

UTS Welcomes Hugh Spurgin as Interim President

January 7, 2015



Dr. Hugh Spurgin

The Board of Trustees of the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) voted on January 7, 2015 to appoint Dr. Hugh Spurgin as its Interim President. At the same meeting, the Board thanked the outgoing president, Dr. Richard Panzer, for his valuable contributions to UTS since 2010 and wished him well.

Dr. Michael Balcomb, chair of the UTS Board and president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification USA (FFWPU), thanked Dr. Panzer for his pioneering work to create Barrytown College of UTS and to bring new vitality to UTS. He said that Dr. Spurgin will report to the UTS Board and will serve as interim president until June 30, 2015 during which time there will be a formal search for a permanent president.

Hugh Spurgin has served since 1997 as the principal of Bridgeport International Academy, a college preparatory high school that is located adjacent to the campus of the University of Bridgeport. At UTS, he will guide the effort to find solutions to the financial and management crises which have developed at the seminary and college during the last few years.

The close association of UTS with its sponsoring church, the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC), is explicitly set forth in the UTS bylaws, and the spiritual guidance of UTS by the Founder of both HSA-UWC and UTS is recognized by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, its accrediting body. On June 26, 2014, the Middle States Commission (MSCHE) placed UTS on probation, a warning that the school must reflect on its mission and strengthen its institutional resources in order to keep its accredited status. In April MSCHE will send a site team to UTS to determine whether it has made appropriate adjustments to bring itself into compliance with the accreditation standards.



Dr. Hugh and Nora Spurgin

“The vote of the UTS Board to ask Dr. Panzer to step down and appoint Dr. Spurgin is not a vote to close the Barrytown College of UTS undergraduate program” said Balcomb. “We are deeply concerned about all students, and place a very high priority on their educational success.”

“A joint committee of trustees from the UTS and HSA-UWC Boards will collaborate to find ways to sustain all UTS programs,” Balcomb went on to say, “The Board of HSA-UWC has determined to preserve UTS funding at current levels at least through the end of the academic year in June 2015.”

“Our Founder has requested that nonprofits that receive financial support from HSA-UWC should be self-sufficient.” He added, “At the same time, she is investing extensively in formal education for the second generation with wide-ranging grant opportunities, including scholarships to colleges in the USA and worldwide, and special grants for

study at Sun Moon University in Korea and at the Universal Peace Academy.”

The consensus of the trustees was that in the current circumstances, dealing with the budgetary, administrative and accreditation crises UTS faces could be best addressed by a president with more experience in church and educational administration. “My first order of business will be to communicate with the various stakeholders of UTS/BC, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and donors, to address their concerns and to answer their questions,” Dr. Spurgin said after the vote. “Having spent 18 years as the principal of a college preparatory school, I have cared greatly about the education and welfare

of second-and third generation Unificationist and non-Unification students. I hope to apply lessons that I have learned in that educational environment to the UTS situation.”

Dr. Spurgin is a longtime Unificationist who joined the Unification Church in 1968 in Washington, D.C. He holds a Ph.D. in American and European history from Columbia University, a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary, and a Master of Public Administration degree from Syracuse University. He was the president of the first class of students who graduated in May 1977 from UTS and served as the first president of the UTS Alumni Association. For more than three decades, Dr. Spurgin has served as an associate or a full member of the UTS Board and for many years has been an officer of the Board. He said, “For 40 years I have been associated with UTS, and I look forward to the opportunity to help the seminary and college that I love to survive its current budgetary, administrative and accreditation crisis.”

Spurgin was blessed in marriage with Nora Martin Spurgin during the “777 Blessing Ceremony” that was held in Seoul in 1970. Hugh and Nora are the parents of four adult children, who are married and who have professional careers. Spurgin has served as national vice president of HSA-UWC and several other organizations, including the Professors World Peace Academy, the International Cultural Foundation, and the Washington Times. He has taught courses at UTS, the University of Bridgeport and the Union Institute.