



# UNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN

AN AUDIENCE-FIRST APPROACH TO RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION



# Strategic Plan Goal Statements

## An Audience-First Approach to Resilient, Sustainable Education

The three goals in Unity College’s Strategic Plan outline an interrelated strategy to provide audiences with the products, programs, and services they need.



**Goal One** Audience

Serve audiences through engagement with Unity College and its mission to respond to clearly identified needs.

Objective areas include:  
Learners | Clients | Consumers | Partners | Foundations | Investors/Donors



**Goal Two** Enterprise

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

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



**Goal Three** Storytelling

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

Objective areas include:  
Branding, Storytelling, Marketing | Internal & External Communication | Thought-Leadership | Communication Channels



## 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 thoroughly researched the opposing forces of student needs, college objectives, and the marketplace, and has identified **Enterprise Education with Sustainable Education Business Units** as our disruptive approach. To achieve the status of America's Environmental College we are, in all of our strategic initiatives, finding ways to address the biggest pain point of higher education: affordable, accessible, value-oriented education. Enterprise Education accomplishes this by offering students the opportunity to learn beyond traditional coursework and acquire resume-worthy experience at any Unity College location, thus diversifying revenue.

Higher education finds itself in a position very few would have predicted in the late 1990s, 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 a college must be.

Unity College is looking to its own viability and beyond. A new approach to remain relevant and vital is necessary in order to flourish as a college, but also in order to provide a model for what a twenty-first century college can be – in terms of teaching and learning, fiscal sustainability, place and modality, and service to new audiences.





# Unity College Distance Education

## Sustainable Education Business Unit (SEBU)

This SEBU was founded in 2016 and serves our adult, place bound students by offering fully accredited bachelor's and master's degrees online. The faculty in this SEBU are leading experts in their professional fields. Students use their everyday environment as their laboratory and incorporate their classes into their daily lives so they can earn a degree and not dramatically alter their present commitments.

The Distance Education SEBU is located in New Gloucester, Maine at Pineland Farms.

### Some highlights of Distance Education include:

- Unity College Distance Education is fully accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)
- Affordable, accessible, and transferable academic experiences
- Convenient start dates, allowing students to choose the best time to begin studies
- Customizable course loads depending on individual needs
- Professional advisors to help each student achieve their professional goals
- A world-class faculty includes Fulbright Scholars, as well as people who have discovered new species, exhibit art internationally, consult with international law enforcement, and win National Science Foundation grants





## Unity College Hybrid Learning Sustainable Education Business Unit (SEBU)

Traditionally the college experience has been reserved for recent high school graduates who have the financial means or subsidies, provided by outstanding academic achievement and/or athletic abilities, to attend a four-year residential program. This exclusivity has left a void in higher education options for students who are looking for something other than a strictly online education or a traditional semester calendar at a residential campus. Something that is more affordable, flexible, and accessible while being less prone to major disruption by outside forces.

Unity College Hybrid Learning was established in 2020 to serve the needs of this audience. Hybrid Learning offers students the ability to take classes either face-to-face, online, or a combination of the two modalities depending on what is best for them. All classes are taught in five-week terms regardless of the modality and one course per term allows students to qualify for financial aid. This flexibility allows students to step in and out of terms without falling behind. Hybrid Learning's classes are designed with students' future careers in mind, incorporating the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the job market.

This SEBU has multiple locations and is modality agnostic, giving it the flexibility to locate its face-to-face classes anywhere that is relevant to the course work, including any of the Unity College properties as well as other unique areas of Maine, the nation, and the world.

### **Some of the highlights of Hybrid Learning include:**

- Unity College Hybrid Learning is fully accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)
- Differentiated tuition depending on the modality of choice
- One course allows students to qualify for financial aid
- Eight 5-week terms provide the ability to stop and start depending on life events
- Courses are taught by a dedicated faculty who are experts in their fields
- All Hybrid Learning degrees are environmentally focused, and students are career-ready when they graduate
- Disruption-proof education because all face-to-face classes have an online back-up





# Unity College Technical Institute for Environmental Professions

## Sustainable Education Business Unit (SEBU)

As the Green Economy evolves, becoming more integrated into people's daily life, and the cost of higher education continues to rise, it is apparent that there is a gap in educational opportunities for those who want to pursue career-building skills but not necessarily a four-year degree or the cost associated with it.

