himself to full-time evangelistic ministry. In the wake of his resignation, the Green family, founders of two successful corporations based in Oklahoma City, came forward with an offer of substantial

financial help if ORU would make massive changes in its form of governance. The Board of Regents voted in January 2008 to accept the Green family's proposal, which outlined plans for a new Board of Trustees, greater financial accountability (including ECFA membership), new bylaws and other changes.

In July 2009, Dr. Mark Rutland was hired to serve as the third President of Oral Roberts University and continues to serve in that capacity.

With the acceptance of this proposal ORU has entered an era of significant change. The new leadership, including the next president, has a **momentous opportunity** and a **vital responsibility** to continue to transition ORU from a founder-governed system to a shared governance system, while holding fast to its God-ordained mission and the enduring values set in place by its founder. There is renewed excitement and interest on campus, as expectations of needed changes and new opportunities are building faith and hope that ORU once again may be worthy of the title: "God's University."

FACULTY, STAFF AND ALUMNI

Faculty organizations at ORU have always included all full-time faculty. The original Faculty Senate was led by high-ranking professors, and enjoyed stature, influence and cohesion. The president often attended meetings. This waned as attention shifted to the new graduate programs. From a low ebb in the early 1980s, the Senate rebounded under leadership teams guided by newly appointed Associate Dean Ralph Fagin. Lasting achievements from that period include the annual faculty retreat, a weekly dedicated hour for faculty meetings (Mondays at 11:00 a.m.), and a focus on effective teaching. These and related efforts positively impacted faculty morale. (Concern for meaningful faculty involvement and morale was the inspiration for a 1987 paper titled "Enduring Values: A Role For Faculty," by Senate President Nathan Meleen.)

In 1991 the Senate concept was reorganized into a University Faculty Assembly, with individual Senates in each school. As implied by its name, the new organization placed more emphasis on disseminating information and less on governance. This is reflected in the fact that the original Senate had elected officers whereas the new one has elected representatives who follow a rotating system of officers.

The staff has played a large part in the success of ORU. Many have been faithful for many years, choosing to stay at ORU rather than seek employment elsewhere at a higher rate of pay. Despite less-competitive compensation packages and infrequent raises. ORU has nonetheless been blessed with a significant group of highly committed individuals—along with many new staff, as turnover has been high. The staff is looking for leadership from the new president that will acknowledge their contributions to ORU and encourage them to continue on.

The alumni of ORU include about 22,000 graduates and 14,000 associates. They are served by the Office of Alumni Relations, which was established in 1980. Through the years this group has observed their alma mater's ups and downs, and has exhibited limited trust in the university—due in large part to questions concerning governance and financial accountability. The Alumni Office has had mixed success in reaching out to disengaged alumni. As a result, ORU has not enjoyed the type of positive spokespersonship and financial support from alumni that is characteristic of older, more established colleges and universities.

THE ORU MISSION, BASIS OF FAITH, AND CORE VALUES

The ORU vision is stated in the two prime directives God gave Oral Roberts:

- 1) *"Build Me a university. Build it on My authority and on the Holy Spirit."*
- 2) *"Raise up your students to hear My voice, to go where My light is seen dim, My voice is heard small, and My healing power is not known, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Their work will exceed yours, and in this I am well pleased."*

Those in leadership at ORU must have a clear understanding of this vision as outlined in the prime directives. The strategy for fulfilling these directives is found in an emphasis on whole-person education and vocational penetration.

Chancellor Roberts' message during ORU's inaugural chapel, "Quest for the Whole Man," is foundational to an understanding of ORU's core values. The model is Jesus Christ, the only whole person, who "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 3:52). From this scripture the chancellor derived the goals of developing the mind through education, the body through physical exercise, and the spirit through spiritual disciplines under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For a further discussion of core values, see the Institutional Audit and the ORU catalog. Student Services has also developed a "Core Values Synthesis" based heavily on Chancellor Roberts' message, "Quest for the Whole Man."

The Great Commission has also been foundational at ORU, but with an added emphasis. Not only were graduates challenged to "go into all the world," but to "go into every person's world" (Acts 1:8). This can be described by the phrase "vocational penetration," and is the basis of support for a wide diversity of majors. The accomplishments of ORU graduates have truly exceeded the chancellor's. Pastors, teachers, physicians, dentists, nurses, entrepreneurs, missionaries, political leaders, evangelists, authors, and filmmakers—the list goes on and on. Many alumni have embraced this challenge and have gained international recognition for their accomplishments in fulfilling the Great Commission. Alumni involvement is vital to fulfilling the vision and mission of ORU.

What does it mean to "build God a university"? It means being excellent scholars, as modeled by the chancellor and the value he placed on learning. He publicly told faculty to make it hard on students, and when asked about unexcused absences, he demanded zero tolerance.

At the time of its founding, ORU was the only charismatic university in the world, and stands alone in the quality and breadth of its undergraduate and historic medical programs. Many fine schools exist within the Pentecostal-Charismatic dimension, but none match the uniqueness and distinctive character of ORU. Faculty member Stephen M. King, who later taught at Regent University, wrote:

There is no other place like ORU. There is no other college or university that has such a specially defined and spiritually powerful mission and vision statement. There is no other university where you can thoroughly, powerfully and strategically interject the unadulterated Word of God into the classroom, regardless of the class, and find a generally receptive student audience."

