



Strategic Plan 2024 - 2029

union
college

The University of Queensland

A word from the Board Chair

On behalf of the Board of The University of Queensland Union College, it is my privilege to present our Strategic Plan for the years 2024 to 2029. At the heart of this plan are our core strategic pillars, each designed to guide us in our mission to foster an exceptional student experience, cultivate personal growth and development, and uphold sustainable practices.

Central to our vision is the commitment to deliver a highly sought-after resident experience within an environment that champions equity, diversity, and inclusivity. We recognize that true excellence is achieved only when every individual feels valued and encouraged to thrive. Through intentional efforts to create a welcoming and inclusive community, we endeavour to create a supportive culture where every resident can flourish academically, socially, and personally.

Moreover, we aspire to be recognized as a respected provider of on-campus opportunities, serving as a catalyst for personal growth and development. By offering diverse programs, mentorship, and resources, we aim to encourage residents to explore their passions, develop their skills, and become engaged members of society. We aim to nurture a supportive community where individuals are inspired to pursue their aspirations and contribute positively to the world around them.

In our pursuit of excellence, we are also mindful of our responsibility to create a balanced value proposition that integrates sustainable environmental, social, and governance practices into everything we do. We understand that our actions today have a lasting impact on the future, and therefore, we are committed to fostering a culture of sustainability and responsible stewardship. By embracing sustainable practices, we reduce our environmental footprint and contribute to the well-being of our community and the planet.

As we embark on this journey, we are guided by our unwavering dedication to our residents, our community, and our planet. Together, we will continue to aim for excellence, embrace diversity, and cultivate a culture of sustainability. By staying true

to our values and working collaboratively towards our shared goals, we will create a future where every resident has an opportunity to thrive and make a meaningful difference in the world.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we embark on this exciting chapter in the history of The University of Queensland Union College.

Rebecca Freath

Mrs Rebecca Freath

Board Chair

The University of Queensland Union College

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 in achieving academic success and personal growth.

In pursuit of its vision and mission, the College will always 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

Respect

We honour all community members' diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and identities, fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

Integrity

We uphold honesty, accountability, and ethical conduct in all aspects of academic and personal life, striving to be trustworthy individuals and reliable members of our community.

Community

We cultivate a sense of belonging and support, valuing collaboration, empathy, and inclusivity to create a vibrant and supportive residential environment.

Personal Growth

We embrace opportunities for self-discovery, intellectual curiosity, and continuous learning, empowering ourselves and others to reach our full potential.

Well-being

We prioritise physical, mental, and emotional health, promoting balance, self-care, and resilience as essential components of academic success and overall happiness.

Responsibility

We take ownership of our actions and their impact on others, contributing positively to the well-being of the residential college and the broader university community.

Sustainability

We are stewards of the environment, promoting sustainable practices and responsible consumption to minimise our ecological footprint and preserve resources for future generations.

Leadership

We inspire and empower others through positive role modelling, fostering a culture of leadership, initiative, and service within our residential community and beyond.

Innovation

We embrace creativity, adaptability, and forward-thinking, seeking innovative ideas and solutions to address challenges and drive positive change in our community and society.

Inclusivity

We celebrate diversity and promote equity, ensuring that all voices are heard, valued, and included in decision-making processes and community activities.

By 2029, Union College will be known as a residential college for tertiary students that:

Delivers a highly sought-after student experience through an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment.

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

Consciously creates a balanced value proposition embedded in sustainable environmental, social, and governance practices.

Strategic Pillars

Pillar 1

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

An equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment.

To create a residential community that reflects society, we invite, include, and involve current and potential residents from varied social and ethnic backgrounds, respecting diverse religious beliefs, all genders, and sexual orientations.

The University of Queensland Union College welcomes the richness of a diverse and inclusive admissions policy 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's home community.

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 passionate about supporting residents' transition from school to employment through university studies and engaging with inspirational, established, and emerging community leaders to mentor and advise.

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 and learn how to lead and 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 well-being to influence who they are becoming and build on what they stand for, meaning the college experience is more than just a room and food. Union College life is not transactional, but rather, the environment is a place that demonstrates just the right mix of individual freedom and community regulation to ensure every individual can thrive intellectually, physically, and emotionally. A place where respectful disagreement is an opportunity to enhance understanding and empathy, leading to decisions focused 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 are 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. We promote confidence in exploring personal ideas, interests, values, and goals and facilitate residents' becoming more confident in their decision-making skills. Union College is where residents can build their 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 “*do the right thing*”, living at Union College comes with no expectation that residents do what they do not 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.

