



**UNITED**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
OF THE TWIN CITIES

CLASS OF 2020  
AND  
GRADUATING CLASS OF 2021

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**COMMENCEMENT**

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MAY 2, 2021 3PM

# THE FIFTY-NINTH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES OF UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES

## SEAL OF THE SEMINARY



The seal of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities was created as the seminary was being formed. It represents the seminary's Christian heritage and honors the merger of Mission House Theological Seminary and Yankton School of Theology that formed a new seminary, United. The arrangement of the hexagons in a triangular shape emphasizes the Trinity. The lower hexagons symbolize Mission House and Yankton as the foundation upon which United sits. The seal reads 1862, the year Mission House was founded, and "Soli Deo Gloria," Glory to God Alone.

## UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities is a school with deep roots in the Upper Midwest. United was established in 1960 through the merger of Mission House Seminary of Plymouth, Wisconsin, and Yankton School of Theology of Yankton, South Dakota.

Mission House, the German Reformed Prophetenschule ("school of the prophets"), was founded in 1862 to meet the religious needs of German immigrant settlements in Wisconsin and other Midwestern states. Established in 1869, Yankton School of Theology served the needs of German Congregational churches in middle America. The merger of these two schools expressed not only the spirit of union that led to the formation of the United Church of Christ in 1957, but responded to a need for an ecumenical center of theological studies in the Twin Cities. By its charter, United Theological Seminary is a multid denominational, ecumenically focused seminary of the United Church of Christ. A new campus was acquired and developed in the Twin Cities suburb of New Brighton and classes began in the fall of 1962. In 2018, the seminary moved to a vibrant, centrally located, accessible location in the heart of the Creative Enterprise Zone of St. Paul. Standing in the broad Reformed theological tradition, United Theological Seminary is committed to an ecumenical style of theological learning. Representatives of major religious traditions are found in its faculty, staff, and student body.

# ORDER OF SERVICE

**Call to Worship/Invocation**.....Sara Smalley  
*Director of Student Mentoring and Contextual Education*

**Opening Prayer**.....Christine Ford '21

**Opening Hymn**.....sung by Judith Melander, acc. by Diana Carlson  
*"Imagine the People of God," comp. Mark Miller* *Guest Musicians*

**Welcome**.....Molly T. Marshall  
*Interim President*

**Greetings from the Board of Trustees**.....David Anderson  
*Chair of the Board of Trustees*

**First Reading**.....J. Samuel Subramanian  
*Matthew 5:1-12* *Associate Professor of New Testament Theology*

**Second Reading**.....Joan Howe-Pullis '21  
*"V'ahavta" by Aurora Levins Morales*

**Commencement Sermon**.....Traci Blackmon  
*Associate General Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries for The United Church of Christ,*  
*Keynote Speaker*

**"Life Calls Us On"**.....sung by Judith Melander, acc. by Diana Carlson  
*Words: Kendyl Gibbons, Music: Jason Shelton* *Guest Musicians*

**Poem**.....written and read by Max Brumberg-Kraus '20

**Prayer**.....Deryk Bauer-Lee '21

**Academic Announcements**.....Kyle Roberts  
*Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean*

**Conferral of Emerita Status on Retiring Faculty Member Carolyn Pressler**.....Kyle Roberts  
*Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean*

**Granting of Degrees**.....Kyle Roberts  
*Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean*

**Conferral of Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters on Mark Dayton**.....Molly T. Marshall  
*Interim President*

**Litany of Blessing**.....John Rinehart '21  
*Isaiah 6:8 Here am I; send me!*

**Reader:** We, like Isaiah, are troubled people living in troubled and troubling times. We, like Isaiah, recognize the political and economic inequity, the racism, the false religion, the nationalistic extremism, the brutality, the identity wars, and the fear of the changes that swirl around us. We, like Isaiah, recognize that, at times, we have been part of the problem; we enjoy our privileges and are reluctant to relinquish them. We, like Isaiah, have been transfixed and transformed by the glory of God and embraced in God’s forgiving grace. We, like Isaiah, have chosen to offer our voices to join those who struggle for equitable justice and peace, and to warn the powers that be of the consequences of injustice. Today we depart the community of the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities to commence our ministries in God’s world, to be God’s servants in the service of others. May the spirit of the Lord that we have enjoyed here remain with us and guide us along our ways. Like Isaiah, may we carry the blessings of the Lord our creator with us in all our days as an exhibit the blessings of God’s love to all.

