

Executive Summary: Strategic Positioning

On March 11, 2005, the University of Minnesota's Board of Regents unanimously endorsed a strategic positioning plan aimed at making the University one of the top three public research institutions in the world within a decade. Economic, demographic, and global forces have brought a new era for higher education and with it the need to fundamentally transform the University to even greater heights of excellence and academic distinction. Excellence requires that we build up existing strengths, anticipate the future, and align our academic and administrative resources in ways that best serve our students, faculty, and the state of Minnesota.

The University faces a convergence of challenges. Among these, Minnesota's traditional college-age population will decline in the next five years; there will be more students from diverse populations; competition for the best students and faculty will increase, as will competition for a decreasing pot of state and federal resources. For example, Minnesota currently ranks 29th in the country in support for higher education from state and local taxes, down from 6th 25 years ago.

We can turn these challenges into opportunities through bold and creative action. Our task will be to preserve the values we hold dear at the institution—access and public service, to name two—while positioning a very good institution to be one of great distinction. Without transformation, the University faces the prospect of losing its ability to provide students with a high quality education, enriched by a research environment, and to use its educational and research capabilities to improve the health and well-being of all Minnesotans. Strategic positioning is a multiyear journey: Evaluation of everything the University does—teaching class, discovering cures to social or physical ills, bringing the latest health and technological innovations to rural communities, managing the state investment in our campuses—will be ongoing and will lead to additional recommendations in the future.

The strategic positioning process began in August 2004 and led to the blueprint that was unanimously endorsed by the Board of Regents in early March. At the same time, two task forces—academic and administrative—were formed to develop recommendations for President Robert Bruininks' consideration at the end of March. Into May, there will be broad consultation within the University community on the recommendations, and the president will submit his recommendations to the Board of Regents in May. After a public hearing and other consultation, the regents will take action at their June meeting. Following that, task forces will spend several months developing implementation plans, with their recommendations due on December 10, 2005. Some results of the strategic positioning process are expected to be in place by July 1, 2006. Other changes may take several years.

Academic Recommendations for Twin Cities Campus

Undergraduate Admissions, Enrichment, and Support

To sustain and advance academic quality at the University, we must institute improvements in undergraduate education that promote high expectations for learning outcomes and a rich and supportive student environment. Four recommendations are proposed to achieve these goals:

- strengthening academic support and advising services across the University;
- enhancing access and diversity through increased efforts to improve high school preparation;
- increasing early outreach and recruitment;
- creating a new university-wide writing initiative and honors college.

These recommendations will help the University recruit high ability students, strengthen commitment to educational attainment for all students, improve student services, increase student satisfaction and improve institutional accountability and outcomes, including graduation rates. In addition to the academic advantages, the University is expected to realize savings through streamlining and other efficiencies.

Faculty Culture

The quality of a university comes first and foremost from the achievements of its faculty. The University must attract, retain, and reward both promising entry-level and distinguished senior faculty. The recommendations call for investments in faculty quality and development.

Reshaping and Design of the University

The academic task force charged with the redesign of programs looked for ways to deploy faculty talent, increase coordination and collaboration across academic disciplines, and increase investment in areas of comparative advantage. The recommendations for the Twin Cities campus include:

- 1) Create a new College of Design that would integrate the Department of Design, Housing and Apparel with the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. The new college would enhance the University's strengths across a range of design disciplines and integrate them into a stronger whole.
- 2) Create a new College of Education and Human Development that would include departments from the College of Education and Human Development, the College of Human Ecology, and General College.
- 3) Create and implement a plan for reconfiguring the sciences and engineering that optimizes existing strengths in four colleges—the College of Biological Sciences, Institute of Technology, College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences, and College of Natural Resources—and creates new connections among the disciplines.
- 4) Review the organization of the College of Liberal Arts with the goal of making it a model for excellence in liberal education, retention, and

graduation rates at the University, and leadership in interdisciplinary education.

- 5) Integrate the Department of Food Science and Nutrition, currently housed in two colleges, into an appropriate new structure.
- 6) Perform regular, ongoing review of graduate programs based on program interest, enrollment, and graduation rates.
- 7) Study and recommend whether the Law School and the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, and other smaller-sized academic units, can share administrative functions to create cost savings that can then be reinvested in academic programs.

Academic Recommendations for Coordinate Campuses

Each coordinate campus has its own unique mission and strengths and will develop and implement its own, parallel strategic positioning plan. Each campus will evaluate how to best serve its region and the state. Each campus must fulfill system-wide expectations for self-sufficiency and fiscal and academic accountability. The University's administration will work with each campus to establish a framework under which it will operate and be evaluated.

Administrative Recommendations

The University of Minnesota is recognized for its professional management, but to carry out the strategies outlined above will require a coherent institutional focus and a fundamental transformation of administrative operations and cultural expectations across all University campuses and operations. The task force is confident that these recommendations will strengthen the administrative and support units' ability to provide excellent service and achieve cost savings to better support the academic enterprise.

The administrative strategic planning task force recommendations include:

- 1) Recognize the University of Minnesota, its campuses, colleges, departments, and units as a single enterprise. Establishing uniform standards and systems will help reduce duplication of administrative processes and their associated support structures.
- 2) Embrace and achieve a culture that is committed to excellence, service, and continuous improvement. A culture that is aligned with and encourages transformational behavior and outcomes is essential for the University to achieve its strategic vision.
- 3) Transform the "centralized vs. decentralized" administrative structure. This historic model of administrative support has become nonfunctional and

outmoded. The University must restructure and realign our administrative units.

- 4) Adopt best-practice management tools throughout the University. Providing better information will support fact-based decision making and will demonstrate successes, target areas for improvement, and maximize the effective use of resources.
- 5) Focus administrative support on serving students, faculty, and academic units. Strengthening our understanding of the people we serve will allow administrative and support units to provide excellent services in alignment with their needs.
- 6) Maximize opportunities for the people of the University to grow, develop, and contribute. The University of Minnesota must transform its human resource system to foster creativity and innovation while enhancing effective, accountable administration. This means not only recruiting individuals at the top of their disciplines, but also providing individuals the means to develop new skills, once hired.
- 7) Optimize the use of the University's physical, financial, and technological resources. Strategic resource acquisition, management, and redeployment are essential if the University is to achieve its long-term goals and advance academic quality.

These seven recommendations and associated strategies are comprehensive and far-reaching. All seven recommendations are inter-related and therefore must be advanced together in order for transformational change to be possible. The administrative strategic planning task force will spend April and May advising President Bruininks on next steps to develop an initial plan for sequencing the recommendations and strategies and outlining expectations for completing implementation plans; recommend leadership responsibility and authority for the recommendations and associated strategies; and determine how progress on the recommendations will be measured and when.

The administrative strategic planning task force estimates that substantial progress on these recommendations will take three to five years and will require focus, persistence, and a considerable commitment of human and financial resources, but will ultimately avoid costs and achieve savings. The task force believes there is support, commitment, and resolve among administrative and support unit leaders across the University to achieve this change agenda.

The full Strategic Positioning report can be viewed at www.umn.edu/systemwide/strategic_positioning/