

A STRATEGIC PLAN for Union Presbyterian Seminary

2014-2019

MISSION STATEMENT

Mission

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.

MISSION AND PURPOSE

The Seminary's core mission is to participate in the mission of the church by forming and equipping leaders for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (*Eph 4:12*).

CORE VALUES

- We confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus is God in the flesh, the Son of that One whom he called Father. His life, ministry, death and resurrection have transformed the world. As the risen and living Lord, Jesus has called us to bear witness to his transformative presence in the world.
- We serve as a theological resource for church and society.
- We weave together distinctive approaches to theological education for pastoral and educational ministries.
- We educate, inspire, and empower leaders for congregational life, theological scholarship, and bold Christian service to the world.
- We seek to participate faithfully in the Holy Spirit's transformation of the seminary, the church, and through the church, the world.

CONTEXT: CHURCH AND WORLD

We begin with Jesus. As a theological seminary, our particular calling is to bear witness to that transformative presence by responding in faith to "Go...and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have

commanded you." (*Matthew 28:19*) Every endeavor outlined in this plan — enrollment management, curriculum review, governance, fiscal responsibility, property management, faculty-staff-student relations, alumni/ae affairs, capital campaigning, strategic planning for the seminary's future — is secondary and in service to this commission.

We live more faithfully into Christ's commission when we teach in response to God's movement in the world, even as we assess the manner in which contemporary society engages and often resists that movement. It is important, therefore, that as we marshal our resources to strengthen our classroom work that we understand the context in which we and the church we serve operate so that our teaching may be an effective response and supportive witness to God's transformational presence.

Even so, we recognize our limitations. We cannot address *all* the contextual issues on God's agenda. In this strategic plan we endeavor to identify those issues that the resources granted to us by God's providence allow—indeed, we believe, call—us to address.

We recognize that:

- At a time when many mainline churches are losing membership from within¹ and are doubted by a secularizing culture from without, congregations need the most ably equipped clergy and Christian educators, skilled in interpreting and proclaiming the gospel as well as leading and managing communities of faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Too many churches, particularly smaller congregations, are financially incapable of securing such leaders.
- Churches, unable to call ordained, seminary-trained pastors and educators, rely more and more upon part-time lay leadership, particularly commissioned lay pastors whose commitment is impressive but whose training is limited. While some in the church and within the culture question the value of theological education, our seminary affirms ministry as a sacred vocation that requires deep learning.
- The long Presbyterian tradition in the United States of including trained educators on church staffs to instill lifelong nurture of and commitment to Christian discipleship is fast disappearing despite the fact that declining membership, particularly among the young, indicates a desperate need for vibrant Christian spiritual formation from cradle to grave.

¹ See Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010). There are more "nones" (17%) than there are mainline Protestants in the United States (14%). Kindle location, 328. "Nones" are those who claim no affiliation with religion. While the ranks of the "nones" is increasing in the United States, the ranks of mainline Protestants is decreasing. Kindle location, 330. The increase in "nones" is particularly striking among the young (18-29). In 1965 approximately 7% of the young considered themselves to be "nones." By 2010, that number had climbed to approximately 23%. Kindle location, 1658.

More positively, we observe that:

- Adult laypersons who are committed to the church continue to hunger for inspiring opportunities for education to deepen their faith and 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 growth, strength, and attractiveness.

We are emboldened by the promise of God's grace in Jesus Christ, a grace that has blessed and equipped Union Presbyterian Seminary with:

- A committed, faithful, academically excellent student body that, though leaner than in yesteryears, is every bit as determined to follow God's call into ministry.
- Recent graduating classes that have experienced exciting rates of vocational placement.²
- An engaging team of teaching and publishing scholars who comprise a faculty growing in expertise even as it becomes smaller in size.
- A theological library that is one of the best of its kind in North America.
- A dedicated, conscientious staff devoted to supporting the work of students and faculty, and to caring for the property that has been entrusted to it.
- An alumni/ae base that is one of the most financially supportive among all the PC (USA) seminaries.
- A Board of Trustees devoted to securing a sound base for the school and advancing its mission long into the future.
- An endowment placed in trust with the school that has grown by 49% (\$41 million) since 2009³ so that the school may continue to follow its Christ given commission to teach.

² The Seminary's official Statement on Institutional Effectiveness provides specific numbers. The current statement includes placement figures for the 2012 graduating class one year after graduation. For the 2011 graduating class, the statement offers figures for two years after graduation. The one-year figure for both classes is 81% (further study is included as placement). When including two years after graduation for the 2011 graduating class, the combined placement rate is 86%.

