

## From the President

**A** FEW WEEKS AGO, STEPHEN Swartzman, CEO and Chairman of the Blackstone Group (the largest alternative investment firm in the world, valued at \$43.9B), suggested that corporations need to focus more deeply on the social value they are creating. His argument was that maximizing profit and increasing shareholder value can no longer be the sole goals by which value and success are measured in business enterprises.

The sentiment struck me as somewhat parallel to the significant changes taking place in the academic environment in the United States. Today, even a “liberal arts” education is expected to demonstrate deep connections to the practical realm and real-life issues facing our world. As someone who closely monitors higher education, I have been astounded by the number of college and university magazines that focus on students and faculty working on solutions to perplexing problems.

Today, education is expected to demonstrate identifiable impact—and that seems even more essential for a school like the GTU. For our work to have enduring value, our study of the world’s religious traditions here must make a positive contribution to justice and the healing of our planet.

In the past year, we’ve developed a new tagline to help articulate the essence of the GTU. It articulates what we seek to do in three brief foundational statements:

**Grow in knowledge.** This is, of course, one traditional and enduring purpose of education—critical and creative intellectual inquiry.

**Thrive in spirit.** This identifies the GTU as a school that not only embraces religious and spiritual issues, but invites personal engagement with both tradition and practice.

**Unite in solutions.** This emphasize the GTU community as one that comes together to bring critical



thinking about religion to bear on the challenges society must resolve.

This articulation represents important aspects of the GTU’s graduate education that have long been present yet continue to emerge. We see them today, for example, in the student research cohorts program, in the growing interest in public theology, and in the pursuit of relationships between faith and public life. The same emphasis was certainly incorporated into the multi-day conference on sustainability sponsored by the Center for Dharma Studies last spring as well as the current “Religion and Resistance” exhibition at the Doug Adams Gallery.

You’ll find additional evidence of this commitment throughout

this issue. It includes an article adapted from Cynthia Moe-Lobeda’s “excellence in teaching” lecture on pedagogy and the role of religion in an era of climate change. You’ll also find several pieces celebrating the 50th anniversary of our Center for Jewish Studies, which for the past decade has partnered with our Center for Islamic Studies for Madrasa-Midrasha programs that explore issues that often generate tension, misunderstanding, or conflict. These educational events create safe and respectful communities where people learn about and appreciate difference and context.

It has been an uplifting experience to serve as GTU president for the past five years and to help develop the human and financial resources to support the aspirations and dreams of our faculty and students. It is now time to pass leadership of this vital interreligious educational community to another. I do so with gratitude and with my prayerful hope that the GTU will continue to contribute creative solutions to the challenges of tomorrow.