



Union College

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

## Union College (Nebraska)

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Union College is a co-educational liberal arts baccalaureate<sup>1</sup> college in Lincoln, Nebraska, founded by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1891. The college has continuously operated on the same site and under the same name since it was founded.

Originally owned by the General Conference, title to Union College was transferred to the Central Union when it was formed in 1902, although the Northern and Southwestern unions continued to support the college. Union

College is currently governed by the Mid-America Union, formed when the former Central and Northern unions merged in 1980.

## Developments that Led to the Establishment of Union College

In 1889, there were only seven Adventist schools providing high school and college-level education in the United States. Five of the schools, located in Battle Creek, Michigan; South Lancaster, Massachusetts; and along the Pacific Coast, represented the pattern of American migration across the United States, which largely skipped over the central Great Plains region of the United States before the Civil War. At the time, the central Great Plains were thought to be an uninhabitable expanse of treeless desert. The Adventist message also bypassed the southern United States where people were not open to the Adventist message until after the Civil War. But two things changed after the Civil War. First, the Homestead Act encouraged settlement of the Great Plains and, second, a massive influx of European immigrants arrived in hope of obtaining free land through homestead claims.

Adventist evangelism was very successful among the new immigrants. New churches were established with regularity. Between 1875 and 1888, seven new conferences were formed in the region between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. Church growth demanded improvements in denominational organization. After the 1888 General Conference session in Minneapolis, Minnesota, church leaders divided the United States into four large districts, and a year later the system was further refined with the central United States becoming District 4 (or northwest district) and District 5 (or southwest district). These two districts would become the constituent base for the new Union College.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, church growth also increased interest in Adventist education due to the demand for more ministers and Bible workers. In 1888, the General Conference session delegates appointed W. W. Prescott to be the church's first educational secretary. Prescott was responsible for providing guidance in establishing new church schools and oversight of existing schools. Among his concerns was the desire of many local conferences to establish their own educational institutions for advanced study. At the time, Prescott strongly believed the church possessed neither the financial resources nor enough qualified teachers to support that many schools.

Thus, it was while attending the year-end exercises for the Minneapolis school in the spring of 1889 that Prescott proposed that the conferences of District 4 combine their resources to support a single school. Continuing to advocate this idea throughout the summer, Prescott expanded the conversation to include District 5 after visiting Ottawa, Kansas. The question then became whether to establish two schools or one school between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi River. Ellen White counseled in favor of a single school, helping to achieve a consensus among church leaders by the time of the General Conference Session in the fall of 1889.<sup>3</sup>

## Founding the School<sup>4</sup>

The establishment of the “Western School”<sup>5</sup> featured prominently on the agenda of the 1889 General Conference session that met from October 17 to November 5. Key decisions included appointing a site locating committee and a board of directors, and creating a financial plan for raising the capital needed to construct the school. While the General Conference Association would hold title to the school’s property, fund-raising shares were divided among the state conferences of Iowa, Minnesota, Dakota, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Missouri, Texas, and Arkansas. Ultimately the General Conference contributed \$20,000, the constituent conferences raised \$60,000, and Wisconsin voluntarily contributed \$5,000, but total construction costs for the first four buildings was later estimated at \$151,000. The General Conference specified that the school was to offer a college curriculum, but left naming the new institution up to the board of directors.

The locating committee chaired by Iowa Conference President J. H. Morrison, was composed of W. B. White of the Dakota Conference, R. S. Donnell of Missouri, L. A. Hoopes of Nebraska, E. H. Gates of Colorado, J. G. Wood of Arkansas, W. S. Hyatt of Texas, Allen Moon of Minnesota, and L. Dyo Chambers of Kansas.<sup>6</sup> The committee considered a number of cities, all of which were eager to recruit the new college. By January of 1890 the choices had been narrowed to Lincoln, Nebraska, and Des Moines, Iowa, due to their central locations. But a group of Lincoln businessmen tipped the balance in favor of their city by putting together an attractive land deal and inviting the committee to visit Lincoln, travel expenses paid by the Lincoln Real Estate Exchange. Arriving on January 20, 1890, the committee toured six sites in and around the city of Lincoln for a week. On one of those days, they visited the May farm, then five miles southeast of Lincoln, where campus tradition says L. A. Hoopes planted his heel in the snow on a barren hill and stated “Here is where the southwest corner of the College building should be.” On January 28, the committee assembled in J. H. Morrison’s home in Knoxville, Iowa, along with representatives from the General Conference and, with only two dissenting votes, agreed to accept the Lincoln offer of 280 acres in the vicinity of the May farm.

