



# Strategic Plan 2024 - 2029

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THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

**union**  
**college**

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# A word from the Board Chair

Rebecca Freath

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# Vision

A learning and living community in which tertiary students are provided with opportunities and programs to enhance their academic learning and personal achievements, as they become ethical, global citizens.

# Mission

To promote education by offering access to a residential community specifically created to assist students achieve academic success.

In pursuit of its vision and mission, the College will, at all times, strive to be a safe, secure, and caring environment that facilitates and enables residents to achieve their academic, personal, cultural, and sporting goals.

# Values

Guiding our behaviour and providing foundational support for culture  
(I can work on what these mean with a resident focus group)

Integrity:

Innovation:

Collaboration:

Tolerance:

Equity:

Respect for self and others:

Responsibility:

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# **By 2029, Union College will be known as a residential college that:**

**Delivers a highly sought after student experience by way of an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment.**

**Leads as a respected provider of on-campus opportunities by facilitating personal growth and development in a supportive community.**

**Consciously creates balanced value proposition which is embedded into sustainable environmental, social, and governance practices.**

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# Strategic Pillars

## Pillar 1

*a place where everyone feels safe, and everyone can see themselves represented.*

**An equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment.**

*Inviting, including, and involving current and potential residents who are from varied social and ethnic backgrounds, respecting diverse religious beliefs, all genders, and sexual orientations to create a residential community which reflects society.*

The University of Queensland Union College welcomes the richness a diverse and inclusive admissions policy brings to its campus. By actively working with the University of Queensland, the community of referring institutions and our alumni, Union College can ensure that its cohort is one that strives to represent each resident home communities.

We demonstrate action by applying the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout our language, messaging, governance, operating, investing, and living policies and practices. The diversity of our college life creates a sense of belonging before, during, and after engaging with Union College as a resident, alumni, Board, or team member. This is done by employing workers who are passionate about supporting the transition of residents from school to employment by way of university studies, and engaging with inspirational, established, and emerging community leaders to mentor and advise.



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## Pillar 2

*a place where you can work out who you are, that is more than food and shelter.*

### Facilitating personal growth and development in a supportive community.

*Union College is a place where residents are facilitated to see value in life, learn how to lead and to respond to challenges, knowing that their fellow residents, operating team, and alumni are behind them, as a part of a community that strikes a balance between respect and familiarity.*

The University of Queensland Union College is a place where residents can engage in university life and continue their growth as leaders and members of society. They can seek out experiences to promote their academic, cultural and sporting endeavours and wellbeing to influence who they are becoming, to build on what they stand for, meaning the College experience is more than just a room and food. Union College like is not transaction, but rather the environment is: a place that demonstrates just the right mix of individual freedom and community regulation to ensure every individual thrives intellectually, physically, and emotionally. A place where respectful disagreement is an opportunity to enhance understanding and empathy, leading to decisions focussed on the greater good. A community where good leadership is seen, experienced, and encouraged. By actively working with returning residents and alumni, Union College can ensure that its community is one where time and space is given to sort out choices, and where freedom to grow and experiment is balanced by safety and respect for self and the community.

We demonstrate action by offering exposure to different respectful opinions and approaches, not merely giving solutions or advice, promoting confidence to explore personal ideas, interests, values, and goals, and facilitating residents becoming more confident in their decision-making skills. Union College is a place where residents can build their personal leadership style through strong connections with peers, mentors, their university, and the broader community.

Life at Union College is experienced as a residential community where residents and workers respect shared norms, participate in leadership and civic engagement opportunities; foster a sense of community, connect people with resources, and share open, transparent, and frequent communication. Based on the notion of *just do the right thing*, living at Union College comes with no expectation that residents do what they don't want to do – whether that is socially, politically, or privately. In their lived experience in the moment and looking back, we want residents to reflect on their time at Union College as a time and place to focus on achieving their academic goals while having opportunities to participate in academic, sporting, cultural and wellbeing programs.

