Unification Theological Seminary's technology supports its wonderful courses

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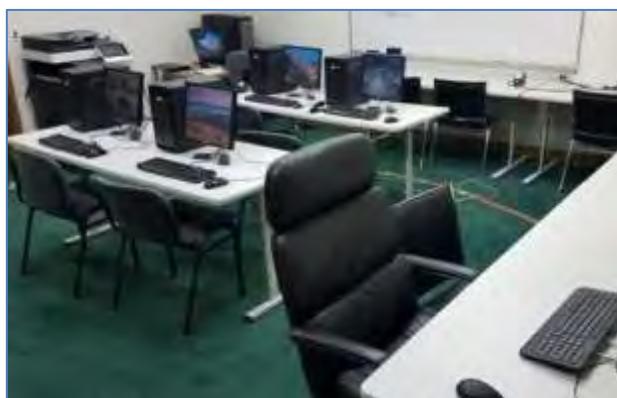
UTS Computer Lab 4W43 NYC campus

Often visitors to UTS "arrive" through the UTS website. There they see the public face of UTS, the "front end," where they are introduced to the wonderful programs and courses taught by outstanding professors.

The seminary offers the Master of Arts in Religious Studies (M.A.) which prepares students who seek to integrate their faith with knowledge of religions and their impact on society. It leads to various ministry and career options, including doctoral studies. There are concentrations in Interfaith Peacebuilding, Non-Profit Leadership, Unification Studies, and Theological Studies; the Master of Religious Education (M.R.E.) prepares students for diverse educationally focused lay and ministerial work, drawing on effective teaching principles, and understanding the contributions from neuroscience; the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) prepares students for any number of specialized ministries including marriage and family, youth, campus, interfaith, pastoral care, and social justice ministries. Students gain competencies which include preaching, evangelism, pastoral counseling, public relations, management of church resources, and leadership. UTS also has a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) program and Certificate Programs.

Let's explore the "back end." The behind the scenes work to maintain the website, adding content and articles, and answer functionality issues is performed by UTS's webmaster Pandasites. This unobtrusive work also means providing support to the registrar for Populi (UTS's Student Information System), and managing UTS's G Suite (formerly Google Apps) which is a brand of cloud computing, productivity and collaboration tools, software and products developed by Google. These are the systems which keep UTS "live" and present.

While browsing with a desktop or laptop is far from dead, in terms of popularity it is being swiftly outpaced by mobile technology. The simple fact is that now more people are searching via their phones and tablets. Pandasites has designed the site to makes sure the UTS website looks as good on your mobile as it does on your desktop.

UTS's website reinforces its credibility, but also serves future students, who are able to learn about its educational programming and research the degrees and courses offered. Building upon the website presence UTS uses social media, online newsletters and online publications which distribute quality content and leverage UTS's position as an emerging thought leader in theological education.

Social Media

UTS also maintains an active social media presence, currently using Facebook with 404 "likes" and Youtube. A wide variety of content is posted. There is information about UTS activities: events and lectures plus articles from the various UTS publications.

The purchase of a Mevo camera in 2018 allows UTS to stream live to Vimeo, Facebook, Youtube, Periscope and Twitter. Expect more from UTS in 2019!

Other Online Media

UTS publishes regular articles in its newsletter, UTS News, through its email marketing service Mailchimp. There are currently 1345 "active" subscribers on the mailing list.

The Journal of Unification Studies also maintains an online archive of articles published since 1997 by subject and author. The latest publication, Volume XIX (2018) of the Journal of Unification Studies is now available online.

The Applied Unificationism blog is also online. It explores the application of Unificationism to the wider world. Begun on May 1, 2013, articles are added weekly and archived under the following topics:

- Culture and the Arts
- Economics
- Education
- Film Reviews
- Gender Issues
- Governance
- Foreign Policy

The focus on student learning is at the center of UTS's mission:

> The Unification Theological Seminary offers educational programs in an interfaith context, which cultivate the heart, mind and spirit; bridge religious and cultural divides; promote leadership, service and engagement with the world; and provide tools for success in ministry and professional life. UTS is committed to the Unification vision of one global family under God.