In the winter of 1890, another thread of General Conference concerns about education for Adventists merged with the plans for the new college. In a time and place where attendance at Scandinavian and German language programs at camp meetings drew a larger attendance than did the English programs, it was thought important to provide education in these languages. Between November 1889 and April 1890, a five-month Bible School was held at Battle Creek, Michigan, with instruction offered in English, French, German, and Scandinavian languages. At the General Conference session in March 1890 President O. A. Olsen announced that the Scandinavian and German language programs would move to Union College.

## Choosing a Name

No remaining committee minutes document the decision to name Union College. Years later, in conversation with Everett Dick, Prescott claimed the name was his idea.<sup>7</sup> The group of state conferences that financed the building of the college was referred to as “the union” and the name Union College probably grew organically out of the board of directors’ conversations. The name was informally reported in a news note in the *Review* published on February 4, 1890.<sup>8</sup> To twenty-first century readers, the name Union College may seem ambiguous, but it predates the denomination’s union administrative units. Thus, in 1890 the name was unrelated to the modern organizational structure of the Adventist Church and may have had significant meaning for contemporary church members.

## Constructing the Campus<sup>9</sup>

When construction of the college began near the May farm in early 1890 Lincoln’s southeast city limit was nearly two miles away. It was understood by all parties that part of the 280 acres would be sold in town lots to incoming families who would staff the college and other families who might choose to move to the new community while their children attended the college. A. R. Henry was tasked with the responsibilities of land agent and selling the town lots. Part of the agreement between the new college and the city of Lincoln guaranteed that public transportation in the form of an electric streetcar would connect the city with the new town, named College View. This promise was realized only after the General Conference provided approximately \$2,000 to a Lincoln electric company in 1892 to purchase the electric streetcar and lay the lines. This public transportation fueled the growth of College View and southeast Lincoln, but it would be a few more years before Union College would be able to connect to city utilities such as water and electricity.

The General Conference engaged W. C. Sisley to design and build three college buildings and a powerhouse. These three buildings were the College Building containing classrooms and offices, South Hall housing English school students, and North Hall housing Scandinavian and German students. Sisley arrived in Lincoln in March of 1890 to begin plans. About this time, Enoch Jenkins, the Nebraska Conference field secretary, built a tool shed on the property in preparation for construction of the college buildings. Ground was broken for the main college building on April 10, 1890. The first building in the town of College View was a barn Sisley had built on the town lot he purchased for his family’s residence. This barn also hosted the first Sabbath School in College View.

## The College Opens

In 1889, the General Conference had expected the college to begin classes in the fall of 1890, but construction took longer than planned. When Union College was dedicated on September 24, 1891, none of the three college buildings were completed. Despite their unfinished state classes began on September 30, 1891, with about eighty-five students and sixteen faculty and staff members.<sup>10</sup> On November 25, 1891, the Scandinavian and German departments opened with another fifty students enrolling. Enrollment continued to grow in all courses

as the year progressed reaching a peak of 301 students.<sup>11</sup> Although Union College was intended to offer higher education from the beginning, many of these first students were unprepared for college-level work and most enrolled in preparatory-level courses.

From the beginning, Union College sought to educate the whole student, mentally, physically, and spiritually, preparing students for a life of practical work and service to God. Every aspect of the college's program, from course work to the required six hours of domestic labor each week to chapel services, contributed to this goal. The first college bulletin outlined four courses of study: English (equivalent to junior high school), Academic (equivalent to senior high school), Scientific (equivalent to junior college), and Classical (equivalent to a baccalaureate program). Musical instruction and physical education supplemented the formal courses. The Bible was central to the curriculum. President Prescott also placed emphasis on proper etiquette and deportment. While sharing a campus, the German, Scandinavian, and English students were segregated with not only separate classes, but separate chapels, dining rooms, and dormitories as well.

## The Growth and Development of Union College (1891-1941)<sup>12</sup>

W. W. Prescott was Union College's president for the first two years. But as he was already president of Battle Creek College and he then assumed the presidency of Walla Walla College when it opened in 1892, Union College's daily operation was supervised by a principal, James White Loughhead until Loughhead himself was made president in 1893.

Union College's first decade was plagued by the problems of incomplete facilities, declining enrollment, and financial instability created by the Panic of 1893. After an inauspicious start with only 85 students, enrollment quickly increased and peaked at 607 students in 1892-1893. Then in 1893 U.S. wheat prices crashed triggering a nation-wide depression that hit the Great Plains particularly hard when the region simultaneously experienced a drought. Suddenly, Union College's students, the children of Great Plains farmers, could no longer pay tuition. Union College also lost about \$80,000 when buyers of College View town lots defaulted on notes held by the college. Among other initiatives designed to maintain financial solvency, North Hall was leased to the Nebraska Sanitarium, an Adventist medical institution founded with the assistance of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg in 1895, for twenty years beginning on March 15, 1899, and then outright sold to the sanitarium in 1905.