Unity College seeks to fill that gap with unique learning opportunities designed specifically for this audience. Learning that is affordable - \$250.00 per credit hour; accessible – it is located in Pineland Farms, in close proximity of some of the largest centers of population in Maine; flexible – courses are taught in two-week terms and relevant – all programs and certificates are tied directly to the skills needed for employment in fields such as urban agriculture, veterinary technology, and data analytics.

The certificates and associate degrees offered by the Technical Institute for Environmental Professions (TIEP) are also stackable with a Unity College bachelor's degree.

### **Some highlights of the Technical Institute for Environmental Professions include:**

- Unity College Technical Institute for Environmental Professions is fully accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)
- Hy-flex learning opportunities offering synchronous online and in-person classes
- One course allows students to qualify for financial aid as a full-time student
- Courses are taught by subject matter experts and designed by professional curriculum designers using a competency-based education (CBE) framework
- All TIEP degrees and certificates are environmentally focused, and students are career-ready when they complete their program





## Unity College Sustainable Ventures

### Sustainable Education Business Unit (SEBU)

The Sustainable Ventures SEBU was created in 2019 and each venture under this SEBU is a real-life, revenue-generating manifestation of the academic curriculum. This SEBU is home to Unity College's lifestyle brands which provide curated learning opportunities in the non-credit space.

#### Current ventures include:

- **Business to Business Partnerships:** Customizable, curated content designed in collaboration with organizations to meet the unique needs of their workforce.
- **Dining and Catering Services**
- **McKay Farm & Research Station:** A one acre field and five greenhouses in Thorndike, Maine which is a working production farm, selling wholesale culinary herbs and produce as well as providing contract growing services and bench rental space to local farmers and the general public.
- **Unity College: Sky Lodge:** A 150-acre campus in Moose River, Maine that serves as a year-round vacation destination geared towards nature-lovers and outdoor adventure enthusiasts.
- **Unity College Store:** Located in Founders Hall North in Unity, ME and on-line at <https://store.unity.edu/>, the store focuses on sustainable, purpose-driven, Unity College branded merchandise

These semi-independent ventures can more quickly respond to changing needs of society, particularly non-degree-seeking audiences and their profits are reinvested in Unity College student scholarships, facility improvements, and community outreach.





## Innovation at Unity College

A mission-driven, yet flexible mindset that rewards and supports intentional risk-taking

Innovation by its very definition is new ideas, new methods, new products. Innovation is the only way a college like Unity can survive in the 21st Century. We have to grow, change and come up with new ways to take what we do best and share it with the world, and maybe, just maybe, one of the innovations that Unity College comes up with will change the world.

Achieving the status of America's Environmental College is a lofty, but attainable goal. Innovation is the key to attaining this goal, but what does innovation at Unity College really mean?

Innovation means creating powerful new learning experiences and changing higher education to address the evolving needs of society and the sustainability of the environment. It also means pursuing the Enterprise Education Model, and providing an online environmental education to students across the world through Distance Education, changing the way we deliver our curriculum by creating a modality and location agnostic education that can be delivered with a combination of face-to-face and online classes through Hybrid Learning, and allowing students to pursue career skills using Hy-flex learning opportunities by offering synchronous online and in-person classes through the Technical Institute of Environmental Professions, and diversifying our reach with Sustainable Ventures lifestyle brands.