³ These figures are accurate as of December 31, 2013.

THEOLOGICAL MISSION FOCUS

We are a Reformed people. We believe that the church of Jesus Christ is always being re-formed so that its people can follow the movement of God's guiding hand. The seminary, as part of the church, is part of God's transformational agenda. Led by the Holy Spirit, as a teaching agency in partnership with the church, we endeavor more clearly and faithfully to respond to and cooperate with God's re-formatational work in the world.

As a Reformed people, when we seek God's guidance for Christ's church and seminary, we search the scriptures under the direction of the Holy Spirit. In the scriptures we find a God who envisions new things, yet does not forsake the former things (Isaiah 43).

Consequently, we cherish all in our past that was faithful and true to Christ (the old things). Yet we look forward to effecting Christ's commission in the present and the future. We celebrate our former vision even as we hope to be re-formed by God's new day in the context where God has placed us.

KEY AREAS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Degree Programs: Engage new or revitalize current degree programs so as to achieve a mission and leadership focus on God's transformational work in the church and world.

Formed

In the 2009-2014 strategic plan of Union Presbyterian Seminary, the core M.Div. and M.A.C.E. degree programs were significantly revised. The faculty re-formed the curriculum around three key roles: practicing theologian; congregational leader; community witness. Additionally, a church in the world component was added. All students must now fulfill requirements in evangelism, interfaith relations, and community engagement. The seminary is committed to the successful implementation of the new curriculum (with its three roles). Degree program focus was shifted to the M.Div.; M.A.C.E.; M.Div./M.A.C.E. dual; Th.M.; and Ph.D. degrees.

Being Re-formed:

The Seminary will:

- **Invigorate its M.Div. program through the new curriculum that began in the 2013-14 academic year.**
The program will continue to focus on healthy enrollment with an emphasis on the admission of students with academic excellence and genuine promise for ministry.

- **Enhance its longstanding commitment to Christian Education.** The program will focus on healthy enrollment and an emphasis on the admission of students with academic excellence and genuine promise for ministry. Given the changing landscape of educational ministry in the church, the faculty and trustees will immediately initiate conversation between faculty and practicing Christian Educators among its alumni/ae and trustees to determine the long term agenda, shape, and focus of the Christian Education program, drawing on outside consultants and resources as helpful.
- **Reaffirm its call to theological scholarship as a means of promoting the gospel through an educated ministry.** Union commits itself to strengthening the Master of Theology program (Th.M.) by offering full tuition support to a cohort of up to ten Th.M. students per year. Recipients of the Th.M. will be trained either for doctoral work and a career in higher education or for other forms of ministry that rest on specialized theological expertise. The program will require levels of course work beyond the M.Div. As a result, the Th.M. will help to sustain rigorous standards of research and reflection that the seminary has long upheld and encourage its faculty and student-candidates to aspire to the highest levels of theological acumen. A heightened commitment to the Th.M. will enable this continuing focus on graduate academic theological inquiry as Union aligns program goals more efficiently with material and personnel resources.
- **Engage a Master of Arts in Theological Studies Degree (MA[TS]).** This degree program will be designed to equip lay persons with the necessary academic and practical foundations to participate as church leaders in the mission of the church's engagement in the world. The faculty will conduct a curriculum design process for this degree program, while considering the different ways in which the degree might be offered (residential and/or hybrid) to a wider public.
- **Consider the viability of a Doctor of Ministry Degree that concentrates on areas of strength in the current faculty, draws appropriately upon qualified practitioners as adjunct faculty and addresses the needs of the church.** (A committee comprised of faculty members and trustees will be commissioned to investigate the viability and potential directions of the degree program.)
- **Research the Doctor of Philosophy Degree program in light of projected material and personnel resources and the needs of church and academy with the intention to draw one of two possible conclusions:**
 1. the termination of the Doctor of Philosophy degree program;
 2. the redesign of the Doctor of

Philosophy degree program with a new and targeted interdisciplinary focus and format. No new students will be accepted into the Ph.D. program as currently configured after June 30, 2014. Any proposal for a reconfigured interdisciplinary Ph.D. should be presented to the faculty and board for approval no later than March 1, 2016. Any redesign of the Ph.D. will have to occur in such a way that it does not detract from the effectiveness or implementation of the other degree programs cited in this section. If no such redesign is approved, the Ph.D. program will conclude at that time.⁴

The faculty will focus on two tasks at the beginning of the strategic planning cycle: 1. a curriculum review process for the Th.M. degree; 2. a redesign of the Ph.D. program, if a decision is taken to retain this degree with a new format and focus. In the middle of the planning cycle, the faculty will design a MATS degree. Toward the end of the planning cycle, the faculty will focus on two curricular tasks: 1. a review of the MACE degree; 2. the design of a D.Min. degree, if the faculty-trustee committee that investigates the viability and potential directions of this degree program recommends its implementation.