Between 1889 and 1896, the General Conference held Bible schools providing theological training for ministers, colporteurs, and Bible workers. During the 1894-1895 academic year, 131 students attended the General Conference Bible School at Union College.<sup>13</sup> Although the course used college faculty and facilities, it did not offer academic credit and no student records were created for attendees. But these students counted themselves among Union College alumni—a testament to the college's welcoming campus culture that generated a loyal alumni base.

The late 1890s also saw the first student publications. *Rose Leaves* was published by the graduating class of 1898 as a class memento similar to a yearbook although it included no photographs. Similarly, the class of 1901 printed a volume entitled the *Souvenir of the Class of 1901*. But it was not until 1917 that a regularly appearing yearbook was first published. With the exception of three years during the 1930's Great Depression and one year during World War II, the *Golden Cords* has been published each spring since 1917. In 1898 Union College faculty started a periodical called the *Practical Educator*. This publication was succeeded by the *Union College Messenger* in 1904 and the *Educational Messenger* in 1905. In 1909 the *Educational Messenger* was placed under the control of the student association and became a student publication. It was replaced by the *Clock Tower* in 1927, which continues to be published by the Associated Student Body.

The same desire for a biblically centered and doctrinally sound education that prompted Adventists to start church schools, also made them leery of accreditation by secular organizations. But Union College was among the first to recognize the necessity of accreditation in order for students' diplomas to be recognized professionally. This was particularly important in the areas of medicine and education. Thus, under the leadership of C. C. Lewis, Union College received accreditation from the New York Board of Regents on April 13, 1905 for premedical students. A further affiliation established with the University of Nebraska on February 15, 1906 gave premedical students standing not only with the University of Nebraska Medical College, but also with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in England when it granted recognition to the University of Nebraska Medical College in 1908. The following year Union College applied for and received recognition from the Nebraska state education department.

In 1910, the German and Scandinavian schools were relocated, the German school to Clinton, Missouri, and the Scandinavian school divided between Broadview, Illinois (Swedish), and Hutchinson, Minnesota (Danish-Norwegian). This dispersal of students resulted in the lowest enrollment since 1896-1897 with only 284 students. Over the next decade, enrollment stabilized closer to 400 students and would not dip below 300 again until the worst years of the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Between 1892 and 1920, the improvements to the campus facilities consisted mainly of adding utilities and expanding housing for students. Then beginning in the early 1920s a series of capital building projects that extended through 1947 culminated in greatly expanded facilities. Among these buildings were two gymnasiums, a factory, a library, and two classroom buildings, one for science and one for music.<sup>14</sup> North Hall was also repurchased from the Nebraska Sanitarium in 1920. The capital campaign for the new library was the first time since the college was founded that businessmen in the city of Lincoln were invited to financially support campus improvements. During this campaign, campus industries providing vocational training and student jobs caught the interest of Don Love, a local businessman and former mayor of Lincoln, who contributed funds for a factory building. At about the same time Neil Rowland, a student, and business manager Harvey Hartman presented a proposal to the college board for a furniture factory.

The furniture factory was not the first industry on campus. Beginning in 1897 there was a marked transformation of Union's curriculum from a strict classical format to a broader spectrum of elective courses and vocational training. In addition to classes such as sewing, tailoring, agriculture, carpentry, drafting, and bookkeeping, students could earn money working in the laundry, the broom factory, the dairy, or the bindery. Over the course of the twentieth century, these industries served both the college and the community. The laundry operated from 1891 until it quietly closed in 1967 when no longer profitable. The dairy farm started in 1895 and closed in 1957 due to urbanization of the college campus. The broom factory began in 1899 and closed in 1911, but was reinstated in 1933, then closed again in 1948 and revived in 1951. In the late 1950s mops were added to the line of products, but ultimately the broom and mop manufacturing was completely shut down in 1971. Book printing and binding was another industry that, like the broom works, was in business off and on between the early 1900s and 1976.

In 1926 a carpentry shop was set up under the charge of Abraham Ortner, who experimented with marketing various products constructed by students. However, the stock market crash in 1929 ended his attempts. In 1938, as previously mentioned Neil Rowland and Harvey Hartman revived the idea with a proposal for a much larger furniture making enterprise, one that became the College Furniture Manufacturers. The business, operating out of the Don Love Industrial Complex, produced seventy-five different pieces of furniture.

