

Unification Theological Seminary's Brand New Accelerated Master's Program

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(Front row from left) Accelerated MRE participants: Crescentia deGoede, Naokimi Ushiroda, Yoshie Manaka, Luke Higuchi, Taka Sugawara with UTS faculty and staff

On Thursday, September 6, a new initiative was launched at UTS. Over a catered lunch 6 new students were welcomed to UTS, and a couple more joined the program later. Mrs. Ute Delaney, the UTS registrar, led the orientation session for the newly enrolled cohort participating in the brand new accelerated Master's program. She remarked that "All the students were engaged and asking intelligent questions. We are there for them and we can solve any issues that come up."

Academic Dean, [Dr. Keisuke Noda](#) and UTS President, [Dr. Hugh Spurgin](#), were also present to welcome the incoming students and share in the enthusiasm surrounding this great step forward. It signals a welcome next phase in the work of the seminary and its cooperation with the sponsoring church and the wider Unification Movement.

The lunch session also included registering for classes. Several of the UTS faculty were on hand to counsel the new students on their course choices. One of the faculty, [Dr. Drissa Kone](#) who will be teaching the upcoming [UTS-Online course on Islam](#), had this to say:

"In the orientation it was positive to see a cohort of young Unification leaders making a commitment to UTS education. It can be a starting point for a new generation of leaders to take on the challenges which face both the wider society, and the Unification Movement. It is a generational challenge. The challenges in society today are different from those that faced the UTS graduates of the 70s and 80s. There are major issues surrounding faith, leadership, marriage and family, and growth of community. Building upon the faith tradition of the elders in the Unification Movement, there is a need to empower and strengthen the next generation of leadership to facilitate growth, consistency and sustainability. The UTS accelerated Master program is designed to generate that transformational experience."

Several of the entering students were asked to share their impressions, hopes and expectations. Crescentia DeGoede commented:

"I am grateful the program is being offered. As a full-time [national ministry leader](#) for our church ([Family Federation](#)), and mother of two young children, it's not easy to invest in my personal religious education, but being enrolled in this program together with my peers, makes it easier and more enjoyable to do. I am looking forward to studying together as a cohort.

I felt very welcomed by the faculty and staff of UTS during Thursday's orientation. The faculty and staff are clearly pleased to have us as seminary students, and dedicated to providing us with the best experience possible. I walked away with a strong sense that I should not hesitate to ask

for help from any of the faculty or staff, should I need it.

My first class, Church History II with [Dr. Mickler](#) was very enjoyable. It was quickly evident that he has a tremendous amount of wisdom to share, and a passion for the subject. What made the class particularly enjoyable was the opportunity to engage in dialogue with my peers during the class about the content presented, and consider how lessons from the past, can be applied today."

Another student, Yoshie Manaka, who graduated from Redlands University, CA with an undergraduate degree in English and Studio Art, said:

"I feel very invested in the future of our movement, which is why I have thought about attending UTS in the past. When I heard about the structure of the accelerated Master's program, it sounded like such a great opportunity, because it would allow me to be in a group of people who are invested in their education and are helping to create the curriculum together with the professors. I learn best when I am a part of an animated discussion and when I am part of a team that is pushing each other to really think about what they are learning, so I decided that this was the best time to study at UTS.

After orientation and the first class, I'm looking forward to the future! I felt a lot of energy in the room: the students are excited, the professors and faculty are excited, and there is definitely a sense of generational collaboration."

[Naokimi Ushiroda](#) is the National Director of Youth and Students Ministry for the Family Federation. Naokimi proposed the accelerated degree program back in May 2018 and worked together with UTS faculty and administration to design and launch the accelerated degree.

"I thought that the first class in Church History went rather well. It's a cohort of 6 students at this point, and we were able to introduce "[pair share](#)" and "group share" discussions as part of the class experience, which both the students and the professor, Dr. Mickler, enjoyed.

As for the accelerated Master's program, I'm most excited about helping to develop it into an attractive program for the next generation of Family Federation leadership. I'm glad that the faculty is open to adjusting and exploring what that might look like together with this first class of students."

Luke Higuchi is the International Coordinator for the Family Federation, and has a vibrant and spirited personality. Though technically the senior member of the cohort, his lively nature places him comfortably in the middle of the student group. He shared these thoughts:

"I am truly grateful to take UTS classes at this time. I have been thinking to attend UTS for a long time, but I was hesitating, because English is my third language (after Japanese and Korean). It is challenging to take classes in English. The first Church History class on the [Reformation](#) was very interesting. I feel that I have gone back to my college years. I am looking forward to take the next class."

We wish the new students much success and welcome them into the UTS student body.