**Graduates:** With gratitude in our hearts, we go as servants of the Lord.

**All:** Amen!



# GRADUATES OF THE CLASS OF 2020

## **MASTER OF DIVINITY**

Penny Bonsell  
Stacy Craig  
JD Haas  
Sarah Holst  
Kyle Homstad  
Deborah Jance  
Mitch Nelson  
Meredith Olson  
Vicki Richardson  
John Scheuer  
Riva Tabelisma\*  
Yolanda Williams

## **MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP**

Allison Johnson-Heist  
Lisbeth Melendez Rivera  
Sheryl Schwyhart

## **MASTER OF ARTS**

Max Brumberg-Kraus  
Robert Galkiewicz  
Hugh Huelster  
Ann Larrabee  
Mary Beth McRaith  
Melissa Miller  
Cathy Pino  
Riva Tabelisma\*

## **MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES**

Matthew Whitaker

## **DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

Saw Octavius Aye  
Bonita Kitt  
Shawn Moore  
Shalom Reznik-Bell  
William Sieben

\*Designates graduates with dual degrees

# GRADUATES OF THE CLASS OF 2021

## **CANDIDATES FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF DIVINITY**

Deryk Bauer Lee  
Teri (Yaki) Cahoon  
Elise Choi  
Christine Ford\*  
Carly Gaeth  
Gabrielle Heille  
Stephanie Johnson  
Lucia Kalinosky  
Jeana Wescott

## **CANDIDATES FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP**

Joan Howe-Pullis  
Emily Marie Kindelspire  
Emily Stacken

## **CANDIDATES FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF ARTS**

Troy Bailey  
Jonathan Bradner  
Christine Ford\*  
Phillip Romine

## **CANDIDATES FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

John Rinehart  
Tanya Sadagopan

\*Designates candidates with dual degrees

# ACADEMIC AWARDS

## CLASS OF 2020

Professor Edward Wentz Award  
*For the best scholastic record  
in Constructive Theology*

**Kyle Homstad**

The Francis X Pirazzini Award  
*To the graduate demonstrating exceptional  
theological acumen and ethical sensitivities  
regarding contemporary social and cultural  
problems*

**Max Brumberg-Kraus and  
Stacy Craig**

Susan Noble Blons Scholar in  
Theology and the Arts  
*To a student who shows exceptional talent  
in the study and integration of the arts  
within the life of the Christian Community*

**Melissa Miller**

Henry Felix Kapp Memorial Award  
*For the best scholastic record in  
Old Testament Theology*

**Max Brumberg-Kraus and  
Stacy Craig**

Walter F. Kuentzel Memorial Award  
*For the best scholastic record in New  
Testament Theology*

**Penny Ponsell**

Historical Theology Award  
*For the best scholastic record in  
Historical Theology*

**Sarah Holst**

Horace Bushnell Award in  
Educational Ministry  
*For outstanding work in Christian Education*

**Riva Tabelisma and Penny Ponsell**

Creative Religious Leadership Award  
*To a Master of Arts graduate for outstanding  
work in Religious Leadership preparation*

**Robert Galkiewicz**

Douglas Horton Award  
*To a middler student who has done  
outstanding work in the junior year*

**Gabrielle Heille**

Charlotte L. Matthews Community  
Leadership Award  
*To the graduating student who has  
demonstrated outstanding service within the  
UTS community*

**Deborah Jance and Vicki  
Richardson**

Clyde J. Steckel Prize in Pastoral Care  
*To M.Div. or M.A.R.L. graduates demonstrating  
excellence in pastoral care and/or counseling  
courses, and/or Contextual Studies placement*

