After more than 30 years teaching graduate and doctoral studies, Regent’s School of Communication & the Arts (Com/Arts) is teaching undergraduate students. The school integrated its bachelor’s programs with Regent’s School of Undergraduate Studies (RSU), and after only two years of integration, Com/Arts is experiencing phenomenal growth.

“In terms of credit hours, there is a 147 percent increase this spring over last spring in the undergraduate program,” Com/Arts Dean Michael Patrick says. This increase means more programs and more opportunities are opening up.

Dreams are becoming a reality for undergraduate students at Regent: April Campion, cinema-television student created a 30-second soccer viral and just pitched her script to Adidas.

“I knew from the time I was 12 that I wanted to make movies,” says the San Diego native. Discussing her commercial, she adds, “It’s to motivate young men and young women to go for what they want in life.”

Campion came to Regent to pursue her passion. Her talent earned her the opportunity to produce the fall 2008 endowed film, an offer usually extended to graduate students. Explaining the “one thing” Campion likes most about the program, she says, “You get to dabble in everything ... you get to produce, direct, edit and do audio.”

Recently hired to produce a local reality show, Campion also freelances, telecasts live sporting events and has started her own production company, Azure Blue Films. And she plans to go to Hollywood. Her desire is to create better, more wholesome films where viewers come away feeling the movie made a positive difference for them.

Van Austin Brooks, a production major, transferred to Regent University as a junior this year. Growing up in Effingham, Ill., Brooks’s interest in filmmaking blossomed during a phenomenal, four-year high school cinema-television program. In addition to making films, he took part in other programs around the country, such as Act One in Hollywood and the City Lights internship for young filmmakers from around the world.

“I have a love, a passion for storytelling ... I care about people. My heart is people. And my tool to affect them is filmmaking,” he explains.

For Brooks and many other students, it is rewarding to find a place with people who care about what they’re doing, and who have a devotion and passion matching their own. Brooks says the collaboration between graduate and undergraduate students has been positive.

“Since I have been here, Regent has definitely exceeded my expectations!” he says.

Like Brooks, Dan Hutchins is a production major. He transferred to Regent in his junior year. Both Brooks and Hutchins are pastors’ sons.

Hutchins moved from Manhattan in August 2008, getting his initial introduction to the program as an extra in the fall film. “One of the things that just blows my mind is how they prepare you for the real world ... this school is a hidden treasure,” he says.

Hutchins originally thought he wanted to be a pastor. Now he realizes he can express his vocational purpose and get his messages to the world through film—his preferred medium.

“I think when you make a film you’ve got to give it your best. You can’t settle for mediocrity at all,” he explains.

Timothy Kay, a freshman from Cleveland, Ohio, is studying directing in the cinema-television program. One of 13 children, Kay
made several films with his family and friends during his teen years. An alumnus introduced him and his twin brother, Ben, to Regent. When they visited the campus, they heard about the ReelDreams Film Competition. Kay returned home and immediately went to work on the script. He shot the film, and within weeks, submitted it. One of 57 initial entries, A Fragile Hope soared to finalist. Kay came to Regent with nine others for the ReelDreams Grand Finale, where A Fragile Hope triumphed as the grand-prize winner. Kay was awarded a full scholarship.

Wondering how much filmmaking he would do right away, Kay is impressed by the opportunities available to him and the caliber of filmmakers at Regent. He has already been a part of six films. He was production assistant for the endowed fall film. Near the end of the production, the second assistant director was out, and Kay was asked to step in. “It was seven days and not much sleep. They were long days, but it was well worth it!” he says with a smile.

Shaina Kelly is a freshman theatre major from Virginia Beach, Va., who has always had an interest in acting. She, too, has already been involved in a few productions including The Emperor’s New Clothes and The Glory Man. Kelly was wardrobe supervisor for one production in which she also worked as an actress. “My family got to see me on stage the first year ... it was incredibly fun!”

Cheryl Ellis grew up in a small town outside of Seattle, Wash. A theatre major, Ellis has performed in The Emperor’s New Clothes, Into the Woods, The Rivals and other productions. Now a senior at Regent, after two years studying elsewhere, she will graduate in May.

Describing what brought her to Regent, Ellis says she found the B.A. in Theatre program to be fresh and new. “I found it very exciting,” she says. “And it gave me opportunities I may not have had otherwise.” She adds that she is excited about the Regent theatre department’s goals for redemptive theatre and its place in the world.

Dean Patrick attributes the school’s growth to new integration and recruiting approaches. With a total of 450 students, the school is seeing record-breaking growth in both graduate and undergraduate enrollment—more than 50 percent in the last two years. “We work to create a whole experience and a rich sense of community for students in our majors. And from our point of view this accelerates everybody’s experience.”

“One of the things that just blows my mind is how they prepare you for the real world ... this school is a hidden treasure.”

She finds working with MFA students a great experience. But as much as she loves theatre, Kelly sees herself working in film. “I want to reach a large audience,” she explains, adding that she has stories she wants to tell. “I write down all of my dreams.”