The construction of new buildings on campus was not only indicative of a growing campus's need for additional space, but also supported Union College's bid for regional accreditation. Under President M. L. Andreasen, faculty members were encouraged to seek graduate education as well. Among the number of faculty members who undertook graduate study during the 1930s was English professor D. Glenn Hilts. Hilts was appointed Union College's first full time librarian in 1934-1935 and given a year's leave of absence to earn a graduate degree in library science, making him the first Adventist professional librarian. Union College received North Central Association accreditation as a junior college in 1923 and as a senior college in 1937.

## The College in World War II

Union College also took the lead in preparation of its young men for a potential military draft. The Union College Medical Corps first met on January 8, 1934. The brainchild of a group of World War I veterans who were members of the faculty, Everett Dick became the principal leader of the program at Union College and was largely responsible for promoting it to the General Conference as well as inspiring other Adventist campuses to start similar programs. In 1939 the General Conference combined elements of these early campus Medical Corps to form the Seventh-day Adventist Medical Cadet Corps.<sup>15</sup>

During World War II, Union College was one of only two Adventist colleges approved to accept Japanese-American students moved to relocation centers by the War Relocation Authority. Facilitated by the National

Japanese American Student Relocation Council, the college was approved in early 1943 and enrolled approximately twenty students from Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming.<sup>16</sup>

## Union College Reaches Maturity<sup>17</sup>

With the return of American servicemen to college campuses, enrollment boomed and Union College registered 1000 students for the first time in 1947-1948. Thereafter enrollment remained above 800 for many years, reaching above 1000 several times (with the exception of three years around the time of the Korean War), and peaking at over 1,200 in 1967-1968. It was around this time that the Southwestern Union, a full partner with the Central and Northern unions since 1915, withdrew its financial support from Union College in favor of its own Southwestern Junior College which became a senior college in 1967. As a result, Union College's enrollment was reduced by the approximately 150 upper classmen who previously enrolled from the Southwestern Union.

Increased enrollment brought other changes to campus as well. The old wood-frame residence halls were no longer adequate. South Hall was replaced with Culver Hall in 1954 and North Hall was replaced with Rees Hall in 1958. In 1967, an additional residence hall, Prescott Hall, was added and the library and science (Jorgensen Hall) buildings were expanded.

Union College's curriculum also took on a more modern mien in the mid-twentieth century with new professional programs and more accreditations. Although the Nebraska Sanitarium trained nurses at one time, this program was never affiliated with Union College. Instead, Union College established relationships with nurse training programs of longer duration at Boulder Sanitarium and later Porter Hospital, both in Colorado. Nursing became a baccalaureate program in 1947 made possible in collaboration with the Boulder Sanitarium and Porter Hospital, where students completed upper division clinical coursework after taking pre-nursing classes on campus in Lincoln. As a result of this collaborative relationship, Union College's Division of Nursing dates its origins to 1896 when the Boulder Sanitarium began training nurses under the leadership of Dr. Kate Lindsay.<sup>18</sup>

Union College was the first Adventist college to provide a career center beginning in 1943. It was also the first Adventist college to offer a social work degree beginning in 1953-1954. In the late 1970s, Union College started working toward Council on Social Work Education accreditation and as a part of the effort made a collaborative arrangement with Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln where students from each college completed a portion of the coursework at the other campus. The education program received National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (now Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) accreditation on September 1, 1963, once again, the first Adventist school to do so. The education program also opened a multi-grade laboratory elementary school in 1976 named in honor of George Stone, chair of the education and psychology department from 1965 to 1973.



Under the leadership of Arthur Hauck, the campus also started a five-watt AM radio station in 1962 with the call letters KVUC (Kampus Voice of Union College). After the purchase of a ten-watt Gates transmitter (and revision of the call letters) KUCV-FM began operation at 91.3 megahertz in November 1968. A decade later, the station was upgraded 1000-watts, offering classical music and limited religious programming to the general public. After twenty years of operation, it became financially infeasible for Union College to continue operation of the station and ownership was transferred to Nebraska Public Radio in 1988 where the station continues to broadcast as the Lincoln radio station of Nebraska Educational Telecommunication (NET), a part of the National Public Radio network.

Continued high enrollment through the 1970s ushered in another round of new construction on the campus. By the early 1970s the College Building had become decrepit and in need of a great deal of repair. Rather than invest in what would likely be a costly restoration, two new structures were built. First a modern steel clock tower was installed in 1971 replacing the iconic tower on the old building, which was removed the same year due to safety concerns. The College Building was replaced by the Dick Administration Building in 1975. Although the library had been expanded in 1967 this new space was filled almost immediately and planning for an entirely new library began soon after. And in 1980 the first phase of the Health Complex (now called Larson Lifestyle Center) was completed. This building included an indoor swimming pool, fitness center, faculty offices, and classrooms for nursing and physical education. Two more phases were planned for the Health Complex, and groundbreaking occurred for phase two, but due to financial circumstances, construction on the next two phases was discontinued.