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# Pillar 3

*a place where you can find benefit and value that treads lightly on the earth.*

## Balanced value proposition embedded into sustainable environmental, social, and governance practices.

*Union College offers high-quality accommodation in a central location for students of the University of Queensland and other Brisbane tertiary institutions to live as they learn, offering affordable with real value for money that demonstrates ethical, sustainable, and robust governance and discerning business practices. Union College is recognised as a leader in sustainability and known for its high standards in operations, social impact, and environmental performance.*

The University of Queensland Union College stakeholders can see and understand the approach to the management of risk and opportunities. The business is governed in a way that is sustainable, ethical, meeting all commercial metrics as expected of a not-for-loss organisation, consistently meets or exceeds industry standards, is open and is transparent where appropriate, and respects confidentiality and privacy when this is required. Prudent return on funds under investment, coupled with rigorous review of financial priorities, means that Union College operates as an astute commercial for-purpose entity.

Assets and infrastructure are well maintained, and practices are respectful of the privilege that is stewardship of heritage architecture. Investment decisions reflect the business need for consistently high occupancy rates, more likely to be achieved by creating a place where residents live comfortably and securely as needs and wants change over time.

Recognising the proximity of the College to the University of Queensland campus and value of on-site accommodation to students enrolled at the University of Queensland, we support the University to promote the College experience to potential and continuing students, and maintain admissions protocols which reflect a commitment to the University of Queensland, family, friends and associates of Alumni, and maintaining full occupancy for sustainable operations each year.

We demonstrate action by ensuring the management of risk, evaluation of opportunities and development of options for the future are supported by appropriate governance measures, including transparency and consultation with stakeholders. Union College is recognised by its peers and others as an example of best practice in terms of sustainability, governance, philanthropy, and ethos.

Choosing to live at Union College is acknowledged as an excellent return on investment.

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# The path to success

## Pillar 1

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**An equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment.**

*Inviting, including, and involving current and potential residents who are from varied social and ethnic backgrounds, respecting diverse religious beliefs, all genders, and sexual orientations to create a residential community which reflects society.*

### **How do we go about achieving this?**

#### **Analysis of:**

Demographic representation of current Residents, Staff & Board; Recruitment practices; Employee Engagement and Satisfaction; Pay Equity; Accessibility; and Supplier Diversity.

#### **Creation of:**

Union College Foundation to oversee the deployment, management and disbursement of managed funds that are invested in a manner that represents the ethos of Union College.

Diversity & Inclusion Framework.

### **Measures of success**

#### **CY2024/25**

1. Establish baseline data by listening to the voices of residents, parents, alumni, workers, neighbours, and other stakeholders.
2. Maintenance of an admissions protocols reflecting the role of Union College in the University of Queensland value proposition for potential and continuing students. In the interests of sustainability and need for high occupancy, the protocols will also reflect the opportunities that residing at the College presents for students at other universities in Brisbane, particularly where potential residents aspire to reside at Union College by referral from Alumni, siblings, and community ties.
3. Establishment of a scholarship/bursary/stipend program that supports residents from circumstances arising from disadvantage or marginalisation to attend both university and Union College, improving their likelihood of success.
4. Incorporation of industry standards relating to the promotion of a safe, secure environment.
5. Reengage with Alumni and leverage off their lived experiences, learnings, and potential offerings.



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## ***Beyond***

1. Evidence of increased representation of cohorts traditionally underrepresented at university of in colleges; increased diversity in the staff and Board cohorts; increased satisfaction with all aspects of the college experience, in particular, from residents coming from cohorts traditionally underrepresented at university.
2. Increased numbers of first-in-family residents, with positive reports from them on their college experience at the end of their time at Union.

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# Pillar 2

*a place where you can work out who you are, that is more than food and shelter.*

## Facilitating personal growth and development in a supportive community

*Union College is a place where residents are facilitated to see value in life, learn how to lead and to respond to challenges, knowing that their fellow residents, operating team, and alumni are behind them, as a part of a community that strikes a balance between respect and familiarity.*

### How do we go about achieving this?

#### Analysis of:

1. Resident engagement with the College and their University, Relationships, Sense of self, and Meaning & Accomplishment
2. Data derived from resident focus groups, validated surveys tools that measure wellbeing indicators such as resilience, flourishing, and positive perception.
3. Impact of the tutorial program and workshops
4. Holistic profile of the first-year resident to ensure this profile reflects the broader community.

#### Development of:

1. Model of university residential community living
2. Leadership development opportunities for all residents
3. Targeted marketing campaigns to enhance Union College's ability to draw from urban, rural, and remote global communities.

