

From the President

DURING MY FIRST SEVERAL months as the new president of the GTU, I have had the privilege of meeting with students, faculty, deans, and presidents of GTU member schools and affiliates, as well as GTU trustees, alumni, friends, and supporters. I have been impressed by the passion, commitment, and intellectual depth across the GTU consortium. Add to this the diversity of religious backgrounds and academic interests, and the GTU emerges as a unique and powerful center of interreligious learning at the highest levels. I feel blessed to serve this unique hub of religious scholarship and leadership, and look forward to finding ways to enhance the GTU's reach by supporting existing programs and investing in new opportunities.

The nascent field of interreligious study is experiencing unprecedented growth in the academy. Among theological schools, the GTU is a thought-leader and a model of interreligious understanding and cooperation rooted in intellectual rigor. The GTU has a responsibility to the world beyond academia as well; we will find new ways to leverage the intellectual, spiritual, institutional, and financial resources to advance religious and spiritual learning and leadership for our pluralistic world.

Like its peer institutions in North America, the GTU is in the process of responding to complex challenges. Many institutions of higher education, especially those that specialize in religious studies, face shrinking enrollments and diminishing financial resources. At the same time, we are witness to a countervailing phenomenon of religious expansion and spiritual eclecticism throughout the world.



President Daniel L. Lehmann

Sociologists Peter Berger and Anton Zijderveld have written: “As one looks over the contemporary world, it’s not secularization that one sees, but an enormous explosion of passionate religious movements. . . . If modernity, then, doesn’t lead to secularization, what does it lead to in the area of beliefs and values? The answer, we think, is clear: *It leads to Plurality.*”

We will need to confront this changing context with entrepreneurial energy and spirit. The contemporary era calls for creativity and ingenuity as we build bridges between spiritual seekers and religious traditionalists, between the academy and congregations. The GTU is uniquely poised to actively engage the religious and spiritual

diversity of our age by nurturing and unleashing the pluralistic potential in our community of learning.

Our society desperately needs mending; the tensions produced by polarized perspectives and ideologies threaten to pull apart the fabric of our democracies. It is a scary time, and religion is often seen as an accomplice to the destructive forces we witness throughout the world. But the GTU, through its distinctive culture of pluralism and interreligious scholarship, embodies an alternative paradigm, one in which mutual understanding, genuine curiosity, and sophisticated study join to create an environment of engagement across difference. We welcome your active involvement in this community, as together we explore the wisdom of the world’s diverse religious traditions and the ways they can contribute to healing our wounded world.