

## [Support for New Hindu University Snowballs](#)

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After Years of Planning, the Hindu University of America Will Open This Fall with Two Professors and Ten Students

Clouds of sandalwood incense will not fog the classrooms. Reverberating Vedic mantras will not echo in the hallways. A Ganga Goddesses cheerleader squad dressed in mini-skirts will not spur on a Himalayan Hunks football team into inter-collegiate battle. Nor will nerds dominate. Those extremes avoided, the new Hindu University of America (HUA) will nevertheless be downright Hindu in spirit, unapologetically American in social setting, cosmopolitan Indian in character and unequivocally Ivy League in scholastic standard.

With a bare-bones starting budget of \$150,000, the university is scheduled to open in September, 1993. "We will start with only two faculty members and 10 students for whom we will be soliciting applications in February," key HUA coordinator Dr. Choudhary told HINDUISM TODAY. The school will initially offer post-graduate masters and doctoral programs in Hindu Studies. The first campus is being located in Florida, near Orlando, home of Disney World. But "campus" for these founding students will not be rolling lawns, million-volume libraries and a busy sorority/fraternity social life. They will suffer Ghandian austerities, but be rewarded with quality attention from dedicated minds in an intellectually stimulating Hindu climate.

In the beginning, the curriculum will include graduate courses in Hindu philosophy, comparative religion, yoga philosophy and meditation. Subsequently, other courses will be added in Hindu devotional music and arts, holistic health (ayurveda), Oriental philosophies, Vedic studies, Eastern spiritual sciences, Tamil, Sanskrit, Hindi, ethics and morals, global ecology, global harmony/peace and herbal medicine. Transition to a full-fledged "regular" university on the model, but not scale, of Harvard or Yale - with full undergraduate programs in the arts, sciences, humanities and social sciences - is scheduled for the year 2,000.

The first two faculty members - engaged on a non-salary basis - for the September opening: Dr. Yog Dhyan Ahuja, professor of philosophy at Denver Metropolitan College, Colorado and Mr. P. Mehta, a retired attorney and respected scholar.

Though Hindu, HUA's admission policy will not discriminate on the basis of creed. Christians, Jews and Buddhists can go to the Hindu University of America, just as Hindus and Buddhists attend Christian schools like Houston Baptist University. But HUA is determined to take its name seriously unlike Benaras Hindu University which, although founded to nurture the Hindu ethos, has since become so exclusively academic, almost nothing remains in curriculum and religious tone to justify the Hindu name.

The most vital Hindu icon at HU will be a campus temple. Regular attendance will not be dictated, but sensitively encouraged as part of the school's commitment to nurturing a spiritually buoyant atmosphere. Most organizers foresee the yoga courses will be so popular that, along with daily pujas, a special sublimity will distinguish the Hindu University, catalyzing intellectual and vocational study directed in the service of humanity. "A graduate from HUA will get a BA that, admittedly, he or she could get elsewhere," HUA spokesperson Mr. Khandelwal told HINDUISM TODAY. "But, the critical difference, and why we are building this school, is that students will receive a basic understanding of this great faith, Hinduism, to help them integrate spiritual values in their lives."

## Selling the Vision

Though for decades excited talk about starting a Hindu university bandied about the globe from coffee shops in Nepal to living rooms in Georgia, it finally took a serious tack around 1984 when Swami Tilak announced that the Hindu University concept was overdue. Several Indian Hindu men and women decided the hour had come. Discussions progressively got more sober and in 1989 the school was finally incorporated in Florida and secured licensing from the State Board of Education in October, 1992.

The growing impressive list of registered faculty now includes: Dr. Sunder Das; Dr. Krishna Mohan; Prof. J.P. Dave; Dr. David Frawley; Vyaas Houston; Swami Jyotiramayananda; Professor Subash C. Kak; Dr. Vimal Mehta; Dr. J. Kenneth Rabac

and Dr. K.L. Seshagiri Rao.

Hindu leaders are unhesitatingly backing the school. They already include Swami Satchidananda, Swami Chidananda, Swami Rama, Swami Jyotirmayananda and Sivaya Subramuniaswami. HUA workshops are being conducted nationwide to coalesce interest in the school. These are fact sharing, fund-raising meetings - full of exchange of ideas and enthusiasm. Two were held in November - one in Atlanta, Georgia and another in Denver, Colorado. The Atlanta forum attracted over 50 persons - many from different parts of the country. Dr. Mrs. Joshi, professor of nutrition and biochemistry at Morris College, was present and shared: "The discussions were wonderful. Everyone was excited to hear about the creation of a high-class university on the calibre of Harvard or Yale. I feel the creation of this unique school will contribute to harmony and peace worldwide. A spiritual evolution is coming globally, and the very bright light that is Hindu philosophy can contribute very much to this awakening."

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