**Deborah Jance**

Donald R. White Prize in Theological  
Interpretation of Culture  
*To the graduating student demonstrating  
excellence in interpreting culture theologically*

**Yolanda Williams**

Feminist/Womanist Theology Award  
*For outstanding work in Women's Studies*

**Mary Beth McRaith and Sarah Holst**

Re-Imagining Community Award  
*For innovation and creativity in the field of  
Feminist Theology*

**Lisbeth Melendez Rivera**

Joseph B. Morris Award  
*To the outstanding DMin graduate*

**Shalom Bell**

The Hortense MacLeod, Jerilyn  
Dinsmoor, and Patsy Herbert Award  
*An Arts and Theology student whose thorough  
engagement, intrepid whimsy, and theological  
"out-of-the-boxness" added spice to seminary  
life and provoked creative theological  
conversation and action at United and beyond*

**Sheryl Schwyhart**

Alfred and Catherine Koch  
Memorial Award  
*To a graduate doing outstanding work in  
parish service in a single year*

**Joan Howe-Pullis and  
Cameron Williams**

Merrill Memorial Scholarship Award  
*For a graduate demonstrating outstanding  
integration of the M.Div. curriculum whose  
stated goal is the parish ministry or missionary  
service*

**Riva Tabelisma**



# ACADEMIC AWARDS

## GRADUATING CLASS OF 2021

Professor Edward Wentz Award

*For the best scholastic record  
in Constructive Theology*

**Gabrielle Heille and  
Phillip Romine**

The Francis X Pirazzini Award

*To the graduate demonstrating exceptional  
theological acumen and ethical sensitivities  
regarding contemporary social and cultural  
problems*

**Emily Kindelspire**

Susan Noble Blons Scholar in Theology  
and the Arts

*To a student who shows exceptional talent in  
the study and integration of the arts within  
the life of the Christian Community*

**Kiera Stegall**

Walter F. Kuentzel Memorial Award

*For the best scholastic record in  
New Testament Theology*

**Gabrielle Heille**

Historical Theology Award

*For the best scholastic record in  
Historical Theology*

**Troy Bailey**

Lydia Myrl Kapp Memorial Award

*For outstanding work in Preaching*

**Carly Gaeth**

Alfred and Catherine Koch  
Memorial Award

*To a graduate doing outstanding work in  
parish service in a single year*

**Joan Howe-Pullis**

Horace Bushnell Award in

Educational Ministry  
*For outstanding work in Christian Education*

**Edith Bohardt**

Creative Religious Leadership Award

*To a Master of Arts graduate for outstanding  
work in Religious Leadership preparation*

**Joan Howe-Pullis**

Douglas Horton Award

*To a middler student who has done  
outstanding work in the junior year*

**Stephani Pescitelli and  
Leticia Mauriello**

Charlotte L. Matthews Community  
Leadership Award

*To the graduating student who has  
demonstrated outstanding service within the  
UTS community*

**Tanya Sadagopan**

Clyde J. Steckel Prize in Pastoral Care

*To M.Div. or M.A.R.L. graduates  
demonstrating excellence in pastoral care  
and/or counseling courses, and/or Contextual  
Studies placement*

**Lucia Kalinosky and  
Stephanie Johnson**

Merrill Memorial Scholarship Award

*For a graduate demonstrating outstanding  
integration of the M.Div. curriculum whose  
stated goal is the parish ministry or missionary  
service*

**Christine Ford**

Feminist/Womanist Theology Award

*For outstanding work in Women's Studies*

**Angela Barnes and  
Sam Carwyn**

Re-Imagining Community Award

*For innovation and creativity in the field of  
Feminist Theology*

**Alaina Hoffman**

Joseph B. Morris Award

*To the outstanding DMin graduate*

**Tanya Sadagopan**

The Hortense MacLeod, Jerilyn

Dinsmoor, and Patsy Herbert Award  
*An Arts and Theology student whose thorough  
engagement, intrepid whimsy, and theological  
"out-of-the-boxness" added spice to seminary  
life and provoked creative theological  
conversation and action at United and beyond*