Expand Programs for Prophetic, Missional, and Transformative Leadership for Church Leaders and Other Professionals

Formed

In the 2009-2014 strategic plan of Union Presbyterian Seminary, the (then) Center for Ministry and Leadership Development (CMLD) was transformed into a Leadership Institute (LI), a comprehensive institutional platform that now directs all non-degree programs and initiatives for the seminary. The LI was tasked with developing innovative approaches to continuing education and leadership training. Subsequently, it has developed a plan for a post graduate leadership curriculum for seminary graduates that has strong potential to become the framework for a leadership focused D.Min. degree program. The LI has developed partnerships with outside agencies like the Montreat Conference Center. It has developed plans for an alum-in-residence program and has worked to develop resourcing and programming in the area of recreation ministries. It has initiated innovative leadership initiatives for current seminary students like the 70 x 7 series⁵ and has worked with external agencies like the Lilly

⁴ Actual conclusion of program would occur only after all current students have matriculated through the program.

⁵ 70 x7 is a series of leadership oriented sessions offered through the LI, taught by regular faculty. 7, 70 minute teaching sessions over a provided meal occur on topics connecting biblical and theological study to concrete leadership issues in the church such as stewardship and strategic planning.

Endowment to seek creative ways to support seminary graduates financially in first calls. In addition, the LI has begun to implement programs designed to bring lay persons interested in theological education to the seminary through a Seminary for a Day program, and project the seminary's resources into the church.

Being Re-formed

- **Strengthen and broaden the work of the Leadership Institute:**
 - o **Offer new or revised elective courses in church leadership and administration in our M.Div. and M.A.C.E. degree programs.** The dean of the LI, a member of the faculty, teaches regularly in these degree programs and will assess and respond to contemporary needs in the church and culture in relation to courses he offers in church leadership and administration.
 - o **Expand extracurricular opportunities on leadership topics for our students.** In recent years, the LI has experimented with extracurricular learning events, such as several 70x7 Series. Often linked to a shared meal, these extracurricular opportunities have been well-attended by students and have allowed them to focus on topics of interest and relevance in a less formal and more conversational setting.
 - o **Expand present initiatives to assist small churches and seminary graduates fund first call ministries in small churches.** The Seminary will expand its current Church-Serve scholarship program⁶, and provide suitable financial assistance (through grants and capital campaign) to help small churches provide health care and benefits for graduates over a four year period during which time those graduates take selected LI leadership courses.
 - o **Develop and manage initiatives to support the particular leadership development needs of pastors and Christian educators approaching the 10-year mark of ministry.** The LI understands this time frame to be a critical time for many church leaders, with respect to developmental dimensions of their vocational identity and leadership effectiveness.
 - o **Develop and manage initiatives to equip lay leaders interested in deepening their faith, practices, and leadership capacities.** The LI will develop web-based resources and/or hybrid teaching methods that employ online technology to increase access to educational opportunities for members and lay leaders in congregations.

⁶ The Church-Serve scholarship program, funded through support from the Lilly Endowment and seminary donors, matches small church salary support with monies to cover benefits and other costs associated with the hiring of a full time pastor. Funds from this program are also used to provide financial planning to students during the time of their seminary coursework.

In developing, implementing, and managing ongoing and new initiatives, the LI will draw upon resources from the seminary faculty and staff, as appropriate, as well as qualified practitioners who bring perspectives from experiences as pastors, Christian educators, and other church leaders. Additionally, the LI will seek to develop new partnerships with congregations, denominational bodies and mission agencies, and other educational institutions with common interests.

