

# UCE of FIT

## Strategic Vision

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### Introduction

To the Officers and Executive Committee Members of the United College Employees of Fashion Institute of Technology:

It is with great pride that we present for your consideration a draft of the Strategic Vision and Communication Plan for the UCE of FIT.

Our Union finds itself at a crucial juncture in regard to its history and its future, and is uniquely poised to play an instrumental role in shaping the future of the Fashion Institute of Technology. The drama presented before the Supreme Court in the *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association et al.* case brought new urgency to our ultimate goal of greater engagement and activism by all UCE members. This strategic vision and communication plan will help fuel the momentum needed to effectively engage the membership, while demonstrating how valuable the UCE is in serving the needs of our constituencies.

The Strategic Plan identifies three key areas that will help provide the roadmap needed to help us stay on course in strengthening Membership Engagement:

1. Identifies the main issues and tasks facing our Union
2. Recommends initiatives that will help clarify who we are and
3. Underscores the importance of, and the tools needed, to keep our Union relevant, engaged and strong.

Each item has been carefully and thoughtfully discussed. Our sincere hope is that this plan will lay the groundwork to shape for us a renewed and energized presence within the larger FIT community, inspire our continued efforts to work together to mold the College's direction and priorities, our working conditions, and the future of higher education.

In Solidarity,

The Strategic Vision Committee

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## **Mission Statement**

The UCE of FIT is a culturally and professionally diverse and inclusive community of faculty and staff who value quality of life in the workplace and the free and responsible exchange of ideas as the essential foundation to maintain and improve the learning environment.

The primary role of the UCE of FIT is to support collective bargaining as a means to strengthen and protect the core principles of due process, academic freedom and shared governance, and to promote the economic security, health, and safety of its membership.

Through the UCE of FIT faculty and staff participate more effectively in efforts to shape the College's direction and priorities and to defend the values of public higher education.

To fulfill this mission, the UCE of FIT is committed:

- To collective bargaining to insure the fair and equal treatment of the membership and establishment of wages, benefits, job security, and working conditions;
- To expand awareness of the rights and responsibilities of our membership;
- To foster a work environment in which the membership feels free and safe to participate and develop skills to contribute to an informed, productive and ethical working life.

## **Initiatives**

To achieve this mission, the UCE of FIT strives to succeed and develop initiatives in five key areas of excellence:

1. Campus Leadership and Leadership Development
2. Building an Organizational Culture
3. Exemplary Teaching, Learning, and Work Environments
4. Community Engagement and Coalition Building
5. Social Justice, Equity and Diversity

## 1. Campus Leadership and Leadership Development.

The UCE values and actively seeks to develop leaders who can serve at every level of the union as an affirmation of its values and goals. Diverse and inclusive leadership is essential to the growth and relevance of the UCE in an increasingly challenging environment where the value, benefits and mission of our union need to be clearly outlined and communicated to its membership. Leadership is expressed not only in the formal roles established that govern the union, but through inclusive informal interaction within the membership.

The development and support of leadership includes encouraging open discourse on concerns that establish an ever-expanding connection with the environment and context of how we educate, support and serve our membership.

Initiatives to establish, sustain and develop leadership include:

1. **Proactive communication** through social media, the newsletter and website.
2. **Frequent general meetings** to encourage informal discourse between the leadership and its members, and establish confidence and transparency.
3. **Leadership mentoring program** to encourage interested staff and faculty to participate and contribute efforts and ideas to the benefit of the UCE while the mentees gain insight and familiarity with the activities of the union.
4. **Leadership training** to reinforce the role of leadership by example at each level of membership. Staff and faculty interested in participating in the operation and management of the UCE become familiar with the ways the union provides for its membership.
5. **Outreach to inactive or non-participatory members** to increase representation, to continue mirror the diversity of the UCE staff and faculty members and to scaffold its credibility and strength.
6. **Redefine the role of the executive committee membership** to assign specific responsibilities.

## 2. Building an Organizational Culture

The UCE fosters an environment where its membership maintains a strong voice in shaping the College's direction and priorities, its working conditions, and the future of higher education.

In order to preserve the integrity of our collective professional lives the UCE seeks to promote an active, expressive and critical union built upon a well informed and empowered staff and faculty that will participate effectively in efforts to defend the values of public higher education, values that are under attack locally and nationwide. In the face of negative environments, the UCE can provide strategies to reestablish and improve communication between staff, faculty and administrators.

