

## Unification Theological Seminary President's Letter to Alumni and Friends of UTS

Hugh D. Spurgin  
February 7, 2017



Dear Alumni/ae and Friends of UTS,

Happy New Year. I hope you and your family had a good holiday season. At UTS, the Spring Semester has begun (yes, Spring!), and I want to update you on several developments. First of all, thank you to those who attended the December 14, 2016 Alumni meeting in NYC, either in person or online. We had a dynamic discussion that was focused on the status of the Barrytown campus. If you haven't yet had the chance to watch the video recording of the session, I think you will find it instructive. We conducted the meeting in an open way where people could freely share, and I was pleased with the dialogue and impressed by the sincerity of those who commented. You can view the video [UTS Alumni Meet in NYC](#) on the UTS YouTube channel.

At the present, UTS is in the midst of developing a five-year strategic plan, 2017-2022. Our strategic planning committee, chaired by Dr. Michael Mickler, has been meeting regularly and identified four strategic issues. Over the next five years, UTS will work to 1) Exercise effective stewardship of its facilities, including Barrytown; 2) Add value to the Unification movement; 3) Expand the market of UTS; and 4) Foster interreligious and intercultural engagement. The committee is considering various alternatives in addressing these issues in preparation for an upcoming meeting of the UTS Board of Trustees.

The Barrytown campus is a particular concern, and we are moving forward by obtaining a professional market study of the mid-Hudson valley region. This will lead to a feasibility study of specific initiatives. As I reported previously, our sponsoring Church made it clear that at this time relinquishing ownership of the property is unacceptable. However, in the future, much will depend on the support from our alumni and friends. Hence, UTS intends to re-purpose the Barrytown campus toward sustainability with the goal of reducing the property deficit over the next three years. Bard College now utilizes our facility to house conference participants, and we have the possibility of attracting other first-rate clients. Of course, property development will entail investment as well.

The Kingston/Red Hook area has become a destination for people from NYC. This gives me hope that our property can become an attractive conference center for educational, sports and cultural activities. Some of you have sent ideas for uses for the property. I appreciate any input and feedback. In the future, when there are concrete, specific and feasible developments, I will share them with you.

Apart from facility issues, we are distributing a Distance Learning Survey at the international meeting of Unification movement leaders in Korea. In my letter last summer "[Economic Realities Facing UTS](#)," I wrote, "UTS needs to reposition itself as an entrepreneurial, urban seminary with traditional classes and eLearning programs that rely on creative modes of delivery." That is still the case.

In our strategic planning, we are looking at various online, distance learning options that can expand our market. I have asked Dr. Tyler Hendricks, former President of UTS, to research various options and to help to develop a plan for online, distance learning.

In previous letters, I was pleased to report on enrollment increases, and it is the case this spring as well. Our instructional site in Clinton, Maryland has admitted eleven new students for this semester, and our 43rd Street NYC extension center admitted twenty new students, though some of them are from overseas and have not yet obtained student visas. We continue to serve an intercultural and interdenominational student body. We intend to pursue alliances, partnerships and joint-degree programs with other educational institutions and organizations. UTS is working cooperatively with hospitals in its Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program leading to chaplaincy, and we are hoping to do the same in the areas of counseling and social work.

In addition to reporting on increased enrollment, I am pleased to report on our accreditation status. In March 2016, Middle States Association Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) notified UTS that we were in compliance with all accreditation standards after having been placed on probation under the previous administration. We submitted a follow-up Monitoring Report on September 1, 2016 which was accepted by the Commission and have a Progress Report due this April 1. I'd appreciate your prayers as we work to maintain our status as a regionally accredited educational institution.

Finally, I want to thank those who contributed financially to UTS. Donors in 2016 include trustees, faculty, staff, alumni/ae and friends. In all, \$32,196.32 was contributed. To be honest, in 2017 we need to do much better than this. Contributions from individuals and organizations, other than religious organizations, account for more than 25 percent of revenues on the average for accredited theological seminaries in North America, according to the [Factbook of The Association of Theological Schools \(ATS\)](#). Yet, for UTS, donations of this type account for less than 2 percent of our revenue.

I would like to see contributions triple in 2017. Last year, a few more than 60 alumni/ae donated out of more than 1,500 graduates. I anticipate that number will increase this year. Please support our seminary by going to [www.uts.edu/support-the-seminary](http://www.uts.edu/support-the-seminary) to contribute to the "UTS over 40 Campaign". I appreciate all donors, listed below, who supported the Seminary this past year.

In January 2015, I became interim President of UTS. The Board removed the interim status in May 2015, and I am now beginning my third year at the helm of UTS. I have great hope that 2017 will be a breakthrough year. With your support and prayers, I am confident going forward.

Best wishes,

Hugh D. Spurgin, Ph.D.  
President

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