Consistency of leadership in higher education is a crucial but often elusive advantage. According to the most recent edition of The American College President Study, the average tenure for a college president is 8.5 years. But the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported recently that among 63 institutions in the prestigious Association of American Universities, only about one-in-five sitting presidents had been in the position for 10 years or more.

On December 5, 2010, Union University marked the 15th anniversary of David S. Dockery’s selection as president. The changes in Union since his arrival are nothing short of profound.

In the pages that follow, an attempt is made to review just a few of the many highlights that have marked Union’s transformation into a top-tier academic institution—a school U.S. News & World Report has recognized repeatedly in recent years as one of the nation’s up-and-coming universities; First Things recently named Union among the 12 best Protestant faith-based institutions in the country.

The special section is loosely organized around the major planning initiatives of the Dockery administration: Vision & Values I (1995-2000), Vision & Values II (2001-2005), Union 2010: A Vision for Excellence (2005-2008), and Renewing Minds: Union 2012. In addition, people from around campus and across the nation have expressed to the Unionite their impressions of the president’s leadership, scholarship, and spiritual strength.

Celebrating 15 Years of David S. Dockery’s Presidential Leadership
UNION CELEBRATES 15 YEARS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

By Tim Ellsworth

A
dorning the wall in the Carl Grant Events Center at Union University is a group of portraits of the presidents who have led the institution over the years.

In a rich institutional history, many of those names stand out. Joseph H. Eston was among the first leaders who had a significant impact on the school’s future. George M. Savage, Union’s eighth president, was the first to occupy the J.R. Graves Professor of Theology and Moral Philosophy chair.

John Jeter Hurt led Union through the Great Depression and World War II. Robert E. Craig presided over the move of the campus from downtown Jackson to its current north Jackson location.

On Dec. 2, Union University trustees added to the wall of Presidents another portrait — that of David S. Dockery, elected to the position 15 years ago. Over that 15-year term, Dockery has guided Union University through the most progressive and expansive era in its 187-year history.

The statistics alone are enough to garner attention.

• Fall enrollment in 1995 when Dockery was elected: 1,972.
• Fall enrollment in 2010: 4,866.
• Donors in 1995: 2,000.
• Donors in 2010: 6,000.
• Budget in 1995: $18 million.
• Budget in 2010: $81 million.
• Number of seven-figure gifts in university history in 1995: three.
• Number of seven-figure gifts since: 18.

“When I think of Dr. David Dockery, I would call him a visionary. He has a calmness and peace that permeates his entire personality, which inspires immediate trust. He is self-deprecating, and yet at the same time, he embodied the mission of Union University in every aspect of his leadership.”

JAMES W. AYERS
Chairman, Praytell former Union Trustee and Union Foundation Board Member

“Those are pretty amazing accomplishments,” said Rod Parker, chairman of Union’s Board of Trustees.

“And the fact that he’s been able to grow the university the way it’s grown and maintain its financial strength is phenomenal."

Then there’s the way Dockery has transformed the Union campus. Buildings such as Jennings Hall; Hance Hall, White Hall, Providence Hall, Miller Tower, the Carl Grant Events Center, the Femrite Field House, the Boyd Student Activities Center, and several others all exist today because of Dockery’s leadership.

Over that 15-year term, Dockery has been so successful at what he does that his name is always one of those names that stand out. Joseph H. Eston, Jr., who served as vice president for academic administration at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

“We had interviewed several that were recommended, and were good people, but none that even compared to him,” Dr. Dockery said. “We committed this to prayer. We felt fortunate to have the input of some very qualified people on our search committee. It was an incredible experience. Many of us look back on that day as one of the highlights of our lives.”

Union Provost Carla Sanderson also served on the presidential search committee in 1995, and has worked closely with Dockery over the past 15 years.

“David Dockery is a humble and faithful servant of Jesus Christ who combines a yielded, godly spirit with a tenacious and tireless drive for excellence in everything he does,” Sanderson said.

“He has aimed higher and higher regarding academic standards at Union, but has not compromised the commitment to its Christian mission and the physical development of the campus. Dockery is quick to credit others for these accomplishments."

“Dr. Dockery has been so successful because of where he remains focused — or, I should say, on whom he remains focused — and that is Jesus Christ, as our primary advisor.”

“Dr. Dockery isn’t afraid to get down in the trenches and work hard. He caboose in student life, too, as a failure, but none that even compared to him.”

