

My immersion into the intellectual and spiritual life at the GTU over these past months has highlighted for me the rich and complex nature of our educational mission. The Graduate Theological Union brings together multiple institutions representing diverse traditions and practices in a collaborative community that values the distinct contributions of each.

The influential Quaker educational theorist and UC Berkeley alum Parker Palmer has suggested that a learning community with diverse perspectives, ideas, and experiences can “give rise to a larger truth” if conflict is negotiated “compassionately, with forgiveness, and in a generative manner.” Palmer continues, “In creative conflict, we can all win because we can all have our hearts and minds [and I would add souls] stretched.” By its very nature the GTU generates the kind of creative and compassionate conversations found at the heart of a truly transformative education. The collective commitment to work together amid diversity is important to sustain in our culture of polarization and fractionalization. The GTU can serve as a model of the institutional collaboration so desperately needed.

The GTU is unique in that it is both an independent, degree-granting graduate institution as well as the hub of a consortium of schools and seminaries. In recent years, our accrediting agencies have raised the concern that the GTU’s governance structure divided decision-making authority between the GTU Board of Trustees and the Council of Presidents of the member schools. At its February 2019 meeting, the GTU Board addressed this concern by voting to approve revisions to the GTU bylaws as well as a new Common Agree-



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ment between the GTU and its member schools.

These important votes, by overwhelming majorities, were the culmination of many years of work by professional and volunteer leaders of the GTU and its member schools, both past and present. The changes create a more independent governance structure for the GTU as mandated by our accreditors, while maintaining the collaborative relationships that are foundational to the GTU. The votes of the GTU board, and the forthcoming votes by member school boards regarding the Common Agreement, will move us into compliance with best practices and accepted standards of governance for nonprofits and higher education institutions.

At the same time, the GTU and its member schools have worked diligently to preserve the unique consortial arrangement that makes the Graduate Theological Union such a compelling center of inter-religious and ecumenical learning. The critical partnership between

the GTU, the member schools, and the affiliate institutions—as embodied in our common library, cross-registration of courses, and our joint PhD and master’s programs—will be reinforced by a new financial model that will create greater stability, sustainability, and support for our sacred mission.

I am deeply grateful to all who contributed to the progress we have made in strengthening our consortium. The changes underway and the good will demonstrated throughout the process provides a solid foundation upon which to build our future together.