



# A SEARCH FOR THE PRESIDENT

## THE UNIVERSITY OF MOUNT UNION ALLIANCE, OHIO

The University of Mount Union (UMU) Board of Trustees has announced the search for the University's thirteenth president in response to Dr. Richard Merriman's decision to retire at the end of this academic year. Dr. Merriman's accomplished presidency provides a strong starting point for his successor and a strong sense of momentum from which to exercise continued strategic leadership. With a focus on growth and financial stability, the new president will be asked to build the next iteration of Mount Union's strategic plan, to champion the liberal arts as the foundation of all academic programs, to sustain a spirit of academic entrepreneurship, to enhance current revenue streams, and to inspire others through continued collaboration. The appointment is expected to become effective on or about July 1, 2020.

# MOUNT UNION MISSION

TO PREPARE STUDENTS  
FOR FULFILLING LIVES,  
MEANINGFUL WORK,  
AND RESPONSIBLE  
CITIZENSHIP.

## ABOUT MOUNT UNION

The University of Mount Union, a private Midwestern institution founded in 1846, offers a rigorous and relevant academic program that is grounded in the liberal arts tradition. Mount Union's nearly 2,300 students (including over 200 graduate students) may select from 56 broad-based and career specific undergraduate programs as well as master's program in physician assistant studies and education, and a doctoral program in physical therapy. Other graduate programs are in varying stages of development and approval. Known for its academic excellence and personal approach, the institution boasts an historical 13:1 student-faculty ratio and a curriculum delivered by dedicated faculty members, 87% of whom hold terminal degrees in their fields.

Since 2005, the institution has invested \$110M in the construction and renovation of modern facilities, including a recreation center, apartment-style housing options, a health and medical sciences facility, and a performing arts center. Primarily residential in nature, Mount Union's picturesque 128-acre campus is located in Alliance, OH (population 23,000) within 80 miles of both Cleveland and Pittsburgh. The 180-acre Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center is located six miles away. The University's endowment totals \$145M.

The University strives to make its exceptional educational experience accessible to students of all financial backgrounds. Its increasingly-diverse campus community benefits from a student-centered approach and array of activities for cultural, civic, and social development. Students experience outstanding opportunities for success after graduation, both in the workplace and in graduate study.

**2,300+**

UNDERGRADUATE  
AND GRADUATE  
STUDENTS

**13:1**

HISTORICAL  
STUDENT-FACULTY  
RATIO

**\$110+**

MILLION INVESTED  
IN CAMPUS IN THE  
PAST 10 YEARS

For additional information, please go to [www.mountunion.edu](http://www.mountunion.edu).



## THE AGENDA FOR A NEW PRESIDENT

At a time of unprecedented change in higher education, UMU draws confidence from the combination of its recent successful initiatives and the promise of new ventures. The new president should be prepared to embrace Mount Union's grounding in its core values and the centrality of the liberal arts, while understanding the need for a leadership vision around new programs that will build from existing strengths. In doing so, the president will accept a dynamic agenda that centers on:

### PROVIDING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

#### Designing and Implementing the Next Strategic Plan

UMU's new president will arrive with a year remaining in the current [strategic plan](#), providing new leadership with the chance to listen to constituent interests before the immediate launch of a new planning cycle. The previous plan's introduction of new academic



programs will call for evaluation and continued monitoring of these initiatives, but that should not be interpreted as a need to maintain the status quo. Indeed, the items already addressed in this narrative (revenue generation and financial equilibrium) will be critical components of a new plan, as will several other of the points on this agenda.

Mount Union will present the president with a keystone opportunity to analyze the institution's current and future priorities, develop a meaningful strategic roadmap for the future, implement new program initiatives that will enhance UMU's distinctiveness, and strengthen its academic appeal for the 21st century learner. Taken together, the objectives of this plan should be intended to bolster future enrollment outcomes. As new leadership begins to develop future objectives, it will be expected that the energy, transparency, and collaboration that have enabled successful outcomes in the recent planning process will be continued.

### **Nurturing Effective Shared Governance**

UMU's governance structure has been enhanced in the last five years through an intentional effort to reflect Mount Union's growing complexity as a small, comprehensive university, while retaining its "small college" liberal learning ethos. In 2016, UMU adopted a formal [shared governance](#) outline that was developed by faculty, administration, and trustees. It clearly details the collaborative roles played by each UMU constituency. In addition, recent reorganization to create three colleges - Arts and Humanities, Natural and Health Sciences, and Applied and Social Sciences, the hiring of three new Deans (reporting to the Provost) with responsibilities for each of these entities, the development of a Faculty Senate, and a seat at the President's Council's table for the Senate's Chair have all helped to retain the advantages of an effective governance system in what remains an intimate learning environment.