Initiatives to build an organizational culture may address both local and the global challenges for educational unions:

### 1. Address the following questions:

- Are faculty and staff getting involved in raising the profile of the union within each office/school/department?
- Is the leadership communicating effectively with all members?
- Is the UCE effectively leveraging its unique wall-to-wall underlying structure?
- Are members coming to meetings?

- Are members participating in elections?
2. **Highlight UCE history, achievements, mission, and values** by providing members with the following knowledge and tools:
    - Overview of UCE history, testimonials and comparative analysis.
    - Easy access to resources and benefits.
    - Background and close monitoring of current legislation and legal cases that affect union activities. (e.g., Friedrichs v. the California Teachers Association and flesh out major implications for teachers unions and UCE of FIT's authority to collect fees).
    - Research funding opportunities, community connections, and working resources.
    - Quick resolution of workplace issues that deeply affect both our welfare and our ability to be productive members of the College.
  3. **Address the growth of administrative infrastructure and proportional decline of full time opportunities for staff and faculty.**
  4. **Address issues of decent pay, parity pay for part time staff and faculty, job security and a career opportunities, and erosion of academic freedom.**

### **3. Exemplary Teaching, Learning and Work Environment**

The UCE enhances the College's community by championing an appropriate, fair and safe workplace that sustains a healthy, productive and engaged workforce. Furthermore, a safe and healthy workplace is tantamount to an appropriate learning and teaching environment.

The UCE regards the personal welfare, safety and health of each member of primary importance and advocates to ensure that all mechanical and physical facilities required for personal safety and health are in compliance with codes and regulations set by OSHA, ADA, and New York City Building Department Life Safety, and maintained in keeping with the highest standards.

Through advocacy, the UCE commits to encouraging, promoting, and assuring workplace quality and to guiding Institutional policies and plans with regards to the appropriateness of teaching, learning, and working environmental conditions. This includes but is not limited to:



## 4. Community Engagement and Coalition Building

The UCE considers itself an important partner in the goals of the College, and as such seeks to actively engage in supporting and advancing initiatives in tandem with the administration, the student body, as well as the greater community of which FIT is a part. As such, the UCE seeks to co-sponsor activities that enrich the College's mission toward education, global justice, and sustainability.

### Initiatives focused on engaging the community and building coalitions might include:

- Student participation and engagement in issue-based events.
- Local volunteer work in the Chelsea area and throughout the five boroughs pairing staff and faculty with student groups, classes, and/or members of the administration.
- Increased presence at a wider variety of events throughout the community, city and country that focus upon issues of education, social justice, sustainability, and human rights.
- Sponsoring a wider variety of social events to engage staff and faculty and other community members, including recreation, picnics, sporting events, and creative projects.

## 5. Social Justice, Equity and Diversity

The UCE believes that a strong commitment to social justice, equity and diversity is a high priority. The success of our efforts to address and eliminate obstacles to social justice, equity and diversity depends on our willingness to engage and to educate our members.

Initiatives to promote Social Justice, Equity and Diversity at FIT in within the ranks of the UCE may include:

**1. Inventory.** Conduct an inventory of the College and continue to assess and address the conditions of diversity in the staff, faculty, student body, administration, and union leadership. Continue to address the pathways to leadership available to UCE members. Continue to analyze obstacles to diversity and propose action plans to eliminate these obstacles.

**2. Diversity Committee.** The UCE makes diversity [faculty and staff, members] a central tenet of the union agenda.

- Establish a permanent standing UCE Diversity Committee.
- The UCE Diversity Committee strives to counter the culture of isolation faced by members of underrepresented groups.

**3. Inclusion.** The UCE continues to take the lead in including members from underrepresented groups in its ranks and leadership positions.

- The UCE takes the lead in fostering campus wide conversations on diversity and diversity related issues, such as "cluster hiring."
- The UCE continues to actively recruit members from underrepresented groups.
- The UCE continues to actively recruit minorities for new member retreats, local and national conferences.

**4. Mentoring Program.** The UCE organizes workshops for new faculty and staff and becomes a steady point of reference to support their professional needs.

- The UCE develops a formal mentoring program for new members, making sure to include new underrepresented members.
- The UCE takes the lead to articulate concrete strategies to address social justice, equity and diversity.

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## **Communication Plan**

Working toward the goals outlined in this strategic plan requires effective communication amongst members of the UCE.

The UCE will develop a Communication Plan articulating strategies to reach our constituents in diverse ways and to support the activities described in this plan. This communication plan will take into consideration the following issues:

**Target Audience**

**Messaging and Frequency of Communication**

**The UCE Website and Social Media Profile**

**Additional Communication Resources for Developing Community Outreach with SUNY Faculty and Staff**