“Dr. Dockery is one of the most gifted Christian leaders in America. The transformation of Union University in the last 15 years is a story of God’s grace and an incredibly gifted president.”

When I ask who is the most influential leader in Christian higher education in particular, and in higher education in general, the name of David Dockery is always one of my top responses. Thank you, Dr. Dockery, for what you have done for Union but, more importantly, for how God has used you to help change the world for Christ and for the kingdom of God.”

THOM S. RAINEY
President and CEO
LifeWay Christian Resources

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As a faith leader and administrator, Dr. Dockery has dedicated his career to preparing young minds for bright futures. His 15 years as president of Union University have been marked by a strong record of achievement for both students and growth of the institution. I congratulate him for all he has done and will continue to do at Union.”

BOB CORKER
U.S. Senator

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UNION’S 15TH PRESIDENT
Married: Lanese Huckeba on June 14, 1975

Education: Ph.D., University of Texas System (in Humanities)
M.A., Texas Christian University (New Testament)
M.Div., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Drew University
B.S., University of Alabama at Birmingham

Family: Jon and his wife, Sarah
Ben and his wife, Julie, and their daughter Abigail
Tim and his wife, Andrea

Previous Experience:
1988-96 The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.
Vice President for Academic Administration (93-96)
Dean, School of Theology (92-96)
Professor of New Testament
1990-92 General Editor, Broadman and Holman Press, Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville
General Editor, New American Commentary

Served churches in Alabama, Texas, and New York
Served interim pastorates in Texas, Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee

“UNion’s growth as an institution quickly is apparent to anyone who visits after several years away from campus. There are new buildings, larger parking lots, and eye-catching signs that point to progress. Some will focus on an enrollment that has more than doubled since David S. Dockery became president. But those differences only tell a small part of the growth story under his leadership. There are financial statistics that escape the observation of most observers but nonetheless give a strong indication of a university’s overall health. Take a look at progress in the areas of academics, enrollment and facilities, financial growth, giving and spending priorities:

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1996 2011

ACADEMICS
Graduation rates (percent) 55 65
Retention rates (percent) 70 88
Faculty holding terminal degree (percent) 69 84
Full-time faculty 112 247
Full-time staff 114 290

ENROLLMENT AND FACILITIES
Full enrollment 1,972 4,186
Non-duplicating headcount 2,183 4,954
Annual graduates 388 1,100
U.S. states represented in student body 31 44
Percentage of minority students 9 23
On-Campus residential housing capacity 750 1,340
Property (acres) 280 350
Parking capacity (spaces) 1,400 2,700

FINANCIAL GROWTH
(In millions of U.S. dollars)
Value of net assets 36.3 105.2
Restricted assets/endowment 9.3 28.1
Value of campus assets 24.1 123.8
Accumulated depreciation 9.0 44.5
Tuition receipts 11.2 57.8
Payroll 9.0 39.0
Financial aid provided 3.9 16.2
Academic expenditures 6.8 35.3
Student life expenditures 1.3 9.3
Administrative expenditures 2.4 6.7
Annual expenditures 19.0 81.0
Annual economic impact on Madison County 39.0 180.0

GIVING
Average annual gifts 1981-95 & 1996-2010 (x 1,000) 3.8 8.8
Number of donors giving at least $10K 48 150
Number of donors giving at least $100K 4 45
Number of donors giving at least $1M 3 18

SPENDING PRIORITIES
Academics – % of expenditures 36% 47%
Financial Aid – % of expenditures 21% 22%
Student Life – % of expenditures 7% 13%
Administration – % of expenditures 13% 8%

“I have been my privilege to work with presidents of all our Baptist schools over the past years and that has given me the opportunity to observe each of them and their leadership. In my opinion David Dockery is one of the very best and has done a phenomenal job of leading Union to be one of the premier Baptist universities in the world. He’s the kind of president I could wish for all our schools.”

BOB LEE
Former Executive Director, International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities and President Emeritus, Oklahoma Baptist University

“Union had needed an educator, God would have provided a scholar. If we required a business mind, He would have supplied a CEO. If our need had been a visionary, God would have provided a motivator and leader of men. But Union had a need for all these roles and more – so God sent to David S. Dockery.”

