



A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR UNION COLLEGE



 **UNION**
COLLEGE

You are Union.



OUR MISSION

Union College, founded in 1795, is a scholarly community dedicated to shaping the future and to understanding the past. Faculty, staff and administrators welcome diverse and talented students into our community, work closely with them to provide a broad and deep education, and guide them in finding and cultivating their passions. We do this with a wide range of disciplines and interdisciplinary programs in the liberal arts and engineering, as well as academic, athletic, cultural and social activities, including opportunities to study abroad and to participate in undergraduate research and community service. We develop in our students the analytic and reflective abilities needed to become engaged, innovative and ethical contributors to an increasingly diverse, global and technologically complex society.

UNION COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT, MAY 2008





THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Strategic Plan represents the collective vision of many members of the Union family about how best to build on our assets to keep Union dynamic and distinctive. A planning group began work in spring 2006 with the goal of defining a vision and strategic direction for Union College by February 2007. Representatives of the trustees, administration, staff, faculty, students and alumni contributed their efforts throughout four phases.

PHASE 1: The initial phase focused on collecting data about the external environment and on gathering opinions from the campus community about Union's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. The research process included interviews and focus groups with faculty, administrators and staff; student interviews and surveys; alumni input; and data from surveys of guidance counselors and admitted students. The process solicited input from both academic and non-academic departments and culminated in a trustee retreat at which summaries of the research findings were discussed.

PHASE 2: Five subgroups considered demographics, campus culture, vision and strategic elements, resources, and student development. Each presented a description of its areas of inquiry and objectives, along with possible strategies and questions, to the campus community.

PHASE 3: Participants identified and discussed strategic elements, considered how the work of each subgroup related to those elements, and began developing a vision statement and drafting the planning report.

PHASE 4: The planning committee held open meetings with various campus constituencies to build consensus around the core elements of the plan.

In February 2007, the Strategic Plan for Union College was affirmed by the Board of Trustees. Since then, the College has focused on refining priorities for change and developing detailed blueprints for implementation of the plan.



OUR PLACE IN THE ACADEMIC ARENA

The environment in which we operate as an institution of higher learning provides the context within which we will carry out the plan. Union offers a broad array of disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs that—distinctively for a liberal arts college—includes engineering; quality teaching by dedicated faculty; close student-faculty relationships; faculty commitment to scholarly activities, including excellent opportunities for students to engage in undergraduate research and scholarship; and a premier collection of off-campus and international programs. Students are bright and energetic, and campus life features numerous activities supported by dedicated staff.

Union's distinctions provide a competitive edge. One of the most defining features is the importance of engineering in our curriculum for the last 162 years, a role enhanced by recent efforts to bring engineering and the liberal arts closer together.

Union's beautiful, historic campus is a valuable asset. The College is a national leader in investing in the surrounding community, to the benefit of both. The Minerva House System has become a national model for the integration of academic and social life.



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

The planning process identified three key principles that any selective institution must embrace and promote. Keeping these “foundations” strong, while continuing to build on them, is critical to the plan’s success.

FOUNDATIONS

Academic quality.

An optimal learning environment.

Stewardship of resources.

In addition to the foundational elements, certain core attributes set Union apart and give the College its unique identity. These, too, must be protected and enhanced as part of our strategic plan.

DIFFERENTIATORS

We are small, yet global and diverse.

We integrate engineering with the liberal arts.

We inspire innovation, using our past as a source of inspiration.



FOUNDATIONS

FOUNDATION I: ACADEMIC QUALITY

Union's academic strengths include small classes; close faculty-student interaction; emphasis on student scholarship, communication skills and international experiences; strong departments in liberal arts and engineering; interdisciplinary programs and majors; and dedicated people throughout the community. We will improve on these strengths and address others to educate intellectually engaged, innovative and open-minded citizens who will, as Eliphalet Nott urged, carry their humanity with them into the world.

Strategies include:

- Increase academic challenge on- and off-campus.
- Foster innovative research and scholarship by students and faculty.
- Optimize students' academic quality, diversity and special talents.
- Support faculty commitment to teaching and scholarship.
- Develop the Minervas as models of integrative learning.
- Ensure that facilities enhance the academic mission.

FOUNDATION 2: AN OPTIMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The College develops a "Union of people and ideas" in which all members work together to maintain a vibrant learning environment based on mutual respect, inclusiveness and dialogue.

Strategies include:

- Communicate to students those messages that are central to the College's vision.
- Encourage student organizations to set a standard for civil, open-minded and intellectually engaged behavior.
- Develop models of governance that foster student leadership.

FOUNDATION 3: WISE STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

Our capacity to compete with the finest liberal arts colleges depends on our ability to preserve and enhance our financial, material and human resources. Through careful stewardship and effective investment in recent years, Union's endowment has grown to become increasingly important to the support of the annual budget. Union's campus, one of the College's greatest assets, must be preserved and improved. Union will remain steadfast in attracting and retaining the faculty and staff that are critical to its success. Finally, the College will demonstrate responsible use of consumable resources to ensure sustainability.

Strategies include:

- Enhance growth of the endowment.
- Reinvest in facilities.
- Ensure that faculty and staff compensation remains competitive.
- Invest in sustainability.



