Our Identity

Union University is an academic community, affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention, equipping persons to think Christianly and serve faithfully in ways consistent with its core values of being excellence-driven, Christ-centered, people-focused, and future-directed. These values shape its identity as an institution which prioritizes liberal arts based undergraduate education enhanced by professional and graduate programs. The academic community is composed of quality faculty, staff, and students working together in a caring, grace-filled environment conducive to the development of character, servant leadership, and cultural engagement.

Our Core Values

• Excellence-Driven: We believe that excellence, not mere compliance, is the goal of our teaching, our research, and our service. We are not motivated to excellence out of pride but out of a desire to do all things for God’s glory because He cares about our work and wants to be involved in everything we do. We will not be satisfied with mediocrity, but will pursue excellence in all things. This means our truth claims carry with them the challenge of living out that truth in the minutes and hours of our daily life. Thus we will pursue excellence, without arrogance.

• Christ-Centered: A cohering core value of our guiding vision is a call to faith, a call to be Christ centered in all that we are and in all that we do. We will seek to build a Christian liberal arts based community where men and women can be introduced to an understanding and appreciation of God, His creation and grace, and to humanity’s place of privilege and responsibility in this world. We will seek to establish all aspects of life and learning on the Word of God, leading to a firm commitment to Christ and His Kingdom. To be a Christ-centered institution calls for us to establish the priority of worship and service in the Christian life while seeking to develop a generation of students who can be agents of reconciliation to a factious church in a hurting and broken world. This commitment calls for all faculty and staff to integrate Christian faith in all learning and doing, based on the supposition that all truth is God’s truth and that there is no contradiction between God’s truth made known to us in Holy Scripture and that which is revealed to us through creation and natural revelation.

• People-Focused: A third pillar on which we will build our common commitments is the core value of being people focused. At the heart of our commitment to being people focused is the visible demonstration of valuing one another. We will give honor to one another through our words and actions, and by committing to each person’s success. We therefore jointly commit ourselves to the success of Union University.

• Future-Directed: We will seek to maximize the windows of opportunity the Lord has presented to us to the greatest degree that resources allow. All of our resources and efforts must, by God’s grace, be maximized to fulfill our common mission. A commitment to being future directed means we want to have a short-term focus and a long term view. We want to involve ourselves in efforts that prepare us effectively to impact the world of the 21st Century.

Our Mission

Union University provides Christ-centered education that promotes excellence and character development in service to Church and society.

The University’s History

Union University is an heir of three antebellum Tennessee schools—West Tennessee College and its predecessor, Jackson Male Academy, both located at Jackson, and of Union University, located at Murfreesboro—and it is the inheritor of another college in 1927, Hall-Moody Junior College of Martin, Tennessee.

Jackson Male Academy, founded February 3, 1823, shortly after the opening of West Tennessee for settlement, was chartered by the legislature in 1825.

West Tennessee College

West Tennessee College originated in the mid-1840s when supporters of the Academy secured a charter for a college and received an endowment from the state to come from the sale of public lands. Under its charter, the property rights and governance of the Jackson Male Academy were vested in the trustees of the College. The College offered three degrees—bachelor of arts, bachelor of philosophy, and master of arts—and had four departments: Moral Philosophy, Languages, Mathematics, and Natural Philosophy and Chemistry.
Southwestern Baptist University and Tennessee Baptist

West Tennessee College continued until 1874, when, at a time of depressed economic conditions, the trustees offered the College’s buildings, grounds, and endowment to Tennessee Baptists in the hopes of attracting the southwestern regional university planned by the state’s Baptist leaders.

Meanwhile, after years of discussion and the raising of an endowment, the Baptists of Middle Tennessee (there were three separate conventions in Tennessee at that time) in 1848 established Union University in Murfreesboro, near the geographical center of the state. Union University came upon hard times when in 1859 its highly respected president, Joseph H. Eaton, died and when during the Civil War its campus was badly damaged. It reopened in 1868 only to close again in 1873, largely because of its financial condition and an epidemic of cholera.

