

Transforming the University

Final Recommendations of the Task Force on Collegiate Design: GC/CEHD

Task Force Members:

Laura Coffin Koch, *Co-chair*, Associate Vice Provost, First Year Programs, and
Morse Distinguished Teaching Professor of Mathematics, General College
Robert Serfass, *Co-chair*, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor,
School of Kinesiology, College of Education and Human Development
Victor Collins, Director, Martin Luther King Program, College of Liberal Arts
Megan Gunnar, Professor, Institute of Child Development, College of Education and
Human Development
Walt Jacobs, Associate Professor, General College
Amy Lee, Associate Professor, General College
Sharon Cormany Ornelas, Professional Practice School Coordinator,
Minneapolis Patrick Henry High School
James Parente, Associate Dean for Faculty and Research, Professor, Department of
German, Scandinavian and Dutch, College of Liberal Arts
John Romano, Professor and Chair, Department of Educational Psychology, College
of Education and Human Development
Leah Woodstrom, Undergraduate Student, General College/College of Continuing Education
Staff: Jon Binks, Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Submitted on behalf of the Task Force by:

Laura Coffin Koch
Robert Serfass
Co-Chairs of the Task Force
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I. Executive Summary

The mission of the General College (GC)/College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) task force was to develop a set of recommendations for designing a new college that would build on the strengths of GC, CEHD, the Department of Family Social Science and the School of Social Work in order to become a national model for teaching, learning, and human development, consistent with the University's goal to become one of the top three public research universities in the world. (For the list of task force deliverables see Appendix A.)

The task force began by identifying the values that would inform its deliberations and recommendations. These included: Commitment to Excellence; Diversity/Inclusion; Access → Effective Support → Academic Success; “Cross-fertilization” of interests of faculty/students across the College and University; High quality instruction/teaching expertise; Civic/Public Engagement; Sense of community among faculty, staff, students, and alumni; and Greater connections to PreK-12 and to MnSCU. (See Appendix B.)

From these values, a number of emphases emerged: 1) Diversity of students, faculty and staff is vital to the future goals of the College and the University; 2) Student success across the freshman admitting colleges of the University must be clearly linked to the provision of highly personalized and coordinated advising, mentoring and counseling models that are transmissible throughout the students' university experience; 3) Programs within the new department should be centered on learning communities that serve smaller groups of students; 4) A research agenda should be pursued that places the new department and the new college in a position of both national and international prominence in the area of teaching and learning in postsecondary education and extends the collaborative agenda into the PreK-12 arena; and 5) The new potential for collaboration (within the new college and with PreK-12), engagement, and interdisciplinary work is substantial. (See Appendix B.)

Higher education, and particularly public research universities, must respond rapidly and effectively to help schools, families, communities and individuals adjust to the changing demands created by globalization and our increasingly diverse state and nation. A new approach is needed, integrating the University's nationally recognized strengths and academic synergies in teaching and learning across the lifespan. The new college and the new department¹ are very well-prepared to respond to that challenge.

The task force recommends that the new college focus on leading issues in education and human development across the lifespan for all citizens. The configuration of the new college, by bringing together researchers in education, developmental education, psychology, early intervention, development and family processes, and social work, presents a unique opportunity to act as a national and international leader in conducting interdisciplinary research on disparities in educational achievement. The importance of the expertise of Social Work and Family Social

¹ Throughout this report, “new college” refers to the newly configured GC/CHE/CEHD and “new department” refers to the new department created by the integration of GC with the new college.

Science to the broader mission and vision of the new college is considerable. A holistic approach to research and teaching, including the importance to human development and learning of context, multiculturalism, social justice, the promotion of mental health, family structure, and urban/suburban/rural environments should be a hallmark of the new college.

The new department should develop, provide, and assess innovative models of teaching and learning, including models of effective advising. There should be a focus on learning communities with pedagogy based on cutting-edge research. New curricular efforts offer unprecedented opportunities for students and faculty.

To optimize inclusion of the new department into the new college, the new college should:

1) Focus interdisciplinary and collaborative research and teaching on major national and international educational and human development issues to attract and retain outstanding faculty, staff and students; and 2) Strengthen the relationship between the new college, the community, and national business and community leaders (PreK-16, including MnSCU and graduate education) to develop the new college as a national leader in public engagement.

To contribute effectively to the new college, the new department should:

1) Develop new learning communities and a new advising model as a centerpiece of the student experience to promote the University as a national leader in access to excellence for underserved and underrepresented students; and 2) Create unique interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate majors or minors as a comparative advantage for the new college.

We recommend that the current departmental structure in the new college be retained, but that the College promote and facilitate collaborative and interdisciplinary research and curriculum initiatives by developing overarching research and programmatic themes. Several new programs or initiatives are recommended: 1) Create new undergraduate and graduate majors and minors in the new department; 2) Prioritize advisor/faculty cooperation, and coordinate advising models across freshman admitting colleges; 3) Develop learning communities as a vehicle for effective student recruitment, retention, and graduation; 4) Promote nationally prominent research agendas in best practices in postsecondary pedagogy, particularly related to campus climate, retention, and multiculturalism; 5) Create a strategic collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning Services; and 6) Foster ties between the community and the university through a series of new partnerships with the PreK-12 community, MnSCU, community colleges, and the business and nonprofit community.

In order to promote current strengths and extend its comparative advantage we recommend that the new college: 1) Extend the strengths of General College's advising and mentoring model throughout the new college; 2) Build on the expertise in writing in the new department, continuing the tradition of placing writing at the center of the curriculum for entering students and develop a new approach to expanding the traditional writing center model; 3) Collect short-term and longitudinal assessment data on students' development as they move across the University; and 4) Support international education in the new college and in its work with PreK-16 and graduate education.