Ranchi University was established on July 12, 1960, with ten post graduate departments, one constituent college (Ranchi College, Ranchi), and 20 affiliated colleges spread over an area of 65,000 square kilometers. Being located in predominantly tribal area, the University has successfully lived up to the expectations and aspirations of the people in its fifty years of existence. And it continues to do so despite being subjected to trifurcation: first in 1992 when Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribagh was carved out; second, in January 2009 when Nilambar Pitamber University, Medininagar, was created; and third, in August 2009 when Kolhan University, Chaibasa, was created. Today its territorial jurisdiction covers five districts only. Despite so many divisions, Ranchi University continues to play a leading role in imparting higher education in the state. At present the University has 23 post graduate departments, 15 constituent colleges, and 49 affiliated colleges, imparting teaching in medicine, psychiatry, law, engineering, business management, education, and general courses. Besides these institutions there is UGC sponsored Academic Staff College.

The university's pursuit of academic excellence is reflected in the fact that today is has four autonomous colleges, and three colleges with potential for excellence (CPE) status. Beside these, five colleges have already been granted accreditation by NAAC. The faculty in University's post graduate departments and colleges are working on major and minor projects sponsored by UGC, DBT and other prestigious organizations. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has chosen the University department of Geology under its FIST programme. The University has also instituted extramural lecture series, one I each faculty, in honour of Dr. J.C. Bose in the faculty of Science, Dr. S.K. Mukherjee in the faculty of Engineering, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in the faculty of education, Dr. Camil Bulke in the faculty of Humanities, Barrister S.K. Sahay in the faculty of Law, Dr. Davis in faculty of Medicine, Dr. D. C. Munda in the faculty of Social Science and Prof. R. S. Mandal in the faculty of Commerce. Beside regular courses, Ranchi University also offers post graduate level Self Financing/Vocational courses namely L.L.M., M.B.A., M.C.A., M.Sc in Electronics & Communication, P.G Diploma in Medicinal Plant & P.G Diploma in Plant Bio- Technology. At the under graduate level the University offers B.Ed., Bio-technology, Computer Application, Computer Maintenance, Information Technology, Office Management and Secretarial Practice, Functional Hindi, Functional English, Clinical Nutrition & Dietetics, Fashion Designing, Food Processing, Environment & Water Management, Business Administration, Travel and Tourism Management, Mass Communication and Video Production, Advertising and Sales Promotion & Sales Management.