

Position and Candidate Specification



Union Theological Seminary

President

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November 2025

Assignment: 66620-001

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We are searching for an academic scholar and faith-leader activist—someone morally courageous with the intellectual depth, management expertise, pastoral caring and compassionate spirit to lead Union into its next chapter.

This person will champion interfaith studies and collaborations while honoring Union's Protestant roots, amplify Union's visibility with bold storytelling, and maintain Union's status as a spiritual sanctuary and public square.

As a scholar, preacher, and teacher, this individual will build bridges within and beyond the Union community, preparing the next generation of faith-based leaders for effective, ethical leadership in all forms.

Union Theological Seminary seeks an inspiring, visionary, and respected leader to serve as its next President. The next President will steward and amplify Union's unique identity while advancing enrollment momentum, nurturing a diverse and inclusive community, and strengthening the school's external reach and impact.

An ambassador for Union and its mission, the President will be an excellent communicator and public voice. This leader will be present and accessible to the community; bring pastoral instincts to support students' emotional, vocational, and spiritual needs; and cultivate a campus ethos marked by openness, warmth, good humor, and a wide acceptance of student diversity.

Working in partnership with an active, mission-driven Board of Trustees and a high-performing senior leadership team, the President provides vision and strategic leadership for Union's academic programs, public theology, fundraising, and community engagement. By articulating Union's mission with clarity and conviction and by building strong relationships across faith, civic, and philanthropic spheres, the next President will advance Union's moral calling to form leaders who pursue justice, compassion, and the common good.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Reports to	Board of Trustees
Direct reports	Dean & VP of Academic Affairs, and Associate Professor of Integrative and Field-Based Education Senior Executive Vice President of Public Theology & Civic Engagement and Interim Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Social Justice VP of Administration VP of Communications & Marketing VP of Development & Alumni Relations Chief Human Resources Officer Director of Finance / Chief Financial Officer Chief Operating Officer Executive Assistant to the President & Board Liaison, Executive Office & Associate Director, Campus Service Alliance of Northern Manhattan (CSANM) Director & Principal Investigator of National Storytelling Initiative Project
Other key relationships	Union Faculty, Staff, Students, and Alumni President, Columbia University Chancellor, Jewish Theological Seminary Commissioner's Staff, New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) President, Manhattan School of Music Senior Minister, The Riverside Church Leaders of denominational dioceses

Theological Seminaries and Places of Worship

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Serve as the chief academic and administrative officer of Union Theological Seminary, providing strategic vision and operational leadership for all aspects of the institution while maintaining visibility and accessibility across the community.
- Act as Union's primary ambassador, representing the seminary with moral clarity in interfaith, ecumenical, civic, and policy arenas.
- Oversee academic excellence by upholding rigorous scholarship, modeling interreligious competence, and, where appropriate, sustaining direct engagement with teaching.
- Provide financial stewardship through disciplined planning, prudent management, and ambitious fundraising, including growing diversified philanthropic support from individuals, foundations, and institutional partners.
- Strengthen relationships with alumni, donors, faith leaders, civic partners, and the media.
- Lead efforts to innovate and expand academic programs, including our degrees offered in residence, online, and in correctional facilities, while bridging full-time and part-time student communities.
- Oversee campus operations, including stewardship of facilities, completion of ongoing renovations, and management of property and governance matters with integrity.
- Foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community that reflects Union's commitments to justice and belonging at every level of the institution.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

Academic and Theological Credibility

Distinguished scholarly achievement, with a Ph.D. is strongly preferred. Brings a deep understanding of theological education and the life of the church, combined with interreligious competence and respect for diverse traditions.

Organizational Leadership

Senior-level leadership experience in higher education, theological education, or a mission-driven organization of comparable complexity and scale. Demonstrated ability to create and articulate a compelling vision and successfully lead diverse teams to achieve it. Experience fostering a collaborative, consultative, and inclusive culture that values shared governance and student voice.

External Relations and Fundraising

Experience cultivating donor confidence and building long-term relationships that sustain mission-driven organizations. Comfort and effectiveness as a public speaker and representative, engaging media, civic leaders, and faith communities.

Operational and Financial Management

Experience managing budgets, property, and multi-source revenue streams, ideally through overseeing campus operations and capital projects.

Pastoral and Community Engagement

Pastoral or chaplaincy experience, or demonstrated capacity to provide empathetic, student-centered leadership. Ability to navigate complex social and political dynamics with moral clarity and courage.

CRITICAL LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

Visionary Leadership

The President will be a creative, strategic thinker who:

- Articulates a compelling, future-oriented vision for Union that honors its legacy and positions the seminary as a leader in interreligious, socially engaged, and academically rigorous theological education.
- Anticipates emerging trends in theological education, social justice, and faith communities, and translates these insights into actionable long-term plans that inspire and mobilize the institution.
- Develops and implements strategies that address complex challenges in higher education, including enrollment, financial sustainability, and digital transformation, while advancing Union's mission and values.
- Makes innovative decisions with clarity and conviction, grounded in Union's historic commitments to justice, diversity, and academic excellence.

