

## The Role of UTS Alumni in Society

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*UTS Manhattan Extension Center*

17 UTS alumni from the New York metro area gathered at a “Get-Together” on Tuesday, October 20 at the 4 West 43rd St., UTS Extension Center, using a meeting room on the first floor of the building.

Starting at 7:00 PM, the event was catered with desserts and refreshments. The first half-hour gave time for networking and meeting old friends.

The Director of Advancement and Communications, Robin James Graham kicked off the meeting by having each alumna or alumnus introduce themselves. Through the introductions we were all reminded of the diversity of alumni nationalities, ethnicities, and career paths which makes UTS such a unique place to study.

Then Mr. Graham showed a presentation, giving the alumni an overview of the work being done in Advancement and Communications, covering the three areas of communications, alumni relations, and development.

Dr. Hugh Spurgin, the UTS president, thanked the alumni for coming, especially those who had come from a distance. He then gave a short talk on “The Role of UTS Alumni in Society.” Dr. Spurgin shared that alumni often “do not know who we are.” This was explained a) that we alumni may not even know who the other alumni are within our own communities; and b) that we may not be aware of the value of all the alumni, and what they are already offering in their work and missions.



Bob Mansur later shared his appreciation for Dr. Spurgin taking a stand, and making the case for UTS and the alumni as the frontline leaders for the restoration of culture and society; building the kingdom, not only in the USA but around the world. This is not a new idea, but something UTS and the alumni have been engaged in over the last 40 years.

Dr Spurgin's talk sparked questions about alumni involvement and what kind of influence the alumni could have. Dr. Spurgin has in mind an advisory council which can bring the best ideas from the alumni base to the attention of the UTS administration and the UTS Board. He explained that he has been busy putting "the UTS house in order" after serious past deficiencies with regard to administering Federal financial aid and weaknesses in relation to UTS accreditation standards. But he is eager to see more support developing between UTS and the alumni in the coming months.

Several comments suggested that the alumni are not "looking to be told what to do," that there are already ideas and proposals out there. The sense was that the alumni value greater recognition being given to the work and potential of alumni, especially those willing to give time and make effort to build community and action-oriented groups.

One take-away from the evening recognized the need for greater communication and collaboration. Richard de Sena, President of the Universal Peace Federation in America shared about his experience at the Parliament of the World's Religions earlier in that week. Several alumni wished they had known about the Salt Lake City event in advance so that they could have attended or lent support in a more engaged way.



Alumnae, including Dr. Donna Ferrantello, Carol Pobanz, Denneze Nelson, and Rose Trotman-Jones, shared how they are working in areas of pastoral counseling, health, and chaplaincy. The feedback from the field is that there are many job opportunities opening up which UTS can help their graduates fill. Robin Graham shared how alumna Gillian Corcoran had recently been hired as a hospital chaplain in Santa Fe, NM from among a group of 18 candidates! This is a growing career path for many alumnae and alumni; more information about resources and programs for professional development will be forthcoming. Medical doctor, Robert Shirinov, communicated his desire to see an interest group for spirituality and health develop.

Overall, there seems to be a wish for greater connectivity. Bob Mansur offered his home for a future alumni gathering on the NJ side of the Hudson. Of course it is not easy to come together regularly for meetings of this kind. As Robin Graham had explained in the Prezi, there are opportunities to use existing technology in creative ways to meet up with alumni who share similar interests across the country and maybe even internationally. The October 20 participants will be invited to join an online conference in the next couple of weeks.

The evening came to a close around 9:00 PM. Several alumni stayed to finish off the cheese-cake and most of the brownies; have a few more conversations; and express that they were glad to have had the opportunity for the "get-together