**Stephani Pescitelli**



## **KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

### **REV. TRACI BLACKMON**

Rev. Traci Blackmon is the Associate General Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries for The United Church of Christ. Initially ordained in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Rev. Blackmon served in various ministry capacities for nine years, prior to becoming ordained in the United Church of Christ and installed as the first woman and 18th pastor in the 162-year history of Christ The King United Church of Christ in Florissant, MO, where she recently completed her tenure as Senior Pastor. A registered nurse with more than 25 years of healthcare experience, Rev. Blackmon's clinical focus was cardiac care, and in later years her focus shifted to mobile healthcare in underserved communities with the greatest health disparities in her region. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Birmingham – Southern College (1985), and a Master of Divinity degree from Eden Theological Seminary (2009).

As pastor, Rev. Blackmon led Christ The King in an expanded understanding of church as a sacred launching pad of community engagement and change. This ethos led to a tripling of both membership and worship attendance, expanded membership engagement opportunities, and the establishment of community outreach programs. Regionally, Rev. Blackmon's signature initiatives have included Healthy Mind, Body, and Spirit, a mobile faith-based outreach program she designed to impact health outcomes in impoverished areas. Sacred Conversations on Solomon's Porch, quarterly clergy in-services designed to equip local clergy to assess physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health concerns within congregational life, Sista SOS Summit, an intergenerational health symposium for women and girls, and Souls to the Polls STL, an ecumenical, multi-faith collaborative that was successful in providing over 2,800 additional rides to the polls during local and national elections.

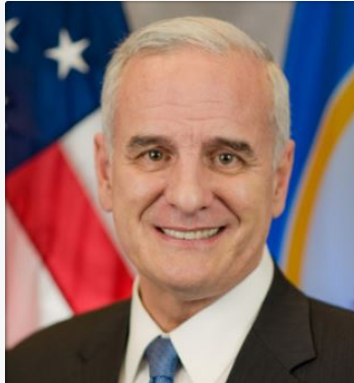
A featured voice with many regional, national, and international media outlets and a frequent contributor to print publications, Rev. Blackmon's communal leadership and work in the aftermath of the killing of Michael Brown, Jr., in Ferguson, MO has gained her both national and international recognition and audiences from the White House to the Carter Center to the Vatican. She was appointed to the Ferguson Commission by Governor Jay Nixon and to the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based Neighborhood Partnerships for the White House by President Barack H. Obama. Rev. Blackmon co-authored the White Privilege curriculum for the United Church of Christ and toured the nation with Rev. Dr. William Barber of Moral Mondays and Repairer of the Breach, Rev. Dr. James Forbes of The Drum Major Institute and pastor emeritus of The Riverside Church in New York, and Sister Simone Campbell of Nuns on the Bus proclaiming the need for a Moral Revival in this nation

Rev. Blackmon is a graduate of Leadership St. Louis and currently serves on the boards of The Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Chicago Theological Seminary, and WomanPreach! She has received several awards and recognitions, inclusive of: The White House President's Volunteer Service Award; The St. Louis American Stellar Award; 2015 Ebony Magazine Power 100; Deluxe Magazine Power 100; St. Louis University – Community Leader of the Year; 100 Black Men of St. Louis Community Leader of the Year; The Coalition of Black Trade Unionist – Drum Major Award; NAACP – Rosa Parks Award; Rosa Parks Award – United Trade Unionist; The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis Woman in Leadership Award; National Planned Parenthood Faith Leader Award; The United Church of Christ – Antoinette Brown Leadership Award; Honorary Doctorate, Eden Theological Seminary

Rev. Blackmon currently resides in both St. Louis, MO and Cleveland, OH and was named 2017 Citizen of the Year by The St. Louis American and as one of St. Louis' 100 most influential voices. Rev. Blackmon is the proud mother of three adult children: Kortni Devon, Harold II, and Tyler Wayne Blackmon.