DIFFERENTIATORS

Much of Union's identity lies in its ability to reconcile attributes that have traditionally been viewed as contradictory. Our academic community is vibrant and exciting because it exploits the intersection of these attributes in an innovative way, offering a truly unique experience to our students.

DIFFERENTIATOR I: SMALL, YET GLOBAL AND DIVERSE

Small

Union has played an historic role in developing the distinctive tradition of the small American liberal arts college, and we will continue to be a path breaker. Our small size differentiates us from those large universities with which we compete for students. While size alone does not differentiate us from most of our liberal arts peers, it is a component of our distinctive character.

Strategies include:

- Enhance our individualized academic curriculum.
- Focus on academic advising, student development and support services.
- Enhance career and placement services.

Global and Diverse

Rather than “small” meaning “parochial,” Union is committed to diversity and to cultivating a sense of global connectedness. As an institution whose core mission is preparing students for the 21st century, Union integrates international experiences into the life of the College both inside and outside the classroom. Members of the Union community strive to bring Union to the world and the world to Union.

Union will also increase student and faculty diversity, which is associated with increased student satisfaction, cognitive development and academic success. Diversity will also help the College achieve many of its important objectives in admissions: increase applicants and attractiveness to high achievers, improve retention rates, and create a more intellectually engaged student population with a heightened sense of social responsibility and global awareness.

Strategies include:

- Increase diversity among students and faculty.
- Increase the breadth and depth of global experiences for students.
- Enhance global experiences in Union's classrooms.
- Infuse global issues into the curriculum.



DIFFERENTIATOR 2: INTEGRATION OF ENGINEERING AND THE LIBERAL ARTS

Since its founding, Union has differentiated itself by integrating strong engineering programs into the liberal arts, and by expanding the liberal arts to embrace engineering and technology. In the spirit of integration, students from across disciplines are encouraged to work together. Students from the liberal arts disciplines enhance their problem-solving skills, and engineering students gain a better sense of the “big picture” from their exposure to humanities and the social sciences.

Strategies include:

- Build on the Converging Technologies initiative by developing more ties between engineering, science, arts, humanities and social sciences.
- Expand the liberal arts concept to include technology, and expose liberal arts students to core engineering skills and thought processes.
- Use engineering as a collaborative and supporting resource for the liberal arts.
- Expand partnerships with for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, government agencies, and other institutions.

DIFFERENTIATOR 3: A TRADITION OF INNOVATION

Union’s history has been one of inventiveness and innovation, and it presents a significant strategic advantage over other liberal arts colleges. The very name “Union” derives from the forward-looking idea, for 1795, that education need not be tied to any single faith. Union was among the first schools to adopt modern languages and to introduce engineering. The 1813 campus architectural plan, the first comprehensive campus plan in the nation, served as a model for other institutions and continues to guide the College today. Many distinguished Union alumni are known for having wrought significant change in their fields. Students today combine depth of knowledge (a major) with the breadth of understanding (general education) that is the hallmark of a liberal arts education. Their ability to address complex problems by drawing on broad perspectives ensures that the list of innovators will continue to grow.

Strategies include:

- Promote socially responsible innovation.
- Teach innovation by being innovative.
- Promote interdisciplinary team projects.
- Ensure that students see their part in an educational project with a long history and a distinctive position.

SUPPORTING THE PLAN

To implement the elements of the Strategic Plan, Union must find ways to support new initiatives through a combination of increasing revenues and cost efficiencies. As all divisions of the College work to support these initiatives, some reallocation of resources will be necessary.

Strategies include:

- Reconfigure a portion of the You are Union campaign to support the Strategic Plan.
- Expand and extend the campaign.
- Pursue corporate, foundation and government support for new initiatives.

NEXT STEPS

Our planning has covered a great deal of territory. We have studied the voluminous materials from campus committees as well as planning documents from other institutions. We have catalogued the concerns and aspirations of members of the Union community. We have tested ideas. We have debated Union's future.

We have identified what we believe to be the foundational issues the College must address, together with the strategic elements that we believe can differentiate Union, breathe new life into its institutional mission, and focus our efforts and resources.

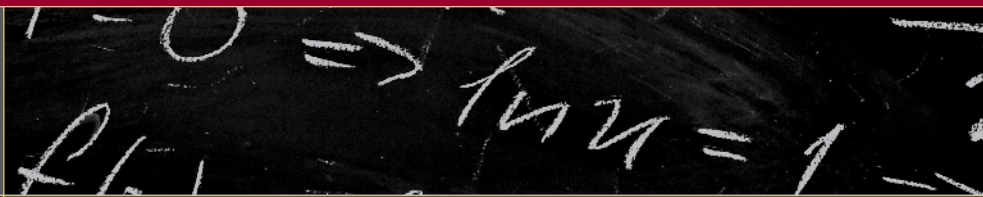
Much work remains. We are engaging in the intense effort of implementation, which requires the energies of the entire community. The Strategic Plan should serve as a challenge to all, asking us to rethink our aims and our approach.

This is an invigorating time for Union College. The Strategic Plan points the way to strengthen our academic, social and fiscal foundation. It also represents a shared educational vision with a clear focus on the tasks ahead. The future of this remarkable institution is bright.





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