Southwestern Baptist University, the immediate predecessor of the present Union University, originated because of a desire by Tennessee Baptists, who still had a separate convention for each of the state’s three Grand Divisions, for greater unification. Education became the core issue around which such unification was promoted. Committees of the three conventions met jointly in Humboldt in 1873 and issued a resolution supporting the establishment of a first-class regional university. An Educational Convention met in Murfreesboro in 1874, at which time a committee was appointed to select a location for the proposed university. The committee recommended the acceptance of the offer made by the citizens of Jackson to assume ownership of West Tennessee College.

Southwestern Becomes Union University

In September 1874, the new Tennessee Baptist-related institution opened in Jackson, and in 1875 it was chartered as Southwestern Baptist University. In 1907, Dr. T. T. Eaton, a trustee at Southwestern from its beginning, bequeathed his 6,000 volume library to the institution. He was a former professor at the Murfreesboro campus, where his father, Dr. Joseph H. Eaton, had been president. In 1907 the name of Southwestern Baptist University was changed to Union University to honor the Eatons and others from the Murfreesboro campus who had made a major impact on Southwestern as faculty, administrators, trustees, and contributors. In a further move to unify its educational efforts, the Tennessee Baptist Convention in 1925 secured a new charter for the University in conjunction with the adoption of the Cooperative Program and clarity regarding the election of the University’s trustees. Two years later, the Convention was able to consolidate Hall-Moody Junior College at Martin (1900-1927) with Union University. During the 1920s, Union discontinued its graduate program, its Law Department, and its high school and added a bachelor of music degree program.

After a major campus fire in 1912, several new buildings were constructed, including Barton Hall, the centerpiece of the Jackson campus for the next 60 years. In 1948, during the administration of President Warren F. Jones (1945-62), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools granted Union University its original accreditation. In 1962, at the request of area healthcare leaders, Union developed a nursing program with the assistance of Jackson-Madison County General Hospital.

The Move to North Jackson Campus in 1975

Because of an aging and landlocked campus, Union, in 1975, moved from near downtown to a new campus located along Highway 45 Bypass in north Jackson. This visionary move was accomplished during the administration of President Robert Craig (1967-85). Under President Craig and President Hyran Barefoot (1986-1996), enrollment increased from less than 1,000 students to nearly 2,000; the multipurpose Penick Academic Complex was enlarged several times; many additional housing units were erected; and the Blasingame Academic Complex (1986) and the Hyran E. Barefoot Student Union Building (1994) were constructed.

The Building Years – 1995-2014

When David S. Dockery was elected as the fifteenth president of Union University in December 1995, he brought with him a compelling vision to build on a great tradition while taking Union to the next level of regional and national prominence in Christian higher education. During his tenure the university grew in its commitment to the integration of faith, learning, and service, among other ways, through the establishment of a Center for Faculty Development. Undergraduate majors and graduate programs grew to include doctoral programs in education, nursing, pharmacy, and theology. The annual non-duplicating headcount increased from 2,183 (in 1996) to more than 5,300 (in 2012). Nine new buildings were constructed and a campaign for a new library was begun. In addition, the university achieved top tier recognition in U.S. News & World Report, Princeton Review, and other important listings, and the Chronicle of Higher Education named Union one of the Great Places to Work in the United States.

United and Grounded – 2014-Present

In June 2014, Samuel W. “Dub” Oliver became Union’s sixteenth president. Coming from a distinguished career at Baylor University and a five-year presidency at East Texas Baptist University, Dr. Oliver has demonstrated a firm commitment to lead Union University to inhabit her mission and core-values.

The Logos—Union’s three-story, 54,000-square foot library was dedicated on November 6, 2015. A new strategic plan, United in Spirit. Grounded in Truth., 2016-2020, was adopted by the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2015. Union also in 2015 launched the EDGE program to provide educational opportunities and job skills training for youth adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In 2017, an academic reorganization took place that created two new schools: the School of Social Work and the School of Adult and Professional Studies. In 2018, the university launched its Writing Center, a result of the Quality Enhancement Plan that Union was required to produce as part of its reaffirmation of accreditation.