What does it mean to build a university “on God’s authority”? Chancellor Roberts saw in ORU an opportunity to meld the best of Bible school training with the best of contemporary academics: a “Bible-based, God-centered, Holy Spirit-anointed university.”

“ . . . if we can take the Bible school concept and put it into the very heart of the university, and build upon it and around it an academic program from which springs the different skills by which the world is operated, we have the absolute best of what we as humans and as Christians can do, the salt of the earth and light of the world, and to release our own personal calling.”

It is clear that fulfilling God’s command to build ORU on God’s authority demands a total commitment to the Bible as the guidebook for everything done at ORU. Different views are permissible and needed under the umbrella of the focus on Jesus, but attempts to undermine or move away from the Bible must not be tolerated.

What does it mean to build a university “on the Holy Spirit”? The chancellor was passionate about an emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the focal point of the ORU experience. Glossolalia (speaking in other tongues, or the prayer language), based on Jesus as Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, is the shared common value, along with the nine-fold offices, nine-fold giftings, and nine-fold fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Language is the cornerstone of culture and a human being’s most God-like trait. Chancellor Roberts understood the power of words, “the foolishness of preaching,” to build faith. He considered the chapel hour to be the most vital part of the ORU experience. The evangelist God used to heal the young Oral Roberts spoke directly to his disease, commanding it to “loose him and let him go.” A powerful idea that one former ORU professor, Dr. Hubert Morken, took from Chancellor Roberts is that:

“Words have the power to create, to bring into being, for they are the source of all that is in the natural and spiritual worlds (words from God have more than denotative and connotative meaning, they are Spirit and Life, they are related to power and they create Faith).

“We academics who work with the visible and with language miss what is most important in the realm of the Spirit, i.e., the capacity of words to reveal the person of God by releasing the power of God. This is a relational truth connecting us to the infinite One through the gifts of the Spirit, miracles, etc.—not magic.”

“Raise up your students to hear My voice . . .” has been drummed into every student and faculty member. The university’s leaders are responsible for “raising up” students, who soon learn that hearing and obeying God’s voice demands going. Students are taught to emulate ORU’s founder, who heard God’s voice throughout his ministry and tried to follow his mother’s advice to “always obey God.” That need for obedience suggests a West Point model for ORU, a place of officer preparation for spiritual warfare against the forces of darkness and evil. Speaking to the Board of Regents (1986), Chancellor Roberts said:

“Anyone who reads history knows the strength and longevity of any movement revolves around its ability to reproduce leadership . . . All the toil, sweat, and tears we endured by faith will become our great joy, if a university can be a vehicle to reproduce the leaders of the future. Without new leadership in the

church, this great flow of the Holy Spirit will subside. **For that I submit to you my life's work."**

ORU Distinctives

In a thank-you letter to Chancellor Roberts, Dr. Nathan Meleen wrote: "I enjoy sharing with faculty and students the firm conviction that ORU has been incredibly well-founded, giving us distinctives as a university that serve us well in carrying out our mission and fulfilling God's will." In his letter Dr. Meleen discussed scholarship, teamwork, academic freedom, diversity and the Seed-Faith message. Other vital distinctives include prayer and the prayer language, the Prayer Tower and its 24-hour prayer ministry, aerobics, an honor code, and striving for excellence in all things. It is the unique combination of these distinctives that makes ORU so special.

Few Christian schools have true academic freedom, but Chancellor Roberts by his very nature embraced it. Tulsa Tribune editor Jenkin Lloyd Jones, in a piece titled "My friend Oral," asked him how he was going to teach geology. His profound reply—"Anything that can be scientifically proven must be God's work; how else could it exist?"—set the academic course for ORU. The university would be mainstream, not trying to sell some specialized viewpoint or novel interpretation. In a faculty meeting where the teaching of origins was discussed, the chancellor stated: "We of all people should be the most free to handle controversy, because we have the Holy Spirit to guide us."

ORU is proud to be one of the most diverse Christian campuses on earth, culturally, ethnically, and theologically. The faculty, staff and students benefit from learning to work in harmony with fellow colleagues and students from a wide variety of backgrounds and beliefs. This is possible only because ORU is centered, at its founder's insistence and guidance, on the one perfect man, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and the four cardinal doctrines. Because these cardinal doctrines—Jesus is Savior, Healer, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and coming King—are the core of shared values at ORU, it is possible to tolerate a wide range of views on other issues. This provides a healthy academic setting, requiring members of the ORU community to think about and respect the views of others, and to hone their own worldviews more finely. That, in turn, opens the door to racial tolerance, love and respect for all the cultures and peoples of the world.

The phrase "Expect A Miracle," painted on the Mabee Center basketball court and used in various promotions, dates from Chancellor Roberts' 1970 seminal work, *Miracle of Seed-Faith*. Always controversial, that teaching remains one of ORU's founding values, greatly in need of careful exposition. The three keys of Seed-Faith—"God is your source," "Give, and it shall be given unto you," and "Expect A Miracle"—offer both an effective strategy for ministry (the "going") and a Biblical basis for godly prosperity (3 John 2) so desperately needed by the poor.