### We support innovation by:

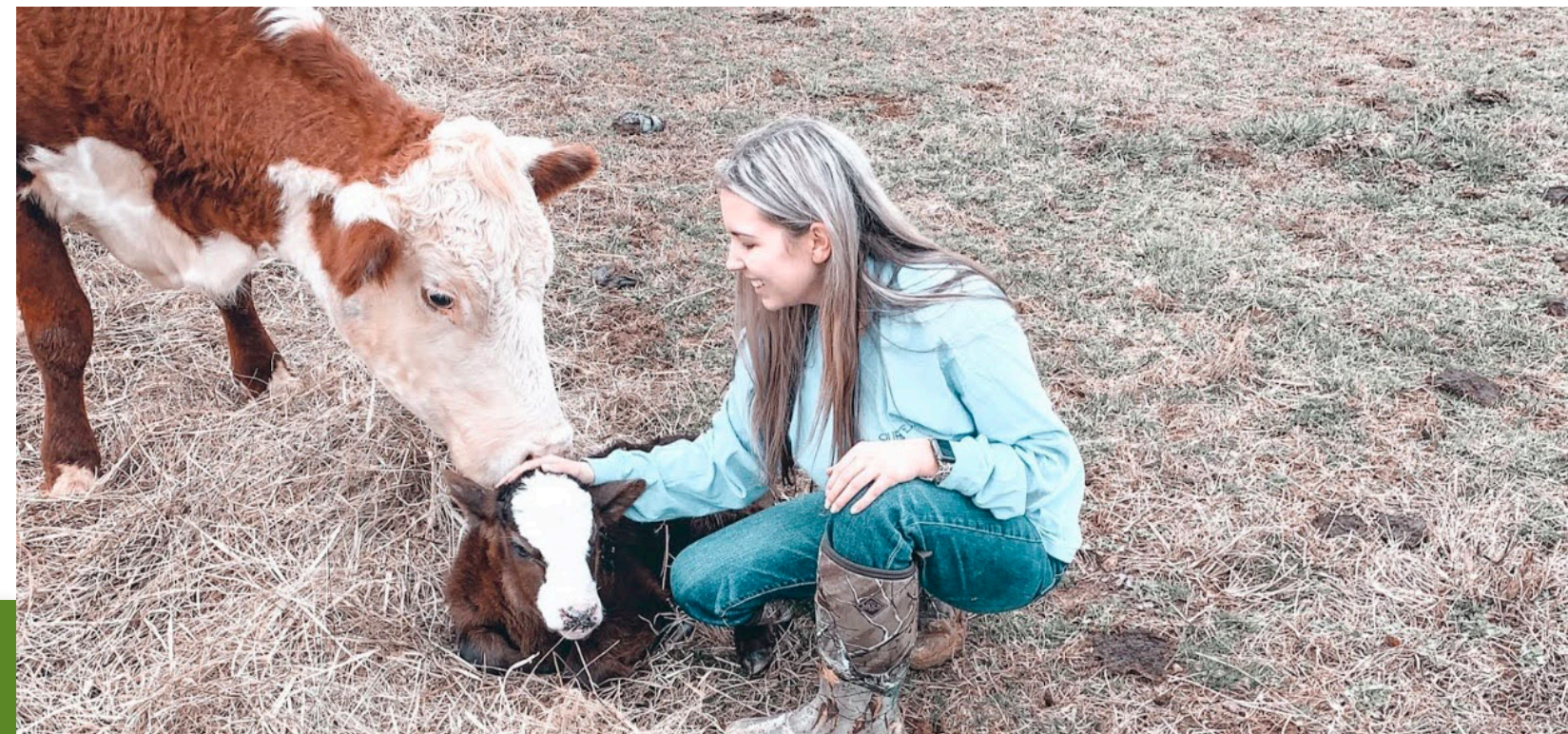
- Providing financial backing and resources
- Celebrating and respecting those pursuing ambitious new ideas
- Celebrating the endeavor whether it is a success or failure
- Ensuring all employees are contributors and supporters of innovation and embrace it in the face of perceived or real consequences
- Regularly examining initiatives and evaluating their future potential

## Our Learning Outcomes

Solution-driven,  
anticipating real-world problems

Undergirded by our core liberal arts and science principles, we have defined certain learning outcomes that we believe make our students the most successful individuals in their chosen careers and we have integrated those skills into our sustainable, environmentally focused education. We are designing a curriculum to provide Unity students with a unique suite of relevant skills and abilities:

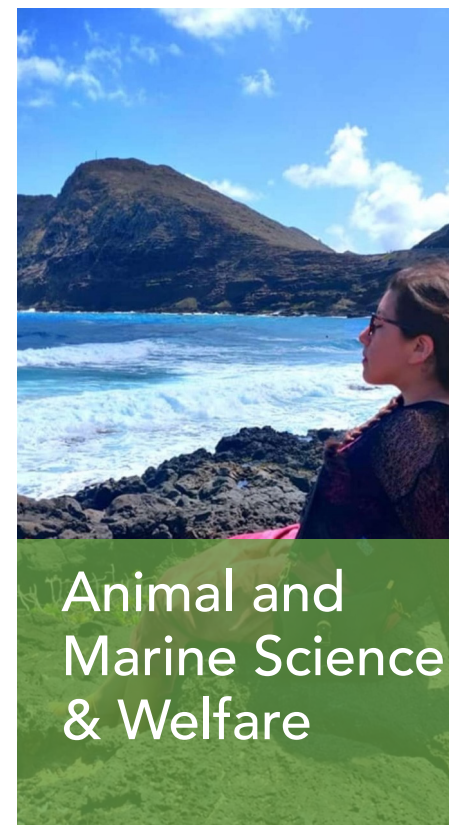
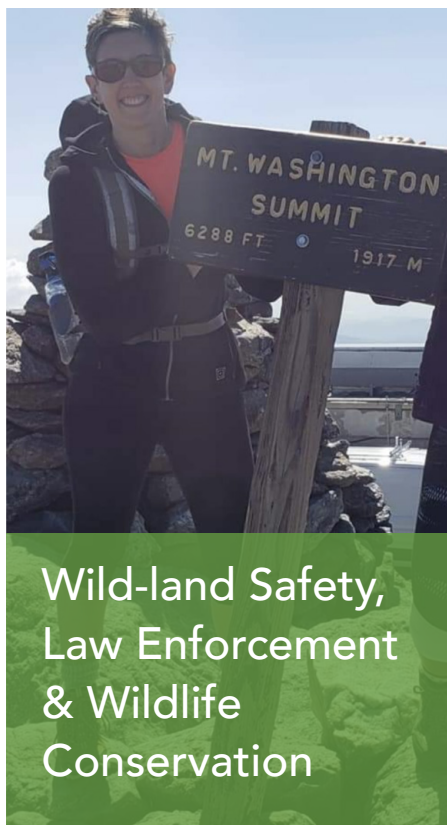
- Exercise productive learning and working strategies
- Apply various forms of communication effectively including written and oral
- Acknowledge the history, contributions, and perspectives of various cultural groups
- Act in ways that are considerate of the perspectives of others
- Interpret qualitative and quantitative data
- Describe uses and limitations of various data sources
- Identify and discern valid sources of information
- Extract meaning from a variety of sources
- Develop and critique logical and evidence-based arguments
- Regulate one's emotional responses and behaviors
- Acknowledge how one's actions impact others
- Utilize intentional strategies to increase well-being and relational effectiveness





## Our Mission-Driven Competencies

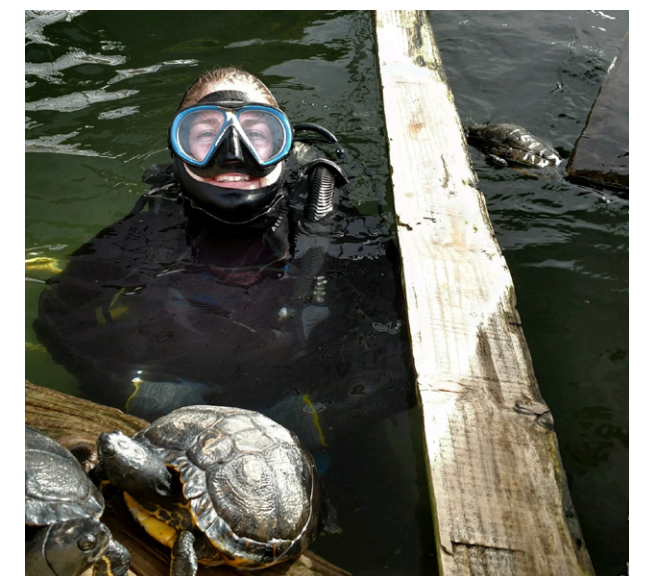
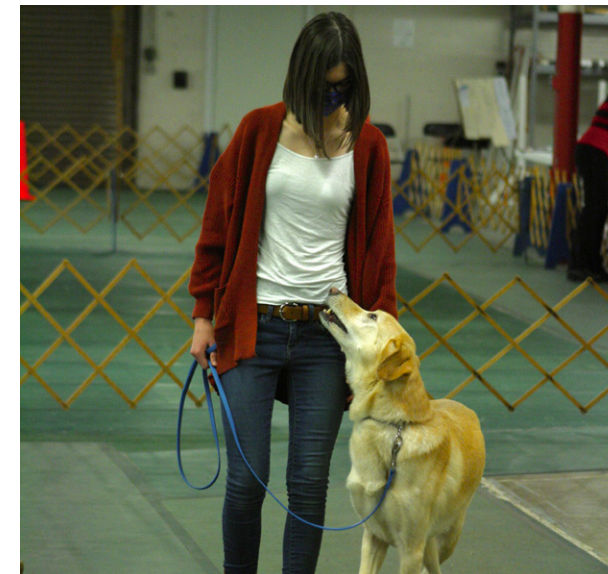
### Environmental and Sustainable Education



## Our Degrees and Credentialing Outcomes

### Environmentally-Focused Education

Unity College offers environmentally-focused education in diverse and exciting areas of study with undergraduate and graduate degrees, certificates, micro-credentials, signature courses, and expeditionary and immersive experiences available on campus and online.