# HONORABLE GOVERNOR MARK DAYTON

## Recipient of the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters



Throughout his life, Mark Dayton has embodied a commitment to the common good. As a teacher, Minnesota State Auditor, United States Senator, and Governor of the State of Minnesota, he has worked to advance causes like affordable health care, equal educational opportunity, marriage equality, social justice, and peace.

At the end of his term as governor, Dayton stated that, as a boy, he considered becoming a Protestant minister (MPR, December 2018). Instead, he lived out his journey of faith through years of public service, committed to making the world a more just place. This journey would also bring him to United.

In 1987 and 1988, Dayton audited courses at United to study the New Testament, as well as ethics with James B. Nelson, professor emeritus of Christian Ethics. At a Governor's Prayer Breakfast, Dayton explained this call, "I figured anyone involved in politics could use a refresher course in Christian ethics." He went on to say, "I have always been struck by Jesus' choice of the word: 'Neighbor.' Our neighbor is whoever's sitting next to us. Whether or not she's of the same nationality, race, religion, political party, social views, or sexual orientation. Whoever he is -- he's is the one we're supposed to love." As a school we are thankful for the legacy of Jim and grateful that Dayton benefitted from his teaching. We are also grateful for Dayton's later service on the United board of trustees and for his family's commitment to the Dayton Scholarship, which has helped hundreds of students follow their calling over the years.

The Doctorate of Humane Letters is a distinct degree that seeks to affirm Dayton's years of public service and his journey of faith. We applaud the many ways in which he has lived into both. Public service as an expression of faithful vocation matters more than ever in our time. We celebrate the ethical leadership of Mark Dayton and continue to advance our commitment to educate leaders like him, who live out their commitments to ethics and justice as leaders in churches, chaplaincy settings, nonprofits, and throughout society.

# FACULTY AND OFFICERS

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Daniel Anderson  
BS, MS, MDiv, PhD  
PM2002 *Worship of the Church*

Anita Bradshaw  
MDiv, STM, PhD  
FL2001 *Organizational Leadership and Administration*

Marian Broida  
MA, PhD  
RT1101 *Hebrew Bible 1: Orientation*

Danielle Buhuro  
BA, MDiv, DMin, PhD  
IC2002 *Interreligious Chaplaincy*  
IC5001 *DMin Interreligious Spiritual Care*

Kelli Clement '10  
MDiv  
PM2006 *Worship, Liturgy and Ritual: UU Theories and Praxis*

Victor Ezigbo  
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CC1001 *Global Christianities*

Karen Hutt  
MDiv, ACPE, BCCI  
PM1001 *Introduction to Pastoral/Spiritual Care*

Sandha Jha  
BA, MA, MDiv  
ST1004 *Social Enterprise*

Cindi Beth Johnson  
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AT5001 *DMin The Arts for Leadership*  
TR 651 *Arts and Social Transformation*

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FL1001 *Introduction to Spiritual and Personal Formation*

Anna Marsh  
BA, MA, MPhil, PhD  
RT2101 *Hebrew Bible 2: Contextualized Interpretation*

Diane Millis  
BA, MA, PhD  
FL5001 *DMin Narrative Leadership*

Linda Gesling  
TR3002 *United Methodist History and Doctrine*

Pamela Prouty  
BS, MDiv  
TR2004 *Presbyterian History, Worship and Polity*

T. Michael Rock  
BA, MDiv  
TR2003 *UCC History, Theology and Polity*

Nicholas Schaser  
BA, MA, PhD  
RT2201 *New Testament 2: Four Gospels*

Melissa Sellew  
BA, MDiv, ThD  
RT1201 *New Testament 1: Epistles, Acts and Revelation*

Rebecca Voelkel '13  
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FE3004 *Social Transformation Practicum 1*  
DM5300 *DMin Practicum*

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Professor Emeritus of  
Church and Economic Life  
1970-2001