#### Commitment to:

1. Asset Maintenance plan and associated investments in the resident experience, safety and maintenance of College assets
2. Demonstrating through actions and decisions the transparent, emotionally intelligent, resilient, and ethical leadership within the Board, Operational team, and key stakeholder daily functions
3. Offering opportunities to Union College residents to hear the thoughts and opinions of a diverse range of socio/political/philosophical traditions.

### Measures of success

#### CY2024/25

1. Establish baseline data by listening to the voices of residents.
2. Pilot of a new Resident Wellbeing Framework and Model of Residential Living at Union College
3. Alignment with the UQ Strategic Plan and policies, Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education, 2024 Australian Universities Accord and other industry standards.

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## ***Beyond***

1. Evidence of enhanced wellbeing measures by way of self-reporting and survey results; demonstrated decline (or plateau) in residents reaching out for mental health support; sustained academic performance; increased length-of -stay; high referrals from alumni; multiple sibling applications; and demonstrated demand for accommodation at Union College.

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# Pillar 3

*a place where you can find benefit and value that treads lightly on the earth.*

## Balanced value proposition embedded into sustainable environmental, social, and governance practices.

*Union College offers high-quality accommodation in a central location for students at the University of Queensland and other Brisbane tertiary institutions to live as they learn, offering affordable with real value for money that demonstrates ethical, sustainable, and robust governance and discerning business practices. Union College is recognised as a leader in sustainability and known for its high standards in operations, social impact, and environmental performance.*

### How do we go about achieving this?

#### Development of:

1. A not-for-loss, for-purpose model of operations placed within an ethical framework for Union College: suppliers, sponsors, investment, environmental sustainability, and business continuity.
2. A contemporary performance management approach designed to achieve the objectives set by the Board in the strategic plan, demonstrated by reported outcomes against operational targets.
3. In collaboration with The University of Queensland, a Union College Master Plan that demonstrates planning for a reduction in our carbon-footprint, in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and incorporates other elements to foster sustainable living and operating, within the mandate of the College infrastructure being Heritage Listed. This is done through responsible prioritisation and management of the associated costs and available funding.
4. Fundraising framework in support of a scholarship program, with funds being directed to the investment portfolio to future-proof the scholarship program.
5. In collaboration with key stakeholders, a digital transformation program that will see Union College offer digital interfaces that are in step with those current and future residents expect.

#### Commitment to:

1. Focussing on the transition from university to career through strong academic and personal development programs and facilitating and supporting the individual to maximise their development and aspirations.
2. Transparent reporting on economic, environmental, and social performance

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3. In collaboration with The University of Queensland, other Residential Colleges, and the Brisbane City Council, creating and embedding process and practices that meet social sustainability, environmental performance, and accounting standards.
  4. Maintaining gold standard cybersecurity measures, in partnership with The University of Queensland.

**Consideration to:**

1. Commencing B Corporation Certification or similar; commencing Union College Reconciliation Action Plan.
2. Union College's ability to support the Brisbane community as part of the 2032 Olympics.
3. Income streams from alternate sources such as Associate Members.
4. Establishing a partnership with The University of Queensland to build residences in new locations.

**Measures of success**

***CY2024/25***

1. Establish baseline data by listening to the voices of residents, parents, alumni, workers, neighbours, and other stakeholders: what are we doing well in terms of delivering our service, what do we need to tweak to get it right, what is coming at us that we need to prepare for, and what are we doing that offers not value-add and needs to stop? What do we have that the Union College and key stakeholder community needs versus what does the community need that we don't have? Where do we sit in terms of the rental crisis and protection from market volatility?
2. Establish baseline data in net promoter score; resident return rate; and average length of stay.
3. Establish efficiency within daily operations by way of metrics across identified key metrics.
4. Benchmark Union College operations against peers and industry standards.
5. Assess Union College's current carbon emission and consumption, including within our supply chain.
6. Development of the business case for investment in B Corporation certification or equivalent; establish a Union College Reconciliation Action Plan Working Party.

***Beyond***

1. Evidence of enhanced success in the market by way of consistent referral rate from alumni and family.
2. Evidence of efficiency, creativity, and innovation within operations and service delivery.

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# Enablers

## Union College in 2029

Our future rests on three vital components: ensuring a continuous flow of potential residents, our people, and a solid financial future from which to offer our services.