Sensitivity to retaining strong relationships between faculty, administrative, and trustee leadership will enhance the new president's effectiveness early in their tenure. The respect and trust that can grow from following thoughtful governance procedures will also enable new presidential leadership to build critical consensus among and between all constituencies around the next strategic plan. UMU's Board membership currently totals 34 voting members who serve for three-year terms with eligibility to serve a total of four consecutive terms before facing a by-law-imposed term limit.

### **Managing While Leading**

The new president can lead Mount Union and its current senior administrative team by engaging a management style that draws this team into open and honest discussion about all issues impacting the University's welfare. Important will be the president's skill at delegating, empowering, and continuing to hold accountable the members of this cabinet. As

the president enables an effective management approach with the team and with those for whom the team is responsible, future institutional accomplishments will be accelerated and celebrated.

### **Extending Town/Gown Relationships**

In an effort to extend Mount Union's influence and visibility, the president will be asked to actively engage in the public arena and to build on the University's distinctive features. Important relationships can be further strengthened by the president's involvement in the city of Alliance and the surrounding region in Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. Given many of the new academic initiatives at UMU, partnerships and collaborations with hospitals, schools, government, and other non-profit groups will help the external communities, while also bringing reciprocal benefits to the University.

## **STRENGTHENING THE RESOURCE BASE**

### **Enhancing Enrollment Outcomes**

Enrollment growth at Mount Union has occurred, albeit modestly, over the last few years. That growth, however, has been uneven. Contributing factors include an incredibly competitive marketplace among and between public and private colleges in Ohio, a "rust belt" economy in many areas of the surrounding region, and the declining demographics being experienced in so many parts of the nation. Working with new personnel and organizational structures in the enrollment/admission area, the new president will be able to engage fresh efforts to target admission work for key academic programs, thereby sustaining and growing enrollment in a more robust manner. Mount Union itself, having evolved to a comprehensive university status,

has an opportunity to market its admission effort in a more program-specific fashion, thus highlighting many of its points of distinction and academic quality.

The next president must bring skills in analyzing and managing enrollment and financial aid variables for maximum results at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Strong planning will help to refine targets for admission, retention (average for first-year students over five years: 76%), and pricing strategies, while evaluating Mount Union's market position, reputation, and brand.

### **Extending the University's Philanthropic Culture**

Mount Union's overall welfare has been enhanced by current fundraising activity, focused largely on a capital campaign to be announced publicly this fall. The campaign's goal is \$50M, of which





approximately \$34M has already been secured. It is expected that by July 2020 when the new president arrives, the campaign will be very close to its goal and that the facility needs of the campaign will be fully funded.

Future opportunities include raising unrestricted annual fund contributions, increasing the alumni annual giving rate, expanding Mount Union's donor base, and soon considering the need for the next campaign. Fund raising for affordability (scholarships) will likely be a top priority in the future, since physical facilities (with the exception of some possible student housing renovations) are currently funded.

The president must be engaged as the chief fundraiser for Mount Union. Communicating the story, engaging external constituencies, setting advancement expectations, and using the strategic plan to establish fundraising priorities will all require presidential leadership. The new president should expect to be judged, in part, on reasonable expectations and significant outcomes in these areas.

### Sustaining Financial Equilibrium

Operating with an annual budget of nearly \$60M and a current endowment of \$145M, no other single agenda item for new leadership is as significant for Mount Union's overall success as the need to achieve ongoing financial equilibrium. While increased revenues are expected from enrollment in new academic programs and aggressive fundraising efforts, it will be critical for new leadership to bring a strategic perspective to the University's cost infrastructure and to practice a meaningful program of cost containment in future years.

The University closed the 2018-19 fiscal year with its 65th consecutive year of balanced operations as measured by operating revenues exceeding operating expenses. Mount Union is proud of its fiscal strength and heritage of living within its means. Sustainable budget parameters challenge all of higher education. The new president will have the opportunity to strengthen further UMU's financial equilibrium as future institutional priorities are determined in the next strategic plan.

## ENHANCING THE MOUNT UNION EXPERIENCE

### Demonstrating Intercultural Competence

A commitment to embrace diversity and inclusiveness in all its forms must be reinforced as a presidential priority. Leadership that demonstrates genuine intercultural competence can engage all of UMU around issues of inclusion, especially given the opportunity for enrichment of underrepresented groups in all constituencies of the Mount Union family.