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. It is affordable and offers real value for money, demonstrating ethical, sustainable, and robust governance and discerning business practices. Union College is recognised as a leader in sustainability and is 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 managing risk and opportunities. The business is governed in a sustainable and ethical way, meeting all commercial metrics as expected of a not-for-loss organisation. It consistently meets or exceeds industry standards, is open and transparent where appropriate, and respects confidentiality and privacy when this is required. Prudent return on funds under investment, coupled with a 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 the value of on-site accommodation to students enrolled at the University of Queensland, we support the University in promoting the College experience to potential and continuing students and maintain admissions protocols that 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 risk management, 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 regarding sustainability, governance, philanthropy, and ethos. Choosing to live at Union College is acknowledged as an excellent return on investment.

The path to success

Pillar 1

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

An equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment.

To create a residential community that reflects society, we invite, include, and involve current and potential residents from varied social and ethnic backgrounds, respecting diverse religious beliefs, all genders, and sexual orientations.

How do we go about achieving this?

Analysis of:

The demographic representation of current Residents, Staff, and 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 Union College's ethos.

Diversity & Inclusion Framework.

Reconciliation Action Plan.

Measures of success

CY2024/25

1. Establish baseline data by listening to the voices of residents, parents, alumni, workers, neighbours, and other stakeholders.
2. Maintain admissions protocols reflecting the role of Union College in the University of Queensland's value proposition for potential and continuing students. In the interests of sustainability and the need for high occupancy, the protocols will also reflect the opportunities that living 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 promoting a safe, secure environment.

-
5. Reengage with Alumni and leverage their lived experiences, learnings, and potential offerings.

Beyond

1. Evidence of increased representation of cohorts traditionally underrepresented at university or in colleges; increased diversity in the staff and Board cohorts; increased satisfaction with all aspects of the college experience, particularly from residents coming from cohorts traditionally underrepresented at university.
2. Evidence of an increased number of first-in-family residents who have reported positive experiences with their college experience at the end of their time at Union.

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 and learn how to lead and 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 and validated survey tools that measure well-being indicators such as resilience, flourishing, and positive perception.
3. Impact of the tutorial program and workshops
4. A holistic profile of the first-year resident is needed 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 diverse 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 (University of Queensland) Strategic Plan and policies, Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education, 2024 Australian Universities Accord and other industry standards.

Beyond

1. Evidence of enhanced well-being measures by way of self-reporting and survey results; residents seeking mental health support indicate that the process is respectful, timely, and user-friendly; sustained academic performance; increased length-of-stay; high referrals from alumni; multiple sibling applications; and demonstrated demand for accommodation at Union College.

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. It is affordable and offers real value for money, demonstrating ethical, sustainable, and robust governance and discerning business practices. Union College is recognised as a leader in sustainability and is 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. A fundraising framework in support of a scholarship program, with funds directed to the investment portfolio to future-proof the scholarship program.
5. In collaboration with key stakeholders, a digital transformation program will see Union College offer digital interfaces that are in step with what current and future residents expect.

Commitment to:

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

-
3. Collaborating with The University of Queensland, other Residential Colleges, and the Brisbane City Council, creating and embedding processes 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.
2. Commencing Union College Reconciliation Action Plan.
3. Union College's ability to support the Brisbane community as part of the 2032 Olympics.
4. Income streams from alternate sources such as Associate Members.
5. 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 need versus what does the community need that we do not have? Where do we sit regarding 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 through metrics across identified key metrics.
4. Benchmark Union College operations against peers and industry standards.
5. Assess Union College's current carbon emissions and consumption and those within our supply chain.
6. Development of the business case for investment in B Corporation certification or equivalent.
7. Establish a Union College Reconciliation Action Plan Working Party.

Beyond

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

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 through alumni and presence at key events.
2. Expand into new domestic communities through engagement with senior teaching and business staff, with a view to sponsoring events at various schools and community events.
3. Expand into new international communities through 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 an 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 with sustained population growth and strong alumni presence.

-
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 its residents and the people it employs. However, employment is not just about who we have on the team but also about who we attract and how we retain workers 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. Create a safe workplace that encourages and recognises excellence and innovation.
4. Develop career pathways within Union College that enhance workers' career trajectories.

2029 Measures of success

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

-
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 continue to thrive for more than the next 70 years, we need to ensure that today's practices 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 and build a scholarship fund through responsible investment and prudent investment in both operational and resident-facing infrastructure.

Strategies

1. Identify opportunities for operational efficiencies through partnerships 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 (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation) margin of 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 carbon-neutral residential college.

Alignment with The University of Queensland and Queensland 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’s objectives for the community.

Union College is committed to investing in creating a quality resident experience through the provision of opportunities to maximise residents' ability to successfully complete their tertiary studies and enhance their personal growth and development. This investment will strengthen Queensland’s economic position within the global market, enabling Queensland industry, businesses, 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. This, 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 demonstrates its priority 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 aim to offer the Union College experience to all residents who wish to experience it, regardless of any personal, financial, or geographical barriers they may face.