JERRY TIWELL
Senior Vice President for University Relations

“He greatest achievement is building a culture at Union University that combines a Christ-centered ethos with high academic expectations. Cultural change is not easy and is not quick, but Dr. Dockery has made it appear that way. Many institutions have one (Christ-centered) or the other (academic excellence). Few have both. David Dockery has always balanced the combination can be possible in a liberal arts institution, and that has made all the difference.”

TOM ROSEBROUGH
Executive Dean, College of Education and Human Studies

“Having identified a vision for the future of Union University, David Dockery articulated that vision in a way that has inspired each of us to pursue it with Christ-centered excellence. Every step of the way he has modeled this very excellence for us in word and in deed.”

BARBARA McMILLIN
Associate Provost and Dean of Instruction

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UNION’S PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY

From the 1823 founding of Jackson Male Academy through 1875, Union University’s early history is rather complex, involving multiple institutions and locations. In 1874-75, the school was re-chartered as Southwestern Baptist University. The name was changed to Union University in 1907. Because there are multiple principals, faculty chairmen and presidents of the schools that eventually formed Union, discussions of Union’s presidential history often begin with the year 1875 and include 14 presidents prior to David S. Dockery. All 15 presidential portraits can be found on campus in the Grant Events Center.

1. William Shelton (1875-1876)
2. George Jarman (1876-1893)
3. George Savage (1893-1904)
4. Phillip Hale (1904-1906)
5. John Conner (1907-1909)
6. Robert Kimberough (1911-1913)
7. Richard Inlow (1913)
8. George Savage (second term, 1915-1918)
9. H. E. Watters (1918-1931)
10. John Jeter Hurt (1932-1945)
12. F. E. Wright (1963-1967)

Note that there are time gaps between some terms during which interim presidents served the university.

T

rustedies approved this initial five-year plan in December 1996. It was unveiled as a three-pronged approach that included ambitious academic goals, a $10 million church endowment campaign and a campus master plan. Of great significance: adoption of Union’s current core values and the first implementation of plans to make Union a Great Commandment university.

The plan also included complete evaluation and/or revision of the University curriculum, plus the establishment of additional programs of study in both undergraduate and graduate disciplines.

FRANK PAGE
President and CEO, Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee

“Beneath the seemingly mild exterior of Dr. David Dockery exists a leader— a visionary whose trust and commitment are evidenced in a phenomenal university called Union. Dr. Dockery has served well, yes, and we are grateful to think of him as our leader. May we never forget that the heart of that team is a man whom God has used mightily, a uniquely qualified man named David Dockery.”

ROBERT P. GEORGE
McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton University

“I simply marvel at the dedication and skill with which David Dockery has led Union University. What an extraordinary and visionary Christian leader he is! I tell people that David Dockery is ‘the Francis of the Christian university president’!”

“David Dockery is the rare leader who combines great intellect, great vision and great charm. On my visit to Union, he had me laughing one minute and pondering some deep challenge the next. He is a wonderful man, and Union is blessed to have him.”

STEPHEN L. CARTER
William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law, Yale University

“Dr. Dockery is the steadfast, faithful leadership during his 5,475 days (15 years) at Union he has unwaveringly exemplified the wisdom of Solomon and the God-seeking heart of David. He possesses those rare, almost-extinct qualities of true humbleness and graciousness, whether writing or speaking, he always seize every opportunity to express deep gratitude to God for His continued kindness and favor on Union University, and for each individual person who serves there. What a gift he and Lanese are to us.”

KATHY SOUTHAL
Director of Intercessory Prayer and Encouragement

“As I have watched Dr. Dockery’s steadfast, faithful leadership during his 5,475 days (15 years) at Union, he has unwaveringly exemplified the wisdom of Solomon and the God-seeking heart of David. He possesses those rare, almost-extinct qualities of true humbleness and graciousness, whether writing or speaking, he always seize every opportunity to express deep gratitude to God for His continued kindness and favor on Union University, and for each individual person who serves there. What a gift he and Lanese are to us.”

www.uu.edu
David S. Dockery came to Union University as a published author and respected theologian. With the added responsibilities of a university president, perhaps it could be expected that his academic pursuits would diminish to a large degree. But a review of his scholarly contributions since assuming the presidency in 1996 reveals the completion of hundreds of significant projects.

