UNITY COLLEGE 2025

STRATEGIC PLAN

DRAFT 004

January 28, 2019

Vision Statement – FINAL DRAFT

A vision statement is a one-sentence statement describing the clear and inspirational long-term impact and desired end state for the institution.

Unity College: Engaging and Educating to Create a Sustainable World.

Mission Statement – NO CHANGE

Through the framework of sustainability science, Unity College provides a liberal arts education that emphasizes the environment and natural resources. Through experiential and collaborative learning, our graduates emerge as responsible citizens, environmental stewards, and visionary leaders.

Unity's Core Values – FINAL DRAFT

Respect

Integrity

Social Responsibility

Community

Resiliency

Cultural Competency

Innovation

Accountability

Unity's Core Value Statements – FIRST DRAFT

Value statements express the institution's motivations and worldview. Each statement is a short, clear, stand-alone sentence that represents a shared belief that underlies our work.

Respect: *We seek to understand the value of each other and the audiences we serve.*

Integrity: *We act ethically in alignment with our mission and values.*

Social Responsibility: *We are dedicated to developing citizens of the world who are committed to repairing it.*

Community: *Our programs reach across boundaries to connect, converge, and construct global communities.*

Resiliency: *We believe that differences and diversity enable communities to anticipate and adapt to change.*

Cultural Competency: *We seek to explore and develop the strengths and talents of each other and our audiences to achieve personal best.*

Innovation: *We promote a climate of disciplined daring and continuous improvement.*

Accountability: *We develop and pursue the highest standards in all that we do.*

Summary Statement (Elevator Speech): - TBD

An elevator speech is a 20-30 second-long statement that captures and communicates the energy and purpose of the institution. It is designed to make the listener want to hear more. The elevator speech for Unity College 2025 will emerge as outcome details become more solidified.

Guiding Principles: Stories of Aspiration, Inclusion, and America's Environmental College – FINAL DRAFT

When Unity College adopted the idea of "America's Environmental College," as our institutional aspiration in the late nineteen-nineties, some challenged the legitimacy of the claim. At the time, Unity College had exactly zero LEED certified or certifiable buildings, and electricity still came in part from fossil fuel power plants. Recycling was done by students, if at all. The Environmental Stewardship general education curriculum was new and unproven.

Much changed in the following years. Unity College executed several sustainability firsts: first German Passive House standard residence hall, first energy-neutral president's residence, and first to divest our investment portfolio from fossil fuels. In recent years, the college's integration of dining, catering, and the McKay Farm and Research Station is winning national awards in food service, and our Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education rating is among the best in the country. While there is still a long way to go, and much to be done, America's Environmental College is now recognized as a national leader in environmental science education. But that is not enough.

Just as the phrase "America's Environmental College," inspired efforts to walk the talk with regard to sustainability and the environment, in order to fully achieve America's Environmental College, Unity College must now live up to the other two thirds of that bold aspiration.

Serving Today's Audiences

To be America's Environmental College, Unity College must find ways to more fully serve the nation and live up to the best of American tradition: the commitment of service to the whole world. Achieving America's Environmental College means living up to the best of what "America," means to this nation, all its people, and the world.

Being student-centric must go beyond scheduling around the students we have, providing service to the students we have, and offering programs that better fit the students who already come. Being audience-centric must mean responding to students we don't yet have, service to people and organizations we don't yet know, meeting needs not yet identified, providing services and programs we haven't yet imagined, and marshaling resources and networks we don't yet have.

Unity College must better represent America, and the world. Demographic and socio-economic shifts make committing the necessary time and money to a dedicated residential experience an increasingly exclusive proposition. And the world needs more Unity College educated leaders, not fewer.

A Model for Small Private Higher Education

As the very value, purpose, and viability of institutions of higher education are being challenged, Unity College must help small private colleges evolve as an industry in order to itself flourish and lead as America's Environmental College.

Unity College has, through painstaking research, identified Enterprise Education as our approach. In order to achieve America's Environmental College we must establish the Enterprise approach as an exemplar of flexible and responsive small private higher education.

Now that even the most basic assumptions about the institutions of higher education and the value of our degrees are being challenged by circumstances, we find ourselves having to reinvent the very notion of what college must be.

Higher education finds itself in a position very few would have predicted in the late nineties when it appeared that the major challenge during the next century would be largely limited to demographic changes. Now that even the most basic assumptions about the institutions of higher education and the value of our degrees are being challenged by circumstances, we find ourselves having to reinvent the very notion of what college must be.

Unity must look to its own viability and beyond. A new approach to relevance and vitality is necessary in order to flourish as a college, but also in order to provide a model for what a college of the twenty-first century might be – in terms of teaching and learning, fiscal sustainability, place and modality, and service to new audiences.

Sharing the Stories of Unity College

Sharing means more than telling. Sharing is an invitation. Unity College must engage all audiences in authentically co-creating interwoven narratives of knowledge, community, and even college re-imagination.