### 1. Future residents

Union College exists solely to offer accommodation to tertiary students who wish to maximise their student experiences by living in a purpose-built residential community. To ensure that we remain a viable preference for future residents, we must embed practices that result in high demand for our services.

#### Strategies

1. Continue to nurture our current feeder communities through authentic and regular engagement by way of alumni and presence at key events.
2. Expand into new domestic communities by way of engagement through senior teaching and business staff, with a view to sponsoring events at various schools and community events.
3. Expand into new international communities by way of enhanced marketing and social media presence, and engagement with alumni residing overseas.
4. Undertake a project scoping the viability of expansion to other communities in Queensland.

#### 2029 Measures of success

1. Evidence of increased number of residents from current or known communities consistently choosing Union College year after year.
2. Evidence of new residents choosing Union College from communities where there is sustained population growth and strong alumni presence.



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3. Evidence that Union College draws from a broad range of socio-demographic characteristics.
  4. At least 5 per cent of Union College residents represent The University of Queensland's top 5 source communities.

## 2. Our people

Union College's success rests with not just with its residents, but also the people it employs. However, employment is not just about who we have on the team, it is also about who we attract and how we retain works who positively contribute to the resident experience.

This cannot happen without a strong and inclusive culture. Therefore, the culture that is created for residents must be mirrored in that of the operational team, subcontractors, and volunteers.

### Strategies

1. Continue to nurture an inclusive and nurturing culture within the organisation that honours and aligns with our values.
2. Develop and grow innate leadership qualities through opportunities to be lifelong learners.
3. Creation of a safe workplace that encourages and recognises excellent and innovation.
4. Develop career pathways within Union College that permit workers to enhance their career trajectories.

### 2029 Measures of success

1. 80% of workers willing to recommend Union College to their personal and professional networks.
2. Union College is recognised by its works, peers, and stakeholders as a diverse and inclusive workplace.
3. Gender equality and parity are evident in the workforce.

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4. The proportion of workers identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander reflects the representation of people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in Queensland.

### 3. Investing in our future

To see Union College continuing to thrive for more than the next 70 years, we need to ensure that the practices of today are designed to meet the strategic goal of being sustainable and demonstrating exceptional operating practices. This means we must embed processes to ensure efficiency in operations, building a scholarship fund through responsible investment, and prudent investment in both operational and resident-facing infrastructure.

#### **Strategies**

1. Identify opportunities for operational efficiencies via partnership or collaboration with other Residential Colleges, The University of Queensland, and sustainable, cost-effective technologies.
2. Investment in capital infrastructure and digital capabilities to enhance resident experience, and meet the growing expectations for digital engagement, online capacity, and improved efficiency.
3. Streamline operations by identifying and eliminating duplication and ensuring the effectiveness of governance structures and processes.
4. Attract alumni and broader philanthropic investment to support Union College's future scholarship opportunities and infrastructure growth.

#### **2029 Measures of success**

1. Move towards an annual EBITDA on 10% and ensure annual revenue exceeds expenditure in alignment with the established not-for-loss ratios.
2. Grow our scholarship fund to \$10m.
3. Be recognised as a beyond carbon neutral residential college.

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# Alignment with Qld Government objectives for the community

This Strategic Plan clearly aligns the future of The University of Queensland Union College with The University of Queensland *Toward 2032: Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025* and the Queensland Government objectives for the community.

The University of Queensland Union College is committed to investing in creating a quality resident experience through the provision of opportunities to maximise their ability to successfully complete their tertiary studies and enhance their personal growth and development. This investment will result in a strengthening Queensland's economic position within the global market enabling Queensland industry, business, and regions to thrive.

Through its scholarship program, Union College is committed to supporting future residents from rural and remote areas of Queensland in their ability to access tertiary education which in turn will support regional economic development and job creation through entrepreneurship and the development of community and business leaders.

Union College's commitment to becoming beyond carbon neutral shows demonstrates the priority it places on environmental protection and management. This will be achieved through adopting innovative solutions to counteract the effects of climate change.

Building a safe, caring, and connected community is at the heart of this Strategic Plan. Every resident has the right to feel safe, without the risk of harassment or bullying. A community where they can reach their personal goals, through the enriching opportunities that Union College offers.

Our goal is that by 2029, we can offer the Union College experience to all residents who wish to experience it, regardless of any personal, financial, or geographical barriers they may face.