

International Reformed Theological College



An online college that teaches in Portuguese (www.pro-rege.net)

We seek supporters for this ministry which provides Reformed theological education to students in Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique, and worldwide, students who do not live near a seminary and cannot move away to go to a traditional college.

Update for 2013

Spoken by some 240 million people in many different countries, Portuguese is seventh place among the languages most spoken in the world. Many Portuguese-speakers do not have access to Reformed teaching, much less, to Reformed teaching at the level of higher education. Please visit our website to learn more about who we are and what we do (see address above).

As we approach the end of 2013, we can share with all that the Lord has continued to build our educational and missionary ministry this year. Our student body, the number of instructors, and our donor base have all grown. We praise the Lord for these reasons for gratitude. The number of students registered has risen to 68, while 54 actually took courses this year. We now have 21 instructors, who are all part-time. Our income has been the highest ever, USD\$56,000 so far this year. If we receive another \$10,000 we will meet our income goal for the first time in our 13 years of existence. We are hopeful that, with more loving contributions by friends of God's Kingdom, we may be blessed to reach this important goal. We are already very thankful that our instructors are no longer waiting unreasonably long before receiving their gratuities.

How We Operate

The College has no physical offices or classrooms. Our mailing address is simply the president's home and all instructors and students work at a computer, wherever they may be in the world. The IRTC is altogether a virtual school of distance learning. This makes it possible for it to be truly international. The members of our Board live in three different countries. Instructors come from four countries and students are found in eight.

I have only met three students in person and less than half of the instructors. For the first twelve years our Board decisions were all made through email correspondence, with voting done by online forms. This year we had a real time meeting by way of a teleconference. Although we found that this too still leaves something to be desired, we agreed that meeting online in this way was very helpful.

FITref Objectives

- 1) To be in the greatest possible number of places attending to the lack of Reformed teaching at the higher level in the Portuguese language,
- 2) To educate leaders of the churches of Christ in theology and other areas of higher learning
- 3) To contribute to the training of pastors and theologians.





How we Operate (continued from page 1)

For our instruction, we make use of a teaching platform developed in Brazil. The instructor posts written lessons in a folder in this online environment and the students access these on their computers. There are various tools available for edifying educational interaction among the professors and the students, such as discussion forums and chat rooms. The instructor can check to see how often each student visits the site and each page. The IRTC also provides email discussion lists for each class and an instructor can choose to communicate with individual students by Skype. [Pictured in this letter are some screenshots of what the students meet on their visits to our courses.]

Our methodology is not yet as dynamic as it might be. The first reason for this is that audio and video require high speed Internet. Quite a number of our students do not have this. Our Mozambican students, for example, do not even have reliable Internet service, let alone high speed. The second reason is that we are on a shoestring budget and our volunteer and part-time instructors need to be able to work with a simple system, in order not to be overwhelmed. Nevertheless, we do want to keep improving. Plans are underway to develop a course for instructors that will help them work more effectively with the tools that are already available. We have also been experimenting with videoconferencing software. This technology really only works efficiently with maybe three students. However, if we can get it set up properly, these sessions can be saved and made available to all students who have the necessary computer and Internet resources.

Another very important part of our teaching is our involvement with the students' churches. Person-to-person discipleship by pastors and elders comes first, even before our online lessons. We require each student to have a local mentor. Unfortunately, we are finding that most churches are not very involved in the training of their students. We now have someone working on the development of a manual for churches and mentors. When this is ready, we plan to also provide in-person visits to help make the oversight of the local church truly effective. Please be in prayer for this and all our activities.

Ralph Boersema, president

P.S. Do you like to give gifts to family and friends? Maybe someone would appreciate a gift of a donation to the IRTC in his or her name.

Appeal for Support

Due to the lack of enough people on our team to take care of these things, we do not send out many newsletters, or many appeals for support. Nevertheless, please be aware that our need is ongoing and urgent. Our funding objective for 2013 is USD\$66,500 and our receipts through October are about USD\$56,000. We are encouraged and are hopeful that the Lord may graciously raise up enough new support to allow us to meet this minimal budget this year. However, we point out that, especially in the areas of administration and information technology, the College is struggling greatly and leaving undone many very important matters. This is keeping us from becoming a truly viable school. The answer is to have two full-time persons to carry our ministry forward. Before that can happen, we need to have enough financial partners to raise another USD\$100,000 annually. Further, we continue to pray for the possibility to develop a program for training teachers for elementary and secondary education from Biblical perspectives. We urgently appeal to you, our readers, can you help us? Please persevere in prayer, distribute this letter far and wide, and help find brothers and sisters who would desire to contribute financially. Please also remember our instructors and students who face so many challenges. A visit to the "Donations" page on our website (www.pro-rege.net/ds14.htm) will provide all the information necessary for making a financial contribution. It also has specific orientation for Canadian donors (our Canadian rep is Mr. Harold J. Ludwig,

development@pro-rege.net).