



# Serving for Over Two Hundred Years

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2019 – 2023



UNION  
PRESBYTERIAN  
SEMINARY

For the Church in the World







## Dear Friends,

Every five years, our seminary prepares a strategic plan that outlines the mission aspiration for the Seminary. Why every five years? Because circumstances shift quickly in our contemporary world, and we want to be flexible and adaptable. We want to be able to ascertain how best to plan the work of the Seminary, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to meet the needs of the church of Jesus Christ and the world in which the church serves.

The process of developing the strategic plan covered approximately 18 months. The Board appointed a Strategic Planning Committee to coordinate the work. The committee began by listening. Conversations were convened with students, staff, and alumni. The faculty shared thoughts about the school's mission at faculty meetings, at a faculty retreat, and at a retreat with the Board of Trustees. The trustees themselves shared their reflections with the committee at regular Board meetings and at the Board retreat attended by members of the Faculty.

The plan operates from the Seminary's mission statement and core values. There are three strategic priorities that will give structure and guidance to the Seminary's work over the next five years. Every Seminary department will participate with the plan and be accountable for its outcome. At each April Board meeting, the president and executive staff will present to the Board of Trustees an Action Plan. The Action Plan will highlight accomplishments and recalibrations, if necessary, to each strategic priority's main components.

Our strategic plan is our roadmap for the Seminary's next five years. We believe it will help us navigate the complex world in which we live as we respond to the inbreaking of God's Reign in our world. In reading and responding to this plan, we hope you will not only take the opportunity to see the road with us; we hope you will come ride along. Follow us as we follow Christ into the future.



Brian Blount



# Introduction

## Mission Statement

Union Presbyterian Seminary equips people in the ways of Jesus to witness, teach, and live into the movement of God's Reign through their ministry in the church and world—a sacred vocation that requires deep learning, commitment to service, and an ability to read cultures and circumstances in the light of the rich resources of Scripture and theological tradition.

## Core Values

**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 and participate in the Spirit's transformative presence in the world.

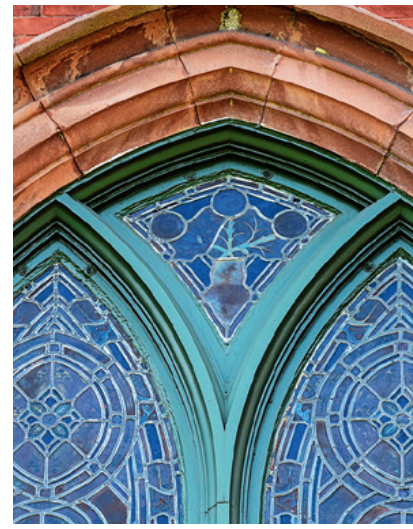
**We provide**, using the best available technology, innovative and effective programs of theological education, grounded in the Reformed theological tradition, that inspire and empower learners for bold service to God's Reign in the world through individual, congregational, and community ministries.

**We nurture** increasingly diverse and inclusive learning communities for service in the world.

**We serve** as a theological resource for church and society in partnership with other institutions, organizations, and faith communities.

## Context and Vision

Like the visible and audible witness of a lightning strike, the Reign of God is on the move in our world. We respond to this Reign by charging behind and alongside it, endeavoring to emulate its prophetic, reconciling work through our witness of theological education.



In an increasingly pluralistic creation wounded by racial, ethnic, and religious divides, Union Presbyterian Seminary challenges itself to equip people of faith with the capacity to generate and sustain interracial, interfaith, and international community.

In a bitterly divided social and political culture, Union Presbyterian Seminary challenges itself to equip people of faith with the hermeneutical and pastoral tools needed to engender reconciliation.

In a religious and social context in which younger, spiritually interested, and invested generations continue to believe in the presence and pray for the intervention of God for social justice and yet increasingly reject the institutional church, Union Presbyterian Seminary challenges itself to equip people of faith to ignite more just communal transformation through spiritual formation rooted in deep biblical study and rigorous theological reflection.

In an increasingly mobile culture where individuals and families migrate across cities and regions frequently, whose vocations make sustained theological education in residential, long-term programs impossible, or whose interests do not draw them into formal, degree-oriented programs, Union Presbyterian Seminary challenges itself to equip people of faith to teach and learn across technology platforms so that access to theological education is available to anyone, anywhere, who seeks it.