By the early 1970s most campus industries had been phased out, but the College Furniture Manufacturers still provided important student employment. However, as a business it was in financial trouble and in 1972 the factory building was leased to Harris Pine Mills. In 1981, Harris Pine Mills moved its Lincoln operations out of state. Union College then renovated the old factory building, allocating space in it for the Ella Johnson Crandall Memorial Library, the student center, the college store, a career center, plant service, and other offices. In 2013, portions of the building were renovated to accommodate the PA and International Rescue and Relief programs, as well as the Nursing Simulation Center.

When campus construction began in 1890, the only trees on the property were a lone cottonwood and a row of locust trees. Saplings were soon shipped in from the east in order to landscape the campus and cultivate an orchard. But campus landscaping and the diversification of tree species on the property became a special focus during Joshua C. Turner's tenure as grounds manager between 1948 and 1969. In 1981 the campus was designated the Joshua C. Turner Arboretum and became affiliated with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum.

In 1984, Union College made headlines for being the first college to place a computer terminal in every dorm room, a project funded by a grant from Hewlett Packard and private donors. The terminals were removed in 2001 after being made obsolete by the installation of a wireless network and the growing number of student-

owned laptop computers. Unfortunately, such a forward-looking initiative could not stop a detrimental decrease in enrollment between the fall of 1985 and the spring of 1997.

Recreational and intramural sports at Union College have a long history reaching back to the early decades of the twentieth century. During the 1980s, an intercollegiate athletic program was launched. The first team to play intercollegiately with other local private Christian colleges was a men's basketball team in 1986. Women's volleyball, women's basketball, men's soccer, and men's golf were later added. Union College's acrobatic gymnastics team dates back to at least the late 1940s. In the late 1980s the team was named the Gymnairs.

As Union College entered the early 1980s the last of the baby boom generation completed college, but the college leadership failed to anticipate the impact this would have on enrollment. Lacking new recruitment and financial strategies designed to keep the college thriving, between the fall of 1984 and the fall of 1985, enrollment dropped nearly 18% and continued plummeting until it bottomed out at 556 students during the spring term of 1994. As the college struggled with the decreased revenue some majors were eliminated, home economics among them. In addition, the college found itself in significant debt in 1985, which took three presidents to overcome, most notably John Wagner and John Kerbs, who worked tirelessly to reduce the debt. The Mid-America Union Conference contributed heavily to the payment of the debt by selling their office building, moving into a smaller one, and giving Union College the gain.

Several programs were started in an attempt to attract more students. The Best of Both Worlds was established in 1995 in conjunction with the University of Nebraska—Lincoln and Nebraska Wesleyan University allowing students to reside at and participate in Union College's student life while taking classes at one of the other campuses offering a wider selection of majors and courses. Even before the enrollment crisis, Union College created the Guaranteed Education program, which allowed students to return to campus between two and six years after earning their first bachelors degree to earn a second bachelors tuition-free, although certain majors were restricted from the program. The Baccalaureate Bonus program allowed students who had earned at least 64 credits from Union College and completed a first bachelors degree to take additional classes or complete a second major at a 50% tuition discount. And in 1997, with the inauguration of a major in PA studies, accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Union College discovered a new strength in health science programs that finally helped begin to rebuild enrollment. In 1998-1999 the student headcount exceeded 900 for the first time in fourteen years.

Declining population of both the Adventist Church membership and the general population in the territory of the Mid-America Union, as well as the closure of two boarding academies in the early twenty-first century made it essential for Union College to broaden its recruiting efforts. In addition to designing a national and international recruitment strategy, between 2010 and 2018 Enrollment Services moved to an enrollment management model of best practices, revised the college days program, enhanced the visit program, began a structured call program, reworked the financial aid awards, restructured the website, rebranded its visual

identity, and formulated the tagline “Experience the Spirit” to reflect the personalized, welcoming spiritual environment that was notable on campus.

In addition to Adventist academy students, special effort was made to recruit home-schooled students and Adventist students attending public high schools. The Mid-America Union Conference academy sports tournaments for basketball, volleyball, and soccer hosted by Union College were also designed to provide prospective students with additional opportunities to experience campus life. In the fall of 2017, 49 percent of the student body originated from outside the Midwest with the largest percentage of the freshman class coming from the state of California.

Meanwhile, changing needs and expectations as well as aging facilities led to two more capital campaigns. The Ortner Center, which opened in 2003, included a complete renovation of the cafeteria, the addition of a new wing attached to Culver Hall, and the renovation of part of Culver Hall’s second floor. The completed project provided new guest rooms, a conference venue, and an official welcome center for campus guests. In 2014 the Krueger Center for Science and Mathematics replaced Jorgensen Hall, providing state-of-the-art classrooms and laboratories for science, engineering, and math.