UTS professors and the administration recognize that "one global family under God" is not simply a fabulous idea, but has to be lived and experienced by all people, all God's children, for it to be realized. Dr. Spurgin, UTS president, expressed it well in a recent speech:

The value of UTS will be measured by how effective our seminary has been in providing tools for your success in ministry, professional life and interpersonal relationships. During your studies, you will learn that the path to personal integrity consists of practicing what the founders of our seminary call "true love," which means forming a meaningful relationship with God and all people.

By manifesting "true love", we can help to create mutual respect, compassion, peace and harmony, so that the world may become "one family under God." We hope that our students will become leaders who will work to bring that ideal into reality.

Robert Pumphrey

UTS provides the tools and technology to support its students on that path. UTS has in-house staff who competently support a robust and reliable campus network and server infrastructure, as well as innovative educational technology for classroom and online instructional processes.

Robert Pumphrey is the Director of Information Technology (IT) for UTS. He works closely with UTS Library Director, Bob Wagner, and with Sam Dennis, a recent graduate who creates media assets and provides technical support for audio/video equipment as his Optional Practical Training (OPT).

UTS has a state-of-the-art computer lab. It consists of 5 drone computers that are run by a very powerful server.

You may ask which brand are the computers and the server? Pumphrey says, "Brand, ha! UTS doesn't deal with brands." The computers and the server are all custom built by him

The drones:
MSI military-grade mother boards
8 GB of ram 1 TB hard drives
I3 6th Generation Intel processors.

The server:
8TB of hard drive space with the capability to be upgraded to 48 TB of space.
64 GB of RAM, upgradable to 124 GB.
Powerful Intel 6th Generation Core i7 processor
Microsoft Server 2016

There is also a 24-port GB switch so that in the near future, or as needed, more drones can be added to the server.

Printing? There is a Bizhub network printer that all the drones are linked to.

And what about students who have their own powerful laptops and need a powerful Wi-Fi network? UTS has them covered. Pumphrey tells us, "There is desk space available where they can use their laptops and UTS has a Netgear Nighthawk 6x wireless router dishing out some of the fastest speeds possible."

Zoom

Pumphrey: "Zoom is one of the best online meeting platforms. The online meeting industry was started by Skype: 'Grandpa step back' …there are new platforms on the market and Zoom is rising above them."

Zoom is a web-based video conferencing tool with a local, desktop client and a mobile app that allows users to meet online, with or without video. Zoom users can choose to record sessions, collaborate on projects, and share or annotate on one another's screens, all with one easy-to-use platform. UTS's use of Zoom is replacing Adobe Connect which had been previously used for UTS's distance learning. Zoom is a better alternative.

The UTS administration, staff and professors also use Zoom to run academic meetings and staff seminars.

The Owl

The Owl integrates with Zoom technology. Pumphrey says, "It is an ingenious 360-degree conference camera with auto tracking. Auto tracking means that the camera focuses in on the speaker dividing the screen into a top panoramic view and 3 individual speakers at any given time and 8 built in microphones that catch a pin drop in the background. Did I mention... we have two Owls!"

Canvas

Embracing new technology, UTS education can now be accessed easily by students worldwide; the UTS-Online program, launched in October 2017, brings the UTS mission of "bridging religious and cultural divides" to a global audience.

> UTS uses the Canvas learning management platform: "Canvas is the best educational learning management system on the market today" (PCMagazine. January, 2018)

Online library resource

Bob Wagner, UTS Library Director, tells us: "Any patron can access all library materials through utslibrary.info. Right on the main page, people can access the various full-text databases as well as the catalog. If they create a catalog account, they can keep track of their virtual bookshelf, see any outstanding fines or fees, "save" titles that they aren't sure about requesting, etc. Through UTS's corporate membership, anyone who works at, or attends school at UTS, can apply for a library card for the three NYC library systems. They are then able to access thousands of databases, request material and borrow books.

"Technology is a present-day requirement to move ahead. Technology is certainly part of the educational toolkit to help students. However, it is professors, not technology, who can open doors, expand minds, and change the world. Professors are teachers, leaders, guides, facilitators, and mentors. They are role models, and especially important in discerning and delivering what is necessary for a student to succeed. Let's remember, it is UTS professors who are its biggest asset! In ten or twenty years the graduate will remember pearls of wisdom and the warmth of relationships, not the speed of the network, or the flashiness of the technical infrastructure. Technology is there to serve a purpose: theology, the study of the nature of the divine.