

Union Presbyterian Seminary Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

Mission Statement

Union Presbyterian Seminary equips Christian leaders for ministry in the world—a sacred vocation that requires deep learning, commitment to service, and an ability to read culture and circumstance in the light of the rich resources of Scripture and theological tradition.

Core Values

This strategic plan reflects core values derived from the Bible and Reformed theology. Every endeavor outlined in the plan is in service to Jesus' great commission to *"Go... and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:19). We teach in response to God's movement in the world, bearing witness to God's transformational presence. While cherishing the faithful endeavors of the past, we believe that the church and seminary are always being re-formed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Challenges

- At a time when many mainline churches are threatened from within by loss of members and from without by a doubting and secularized culture, congregations need the best-equipped clergy and Christian educators.
- Too many churches, particularly smaller congregations, are financially incapable of securing such leaders.
- Churches rely more and more upon part-time lay leadership, particularly commissioned lay pastors, whose commitment is impressive but whose training is limited.
- Declining membership, particularly among the young, indicates a desperate need for vibrant Christian formation from cradle to grave.

Opportunities

- Adult laypersons who are committed to the church hunger for education to deepen their faith and to enable them to partner with their pastors and educators in faithfully responding to God's movement in the world.
- Many churches outside the North Atlantic region are experiencing vitality and growth while expanding their leadership in the Christian community worldwide.
- Many congregations with a clear vision, dedicated leadership, and committed membership give evidence of strength and growth.

Resources

- The seminary's committed, faithful, academically excellent student body is smaller than in the past but still determined to follow God's call into ministry.
- Recent graduating classes have established a strong vocational placement record.
- The faculty team is growing in expertise even as it becomes smaller in size.
- The theological library is one of the best of its kind in North America.
- The conscientious staff members are devoted to supporting the work of students and faculty and to caring for the property entrusted to them.
- The alumni/ae base is one of the most financially supportive among all the PC(USA) seminaries.
- The Board of Trustees is devoted to securing a sound base for the school and advancing its mission long into the future.
- The seminary's endowment has grown by at least 49% (\$41 million) since 2009.

KEY AREAS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Degree Programs

- Invigorate the M.Div. program through new curriculum (begun in 2013-14) re-formed around three key roles—practicing theologian, congregational leader, and community witness—with an added church-in-the-world component. Continue to focus on healthy enrollment, with an emphasis on the admission of students who demonstrate academic excellence and genuine promise for ministry.
- Enhance the seminary's longstanding commitment to Christian education, shaping a program responsive to the changing landscape of educational ministry in the church.
- Reaffirm the call to theological scholarship as a means of promoting the gospel through an educated ministry by strengthening the Master of Theology program (Th.M.).
- Design a Master of Arts in Theological Studies degree, M.A.(T.S.), to equip laypersons with academic and practical foundations for helping lead the church's mission in the world.
- Consider the viability of a Doctor of Ministry degree that concentrates on areas of strength in the current faculty.
- Research the Doctor of Philosophy degree in order to decide whether to terminate the program or redesign it with a new interdisciplinary focus.

Leadership Institute Initiatives

- Offer new or revised elective courses in church leadership and administration in the M.Div. and M.A.C.E. degree programs, responding to needs in the church and culture.
- Expand extracurricular opportunities on leadership that allow students to focus on topics of interest and relevance in less formal and more conversational settings.
- Help fund first-call ministries in small churches by expanding the current Church-Serve scholarship program and other initiatives.
- Develop initiatives to support the leadership development needs of pastors and Christian educators approaching the critical 10-year mark of ministry.
- Equip lay leaders to grow in faith, spiritual practices, and leadership capacities through web-based resources and/or hybrid teaching methods that employ online technology.

Institutional Efficiency

- Develop a five-year strategy of cost reductions and revenue enhancement that targets the reduction of the excess draw on the endowment.
- Make substantial progress toward a faculty size appropriate to curricular need and financial resources. The work of full-time faculty will be supplemented by qualified adjuncts and practitioners, as appropriate, in degree and Leadership Institute work.
- Build partnerships with other seminaries, as appropriate and feasible, to provide programming at reduced costs and develop broader mission strategies.

Institutional Investments

- Increase the applicant pool for all three educational platforms by:
 - Ensuring adequate financial and personnel resourcing for the admissions office
 - Establishing a full-time recruiter at the Charlotte campus
 - Integrating seminary marketing and public relations related to the admissions process with the objectives of the admissions office
 - Developing a targeted recruitment strategy

- Invest in marketing strategies to promote the M.A.C.E. degree program. Demonstrate to pastors of small churches how their pastoral and educational leadership can be enhanced through the acquisition of a M.A.C.E. degree, which can be acquired efficiently through the Extended Campus platform while they continue their pastoral duties.
- Invest in the long range attractiveness and live-ability of Union Presbyterian Seminary for students on the Richmond campus by:
 - Renovating Richmond Hall to include spaces for a dining room and global ministry endeavors
 - Reestablishing lunch food service
- Invest in the long-range development of the Westwood Tract by:
 - Creating a 36-acre master plan for the entire site that includes residential, recreational, commercial, and ministry-related use possibilities
 - Building a residential apartment complex to provide housing for students with families and bring revenue to the seminary
- Invest in an IT department (hardware, software, and personnel) capable of fulfilling the strategic designs intended for the hybrid format and for full integration of the three educational platforms.
- Expand the scope of the library's Instructional Resource Center to provide training in the creation and use of digital media resources for teaching, learning, and ministry.
- Replace the current integrated library system to facilitate the research and study of students and faculty. Install compact shelving in the Richmond-campus library to allow for the continued growth of holdings to undergird the seminary's educational program.
- Require that all new programs have a source of funding that does not increase endowment draw, unless such program(s) represents a justifiable investment in the future work of the seminary.