

UNION COLLEGE'S 2013 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

A SUMMARY OF THE 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN



UNION
COLLEGE
FOUNDED 1795

THINK
CONNECT
ACT





2013 STRATEGIC PLAN

THE 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN BUILDS ON UNION COLLEGE'S STRENGTHS AS A HIGHLY SELECTIVE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE.

In the academic arena, we offer a broad array of disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs in the liberal arts and—distinctively—engineering; high-quality teaching by dedicated faculty; close student-faculty interactions; and faculty commitment to scholarly activities. We also provide excellent opportunities for students to engage in undergraduate research and scholarship, and in premier off-campus and international programs. Outside the classroom, students take full advantage of our vibrant campus life, ranging from clubs and campus organizations to service and community-based learning projects, and athletics. Our infrastructure supports a wide range of approaches to integrating technology into a Union education, and the College is committed to keeping pace with changes in this emerging area.

The Union College experience goes even further. It includes how we think about liberal arts: through our innovative curriculum that blends thought and action to build student proficiency in essential skills such as critical thinking and communication. It's in the connections we offer: the interactions that take place in a tightly-knit scholarly community; the distinctive ways in which we connect knowledge within and across disciplines; and the intertwining of intellectual inquiry between academics and social life. And it's in the way we act: making contributions through community-based learning projects and research activities, and by preparing students to contribute and work in a diverse, global and technologically complex world.

For more than a decade, Union has enjoyed significant increases in the number and quality of applicants. Our overlap colleges are among the most competitive institutions in the nation. We have made significant strides in attracting students from beyond New York and the Northeast and have increased the ethnic, racial and international diversity of our student body.

The 2013 Strategic Plan reaffirms the core values that make Union College what it is, and what it will be—a place where students continue to make connections that change the world. This collective vision of the Union community represents the legacy and strength of the College and serves as the vehicle for moving us forward.





OUR EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

In the course of revising our Strategic Plan, we examined the environment in which we operate and how it is likely to change in coming decades. The environmental scan highlighted demographic changes; higher education trends, such as globalization, sustainability, accountability and campus safety; and emerging learning technologies. It is this environmental scan that provides the context within which we will carry out our 2013 Strategic Plan.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The first phase of the Strategic Plan revision process began during the fall 2011 term with initial conversations among the senior staff, the Faculty Executive Committee, department chairs and directors of programs and College offices about the goal of revising the existing plan affirmed in 2007. In January 2012, the senior staff held a Union community meeting to inform the campus of the intention to revise the Strategic Plan and invited comments on the revision process and timeline. Community members offered suggestions for all phases of the revision of the plan. During the winter and spring 2012 terms, an environmental scan and a gap analysis of the 32 strategic elements in the 2007 plan were developed. In June 2012, the Board of Trustees held a retreat, which focused on the Strategic Plan process.

During fall 2012, Strategic Plan writing groups composed of faculty, staff and administrators were formed to review and revise sections of the 2007 Strategic Plan. In December 2012, a draft of the revised Strategic Plan was circulated to the College community. Subsequently, seven community meetings were held in January and February 2013, which resulted in suggestions and language changes throughout the plan. The Board of Trustees reviewed a draft of the plan at its February meeting. The Planning and Priorities Group also reviewed the plan in March. The 2013 Strategic Plan for Union College was affirmed by the Board of Trustees in May.



WHAT'S NEW: 2013 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

THE 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN WILL FURTHER UNION'S MISSION AS A SCHOLARLY COMMUNITY, WHICH EDUCATES STUDENTS TO BE ENGAGED, INNOVATIVE AND ETHICAL CONTRIBUTORS TO AN INCREASINGLY DIVERSE, GLOBAL AND TECHNOLOGICALLY COMPLEX SOCIETY.

TO THIS END, THE PLAN BUILDS ON OUR 2007 EFFORTS BY FOCUSING MORE SPECIFICALLY ON THREE KEY STRENGTHS:

- OUR ABILITY TO THINK BROADLY AND STRATEGICALLY IN ALL AREAS.
- THE WAY IN WHICH WE MAKE CONNECTIONS, BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM.
- A CULTURE THAT ENCOURAGES AND PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE ACTION, ACADEMICALLY AND SOCIALLY, AS WELL AS LOCALLY, REGIONALLY AND GLOBALLY.

Highlights of the 2013 Strategic Plan can be viewed through the lens of three essential components of a Union College education: the ability to think, connect and act.

THINK

THE 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN:

Focuses explicitly on ensuring that Union provides a deep and broad curriculum in order to prepare students for the contributions that we expect them to make in the world.

Engages students throughout the curriculum in developing skills for addressing the kinds of questions that are of significance to humanity.

Makes a renewed commitment to providing opportunities for close interaction between students and full-time tenure-track faculty.

Creates more learning spaces in classrooms, laboratory buildings and residence halls.

CONNECT

THE 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN:

Explores how emerging technologies can be incorporated into the campus environment in ways that will enhance faculty-student interaction, not replace it.