In 2014, Vinita Sauder became Union College’s first female president.<sup>19</sup> Many women played important roles in Union College’s history from the beginning as members of the faculty and staff. Notably the first six college registrars were all women and in recent decades women served in vice president roles. But no women were elected to the board of trustees until 1968 when Evelina Aitken of Nebraska and Mrs. Clifford Christiansen of Minnesota became members.<sup>20</sup> Sauder’s selection for president marked the first time a woman held any of the three executive committee positions.

As Union College moved into the twenty-first century, growing and maintaining a solid enrollment and tuition-base were of utmost concern. While still a liberal arts campus, Union’s growing health science programs were seen as the most viable way forward. In 2004 the PA program transitioned into a graduate degree, Union College’s first, with room to admit up to thirty students a year. Also opening in 2004, the International Rescue & Relief (IRR) program combined emergency medical response skills and sociology in a program designed to prepare students for careers in disaster response and international relief. In 2008 the nursing program expanded to admit two cohorts a year of twenty-four students each. In 2018 the first cohort of the occupational therapy assistant (OTA) program was enrolled, further consolidating the college’s expertise in health science degrees.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, the business program was gaining a national reputation for developing leaders for the Adventist health care systems, most notably Adventist Health System based in Orlando. Union College had an outsized number of top senior executives operating medical facilities, and four health care systems visited campus annually to recruit business graduates. But the liberal arts side of campus was not neglected with the revision of many programs including the creation of an emerging media emphasis in communication and the introduction

in 2015 of a new major in international relations. The significant number of church leaders among Union College's alumni also prompted the development of a leadership minor in order to intentionally foster leadership skills among students.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century Union College established a reputation for academic excellence with consistently high first-time pass rates for both the nursing and PA graduates' licensure exams. In 2015 and 2016 the Nursing program's first-time pass rate was the highest for both the state of Nebraska and the Adventist educational system. PA graduates achieved a 100 percent first-time pass rate in 2017. In 2006 Union College was listed as a top-tier school for the first time by *U.S. News and World Report*, a distinction it has since earned many times.<sup>22</sup>

## Historical Role

Given its small size, Union College has produced a seemingly inordinate number of church leaders and missionaries. Of the twelve faculty members listed in the first bulletin for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in 1937, seven had a prior affiliation with Union College, as either alumni or former teachers, or both.<sup>23</sup>The graduating class of 1906 began the college tradition of hanging golden cords on a world map connecting Lincoln, Nebraska, to the various regions of the world where alumni have served. As of April 2017, alumni records indicated that 1,763 cords had been hung representing more than 2,031 individuals (for many years a single cord was hung for a married couple and the wife's name was not recorded). In the early decades of the twentieth century, Union College alumni were a particularly strong presence in Asia and South America. Among them was Otto Christensen, who pioneered the Adventist work in Mongolia and later taught at Emmanuel Missionary College and Southern Missionary College.

Apart from mission service, Union College alumni have served the Seventh-day Adventist church in a wide variety of administrative roles. It is impossible to list everyone of note, but the following names illustrate the breadth of contributions by Union College alumni. Milton E. Kern was the first director of the Young People's Department and started the Missionary Volunteer program. Harvey A. Morrison, after serving as Union College's president, became president of Washington Missionary College, then secretary for the Department of Education, and finally general manager of the Review and Herald Publishing Association. Everett Dick directed the Seventh-day Adventist Medical Cadet Corps, Ardis Dick Stenbakken was the second director of the Women's Ministries department and her husband Richard Stenbakken directed Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries. Frank Yost was associate secretary of the International Religious Liberty Association and editor of *Liberty* magazine during the 1950s. On the division level, Don Schneider served as president of the North American Division.

Union College alumni have achieved recognition in other fields as well. Wayne Hooper was music director of the Voice of Prophecy radio broadcast. Norma Rhoads Youngberg wrote mission stories that continue to be classic reading for Adventist children. Floyd Bresee was the first Adventist military chaplain to be endorsed by the

General Conference. The significant growth of several Adventist hospitals was also the work of Union College alumni, among them Thomas L. Werner, Richard Reiner, Mardian Blair, and Larry Dodds.

Beyond service to the church, alumni have made valuable cultural contributions to the broader community. Mildred Rhoads Bennett was instrumental in preserving the legacy of American novelist, Willa Cather. James Berton Rhoads (attended Union College, but transferred to another university before completing his degree) became archivist of the United States. Educator Twila Liggett created the award-winning PBS children's program Reading Rainbow. Artist Victor Issa became a renowned bronze sculptor.