Union Presbyterian Seminary challenges itself with a particular vision: through its core mission of theological education, to equip people of faith to accentuate the ways in which God's Reign breaking into the world can impact the way in which the church and the world operate. Union Presbyterian Seminary's goal is not only to place strong, capable leaders in every church; it is also to inspire and equip strong, capable, knowledgeable people of faith who can project the Reign of God in every component of church and world. Union Presbyterian Seminary is teaching not just for church leadership, but also for leadership in the entire public sphere. We are dedicated to a vision of not only teaching Bible, theology, justice, and reconciliation; we are dedicated to positioning people of faith in churches, non-profit organizations, schools, businesses, and politics who can and will embody God's inbreaking Reign.





# Strategic Priorities

## **PRIORITY I**

**Witness, Teach, and Live into the movement of God's Reign by attracting, educating, and supporting increasingly diverse communities of learners for ministry in the church and world.**

### **I. Attracting**

- A. The Seminary will complete a self-assessment of changes required to attract increasingly diverse communities of intellectually gifted and faithful learners for ministry in the church and world.
- B. The Seminary will design and implement recruitment and admissions strategies focused on the diversification of the student body: race, gender, theology, sexual orientation, geography (global and domestic), cultures, church affiliation.
- C. The Seminary will create a robust communications strategy devoted exclusively to more inclusive recruitment and will direct financial resources toward the development of that strategy.

### **II. Educating**

- A. The Seminary will, through distance technology and creative scheduling, initiate closer course integration and a nimbler faculty crossover between the Richmond and Charlotte campuses.
- B. The Seminary will initiate alternative teaching methods, particularly those utilizing technology, and alternative course scheduling to expand and diversify educational offerings.
- C. The Seminary will develop diverse internships to allow students to explore different ministry settings and ministry approaches that both include and push beyond pastoral and educational roles.

### **III. Supporting**

- A. The Seminary will investigate more generous financial support for Charlotte and Blended Learning Programs to create opportunities to recruit a more inclusive student community.



- B. The Seminary will provide more ample resourcing for theological writing labs, tutors, and tools for students with diverse educational backgrounds and learning styles, and those for whom English is a second language, so as to foster and support a more inclusive student community.

## **PRIORITY II**

**Witness, Teach, and Live into the movement of God's Reign by broadening the impact and reach of an increasingly diverse Faculty and its work through an increased use of technology, new program initiatives, and strategic partnerships.**

### **I. Size and Composition of Faculty**

- A. The Seminary will work toward a faculty constitution in five years whose 22 FTE composition (across both campuses) includes appointments in newly created positions in History (Charlotte), Evangelism, and Ministry in the Public Square.
- B. The Seminary will strive to increase the diversity of the faculty and will annually assess progress toward this goal.
- C. The Seminary will employ a more diverse collection of qualified practitioners whose engagement in areas related to curricular and extra-curricular need (e.g., D.Min. degree, MA degree, Certificate programs) provides collaborative teaching and learning opportunities.
- D. The Seminary will seek grant or development funds to establish a working team of two faculty members in the area of "Church in the Public Square" that will focus on matters addressed in the Context and Vision portion of this document. These faculty members will work strategically with the Syngman Rhee Global Mission Center (Rhee GMC), the Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership (Cannon CWL), and the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation (CSJR).





## II. Impact of Faculty through Curriculum and Programs

### A. Degree Programs

- i. The Faculty will integrate the work and requirements of the ThM Degree with the work of the Rhee GMC in order to attract international applicants to this degree program.
- ii. The Faculty will fully implement and evaluate the curriculum for the new Doctor of Ministry Degree to engage more creatively and faithfully the complex public arena in which the church is now situated.
- iii. The Faculty will study the feasibility of a Master of Arts Degree and/or, working in partnership with the Leadership Institute, a Certificate Program in Theology, Race, and Reconciliation in either the Richmond Residential and/or the Blended Learning format. The curriculum for this degree will be coordinated through and with the programming of three of the Seminary's centers: Rhee GMC, Cannon CWL, and CSJR. The curriculum will address cultural competencies and hermeneutics necessary for conversation across theological, racial, and political divides.
- iv. The Faculty will assess the viability of the MATS program as an online or Blended Learning degree.
- v. The Faculty will study and implement courses where student research, writing, and summative projects involve engagement with and participation in the ministry of the Shalom Farms Urban Farm initiative.