Focuses on the integration of an active learning component into students' extracurricular education.

Encourages Union College to promote wellness of the "whole" person to ensure a healthy balance among mind, body and spirit.

Provides an educational experience that combines both theory and practice throughout the curriculum.

Equips students to make personally meaningful plans for their college careers and beyond.

Draws from the strengths of our past to guide our future.

ACT

THE 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN:

Incorporates social responsibility both inside and outside the classroom.

Defines sustainability broadly and applies it to all of our resources.

Strengthens the role of the rich offerings of our location to help students understand the value of local study and action, and how they relate to global understanding.

Creates and sustains new ways of supporting students and faculty so they can continue to make important contributions to humanity.

The 2013 Strategic Plan for Union College represents the collective vision of the Union community in how to best build on our strengths to make the College a distinctive and continually improving institution. Its implementation will boost Union's academic reputation and enhance the College's scholarly community. Just as we did in 2007, we have divided the plan into foundational elements and differentiators that provide a clear and compelling path to ensure that Union remains the college of choice for highly qualified students, faculty and staff.

FOUNDATIONS

- ACADEMIC QUALITY
- THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
- SUSTAINABLE STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

DIFFERENTIATORS

- AN ACADEMIC VILLAGE THAT REFLECTS THE DIVERSITY OF THE WORLD
- INTEGRATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
- A DISTINCTIVE PAST CONNECTED TO AN INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE FUTURE

FOUNDATIONS



ACADEMIC QUALITY

FOUNDATION 1

What we're going to do:

- We will attract diverse, talented, accomplished and creative students, faculty and staff.
- We will ensure that our students graduate with deep and broad knowledge.
- We will offer students opportunities that will allow them to graduate with excellent critical thinking and communication skills; the ability to work independently and collaboratively; strong technological and visual expertise; the ability to discover and create an appreciation for a culturally diverse world; and a strong ethical understanding and basis for action.
- Students, faculty and staff will contribute to the improvement of the human condition, both locally and globally.

How we are going to do it:

- **F1.1:** Attract, support and retain a high-quality, diverse faculty committed to outstanding teaching and scholarship, and our mission as a residential college.

■ **F1.2:** Sustain a broad and deep curriculum that provides an exceptional education for students. The curriculum will evolve to reflect new developments while maintaining the highest academic quality in all programs. We will use emerging technologies in ways that support our academic programs.

■ **F1.3:** Engage students in innovative and creative projects that contribute to the broader intellectual community. We will facilitate student and student-faculty collaboration and integrate undergraduate research and creative projects throughout the curriculum.

■ **F1.4:** Set high expectations for students in all academic programs, using clear and consistently communicated standards, including the academic honor code.

■ **F1.5:** Ensure that Union's facilities support our academic programs by creating innovative and energy-efficient new and renovated space.

■ **F1.6:** Continue to develop the Minerva House system as an integrative and innovative learning experience for students.

■ **F1.7:** Continue to recruit students who value strong academic programs and can contribute across all of our departments to a culturally rich, diverse and dynamic college experience.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

FOUNDATION 2

What we're going to do:

- Design our residential communities in ways that enhance and support intellectual engagement.
- Develop our students' ability to succeed in a complex, multicultural world by improving their cultural competencies.
- Offer a range of co-curricular programs that will help students develop a sense of their "whole" person.



How we are going to do it:

■ **F2.1:** Develop well-maintained spaces that encourage student learning communities. We will renovate residence halls to create optimal learning environments and a sense of community through multi-purpose dining spaces. We will also continue to use Minervas as a “third space” for socializing, studying and informal intellectual life.

■ **F2.2:** Ensure that Greek life at Union sets a standard for civil, open-minded and intellectually engaged behavior. Working with individual Greek organizations, we will develop programming that is integrated with the academic mission of the College. We will encourage Greek organizations to think broadly about their contributions to Union as a whole.

■ **F2.3:** Beginning in their first year on campus, we will promote the idea that students themselves define the standards of their community. Union will expand civic engagement programs and service, and help students understand the value of leadership activities. We will use clearly defined models of governance to increase student accountability in fostering a “more perfect Union.”

■ **F2.4:** Nurture a campus environment that promotes collective responsibility for diversity and the rich spectrum of identities, perspectives and values represented within our community.

■ **F2.5:** Using an integrated approach among the Wicker Wellness Center, Human Resources and the Department of Athletics, Union will develop a program for promoting wellness of the “whole” person as a way to establish a healthy mind, body and spirit balance.

SUSTAINABLE STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

FOUNDATION 3

What we’re going to do:

■ We will maximize and sustain all of our resources to benefit and secure the future of Union College.

How we are going to do it:

■ **F3.1:** Enhance Union’s reputation by publicizing its institutional qualities and provide its people and programs opportunities to showcase their accomplishments to a wide range of audiences.