Some of the very people who might benefit most may not even know that an environmental education or life of professional service in environmental fields are an option. The issue is a complex one, involving job recruitment practices, the aspirations of first-generation college goers and their families, a lack of exposure to nature at an early age, and more. The reality is that fields associated with the environment, for whatever reason, do not reflect global, or even national, demographics. Unity College must engage underrepresented populations in co-creating stories about the environment, about community resilience, about individuals, and about the college itself in order to foster new aspirations. For Unity College and for the people, organizations, and companies we might serve.

Sharing stories also means thought leadership. At times of disruption, industry leaders must emerge. Industry narratives coalesce around emerging leaders and emerging solutions. Eventually, stories of chaos and confusion give way to stories of hope, clarity, and vision. Sharing stories means offering a narrative of hope based on successful solutions and hard-won execution. But it also means convening the conversation, providing a platform and amplifying other voices, and outlining a bold framework and an overarching narrative in which other individuals and institutions can see themselves and a way to the future.

UNITY COLLEGE 2025 APPROACH: ITERATION IN RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY

Unity College's own experience with its successful stewardship of the Building a Beacon Strategic Plan aligns with the advice from strategic planning experts like David La Piana. General lessons learned from that process are articulated in, "The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution," (Fieldstone Alliance, 2008) and include the following:

1. "There is often a disconnect between the mission and the highest level goals of a strategic plan."

2. "Constant change is the primary driver for a new approach. 'We do not have the luxury of expensive year-longs strategic planning exercises, especially when their impact on the organization's direction is usually so slight.'"

3. "Strategic planning can be confused with consensus building."

4. "Operations are the broad shoulders of strategy."

5. "Programmatic changes are some of the most difficult to enact, but sometimes breakthroughs supersede programs, sometimes other organizations come into the market and do a better job and necessitate programmatic change."

6. "A cornerstone idea is that organizational strategy comes before other considerations."

In response to these general lessons, Unity College 2025 will engage several strategies focused on providing a more efficient initial development process and a more iterative approach to strategic plan management.

Responsive By Design

The Unity College 2025 planning-doing cycle will be more efficient and responsive to the larger industry, environment, and market context by design. Prioritization and decision-making will be facilitated through the use of several new planning, prioritization, and implementation guidelines and tools.

Mission Achievement. Unity College 2025 is designed with mission fulfillment at its very heart. Goals are directly and explicitly tied to fully becoming America's Environmental College. Service to students and other priority audiences in fulfilment of the environmental and educational mission is foregrounded. Everything else is secondary by design.

One of the failures of traditional strategic planning in the current environment is that plans project several years out, yet trends emerge, opportunities arise, and disruption occurs in real time. Unity College 2025 is designed as a framework that will allow for change.

An Iterative Approach. Unity College 2025 adopts an iterative approach to strategic plan development and management. The overarching framework is designed for the college approach over the next several years, but avoids establishing particular initiatives as high level priorities. Ongoing redevelopment of the plan itself is incorporated into the design.

One of the failures of traditional strategic planning in the current environment is that plans project several years out, yet trends emerge, opportunities arise, and disruption occurs in real time. Unity College 2025 is designed as a framework that will allow for change, and not just in minor new initiatives or minor adjustments. As La Piana says, "…The reality of nonprofit life requires a faster, continuous cycle of strategic thinking and action… not a separation of organizational life into reflective and active periods."

Responsibility and Accountability. In order to facilitate an iterative approach, Unity College 2025 identifies three layers of strategic planning structure: Goals, Objectives, and Initiatives. Experience tells us that if appropriate high level items (Goals) are identified at a proper scale, then secondary and tertiary items (Objectives and Initiatives) provide adequate direction for college leaders to be responsible and accountable for project completion.

As with the previous strategic plan, the Unity College Board of Trustees will be responsible for setting the strategic plan Goals. The president and, by extension Senior Staff, will set Objectives. Lead Employees will establish initiatives and all sub-actions necessary to complete any given project. For full rules of engagement, see the Strategic Plan Management Protocols in the Unity College 2025 Tools for Planning and Strategic Plan Implementation.

Tools for Planning and Implementation. Clarity of purpose, institutional integrity, and strategic action occur more naturally when organizational strategy comes before other considerations. To that end, Unity College 2025 adopts several planning, decision-making, and prioritization tools. These tools are designed to help facilitate singularity of purpose, efficiency of action, and ease of decision making.

> **Strategy Screen.** A responsive and iterative approach to strategic planning requires prior agreement on principles by which any new idea may be efficiently assessed. A Strategy Screen is a set of criteria the college uses to choose whether or not a particular initiative is consistent with the college identity and strategic direction (see Strategy Screen matrix in Unity College 2025 Tools for Planning and Strategic Plan Implementation).