Union College's contributions to church and community were not limited to the accomplishments of its alumni. In 1978, Eugene Shirley, a Union College student, recognized that there was no Sabbath School Bible study guide for the collegiate audience. In collaboration with English professor Maylan Schurch, he began the *Collegiate Quarterly*. Both the *Collegiate Quarterly* and *College People* magazine were produced by Union College under the name Collegiate Publications, until the enterprise was sold to the North American Division in 1985.<sup>24</sup> In 1982, *AdventSource* began as a partnership between Union College and the General Conference Youth Ministries department as the official distributor of first Pathfinder materials, and then children's ministry materials of all types. As of 2018, *AdventSource* continues to employ Union College students in its production and distribution of more than 5,000 ministry publications.<sup>25</sup>

As Union College moved toward the end of the twentieth century, volunteerism, both international and local, became an integral part of the campus ethos. The first student missionary from Union College, Jerry Lake, served in Peru in 1965. As of 2018 more than 1000 students have served as short-term volunteers around the world. What began as a student missions work-a-thon fundraiser in 1974, evolved into Project BRUSH (Beautifying Residences Using Student Help) in 1981. The program had college students painting the homes of Lincoln residents who were financially or physically unable to paint their own homes. In anticipation of Union College's centennial, the college set a goal for students to paint 100 homes between 1981 and 1991, a goal that was exceeded. Following the centennial in 1992 a more comprehensive community service program called Project Impact was launched. Encompassing the entire student body, faculty, and staff in one day of service to local organizations, as of August 2017 volunteers had logged more than 131,000 hours.

In addition to campus-wide programs, individual academic departments have also initiated community service projects. The Health Science Foot Clinic was started by nursing professor Maurine Shambarger in 1993. Providing foot care, socks, and shoes to homeless people in Lincoln, the PA program now also participates in the project. The IRR program created a student Red Cross Club that provides first responder respite support at the site of local emergencies. IRR in collaboration with other agencies also sent teams of volunteers to mass disaster sites, such as hurricanes in Texas and the east coast of the United States, and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Union College academic departments have established working relationships with many social service organizations in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Over the years, Union College has built relationships with the local community through many commercial services and programs as well. In addition to the industries previously mentioned, a senior independent living facility, Union Manor, was built in 1985 on the site of Union College's old trailer park. The construction project was funded in part by a 40-year contract with a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program that provided low-income housing for both senior citizens and people with disabilities. Control of the Union Manor facility will revert to Union College in 2025.<sup>26</sup>

In the 2010s, a close relationship developed between Union College Division of Business and Computer Science and Adventist Health System (AHS). AHS provided internship opportunities for Union College students that led to employment after graduation. Acknowledging the professionalism and leadership skill of its business program alumni, AHS awarded Union College \$2 million in 2015 in order to create a permanently endowed chair for a professor of business administration.<sup>27</sup>

## Fulfilling a Mission

Union College was founded for the purpose of educating students for service to the world and the church through ministry, teaching, and medicine. The service mission has never changed, but Union College's programs and education model have transformed in order to remain relevant in a shifting world. Traditionally a residential campus for young adults, Union College lagged behind other campuses in the move to online education, but began offering online courses in the summer of 2017. Responding to the projected need for more health care professionals in the United States and building on Union College's current strength in the health sciences, new programs like occupational therapy assistant, which opened in 2018, were also designed to recruit a new student population.

Desiring to help students find lifelong vocations, in 2013, with a two-year \$50,000 grant from the Council of Independent Colleges, Union College launched "Experience Your Calling," a program designed to help students match their innate gifts with a fulfilling vocation.<sup>28</sup> As Union College looked to the third decade of the twenty-first century, its strategic planning envisioned growth and financial stability built on the college's areas of strength—strong student-faculty relationships, graduating leaders, facilitating career-starting student internships, a responsive environment, and individualized student mentoring.

## Union College's Presidents

William Warren Prescott (1891-1893 and 1924-1925); James White Loughhead (1893-1896); Eli Burgess Miller (1896-1897); Nelson Walker Kauble (1897-1898); W. T. Bland (1898-1901); Lewis Azariah Hoopes (1901-1904); Charles Clark Lewis (1904-1910); Frederick Griggs (1910-1914); Harvey Arch Morrison (1914-1922); Otto Marion John (1922-1924); Leo Francis Thiel (1925-1928); Paul Lamont Thompson (1928-1931); Milian Lauritz Andreasen (1931-1938); Aubrey Henry Rulkoetter (1938-1942); E. E. Cossentine (1942-1946); Robert V. Woods (1946-1950);

Harvey C. Hartman (1950-1957); David J. Bieber (1957-1964); Ray W. Fowler (1964-1970); Robert H. Brown (1970-1973); Myrl Manley (1973-1980 and 1985-1986 [interim]); Dean Hubbard (1980-1984); Benjamin Wygal (1984-1985); John Wagner (1986-1991; 2011-2014); Ward Hill (June-August 1991 [interim]); John Kerbs (1991-1998); David Smith (1998-2011); Vinita Sauder (2014-present).

