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Chicago Theological Seminary Receives Lead Gift for InterReligious Research Institute (IRI)

Chicago, February 7, 2017 – Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) is pleased to announce it has received a \$425,000 grant from The Henry Luce Foundation’s Luce Fund For Theological Education. These funds will support the InterReligious Institute (IRI), which will advance the pursuit of interreligious studies and engagement within CTS and the wider community. The seminary recently welcomed CTS alumnus Rev. Lisa Noel Seiwert to head this new initiative as Project Director.

The IRI will focus on three vital intersections: 1) the worlds of activism and the academy; 2) religious studies/theological education and other fields or professions; and 3) diverse aspects of identity (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality, politics, religion). Each of these meeting points addresses a critical challenge in the current state of interreligious work. The IRI will develop and operate a new model of engagement in public discourse for CTS students, faculty, and community leaders.

“The IRI builds the legacy of CTS as a leader,” said Don Clark, Acting President and General Counsel of CTS. “This is yet another example of CTS living into its ambitious mission and vision for a Church and society transformed.” As Clark’s most recent hire, Seiwert is excited to begin the work of the Institute. “I am thrilled to return to CTS to head up this new initiative. I believe interreligious engagement is crucial as we strive toward a world rich in justice and mercy. I look forward to guiding the IRI from concept to reality, and to fostering deeper opportunities to learn and grow across lines of difference.”

The IRI will build upon CTS’ commitments to interreligious engagement and work towards full integration into academic and programmatic seminary experience for both the students and the wider community. The Master of Divinity (MDiv) program will see a number of minor—yet crucial—changes, which will result in greater attention to understanding and collaborating within a multifaith society. New course offerings, additional travel opportunities, and expanding Field Education sites will support students as they learn and grow during their time at CTS.

“The IRI promises to be a cutting-edge interfaith learning opportunity for students, community members, scholars and activists of all backgrounds to acquire critically important skills for critically urgent times,” said Dr. Rami Nashashibi, Visiting Assistant Professor in Sociology of Religion & Muslim Studies.

Through the IRI, CTS will advance its legacy of leadership and innovation by expanding the institution’s academic offerings, trainings, and public seminars on religious difference and collaboration. The IRI will expand CTS’ commitment to being a resource for these local and national conversations.

Visit the CTS website (ctschicago.edu) and follow CTS social media to remain abreast of announcements and opportunities to engage and learn more about the IRI.

ABOUT CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Based in Chicago’s Southside, Chicago Theological Seminary is committed to creating leaders for the next generation at religious leadership...whatever that may be. A leader in social justice, CTS is committed to LGBTQ and gender issues, interreligious understanding, and racial justice.

CTS is an affiliated seminary at the United Church of Christ. Since its beginning in 1855, CTS has pushed at the growing boundaries of the church in order to make faith more relevant and transform society towards greater justice and mercy. The student body now represents more than 40 different faith traditions, perspectives and denominations.