Collaborating and Partnering

As Union's ambassador, the President:

- Builds enduring partnerships across faith traditions, academic institutions, civic organizations, and philanthropic communities to advance Union's reach and impact.
- Engages stakeholders with openness and humility, fostering a culture of shared governance, collaboration, and mutual respect.
- Navigates complex relationships and interests, seeking consensus while honoring differences, and adapts communication style to diverse audiences.
- Facilitates dialogue and collaboration among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and external partners, ensuring all voices are heard and valued in decision-making.

Leading People

In a community constantly striving towards justice and academic excellence, the President:

- Empowers and aligns individuals and teams around Union's mission, cultivating a campus ethos marked by openness, warmth, good humor, and acceptance of diverse perspectives.
- Models pastoral presence and emotional intelligence, supporting the emotional, vocational, and spiritual needs of students, faculty, and staff.
- Delegates responsibility and authority, providing guidance and resources while encouraging independent leadership and professional growth.
- Facilitate a culture of true inclusion and social justice for all identities and backgrounds.

OTHER PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Mission-driven and values-based.
- Courageous, with a strong moral compass.

- Inclusive, empathetic, people-centered.
- Authentic, transparent.
- Resilient.
- Intellectually curious.

TARGET COMPENSATION

The base salary for this position is anticipated to be in the range of \$350,000 to \$400,000. The selected candidate's salary will be determined based on factors that include the available budget, internal equity, and the final candidate's qualifications, experience, education, and other job-related credentials. On-campus housing is provided and required.

APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS

Union Theological Seminary is being assisted in this important recruitment by Spencer Stuart. If you wish to confidentially submit application materials or nominate someone for this role, please email:

UTSPresident@spencerstuart.com.

About the Seminary

Union Theological Seminary

Founded in 1836, Union Theological Seminary is a globally recognized seminary and graduate school of theology where religion, spirituality, and scholarship meet to reimagine the work of justice. Established by founders “deeply impressed by the claims of the world upon the church,” Union has, for nearly two centuries, prepared leaders who combine intellectual rigor with moral courage to confront the most pressing issues of our time. Union’s world-class faculty of theologians, scholars, and practitioners spans diverse disciplines—including theology, ethics, historical studies, biblical studies, interreligious engagement, practical theology, and social justice leadership—bringing global as well as local expertise and lived commitment to faith, scholarship, and the public good.

A BEACON FOR JUSTICE

Union is not a seminary in isolation from the world—it is a laboratory for justice and transformation. Our faculty, students, and alumni are at the forefront of movements for racial equity, criminal justice reform, LGBTQ+ rights, economic inclusion, immigrant justice, and climate action. Through innovative centers such as the Center for Earth Ethics, The Beacon, and the Law, Rights, and Religion Project, Union extends its influence well beyond the classroom, shaping national and global conversations about ethics, law, and the future of our planet.

ROOTED IN NEW YORK CITY

From its founding, Union’s leaders intentionally located the seminary in the heart of New York City. They believed that to be relevant, theological education must stand at the crossroads of culture, politics, and public life. Nearly two centuries later, that decision continues to define Union. Our campus—situated in Morningside Heights, in one of the most diverse cities in the world—offers students a living laboratory where scholarship meets real-world challenges. Union’s proximity to movements, cultural institutions, houses of worship, and policy debates ensures that students are not only studying theology but also engaging the pressing issues of urban life, democracy, and global interconnection.

AN INTERRELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

Union draws students from a wide spectrum of traditions. Union is a historically Christian seminary with a growing interreligious focus. Our community includes Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Indigenous practitioners, as well as those who identify as spiritual but not religious. This interreligious richness shapes a learning environment where students deepen their own commitments while cultivating the skills to collaborate across lines of difference.

BY THE NUMBERS

Union serves a student body of more than 260 graduate students each year, supported by 25 full-time faculty members, 20 adjunct faculty, and a dedicated staff of more than 60 professionals. With eight degree programs as well as lifelong learning opportunities, the seminary fosters a close intellectual community and mentoring. Its operating budget of approximately \$18 million annually sustains academic programs, scholarships, and innovative centers that extend Union’s reach into the public square. The seminary’s alumni network of over 5,000 graduates serves as pastors, scholars, organizers, and nonprofit leaders around the world.

DISTINCTIVE APPROACH

Union's approach is marked by a combination of intellectual rigor and social commitment. Students explore theology in conversation with philosophy, psychology, law, politics, and the arts, embodying Union's conviction that scholarship and activism belong together. Located in the global capital of New York, Union leaders are sought-after voices in public debates—from the pulpit to the op-ed page—and the institution's mission is deeply tied to advancing equity, justice, and democracy.

UNION TODAY

Union Theological Seminary stands as a beacon for social justice and progressive change, led by diverse theologians and activist leaders. Drawing from Christian traditions and the insights of other religions, Union educates leaders who respond with moral clarity to the climate crisis, racial injustice, income inequality, mass incarceration, and threats to democracy.

At Union, justice is not simply a course of study—it is the core of our identity.