**Books authored since 1996**
- Ephesians: One Body in Christ (1996)
- Basic Christian Beliefs (1999)
- Southern Baptist Identity: An Evangelical Denomination Faces the Future (2009)

**Since 1996**
- Contributions to books: 40
- Publication endorsements: 85
- Scholarly presentations: 45
- Major Presidential addresses to Union University: 21
- Academic and professional articles: 30
- Book reviews: 50

**SCHOLARLY PURSUITS**

David Dockery enjoys a significant level of recognition and respect within the Southern Baptist community. He has been a member of the board of directors of the Southern Baptist Convention and serves on the board of directors of the CCCU. The National Association of Evangelicals has honored him as one of the premier Christian institutions in America. He was appointed to a three-year term on the board of directors of the CCCU. As a published author and respected theologian, he has authored and co-authored over 40 books.

**UNIVERSITY CAMPUS**

The campus of Union University has grown from a small liberal arts college to a comprehensive university with over 2,500 students. The campus has expanded to $60 million in 2000. The first capital campaign, launched in 1997, had a goal of $35 million. That goal was expanded to $40 million. The total raised was $63 million in 2004, one full year ahead of schedule.


Vision & Values 2005 provided support for a new campus in the Memphis suburb of Germantown. But at its core, it underlined “a renewed emphasis on traditional, residential liberal arts undergraduate education on the Jackson campus.”

Alongside these strategic plans, Union also launched two capital campaigns. The first, launched in 1997, had a goal of $35 million. That goal was expanded to $60 million in 2000. The total reached $63 million in 2004, one full year ahead of schedule.

**ENGINEERING PROGRAM LAUNCHED**
- Academic Master Plan approved
- Mission Statement and Identity Statement approved

**2005**
- Day of Remembrance established
- Fall enrollment exceeds 2,800
- Budget exceeds $40 million

**2006**
- Engineering program launched
- President Dockery elected board chairman of CCCU
- Datatel migration for campus technology
- Union 2010: A Vision for Excellence campaign launched

**“I never cease to be amazed by how much joy he takes in others’ successes. He always finds ways to honor others in their passions, gifts, and callings. I’ve never met a person who has more courage than he is, a courage that derives from humility. Many people have self-confidence, but few people have outright courage. He is directly tied to his humble pursuit of Christ.”**

**GENE FANT**

**Vice President for Academic Administration and Dean, College of Arts and Sciences**

**“David Dockery’s gifts for leadership are multi-dimensional, to say the least. As one of the latest board chairmen under whom I’ve had the privilege of serving, David impacted in many ways his wisdom, sensitivity and respect for differing views, support for staff, attention to detail, and quiet competence. His impact on the Kingdom continues to grow. Sue and I love David and Lanese!”**

**BOB ANDRINGA**

**CCCU President, 1994-2006**

**“My friend David Dockery combines a passion for teaching biblical worldview with a warm intellect and a gracious spirit. That rare combination of gifts has enabled Dr. Dockery to do a remarkable job in 15 years leading Union to be one of the premier Christian institutions in America.”**

**CHARLES COLSON**

**Founder, Prison Fellowship**
Union’s third five-year plan under David S. Dockery’s leadership was entitled “Union 2010: A Vision for Excellence.” Building upon the success of the two previous plans, this one came with eight major priorities ranging from a focus on future opportunities to building on Union’s historical legacy. Work advanced quickly on these goals, but about three years into the plan, Dockery summarized it as “a clarion call to re-emphasize our foundational commitments, including our identity, our Christ-centered mission and our liberal arts heritage… the plan was ended on July 31 of that year. White Hall completed accreditation for first time in 40th anniversary of Baptists as a denomination. Fall enrollment tops 3,000 for first time. Recovery and rebuilding following an EF-4 tornado that did $40 million in campus damage. Doctor of Pharmacy program begins. Hendersonville extension program opens.


Union 2010 goals already had been reached: “Never before, in a 40-month period, has so much been accomplished at Union University than since the implementation of Union 2010.” The plan was entitled “Union 2010: A Vision for Excellence.” Building upon the success of the two previous plans, this one came with eight major priorities ranging from a focus on future opportunities to building on Union’s historical legacy. Work advanced quickly on these goals, but about three years into the plan, Union was hit by an EF-4 tornado that left about $40 million in damage to the campus. In wake of this disaster, many priorities shifted to make possible a swift recovery. In about 90 percent of on-campus housing destroyed, 40 million dollars in damage.