The projects undertaken by UT citizen-scholars may well lead to new policies and ways of thinking. Alexis Chamow, a master’s student in theater, is demonstrating how performance art can help us cope with tragedy. She and her colleagues have created workshops to explore themes and ideas from September 11 in an open, artistic forum. “Artists have tremendous opportunities to be ‘useful’ in their communities, especially during crises,” says Chamow. “Performers can facilitate dialogue, enabling audiences and performers together to build a forum, a safe space for exploration of ideas and emotion. People then can live, for a few hours, in a communal and ritualistic setting that allows us to cry, reminds us to laugh, and challenges our beliefs by asking us to consider views that differ from our own.”

Anthropology student Tim Schneider, who specializes in archaeology, recounts two of the most prominent archaeological points associated with the September events: the erasure of the Buddhist statuary by the Taliban in Afghanistan and FBI calls to archaeologists, asking them for their expertise in excavating the World Trade Center. “The fact that a politico-religious movement is willing to erase its past for its future is unsettling, in that most Americans are brought up looking to the past for help in dealing with the present. The call for archaeologists has revealed to me that the monstrous events of that Tuesday will be treated by all, without hesitation,” he says.

These graduate students and many others embody the idea of graduate education as intellectual entrepreneurship — where “being moved” propels action. Lori Stone, a doctoral student in social psychology, is a case in point. After she and a Pakistani friend were treated with hostility at a local Austin restaurant, Stone began what she calls “action research.” “Our approach associates the ability to successfully process emotional events with shifting perspectives — we’re asking students to write about their thoughts and feelings concerning September 11, once from their own personal perspective, and once from a larger perspective, and then we explore the stories together,” says Stone.

The events of September 11 have many dimensions and implications. Therefore, now more than ever, the country could benefit from the diverse intellectual perspectives that a university provides to promote change at a time when change may be needed most. Doing so gives us the best chance to solve the varied and complex problems we face.

To learn more, visit www.utexas.edu/ogs/development.html.

—Richard Cherwitz is associate dean of Graduate Studies and director of the IE Program. Thomas Darwin is a coordinator and faculty member in the IE Program. Laura Grund is a master’s student in the LBJ School of Public Affairs and a graduate research assistant for the Office of Graduate Studies.