# Potential New Audiences What is the societal and individual need?

## Learners

Traditional and non-traditional students seeking credits or Individuals not looking for credits or credentials

## Clients

Businesses, governmental and community organizations interested in paying for services and possibly goods

## Partners

Businesses, governmental and community organizations work with Unity to develop relationships of mutual benefit

## Program What educational products are needed?

### Micro-Credentials

Non-degree certifications or other proof of competency in a specific skill set

### Competency-Based Learning

Awarding credit for career skills toward college degrees

### Custom Trainings

to support specific organizational needs

### Consulting Services

for clients and partners looking to increase their organization's environmental sustainability

### Continuing Education

Professional and workforce development programs

## Modality How and where is it delivered?

In Person

Online

Hybrid

Augmented Reality



## Guiding Principles

### Stories of Aspiration, Inclusion, and America's Environmental College

When Unity College adopted the concept 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 has changed in the years since. Unity College has executed several sustainability firsts: first Passive House standard residence hall, first energy-neutral president's residence, and the 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 has won 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 walk with regard to sustainability and the environment, in order to fully achieve the status of America's Environmental College, Unity College must now live up to the other two-thirds of that bold aspiration.



## Sharing the Stories of Unity College

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

Some of the very people who might benefit the most from an environmental education or a life of professional service in an environmental field, may not know that it is even an option. The reasons for this are complex and can range from a simple lack of exposure to the environment growing up, to job recruitment practices to the aspirations and expectations of first generation college students.

The reality is that fields associated with the environment, for whatever reason, do not reflect global, or even national, demographics. Unity College is engaging 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 both 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, amplifying other voices, and outlining a bold framework with an overarching narrative in which other individuals and institutions can see themselves and a way to the future.



# The Goal

## Serving Today's Audiences

As America's Environmental College, Unity College is finding 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 the status of America's Environmental College means living up to the best of what "America," means to this nation, all its peoples, and the world.

Being student-centric goes 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 means responding to the students we don't yet have, servicing the 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.

Service to students and other audiences is at the very heart of Unity College's Strategic Plan.

# The 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:

- "There is often a disconnect between the mission and the highest level goals of a strategic plan."
- "Constant change is the primary driver for a new approach. 'We do not have the luxury of expensive years-long strategic planning exercises, especially when their impact on the organization's direction is usually so slight.'"
- "Strategic planning can be confused with consensus building."
- "Operations are the broad shoulders of strategy."
- "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."

In response to these general lessons, Unity College's Strategic Plan engages several strategies focused on providing a more efficient initial development process and a more iterative approach to strategic plan management.

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.



## Responsive by Design

The planning-doing cycle created in the Unity College Strategic Plan is more efficient and responsive to the larger industry, environment, and market context by its design. Prioritization and decision-making are facilitated through the use of several guidelines and tools.

**Mission Achievement.** The Unity College Strategic Plan is designed with mission fulfillment at its very heart. Goals are directly and explicitly tied to fully maintaining the status of America's Environmental College. Service to students and other audiences is prioritized while fulfilling the environmental and educational mission. Everything else is secondary by design.

**An Iterative Approach.** The Unity College Strategic Plan uses an iterative approach to strategic plan development and management. The overarching framework is designed for the College to grow 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's Strategic Plan is designed as a framework that will allow for change, and not just in minor adjustments to new initiatives.

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."





## 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's Strategic Plan uses 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.

# 1

## Proposal Phase Understanding Opportunities

The first step in the process, the Proposal Phase, requires a high level outline of the opportunities presented by a potential initiative. Proposals identify key elements of the opportunity, allowing senior leaders to quickly screen ideas for strategy alignment.

### **Current State**

A very brief background of the current situation and factors that might help or hinder our efforts and enable us to set realistic goals.

### **Desired Future State**

A brief overview of the initiative and its value to the College, what audience would be served and how. This section includes preliminary goals and measurable outcomes.