Union approved a campus master plan in 2019 that calls for new buildings and an extension of the university’s Great Lawn all the way to Highway 45 Bypass over the next 20 years.

Dr. Oliver leads with energy and a Christ-centered optimism about the future.
Our Statement of Faith

1. The Scriptures. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain, and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.

2. God. There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver, and Ruler of all things, having in and of Himself, all perfections, being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. He exists eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being. God as Father reigns with providential care over all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures.

3. Jesus Christ. The second person of the Trinity is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for our redemption from sin. He was buried and rose again the third day, and ascended to His Father, at whose right hand He lives to make intercession for His people. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the universe.

4. Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine, who exalts Jesus Christ. The Spirit convicts men and women of sin, of righteousness, and judgment, enabling them to understand the truth. He calls men and women to the Savior, and brings about regeneration, which is a renewal of heart and nature.

5. Humankind. God originally created humankind in His image, and free from sin; but through the temptation of Satan, they transgressed the command of God, and fell from their original righteousness, whereby all humans have inherited a sinful nature that is opposed to God, and are thus under condemnation. As soon as they are capable of moral action, they become actual transgressors. God created only two genders and He fashioned each one of us as either male or female. Sexual relationships are designed by God to be expressed solely within a marriage between a man and a woman.

6. Salvation. Salvation involves the redemption of the whole person, and is offered freely to all who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; accepting and trusting in Him alone for justification and eternal life. Justification is God’s gracious declaration of righteousness of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made. Believers are also sanctified by God’s Word and Spirit dwelling in them. Sanctification is the process of progressing toward moral and spiritual maturity, enabled by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Those who are accepted in Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

7. The Church. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, which is composed of all true followers of Christ, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. Christians are to associate themselves with local churches; and to each church is given the authority to administer order, to carry out ministry, to worship, and to practice discipline.

8. Last Things. The bodies of humans after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God—the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. God in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised. God has appointed a day, when He will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when all people shall receive according to their deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life.

This Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. With respect to faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the Board of Trustees is the final arbiter on the Bible’s meaning and application for the purposes of the University.

External Associations

Accredited By

Union University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award certificate, associate, baccalaureate, master’s, education specialist, and doctoral degrees. Questions about the accreditation of Union University may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC’s website (sacscoc.org).

The University also has the following discipline-specific accreditation:

- Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education
- Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology, Engineering Accreditation Commission
- Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International
- Commission on Accreditation for Athletic Training Education
- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation
- Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
- Council on Social Work Education
- National Association of Schools of Art and Design
- National Association of Schools of Music
Member Of
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Chemical Society
Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International
Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors
Associations for Christians in Student Development
Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education
Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools Certificate in Education for Public Relations, Public Relations Society of America
Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education Concurrent Admissions Program
Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences
Council on Undergraduate Research
Council for the Advancement and Support of Education
Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability
National Art Education Association
National Association of College Admissions Counselors
National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements
Southern Council of Collegiate Education for Nursing Tennessee Association for Counseling and Development Tennessee Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers
Tennessee College Association
Tennessee Independent College and Universities Association
State Board Approvals
Educator Preparation Program, Tennessee State Department of Education
Tennessee Health Related Boards

The Campus
The uniqueness of the Union University campus, located on U.S. Highway 45 Bypass and Union University Drive in Northwest Jackson, is related to the academic facilities and student housing. Union’s campus is designed with the student as its axis. All facilities, programs, and personnel are interrelated in an attempt to meet the needs of students.

In addition to the main campus in Jackson, Union University opened a second campus in the Memphis suburb of Germantown, Tennessee, in 1997. Because of the rapid growth of the campus, the faculty and staff offices, classrooms, and computer lab facilities moved to a new location in June 2001. Continued demands for growth and expansion of programs warranted a renovation in 2003 to include additional nursing labs, classrooms, conference rooms, and offices.

Union also has an off-campus site in Hendersonville, Tennessee. The Hendersonville campus is located at the strategic intersection of Indian Lake Boulevard and Maple Drive. The attractive 26,000 square foot multi-purpose facility effectively serves the expanding program offerings in the middle Tennessee area.