These efforts will boost awareness of Union’s strengths and bring attention and recognition to the College.

■ **F3.2:** Foster an environment that attracts and retains a highly talented, dedicated and diverse workforce, and which allows for an efficient and effective use of time and talent.

■ **F3.3:** We will stabilize our tuition dependency and enhance our financial position through new initiatives, mindfulness of cost and enhancements of our revenues beyond tuition.

■ **F3.4:** Facilitate the assessment process by linking planning, time-management, budgeting and institutional decision-making.

■ **F3.5:** Invest in sustainable and efficient facilities and infrastructure.

■ **F3.6:** Reduce Union’s environmental footprint by creating a culture in which sustainability is a common thread that runs throughout our curriculum and daily operations.

DIFFERENTIATORS



AN ACADEMIC VILLAGE THAT REFLECTS THE DIVERSITY OF THE WORLD

DIFFERENTIATOR 1

What we're going to do:

- Increase the diversity of our campus community.
- Enhance and promote a richer understanding of local and global knowledge.
- Help students "find their place in the world" by enhancing their personal, social and academic development.

How we are going to do it:

- **D1.1:** Continue the development of a collaborative, coherent and integrated approach to mentoring and advising that recognizes a broad range of aspirations and encourages students to explore a variety of curricular and extracurricular opportunities.
- **D1.2:** Enhance opportunities for students' personal and academic development through academic programs including small First-Year Preceptorial and Sophomore Research Seminars, research and scholarly opportunities, and senior capstone experiences.

We will expand experiential opportunities such as internships, civic engagement, community-based learning and engagement, and study abroad.

- **D1.3:** Broaden our understanding of the resources and historical significance of Schenectady, Albany, the Mohawk and Hudson valleys, and the Adirondacks to strengthen awareness of the importance of place.
- **D1.4:** Advance our efforts to recruit for a diverse community, building a learning environment that fosters democratic values, social responsibility, ethical understanding and consciousness that will ultimately attract a broader range of student applicants.
- **D1.5:** Create an environment that retains and nurtures talented faculty, staff and students of all backgrounds. We will also assess and develop programs and processes to enhance the campus climate and make all members of the Union community feel welcome, supported and able to access all aspects of our living, learning environment.
- **D1.6:** Internationalize the campus to provide an academic, research and work environment that embraces a global education.

- **D1.7:** Foster innovation that will allow faculty, staff, students and alumni to connect and collaborate across the world.

INTEGRATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

DIFFERENTIATOR 2

What we're going to do:

- Provide opportunities for students to take advantage of the full spectrum of disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary learning options.
- Offer students the opportunity to use both critical thinking and expertise to develop skills that can be applied across disciplines and in future careers.

How we are going to do it:

- **D2.1:** Provide curricular support for a rigorous integrated experience.
- **D2.2:** Build on the differentiating presence of having ABET-accredited engineering programs in partnership with our other liberal arts offerings. We will also ensure that the practical application to problem-solving is shared across disciplines.



■ **D2.3:** Advance opportunities for learning through action and provide multidisciplinary team and team-oriented projects.

■ **D2.4:** Create and sustain structures, both physical and programmatic, to promote interdisciplinary and collaborative learning.

A DISTINCTIVE PAST CONNECTED TO AN INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE FUTURE

DIFFERENTIATOR 3

What we're going to do:

- Use technology in more innovative ways, both inside and outside the classroom.
- Engage students more effectively in the development of their personal and social responsibility.
- Incorporate the strengths of our historic innovative and creative approach in the ways we prepare our students for the future.

How we are going to do it:

■ **D3.1:** Nurture a culture and community that encourages socially responsible innovation. We will build a base of

knowledge that considers social, historical, ethical and cultural realities and creates a culture that encourages risk-taking. We will facilitate collaborative learning experiences, provide physical spaces for creative thinking and activity, and create opportunities to share innovations.

■ **D3.2:** Adopt innovative ways of teaching and learning while relying on historical strengths. Faculty will be encouraged to experiment with and embrace technologies and tools to enhance student learning.

■ **D3.3:** Recognize, encourage and support the ways in which students learn outside the traditional classroom. We will provide opportunities for experiential learning and cooperative partnerships to allow students to engage with external partners. We will support programs that foster creativity and shared learning, and use technology, management and programming to create efficiencies and enhance interactions both on and off campus.

■ **D3.4:** Engage the community with the historic and living mission, vision and values of Union College. To generate pride, curiosity and questioning, we will nurture Union's tradition and long-standing legacy of making visions realities.

CONCLUSION

THE 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN FOR UNION COLLEGE SETS A BOLD AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE, ENCOURAGING US TO THINK, CONNECT AND ACT. BY WORKING TOGETHER TO FULFILL OUR ASPIRATIONS, WE WILL STRENGTHEN OUR DISTINCTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, PRODUCING GRADUATES WHO MAKE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO HUMANITY, NOW AND IN THE YEARS AHEAD.



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