### **Internal Resources Needed**

A list of internal and external (new and reallocated) resources necessary, including human, physical, fiscal, and technological.

### **Known Risk Factors**

A brief outline of risk factors for the initiative, including scale of the opportunity, potential partners, and legal considerations.

### **Action Items & Key Performance Indicators**

A list of major actions that must be done to support the project goals listed, with specific key performance indicators.



# Tools for Planning and Implementation

## 2

### The Strategy Screen

#### Finding institutional fit

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 Unity College's identity and strategic direction.

#### Initiative Checklist

- ☐ **Audience:** Does it serve a new audience or expand a current audience?
- ☐ **Distinct:** Does it avoid internal conflict for the same audience?
- ☐ **Financial Viability:** Is the institution in a financial position to undertake and sustain it?
- ☐ **Mission:** Does it advance the mission of Unity College?
- ☐ **Values:** Does it align with Unity College's core values?

## 3

### The Decision-Making Paradigm

#### Choosing between options

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.

#### AUDIENCE

What is the societal and individual need?

#### PROGRAM

What educational products are needed?

#### MODALITY

How and where is it delivered?

#### FUNCTION

What is needed to accomplish this?

#### UNIT

Where does this work reside?



# Tools for Planning and Implementation

## 4

### Project Implementation Plan The idea into action

#### Action Plan

A detailed action plan developed in consultation with implicated work units and individual positions. Details include requirements for achieving the goals, assigned roles, synergies and constraints, and timing. Action items must be time bound, measurable, assigned to individuals, and related to goals.

#### Document Development

Proposed additions or adjustments to all college documentation related to the project, including but not limited to policies, standard operating procedures, and job descriptions.

#### Internal and External Communication Plan

A communication plan includes all relevant audiences internal and external, purpose of communications, media opportunities, clearly identified messages, draft language, and timeline.

#### Implement, Monitor, and Report



### Example International Education

#### Proposal

An internationally focused initiative is needed at Unity College – one that taps new markets and grows brand name recognition. Unity College should launch a new Sustainable Educational Business Unit (SEBU) charged with developing international centers for education leadership and research, increasing international enrollment in current programs, launching English as a second language (ESL) programs, and strengthening opportunities such as study abroad and international internships. By fostering a more international institution, this SEBU will attract and graduate generations of responsible citizens, environmental stewards, and visionary leaders from around the world. Simply, this sustainable enterprise project prepares Unity for success globally.



#### Strategy Screen

Senior leaders apply the criteria of the Strategy Screen and determine that concept aligns with the College's mission and strategic direction.

#### Decision Paradigm

Having received two other proposals, the leadership team applies the decision-making paradigm to choose between competing alternatives. The international SEBU is "green-lit" for development because it reaches more new audiences and will more quickly diversify institutional revenue streams.

#### Project Implementation

A phase one implementation plan is launched with action areas including new policies for overseas travel; new paradigms for academic calendars, assessment, evaluation, and pedagogy; allocation of resources and staffing capacities; personnel handbooks; and budget development. Lead employees monitor measures of success including number of international students, number of overseas internships, matriculation of ESL students into Unity College degree programs; and status of partnership agreements for international immersive courses for faculty and students.



# Vision, Mission, and Core Values

## Vision

A multifaceted organization recognized as the thought leader in global ecological, economic, and societal solutions.

## Mission

We are dedicated to delivering quality education and experiences that produce outstanding environmentally competent professionals and inspire individuals from all walks of life to steward sustainable ecosystems.

## Core Values

In pursuing Unity College's vision and mission, we are committed to following these eight core values:

**Respect** establishes trust. We honor the intrinsic value of self, others, and the world we share.

**Integrity** aligns our actions and values. We act with purposeful reflection to uphold our vision and mission.

**Social Responsibility** calls us to act. We prepare leaders to address civic engagement in light of environmental concerns.

**Community** has no boundaries. We connect through inclusive engagement locally and globally.

**Resiliency** demonstrates flexibility. We develop the capacity of people, systems, and environments to anticipate and respond to change.

**Cultural Competency** recognizes differences as strength. We explore and value the strengths, talents, and perspectives of others in order to foster strong relationships.

**Innovation** keeps us relevant. We have the courage to question our assumptions, embrace creativity, and take calculated risks.

**Accountability** starts with us. Our actions demonstrate ownership of our work and responsibility for measurable outcomes.

