

After Putting Barrytown Up for Sale, UTS Recasts Its Future in Online Education

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July 18, 2018



On May 14, Dr. Hugh Spurgin, president of the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS), announced to UTS alumni(ae) and friends that the UTS Board of Trustees decided to sell the Barrytown property. It was a difficult decision, but it was a step that they had to take as responsible stewards of the institution. He wrote that the Seminary is "re-positioning itself as an entrepreneurial, urban Seminary with traditional classes at our campus in New York City and online courses for students worldwide."

Online education is disrupting traditional education models throughout the industry, and UTS is no exception. [This is not the only instance](#) where a well-established seminary has had to face the decision between maintaining a campus property and focusing on the institution's core mission. For UTS, the move to online learning will enable it to fulfill the purpose set by the Founders, Father and Mother Moon, for many generations to come: To equip young Unification leaders and leaders from other faith traditions with the knowledge and tools to minister in a global religious environment.

The Founders have long recognized the value of using cutting-edge media in theological education. In the late 70s Father Moon purchased VCRs and mass-produced [Divine Principle](#) videos for door-to-door evangelism. In the 90s he encouraged the [University of Bridgeport](#) to invest heavily in distance learning. Today, Mother Moon is calling on UTS to harness the power of the Internet to provide educational opportunity to students throughout the world.

"Seminary" means "seedbed," and since 1975 UTS has been the seedbed of the global Unification movement, graduating leaders to serve in church and [Family Federation](#) (FFWPU) leadership, [CARP](#) and campus ministry, [interfaith peacebuilding](#), service learning, media, Ocean Church, the former Soviet Union, Africa, South America, and more, as well as to pursue doctoral studies. Yet for the past 8 years, the main location for the theological education provided by UTS has been its New York City campus at 4 West 43rd Street, while the property at Barrytown has remained largely empty except as a venue for the doctoral program, some other graduate courses, and conferences during the summer months.

Since 2002, FFWPU has contributed more than \$21 million dollars to support UTS. However, the Barrytown facility now requires considerable financial resources that neither UTS nor the Family Federation is able to supply. The funds required to maintain a 125,000 sq. ft. building are overwhelming for a small school. The goal is to protect and develop UTS as a respected institution that continues to provide quality education in a global context.

Over the past couple of years, the UTS Board, administration and faculty struggled over how the school could fulfill its core mission while maintaining its presence at Barrytown, and reluctantly came to the conclusion that it could not. Yet such a momentous decision would need to be considered by the wider UTS community. Therefore, beginning in 2016 Dr. Spurgin convened meetings of alumni(ae) and sent letters to its stakeholders where he laid out the costs of maintaining the Barrytown property and asked for help in securing a future financially for the property. Not finding any practical alternative, in May 2018 the decision was made by the UTS trustees to sell Barrytown.



Keep in mind that UTS is an institution, not a property. In 1998, when the Seminary was creating its logo, a preliminary plan was to use a silhouette of the main building at Barrytown. When that proposal for a logo was shown to Father Moon, he said, "UTS may relocate from Barrytown in the future." He proposed instead the white cross logo that we all know. Indeed, twice our Founder approved plans for UTS to relocate, which did not materialize.

"Alumni and members of The Unification Church will certainly mourn the loss of such a beautiful property that holds a special place in their heart, but the future of UTS is to be where the students are, rather than expecting them to come to us. It makes sense to invest in digital and urban locations to educate the broadest range of next-generation faith leaders just as our Founders had envisioned," said Robin Graham, Director of Advancement and Enrollment Management for UTS.