### B. Seminary Centers

- i. The Seminary will amplify the work of the Rhee GMC so as to expand through global partnerships the engagement with and campus inclusion of faculty members and students from international locations—particularly those in developing countries. Working with the Faculty, the Center will also study the feasibility of Seminary Faculty short-term course leadership in partner countries and schools.





- ii. Seminary Administration and Faculty will study and implement designs for more creatively incorporating the programmatic work of the Rhee GMC, the Cannon CWL, and the CSJR into the strategy and work of the Seminary degree program curricula in ways that will provide opportunities for more engaged and integrated student learning in areas such as worship and liturgy, Christian Education in a global perspective, community organizing, and non-traditional ministries.

C. Leadership Institute

- i. The Leadership Institute will develop new continuing education opportunities in relation to faculty courses and resource projects, the Dawe Lectures and Howie events, and the Bannerman Fund that appeal to church leaders and members, and address the interests of alumni who serve in diverse vocational settings.
- ii. The Leadership Institute will increase its use of various technologies, such as webinars and podcasts, to expand the reach of faculty projects, books, and courses.
- iii. The Leadership Institute will develop strategic partnerships with the Rhee GMC, the Cannon CWL, and the CSJR so as to draw upon diverse resources and develop new continuing education courses and resources in areas of shared interest.

- D. Faculty Reach: The Seminary will expand the reach of faculty by encouraging and supporting more active engagement in scholarly societies, churches, and community organizations and by fostering theologian-in-residence congregational programs.

### III. Support for Faculty Development

- A. The Seminary will increase funding for new opportunities for professional development, particularly in areas such as the use of technology in teaching, pedagogical approaches to support diverse communities of learners, and new degree programs.



- B. The Seminary will initiate a comprehensive technology study to evaluate whether current technology personnel and resources match present teaching and learning program requirements and to determine technology personnel and resources required to support strategic distance learning goals.
- C. The Seminary will provide technology system and personnel upgrades as recommended by the comprehensive technology study to expand the reach of the Seminary and its Faculty beyond the physical campuses through distance technologies.

#### **IV. Strategic Partnerships Beyond the Campus**

- A. The Seminary will seek strategic partnerships in Supervised Ministry for innovative ministry opportunities for learners.
- B. Through the Rhee GMC, the Seminary will study the viability of seeking partnerships with Spanish-speaking agencies and/or schools so as to create certificate programs in Spanish.
- C. The Seminary will seek partnerships with other educational institutions and non-profits in order to expand its curricular and extra-curricular portfolio.





### **PRIORITY III**

Witness, Teach, and Live into the movement of the Reign of God whose Spirit of generosity has radical implications, both spiritual and material, by gathering financial resources and providing infrastructure support required to respond faithfully to our call as a theological resource to the church and the world.

#### **I. Financial Prioritization**

- A. The Seminary will prepare an evaluation of the financial implications of this five-year strategic plan.
- B. The Seminary will prioritize strategic initiatives across the next five years and determine how best to use the resources of the endowment and other financial means (grants, financing) to support these initiatives over the five-year period of this plan.

#### **II. Advancement Initiatives**

- A. The Seminary will focus on strengthening the Planned Giving program with appropriate initiatives.
- B. The Seminary will build a stronger and younger donor base, with the objective of adding 200–300 new donors annually.
- C. The Seminary will add an associate to assist in supporting strategic development initiatives.

#### **III. Endowment: The Seminary will initiate a comprehensive review of strategies to strengthen the endowment.**

#### **IV. Facilities**

- A. The Seminary will enhance its technology resources and personnel as necessary for the successful accomplishment of strategic plan initiatives. (See III.B. under the second strategic priority).
- B. The Seminary will continue efforts to remodel Westminster Hall to serve as the future home of the Leadership Institute.



### **Richmond Campus**

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### **Charlotte Campus**

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