

# GTU Announces Interreligious Chaplaincy Program



(l-r) Munir Jiwa, director of the Center for Islamic Studies; Chaplain Bruce Feldstein; GTU President Daniel Lehmann; Deena Aranoff, director of the Center for Jewish Studies; Kamal Abu-Shamsieh.

**T**he GTU has developed an innovative interreligious chaplaincy program to equip chaplains with the skills and interreligious understanding necessary to meet the spiritual and religious needs of increasingly diverse populations, as well as to offer expertise in religious traditions that have traditionally been underrepresented among institutional chaplains. The program offers students the opportunity to gain a Graduate Certificate in Interreligious Chaplaincy, while simultaneously earning tradition-specific training through an MA in Islamic, Jewish, or Hindu Studies.

The innovative program builds on the groundbreaking work already being pioneered at GTU Centers devoted to the study of Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism, as well as the expertise in chaplaincy and spiritual care present among GTU member schools and affiliates. It was developed in response to the shifting religious landscape in North America, which includes a diminishing percentage of people who identify as Christian, a rising number of “nones,” and an increase in non-Christian immigrants. These demographic trends are likely to continue, creating more pluralistic religious identities and communities, and an increased need for spiritual and religious caregivers to serve non-Christians and people with interfaith backgrounds.

The program provides the practical skills to offer spiritual care in environments of great religious diversity, while also grounding each student in a specific religious tradition underrepresented among institutional chaplains. Course-

work will incorporate practical pastoral training, interfaith training, and coursework on counseling, chaplaincy models and methods, and spiritual care. The certificate program will also be open to students who have previously earned a qualifying master’s degree.

The GTU announced the program on September 26, at a special GTU event on Jewish and Islamic Spiritual Care held at Stanford Medicine in partnership with several Stanford-based healthcare organizations. Featured speakers were Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, founder and director of Ziyara Muslim Spiritual Care, and a PhD student in Islamic Studies at the GTU, and Chaplain Bruce Feldstein, founder and director of Jewish Chaplaincy Services.

For more information on the GTU’s Interreligious Chaplaincy program, or to apply to become part of the initial cohort of students entering the program in Fall 2020, contact the GTU admissions office at [admissions@gtu.edu](mailto:admissions@gtu.edu). ♦