

Hindu Community Institute Announces Launch of a Global Spiritual Care Network

Plans for 108 Hindu Chaplains and 1,000 Trained Volunteers by 2025

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CALIFORNIA, USA, September 16, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Hindu Community Institute](#) (HCI) announced the launch of a global network of spiritual care providers, consisting of Hindu chaplains, trained and vetted volunteer counselors, and interfaith partner organizations. This program aims to fulfill the demand for spiritual care rooted in the Hindu tradition, serving families, hospitals, colleges, prisons, corporations, and the military.

HCI has graduated three cohorts of its [Counselor of Hindu Tradition](#) (CHT) course. It has built a network of 200 trained volunteers in the US and plans to expand to 1,000 volunteers globally in the next five years.



Board, faculty and community members at the launch of HCI in 2018

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Gaurav Rastogi, HCI Dean

Under its “Pathway 108” program that began in 2021, HCI is expected to support the credentialing of 108 Hindu chaplains by 2025. HCI’s chaplaincy pathway program enables qualified CHTs to enter the prestigious Interreligious Chaplaincy Program at the [Graduate Theological Union](#) (GTU) at Berkeley, California. The first three CHTs have entered this program this semester, with several others planning to join in the coming semesters.

Announcing the pioneer program, HCI President Dr. Kailash Joshi said, “We are pleased and thankful to have

worked with GTU in creating this first-ever opportunity for aspiring individuals to achieve Hindu Chaplaincy credentials. We see this service bringing to the community a unique combination of Hindu tradition and the best of norms and protocols of Chaplaincy.” Dr. Joshi also announced

HCI's creation of an education fund to be built with contributions from the global community.

Describing the significance of the proposed spiritual care network, HCI Board Member and Dean Gaurav Rastogi said, "Throughout the pandemic, we have seen a tremendous hunger for spiritual care in the community. We see great opportunities for knowledge sharing across traditions and across borders. To design this proposed network we have drawn inspiration from established spiritual care, academic and interfaith organizations. Since modern problems require modern solutions, we are using technology as a means of magnifying our impact and reach. Our CHT program is already admitting scholars from five countries, and we have signed agreements with several partner organizations."

HCI has also created a community helpline service in select cities across the US, providing guidance on celebrations, last rites, marriage and compassionate presence. Describing this volunteer service, Chair of Services and HCI Board member Dr. Mukund Acharya said, "We have a vision for free spiritual care services for guidance and referral that is available to everyone in the community. Our network of certified volunteers and vetted subject matter experts will bring relief and wisdom when needed. We intend to use technology to offer some services globally online."

HCI announcement also included the following statements from partner organizations and informed supporters:

Welcoming the first batch of CHTs, GTU Director Dr. Kamal Abu-Shamsieh stated, "The Interreligious Chaplaincy Program at the Graduate Theological Union welcomes students from all backgrounds, especially minorities, to explore and study in an affirming environment that celebrates diversity and pluralism. To this end, we welcome chaplaincy students from Hindu communities from across the United States and abroad to join us and establish a foundation of spiritual care rooted in Vedic practices of yoga, meditation, Ayurveda, and prayers."



First CHT Graduation Ceremony, 2019



The first three CHTs to enter the Graduate Theological Union's Interreligious Chaplaincy Program, 2021: Ashis Khan, MSEE and graduate of IIT, Kharagpur; Usha Narasimhan, MBA; Neeti Soota, MS

In support of the Chaplaincy pathway program, Head of Spiritual Directors International Reverend Anil Singh-Molares said, "Over the last few years I have watched with admiration as HCI has developed and evolved a world-class program for Hindu Counselors and Advisors, and now, for chaplains. This program fills a significant void, allowing the riches of the Hindu tradition to be offered in chaplaincy settings to many individuals who will benefit greatly from them."

Dr. Asha Shipman, Chair of North American Hindu Chaplains Association (NAHCA) at Yale University welcomed the HCI-GTU plan and commented, "Access to culturally appropriate professional education for Hindu spiritual caregivers has been a major stumbling block. We need more Hindu chaplains; their heart-centered spiritual care will help not only individuals but strengthen, inspire and invigorate our communities. The partnership between HCI and GTU provides an opportunity for such training and I look forward to welcoming graduates as members of NAHCA."

Commenting on the need for Chaplaincy services in the community, renowned Vedic scholar and computer scientist Professor Subhash Kak said, "I support the vision of Hindu chaplaincy wholeheartedly. It is certainly needed in the United States; it can also serve as a model for other countries to emulate."

Chaplain Bruce Feldstein MD, BCC at Stanford University, Past President of Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains, the professional association for Jewish chaplains worldwide, commented on his long association with HCI, "As a visiting faculty, I have experienced HCI's serious and heartfelt commitment and leadership provided by proven business leaders who have come together and turned their attention to an important and unfulfilled need in their Hindu community."

About the Hindu Community Institute (HCI)

Founded in 2018 in the San Francisco Bay Area, Hindu Community Institute (HCI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit institution. It is a first-of-its-kind service-learning institution guided by the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. It provides a strong platform for universal community service founded on Hindu tradition and wisdom.

HCI provides a foundation course, Counselor of Hindu Tradition (CHT), which prepares individuals for volunteer community services and provides a pathway to Hindu chaplaincy. HCI is overseen by a Board of Directors and managed by a dedicated group of over 200 volunteer professionals who carry the operational, management, and faculty responsibilities. Seed funding for HCI has been provided by the founding team, their family and friends, and the community at large. HCI invites open participation of the public in all aspects of its operation, as described in its charter and on its website www.hinduci.org.

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