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1976-2004

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1961-1991

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Historical Theology  
1992-2019

Susan Ebbers, BA, MDiv,  
MS, MA  
Professor Emerita of  
Theological Bibliography  
Director of Spencer Library  
1995-2016

†Henry Gustafson, BA, BD,  
STM, PhD  
Professor Emeritus of the  
New Testament  
1968-1989

†Eugene C. Jaberg '54, BA, BD,  
MA, PhD  
Professor Emeritus of  
Communication  
1958-1991

Barbara Ann Keely, BA, MA,  
MDiv, EdD  
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Leadership and Economic Life  
of the Church  
1991-2015

B. Edmon Martin, BA,  
MDiv, PhD  
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Contextual and Historical  
Studies  
1981-2001

†Allan R. McAllaster, BA,  
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Professor Emeritus of Biblical  
Interpretation  
1960-1988

Arthur L. Merrill, BA, BD, PhD  
Professor Emeritus of Old  
Testament  
1958-1995

†James B. Nelson, BA, BD, MA,  
PhD, ST.D, LLD  
Professor Emeritus of  
Christian Ethics  
1963-1995

Carolyn Pressler, BA,  
MDiv, PhD  
Professor Emerita of Biblical  
Interpretation  
1990-2020

Marilyn Salmon, BA,  
MDiv, PhD  
Professor Emerita of New  
Testament Theology  
1989-2014

Christine Smith, BGS, MA,  
MDiv, PhD  
Professor Emerita of  
Preaching  
1991-2013

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PhD, DD  
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Theology  
1970-1995

†W. Robert Strobel, BA, BD,  
STM, EdD  
Professor Emeritus of  
Christian Education  
1962-1987

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MDiv, PhD  
Associate Professor Emerita  
of Worship, and Theology  
and the Arts  
2001-2012

Donald R. White, BA, BD,  
MA, PhD  
Professor Emeritus of  
Constructive Theology  
1965-2002

Wilson Yates, BA, MDiv, PhD  
Professor Emeritus of  
Religion, Society and the  
Arts  
1967-2005

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Huenemann House Resident Caretaker

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Executive Administrative Assistant

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Marketing Communications Manager

Mason Mennenga  
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Admissions Counselor

Michael Moua  
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AV Specialist

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Operations

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AAS  
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AA  
Major Gifts Officer

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MDiv, MALS  
Director of Student Mentoring and  
Contextual Education

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Director of Academic Operations,  
Assessment and Distance Education

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Director for Student Success and  
Registrar

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BA, MA  
Student Success Specialist

Cameron Williams  
BS  
Digital Campaign Specialist

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# A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO....

David Anderson  
Deryk Bauer Lee  
Rev. Traci Blackmon  
Max Brumberg-Kraus  
Diana Carlson  
Christine Ford  
Ashley Hovell  
Joan Howe-Pullis  
Cindi Beth Johnson  
Laura Larson  
Molly T. Marshall  
Judith Melander  
Lisbeth Melendez Rivera  
Michael Moua  
Vonda Pearson  
Adam Pfuhl  
John Rinehart  
Kyle Roberts  
Tanya Sadagopan  
Sara Smalley  
J. Samuel Subramanian  
Hillary Vamstad

## MISSION

*United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities fosters intellectual, spiritual and personal growth to educate innovative and compassionate leaders.*

## VISION

*United is recognized as a generous and welcoming seminary where all—trailblazers and traditionalists, questioners and yearning spirits—explore the boundless possibilities of a loving and beloved community.*

## VALUES

*United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities values*

*... its heritage as a seminary of the United Church of Christ and other faith traditions as the foundation for genuine dialogue and profound spiritual experiences*

*... rigorous academic study as an expression of the human spirit*

*... lifelong learning that nurtures the journey of spiritual seekers from all walks of life*

*... challenging conversations and bold partnerships for societal transformation*

*... a culture of creativity where integration of the arts and theology is fundamental*

*... promoting a just, peaceful and sustainable world through stewardship and courageous action*