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## NOTES

1. Despite offering one Masters program, Union College is still considered a four-year undergraduate college by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education in the United States.
2. "Statistics of Home and Foreign Conferences and Missions," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1889), 67.
3. W. W. Prescott, "Report of the S.D.A. Educational Secretary," *Daily Bulletin of the General Conference*, October 23, 1889, 39-43.
4. Information in this section summarized from David D. Rees and Everett Dick, *Union College: Fifty Years of Service* (Lincoln, NE: Union College Press, 1941) and Everett N. Dick, *Union: College of the Golden Cords* (Lincoln, NE: Union College, 1967).
5. Until Union College was named, it was generally referred to as the Western School or Western College.
6. "General Conference Proceedings: Eighteenth Meeting," *Daily Bulletin of the General Conference*, November 6, 1889, 150.
7. Everett N. Dick, *Union: College of the Golden Cords* (Lincoln, NE: Union college, 1967), 19-20.
8. "[News Note]," *ARH*, February 4, 1890, 80.
9. Information in this section summarized from David D. Rees and Everett Dick, *Union College: Fifty Years of Service* (Lincoln, NE: Union College Press, 1941) and Everett N. Dick, *Union: College of the Golden Cords* (Lincoln, NE: Union College, 1967).
10. Reports vary between 73 and 75 students enrolling on September 30, 1891. An additional 10 to 12 students enrolled on October 1, producing a total of 85 students at the beginning of the first school year. "[News Note]," *ARH*, October 6, 1891, 624.
11. O. A. Olsen, "Opening of the Foreign Department of Union College," *ARH*, December 15, 1891, 777.



12. Unless otherwise noted, information in this section is summarized from David D. Rees and Everett Dick, *Union College: Fifty Years of Service* (Lincoln, NE: Union College Press, 1941) and Everett N. Dick, *Union: College of the Golden Cords* (Lincoln, NE: Union College, 1967).
13. W. W. Prescott, "Report of the Educational Secretary," *General Conference Bulletin*, February 17, 1895, 214.
14. W. H. Beaven and E. E. Cossentine, "President's Report to College Constituency Meeting," *Central Union Reaper*, February 29, 1944, 1.
15. See Sabrina Riley, "Seventh-day Adventist Medical Cadet Corps," <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=B9RU&highlight=Cadet> | .
16. President E. E. Cossentine's Correspondence, Ella Johnson Crandall Memorial Library Heritage Room.
17. Information in this section summarized from Everett N. Dick, *Union: College of the Golden Cords* (Lincoln, NE: Union College, 1967); Everett Dick, George Gibson, and Union College Staff, *Union College: Light Upon the Hill* (Lincoln, NE: Union College, Alumni Association, 2004); and the personal knowledge of the author who served as Union College library director between 2003 and 2016.
18. See Edward Allen and Yvonne Joseph, "Nebraska Sanitarium," <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=79UT&highlight=Nebraska|Sanitarium> | and Everett N. Dick, *Union: College of the Golden Cords* (Lincoln, NE: Union college, 1967), 318-321.
19. Ryan Teller, "Union College Welcomes a New President," *Cord Magazine*, Summer 2014, 12-13.
20. Charles B. Hirsch, "Union College President Re-Elected; Women Join Board," *ARH*, March 28, 1968, 24.
21. Emily Wood Roque Cisneros, "Union College to Launch Occupational Therapy Assistant Program," Union College, March 2, 2018, accessed January 6, 2021, <https://ucollege.edu/20180302/union-college-to-launch-occupational-therapy-assistant-program/>.
22. "Union College (NE)," *U. S. News & World Report*, 2021, accessed January 6, 2021, <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/union-college-nebraska-2563>.
23. *Annual Catalog of the Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary* (Takoma Park, MD: Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1937).
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25. "About Us," *AdventSource*, 2021, accessed January 5, 2021, <https://www.adventsource.org/content/about-us/about-us-1>.
26. "Union Manor Slated for July Finish," *Clocktower*, March 28, 1985, 3.
27. "Making of a Chair," *Cord Magazine*, Spring 2018, 2.

28. JoellynSheehy, "\$50,000 Grant Launches Program to Help Students Find 'Calling,'" *Union College*, Winter 2013, 7.

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