> **Decision-Making Paradigm.** The decision-making paradigm is designed as an articulation of college priorities to be applied during the decision-making process. When a choice must be made between competing alternatives, deference is given to elements of greater priority. Unity College prioritizes service to audience over all else. Programs and products are designed to meet needed outcomes. Unity College is modality agnostic, meaning we will engage any approach to program or product that meets the mission, serves the audience, and helps provide for the long-term sustainability of the institution (see Decision-Making Paradigm and Glossary in Unity College 2025 Tools for Planning and Strategic Plan Implementation).

> **Initiative Implementation Plan.** Each Initiative selected for implementation will be executed using the Unity College Initiative Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan helps executors identify roles, resources, needs, goals, and accountability measures. It allows college leadership to plan appropriately for likely contingencies and understand decision tradeoffs and implications more thoroughly. A standardized project implementation plan leads to more time spent on innovation and implementation and less time on process and gaining clarity (see Initiative Implementation Plan in Unity College 2025 Tools for Planning and Strategic Plan Implementation).

Tools for Strategic Plan Management. A new approach to strategic planning requires a new set of tools. Unity College 2025 provides several newly formulated tools for planning and management:

> **Internal Communication Plan.** A key to the success of Building a Beacon was its transparent and inclusive development and communication plan. College-wide feedback sessions, careful documentation of progress and process, and a precise and clearly communicated calendar of the strategic plan process provided a strong foundation for ongoing success. As Unity College prepares for a new strategic planning process, a clear and thorough internal communication schedule is necessary (see Internal Communication Plan in Unity College 2025 Tools for Planning and Strategic Plan Implementation).

> **Strategic Plan Management Protocols.** A new approach to strategic planning requires a new approach to plan adoption, adjustment, management, reporting, and publication (see Strategic Plan Management Protocols in Unity College 2025 Tools for Planning and Strategic Plan Implementation).

A Word about the Goals

Taken together, the three Goals in Unity College 2025 outline an interrelated plan to put service to the audiences who need Unity College products, programs, and services at the very center of the work. Objectives operationalize the vision provided in the three Goal statements. Each Initiative selected for implementation under an Objective will be executed using the Unity College Initiative Implementation Plan.

Goal One (Enterprise) is focused on institutionalizing a flexible approach to innovation, planning, and project implementation, as well as completing the Enterprise buildout begun during the last strategic plan as the operational foundation for service to the audiences identified in Goal Two.

Goal Two (Audiences) is the heart of Unity College 2025. The other two Goals are designed around it. Goal Two embraces the audience-first approach endorsed by college leadership in the Decision-Making Paradigm and Glossary (see Decision-Making Paradigm and Glossary in Unity College 2025 Tools for Planning and Strategic Plan Implementation).

Service to students and other audiences is at the very heart of Unity College 2025

Goal Three (Storytelling) outlines an institutional commitment to interactive co-creation of the college, its interwoven stories of audience, community, and individuality, and of what it means to be a small, private college. Storytelling in Unity College 2025 is a primary means of embracing a more socially-responsive and responsible approach to higher education.

Goal One: Serve audiences through engagement with Unity College and its mission in response to clearly identified needs.

Objectives – TBD. Objective areas could include: Learners | Clients | Consumers | Partners | Foundations | Investors/Donors

Objective: Identify students and other learners who may benefit from Unity College mission-aligned products, services, and programs.

Objective: Identify potential clients and consumers who may benefit from Unity College mission-aligned products, services, and programs.

Initiative Implementation Plan (IIP): As Initiatives are identified for each Objective, an IIP will be established for each. See Unity College 2025 Tools document for the IIP template.

Objective: Identify foundations and potential partners, investors, and donors to engage Unity College, its mission, and its programs.

Goal Two: Establish Unity College as an Enterprise approach organization that serves as a new exemplar for private higher education.

Objectives – TBD. Objective areas could include: Research & Development | Innovation | Financial Modeling & Budgeting | Strategy & Planning | Infrastructure | Policy & Documentation | Personnel | Organizational Leadership & Management | Evaluation & Assessment

Objective: Fully execute an Enterprise organization structure that: fosters educational entrepreneurialism; centralizes for scale, efficiency and oversight; and distributes appropriately for SEBU specific functions.

Objective: Establish evaluation, effectiveness, compliance, and reporting systems that reinforce institutional values and ensure compliance.

Objective: Establish a research and development area of functional responsibility with distinct vision, duties, budget, reporting structures, and key performance indicators.

Objective: Establish institutional planning systems and processes that foster and prioritize service to new audiences, are criteria-driven, encourage innovation, and provide for iterative planning in response to changing social, market, and industry conditions.

Goal Three: Share the story of Unity College through powerful storytelling and inspiring thought-leadership.

Objectives – TBD. Objective areas could include: Branding, Storytelling, Marketing | Internal & External Communication | Thought-Leadership | Communication Channels

Objective: Building on the results of the Strategic Branding Initiative, execute an inspiring identity framework and storytelling strategy.

Objective: Engage identified Unity College audiences through individualized and co-creative story-telling projects.

Objective: Establish Enterprise Education as an alternative to traditional models for private colleges and Unity College as a national thought leader in higher education transformation.