Institutional Efficiency

Formed

In the 2009-2014 strategic plan of Union Presbyterian Seminary, the seminary administration reduced the seminary budget by \$3 million over a 12 month period so that the size of the school more appropriately matched the size of its supporting endowment. The size of the student body was reduced to the desired goal of 180 FTE so that the endowment could more fully support through scholarships each student's educational costs. The size of the faculty was reduced from 32 to 22.5 FTE so that the quantity of teachers more appropriately matched the size of a smaller student body. Following personnel reductions and sale of physical properties, costs related to staffing and infrastructure were reduced so that staff size was a more appropriate match with institutional need. The seminary initiated the quiet phase of a capital campaign with a goal of \$75 million so that scholarship support could be enhanced, faculty support in undersubscribed areas such as Evangelism and Christian Education could be acquired, building construction and renovation on needed properties could be initiated, and the endowment could be bolstered. That campaign has to date raised \$27.2 million in gifts and pledges.⁷ The seminary raised sufficient funds to construct its own Charlotte facility so that the Charlotte program of Union Presbyterian Seminary would have a stable and effective home for its educational outreach. The seminary maintained three platforms (Richmond residential, Charlotte part-time commuting, and an Extended Campus program) so that students in a variety of life and career situations might take advantage of the seminary curriculum. More recently, the seminary has devised and adopted a common calendar for the entire institution so that students might be able to move easily between the three platforms as they seek to secure the courses required for completion of their degree programs. The seminary has initiated an exhaustive effort to develop the Westwood Tract as a resource for student housing and revenue enhancement. The seminary increased its technological capabilities so

⁷ This figure accurate as of January 31, 2014.

that it has the facility to video stream capably between the two physical campuses and is poised to support the IT needs of a hybrid based teaching and/or degree program.

Being Re-formed

- **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 strategic relationships/partnerships with other seminaries, as appropriate and feasible, to provide programming at reduced costs and develop broader mission strategies for our work.**

Institutional Investments

Formed

In an effort to reduce property costs, the seminary administration committed itself to reducing the seminary's real estate holdings and locating all its services on its Richmond campus - except those provided by the Leadership Institute - within the space of its historic seminary quadrangle. The seminary holdings across Brook Road from the historic quadrangle are now being considered for lease to a local K-12 Christian school, and the renovated Spence Library, now the Early Center, has been fully integrated into the teaching life of the seminary.

In the 2009-2014 strategic plan of Union Presbyterian Seminary, the faculty committed (over a three year period) to teaching at least one course in a hybrid format in order to extend the reach of the Seminary's teaching mission beyond those who are currently enrolled in degree programs. In addition, the seminary invested vigorously in the admissions office by securing an admissions director for the entire school and a part time recruiter for the Charlotte campus.

Being Re-formed

- **Invest financial and personnel resources creatively and extensively to comprehensively increase the applicant pool for all three educational platforms.**
 - **Ensure adequate financial and personnel resourcing to admissions office.**

- o Establish a full time recruiter at the Charlotte campus.
- o Integrate the marketing and public relations work of the seminary that relate to the admissions process with the objectives of the Office of Admissions.
- o Develop a targeted recruitment strategy.
- Invest in marketing strategies that 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, and that this degree can be acquired efficiently while they continue their pastoral duties through the Extended Campus platform.
- Invest in the long range attractiveness and live-ability of Union Presbyterian Seminary for students on the Richmond campus by expending all necessary resources to:
 - o Renovate completely Richmond Hall. ⁸
 - o Reestablish lunch food service.
- Invest in the long range development of the Westwood Tract by:
 - o creating a 36 acre master plan for the entire site that includes residential, recreational, commercial, and ministry related use possibilities; and
 - o building a residential apartment complex capable of securing family student housing and bringing revenue to the institution.⁹
- Invest in an IT department (hardware, software, and personnel) capable of fulfilling the strategic designs intended for the Hybrid format and the fuller integration of the three platforms.
- Invest in an expansion of the scope of the Library's Instructional Resource Center to provide training in the creation and use of digital media resources and tools for teaching, learning, and ministry within the three platforms and the greater church.

⁸ Create suite oriented, apartment style dormitory spaces for single students on the upper two floors. Establish appropriate, affordable dining space on first floor. Create offices for locating Global Ministry Endeavors on First Floor (Global Mission Center; Womanist Center; Asian American Ministries Center; Black Seminarians, etc.) Locate recreational and audio visual space in basement.

⁹ Earn income and provide subsidized living space for married students and their families. Clubhouse facilities associated with apartment to provide recreational and fitness resources for single students living in Richmond and Moore Halls.

- Replace the current integrated library system to facilitate the research and study of students and faculty and install compact shelving in Richmond to allow for the continued growth of a substantial library collection to undergird the educational program of the seminary.
- Require that any and all new programs created under this strategic plan, or otherwise, have a source of funding that does not increase endowment draw, unless such program(s) represents a justifiable investment into the future work of the seminary.