### Celebrating Campus Community

Students have historically been the focal point of the Mount Union experience. Presidential leadership must be able to embrace the welfare of students, recognizing that student development occurs in and out of the classroom, formally and informally, and with all groups that make up the campus community. A new president must be comfortable providing visibility, accessibility, and genuine involvement in the life of the University.

## Supporting a Strong Athletic Tradition

When seeking points of distinction, one must look at the tradition of Mount Union's successful Division III athletic program. With 13 national championships in football as well as one indoor and two outdoor track and field championships in the last five years, the Purple Raiders' program provides an example from which other programs at UMU can glean insights about developing and promoting specific aspects of

selected curricular, extra-curricular, and co-curricular programs. Roughly 40 percent of incoming first-year classes are engaged on campus as student-athletes, a distinction which has supported overall enrollment, alumni involvement, fund raising, and marketing efforts at Mount Union.

## Moving Beyond Church Affiliation

Mount Union's historical association with the United Methodist Church

ended in 2019. A committee on Mission and Ministry has been working to formulate recommendations about how to articulate the University's future programs and messages in the realm of religion, spirituality, and campus ministry. The new president can help to define the proper role that UMU can play in helping students explore issues of meaning and vocation, and thereby find the appropriate role for ongoing religious inquiry and worship on the campus.





## DESIRED PRESIDENTIAL ATTRIBUTES

The next president of the University of Mount Union will bring a commitment to liberal arts-centered education, excellent teaching and scholarship, and academic entrepreneurship. Leadership qualities and professional accomplishments that correspond to the presidential agenda presented in this narrative will be critical, as will impeccable integrity, high energy, a demonstrable work ethic, a sense of humor, and an emphatic desire to see Mount Union succeed.

Strong academic credentials are highly desirable and an understanding of the academy is essential. At the same time, UMU recognizes that there can be many pathways to a successful presidency and appropriate leadership interests from outside the academy will be welcomed. Beyond this, the successful Mount Union president should be:

- A strategic and proactive leader, whose creative outlook and vision will help to strengthen UMU and



inspire others to engage in the effort;

- An effective fundraiser, able to inspire Mount Union's philanthropic culture and increase contributed resources;
- A student of higher education, knowledgeable about the changing landscape impacting colleges and universities, the needs of the 21st century learner, national trends in program development, and the significant role of technology in academic programs;

- A person with a sophisticated understanding of contemporary and successful enrollment management at both the undergraduate and graduate levels;
- A person of financial acumen, who can match Mount Union's aspirations with its resources;
- A person of intercultural competence and global perspective, committed to cultural pluralism with an ability to support diversity and inclusiveness throughout the University community;

- An accomplished communicator, whose authenticity includes strong listening skills and who will engage the Mount Union community in thoughtful discourse about its future;
- An astute manager, who can further develop an integrated senior team and successfully empower staff and faculty at all levels; and
- An enthusiastic campus presence, actively engaging students, staff, and faculty while modeling traits that will strengthen collegiality and community across the campus.





## THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The Mount Union Search Committee will be accepting nominations and applications throughout October and early November and will begin to narrow the candidate pool in late November. Although applications will be accepted until the time that a new president is selected, candidates should submit materials by 5 PM EST on Friday, November 22, 2019 for the most favorable consideration. Final selection will be made in late January and the new president will be invited to begin work on or about July 1, 2020.

Thomas B. Courtice, President of TBC Search Consulting, is assisting with this search. Nominators and prospective candidates may contact him in full confidence at [tom.courtice@gmail.com](mailto:tom.courtice@gmail.com) or at 614-395-6631.

Application materials should include 1) a letter of candidacy that responds to the AGENDA FOR A NEW PRESIDENT, 2) a complete CV or resume, and 3) the names and contact information (phone and email) for three preliminary references, none of whom will be contacted until later in the search nor without the permission of the candidate.

Applications should be addressed to the Search Committee Chair:

Mr. Matt Darrah

Chair-Elect, UMU Board of Trustees

[UMUPres@tbcsearchconsulting.com](mailto:UMUPres@tbcsearchconsulting.com)

Learn more about  
the University of  
Mount Union and  
this search.

**[MOUNTUNION.EDU/  
PRESIDENTIAL-  
SEARCH](https://mountunion.edu/presidential-search)**

*The University of Mount Union is an equal opportunity employer and is dedicated to the goal of building a faculty and staff committed to teaching and working in a multicultural environment. We seek a diverse pool of applicants who bring varied experiences, perspectives and backgrounds. Upon request, reasonable accommodations in the application process will be provided to individuals with disabilities.*