

BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

G. Sujin Pak, Dean

I am grateful for my first opportunity to thank you for your moral, prayerful, and material support of the Boston University School of Theology (BUSTH). Like many institutions, this past year at BUSTH has been largely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, outrage over enduring racial injustices in our country, and concern over rising white supremacy in our nation. Our work at BUSTH is to prepare religious leaders to encounter and engage complex challenges such as these. A year like 2020 makes the School's historic and ongoing commitments to social justice even more relevant. Below are some BUSTH highlights from 2020. We remain hopeful in our continued partnership with you in the work and witness of the School toward advancing social justice, fostering compassionate communities, and shaping wise leaders for a hurting world.

BREAKING NEWS:

- **Virtual Learning:** Our faculty, staff, and library successfully pivoted to fully remote learning in Spring 2020 upon the COVID-19 lockdown, which continued through the summer terms. Fall 2020 offered a hybrid approach to learning, due to Boston University's "Learn *from* Anywhere" initiative, which included a comprehensive on-campus testing program and strict COVID-19 precautions to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff. Students were given the most flexibility, with allowances to learn in-person in socially distanced and masked classes or in the comfort of their own homes via Zoom. The redirection to online learning served as an opportunity for BUSTH faculty to develop new online pedagogical proficiency and positions the School for greater engagement with current conversations concerning best practices in distance, hybrid, and online learning options for students worldwide.
- **Students:** We continue to increase and celebrate diversity in our student body, creating opportunities for in-depth exchanges and a rich virtual community life. Our Fall 2020 entering class was among our largest classes ever, with 128 new students enrolling in September, despite the fact that recruitment had to transition to be fully online.
- **Faculty:** We celebrated *dean emerita* Mary Elizabeth Moore's 12-year service to the School as she stepped down on December 31, 2020. The institution will be forever grateful for her historic tenure as its dean. The new dean G. Sujin Pak began her appointment on January 1, 2021. Dean Pak is known for her commitments to academic rigor, social justice, and United Methodism, which made her a wonderful fit for the deanship of BUSTH at this time. In the coming months, the School plans to appoint a new Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of Ethical Leadership.
- **Lilly Endowment Grant for Thriving Congregations Initiative:** BUSTH was awarded a nearly \$1 million, four-year grant to work with urban congregations responding to trauma. The project will be focused on responding to congregants who are continually shaped by and reacting to compounding domestic and global traumatic events, such as systemic racism, gun violence, homelessness, or immigration stressors.
- **Scholarships:** We continue to offer free tuition to United Methodist Church registered candidates for ordained ministry. Building student scholarships and housing opportunities remain key priorities. BUSTH also offers leadership fellowships to support students in ethnic, gender, and sexuality studies: Raíces Latinas, Sacred Worth, Indigenous Studies, Korean Studies, Women in Leadership, and Black Church Studies.
- **Online Lifelong Learning:** Through a generous grant from BU's Digital Education Incubator, BUSTH began to offer online mini-courses, workshops, and reading groups for interested professional and spiritual enrichment of alumni and other religious leaders. Inaugural groups covered topics such as religious Afro-futurism, spirituality through the writings of Howard

Thurman, and rituals and practices of grief in a time of pandemic. To learn about or participate in the next BUSTH Lifelong Learning offerings, visit bu.edu/sth/oll.

- **Theology and the Arts Initiatives:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our traditional exhibits moved to an online space. The art of John August Swanson is available at <https://butheoartsgallery2020.wordpress.com/john-august-swanson-social-justice-artist>.
- **Development:** BUSTH's "On a Mission" campaign surpassed all expectations when it concluded in September 2019, raising \$29.4 million—well beyond the \$15 million goal set in 2010. These funds reflect broad support from alumni, friends, faculty, staff, and students, with a far-reaching impact on the School's ability to pursue its mission. More than 2,800 donors, including 1,927 alumni (a 50% alumni participation rate), contributed to our campaign.

PARTNERING FOR MINISTRY AND TRANSFORMATION:

- **Doctor of Ministry:** The DMin in Transformational Leadership flourishes with lively student cohorts that are interfaith, broadly ecumenical, culturally diverse, and global. The model includes intensives, online courses, and faculty mentoring.
- **Ecumenical partnerships:** We now have four denominational Communities of Learning: Wesleyan/Methodist, Episcopal/Anglican, United Church of Christ, and Unitarian Universalist.
- **Partnership with Hebrew College:** Together we are able to enrich interreligious learning through joint courses and public events, and also co-sponsor *The Journal of Interreligious Studies* and the *State of Formation* for emerging leaders.
- **Chaplaincy education:** BUSTH and the Chaplaincy Innovation Lab received a grant to support the joint project "Innovations in Chaplaincy Education," which will seek to redesign courses on chaplaincy in higher education, and centralize education for chaplaincy curricula, including competencies needed for chaplains or other professionals in spiritual care.

TAKING ACTION GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY:

- **Campus action:** Work continues to improve accessibility, sustainability, and responsible investing. BUSTH is the first certified Green School in BU and is active in the Green Seminary Initiative.
- **Internships in global service and peacemaking:** Students participate in apprenticeship ministries across the world.

COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE:

- Faculty, staff, and students are active in #BlackLivesMatter efforts to seek racial equality, and in collaborative services to support people suffering the consequences of immigration practices or disability inequities.
- In Town Hall meetings, the community has deep conversations on issues that divide, seeking to develop capacities for relating across differences and to create a community based on the dignity of all.

BUSTH celebrates transformational leaders of The United Methodist Church. Your legacy and witness and your partnership give us hope and courage for the future.

Blessings and gratitude