Jackson Campus Facilities
Penick Academic Complex
The Penick Academic Complex houses the G.M. Savage Memorial Chapel, Fred DeLay Gymnasium, E.T. “Rocky” Palmer Activities Center, Vocatio Center, Waldrop Administrative Center, Union Station, Information Technology, Writing Center, and the Warren Jones Academic Suite. The Complex includes the departments of Art, Computer Science, Engineering, English, History, Language, Mathematics, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology and Family Studies, Physical Education, Wellness and Sport, as well as the Intercultural Studies Program and the Center for Intercultural Engagement.

The Waldrop Administrative Center contains the offices of Accreditation and Research, Business Services, the College of Arts and Sciences, Counseling Services, Disability Services, Health Services, Safety & Security, and the Registrar.

The Logos
The Logos, opened in 2015, houses the Union University library and archives, the offices of the President and the Provost, the Modero coffee shop, and study and meeting rooms. The library provides comprehensive and current academic resources and services to support the educational initiatives of Union University, with immediate access to a collection of more than 150,000 books and 200,000 e-books, as well as thousands of journals and other academic resources.

Fesmire Fields and Fieldhouse
The Fesmire Fields provide lighted playing fields for varsity baseball and softball. The Fesmire Field House provides indoor practice and dressing rooms for men and women's soccer, softball, and baseball, as well as athletic training rooms for sports injuries.

Smith Memorial Soccer Complex
The Smith Memorial Soccer Complex provides two competition fields, bleachers to accommodate 1,000 spectators, a press box, concession stand, and restroom facilities.

Blasingame Academic Complex
The McAfee School of Business, the College and School of Education, and the School of Social Work are located in the Blasingame Academic Complex.
Hammons Hall
Hammons Hall contains the Offices of Institutional Advancement, Alumni Relations, University Communications, and the School of Adult and Professional Studies.

Jennings Hall
Jennings Hall contains the departments of Communication Arts, Music, and the School of Theology and Missions, as well as the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies and Hartley Recital Hall.

White Hall
White Hall houses the departments of Biology and Chemistry as well as the College of Nursing.

Providence Hall
Providence Hall houses the administrative and faculty offices and state-of-the-art classrooms for the College of Pharmacy, as well as the simulation labs for the College of Nursing and Health Sciences and the Center for Excellence in Health Care Practice.

Luther Hall
Luther Hall houses the Center for Just and Caring Communities and provides conference spaces for various functions.

Residence Halls
Single student housing is arranged in two residence complexes. Student apartments include four private bedrooms and a kitchen. The Heritage Residence Complex and the Ayers Quad primarily house new students/freshmen. The McAfee Commons building in the Heritage Complex houses the Residence Director and Assistant Residence Director and provides facilities for lounge areas, laundry, and recreation. The Grace, Hope, Hurt, and Watters Quads house upperclassmen and a limited number of freshmen. The Bowld Student Commons Building houses male and female residence directors for The Quads. The Commons provides additional lounge, recreation, and classroom space.

Family housing is located in the Warmath Apartments. The complex consists of 24 two-bedroom apartments. Graduate housing for single students is available in the Hope Complex.

Hyran E. Barefoot Student Union Building
The Barefoot Student Union Building houses the Brewer Student Dining Hall, Executive Dining Room, Lexington Inn, Eldon Byrd Faculty Lounge, Barefoot’s Joe coffeehouse, Harvey Auditorium, University Printing and Mail Services, campus bookstore, offices for Student Life (Dean of Students, Student Government Association, Student Activities Council, and Student Leadership and Engagement), offices of Undergraduate Admissions, Student Financial Planning, Enrollment Services, University Ministries (Missionary-In-Residence), and Prayer Chapel.

Carl Grant Events Center
The Carl Grant Events Center is named in honor of Carl J. Grant to recognize his generosity to and support for Union University. The beautiful state-of-the-art events center was designed to host significant conferences, dinners, banquets, and special events. This magnificent facility also contains the University’s Heritage Center, a splendid pictorial presentation of the University, portraying many of the highlights in the University’s history from 1823-2007.