Transforming the U

Initial Decisions Regarding Academic Initiatives
July 2006

Following the work of the strategic positioning task forces, decisions are being made about strategic direction, alignment, and implementation. Reflected below are academic strategic positioning decisions and projects to date. They are categorized according to the strategic action areas endorsed by the Board of Regents in February 2005. Some decisions have already been implemented; others are in the process of being implemented. As further decisions are made, this list will be updated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Action Area #1: Exceptional Students</th>
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<td>Recruit, educate, challenge, and graduate outstanding students.</td>
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**Undergraduate Education**

1. **Recruit the best and brightest students from a broad diversity of backgrounds:**
   - Strengthen access and affordability by expanding financial support, including the Founders Opportunity scholarship program and other need and merit-based scholarship assistance
   - Improve the academic and diversity profile of enrolled students
   - Increase national and international applications across all disciplines
   - Increase national profile of undergraduate students, e.g., increase matriculation of National Merit Scholars in freshman class
   - Establish a “fast-track” option to allow for early admission of qualified undergraduate students to select graduate and professional programs

2. **Educate and support students for academic success and excellence**
   
   **A. Strengthen undergraduate academic support to improve academic success**
   - Establish campus-wide learning and student success outcomes.
   - Strengthen academic advising services and career services to enhance the personal attention that guides students toward their academic and post-graduation goals.
   - Assign to a campus-wide position the responsibility to plan and implement recommendations on academic advising and career services, including developing a campus-wide academic advising model with standardized training, student loads, evaluation, and rewards.
   - Invest in new portal technology concepts for student advising
   - Integrate the learning outcomes from extra-curricular programming to advance a development philosophy of the “whole student”
B. Provide a distinctive education focused on excellence

- Implement a campus-wide **Baccalaureate Writing Initiative** to improve student writing in all majors and disciplines of study across the Twin Cities campus. The University of Minnesota will become the leading institution for writing instruction, curriculum, and research; every University graduate will learn, through academic programs based on writing, to read carefully, think critically, and write in a manner that demonstrates strong logic, understanding, and analytical skills.
  - Provost has charged a working group to develop and implement an action plan to establish a campus-wide writing initiative to be operational Fall 2007.
  - Establish a new department in the College of Liberal Arts to provide intellectual leadership in research and teaching of writing by bringing together scholars and teachers from across the University who share a common passion for and scholarly interest in writing and composition.

- Create a **campus-wide honors program** to attract the very best students and to strengthen, expand and diversify the honors opportunities for all undergraduate students on the Twin Cities campus.
  - Provost has charged a working group to develop an action plan to establish a campus-wide honors program to be operational Fall 2007.
  - The working group has been directed to consider the following areas and to report its determinations in three phases:
    - The first phase will address admissions issues, including size of freshman program, relationship of colleges to the central program, and program leadership
    - The second phase will address staffing, budget, space, and curricular issues
    - The third phase will address extra- and co-curricular programs, for example, Regents Scholars

- Expand opportunities for students to be involved in **undergraduate research** to assure that more students have a mentored scholarly, creative, professional, or research experience by the time they graduate.
  - Create an Undergraduate Research Center, reporting to the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education, that has responsibility for aggregating information about undergraduate research opportunities across colleges, expanding those opportunities, and communicating about them to undergraduate students
  - Increase the size of the Undergraduate Research Opportunities program (UROP) as part of the expanded Undergraduate Research Center
  - Expand opportunities for students to present their research on campus and nationally, with a focus on increasing presentation skills

- Expand **freshman seminars** to better integrate student development with academic learning outcomes. Create a freshman seminar-like opportunity for transfer students.
o Provost has assigned responsibility for overseeing this effort to the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education
• Establish a systematic review and enhancement of curricula campus-wide, including:
  o Provost has charged the Council on Liberal Education to review the structure and curricular offerings of the liberal education requirements in light of the academic priorities emerging from strategic positioning.
• Implement learning outcomes recommendations
• Increase the target goals for 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates at all University campuses

Graduate Education
The Provost has charged the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School to enhance and advance graduate and professional education system-wide, beginning with improvements in the following areas:

1. **Recruit the best and brightest students from a broad diversity of backgrounds**
   • Continue to substantially enhance block grants and fellowships for targeted disciplines
   • Increase national recruitment strategies to matriculate the country’s most promising graduate and professional students
   • Implement a “fast-track” strategy to consider early admission to graduate and professional school programs for the University’s highest achieving undergraduate students
   • Capitalize on opportunities to better connect UROP to graduate programs

2. **Educate and support students for academic success and excellence.**
   • Strengthen and expand student academic support services throughout the graduate experience, including superior academic advising and mentoring
   • Continue efforts to maintain the quality of programs and departments that already have achieved national recognition for excellence, and establish a continuous process of program review and revision to improve the quality of all graduate programs and to nurture and develop excellence across campus
   • Increase emphasis on interdisciplinary research and teaching and learning at the graduate level
   • Continue to review all graduate degree programs for quality and effectiveness
   • Track all Ph.D. placements to assess the quality and quantity of opportunities available to our graduates

| Strategic Action Area #2: Exceptional Faculty and Staff |
| Recruit, mentor, reward, and retain world-class faculty and staff. |
World-Class Faculty

1. Strengthen and improve the policies, standards, and procedures governing promotion and tenure and post-tenure review, per the recommendations of the Task Force on Faculty Culture, including:
   • Engage the faculty in a systematic consultative process regarding the Tenure Code in light of recommendation of the Task Force on Faculty Culture.
   • Engage the faculty in a systematic, consultative process to revise the institutional statement on tenure, Section 7.11 of the Regulations Concerning Faculty Tenure, to achieve consistency with the University’s strategic goal of becoming one of the top three public research universities in the world.
   • Charge academic departments and colleges to revise departmental statements on the standards, criteria and indices for promotion and tenure, Section 7.12 of the Regulations Concerning Faculty Tenure, in particular to clearly articulate that the award of tenure and promotion demands the demonstration of excellence during the period under review. The promise or expectation of excellence is an appropriate criterion for the hiring of new assistant professors; it is not, however, appropriate as a standard for awarding tenure or promotion.
   • Develop standards of review, oversight and education to enforce promotion and tenure standards systematically and in a uniform way across the University.
   • Develop and implement a more substantial third-year review of progress toward tenure.
   • Develop and implement orientation and training for department heads/chairs and center directors that is more effective in developing the skills and abilities relevant to successful leadership and management of academic units.

2. Increase the international profile of the University’s faculty
   • Increase faculty nominations for prestigious national awards, honorary appointments and professional academic recognitions, facilitated by the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs with the assistance of a new Coordinator of Faculty Awards.

3. Recruitment and Retention
   • Additional competitive compensation strategies
   • New resources for retention of world-class faculty
   • Enhancements and expansion of the Regents Professor awards
   • Family friendly benefits
   • Faculty additions in strategic areas of strength and opportunity
   • Eliminate waiting period for faculty pension vesting

4. Create, promote and strengthen opportunities for faculty interaction across the University to enhance a sense of collegiality and advance intellectual community building across campus and across departmental and collegiate boundaries.
   • Enhance the interdisciplinary Institute for Advanced Studies to increase opportunities for engaging faculty across the campus and from other universities to jointly tackle some of the most pressing problems of society.
• Create a series of events sponsored by the Provost aimed at enhancing the intellectual environment across campus.

Strategic Action Area #3: Exceptional Organization
Promote an effective organizational culture committed to excellence and responsive to change.

Strengthen Compact Process to Integrate Planning, Performance, and Budgets

• Redesign the compact planning process to more fully integrate the budget model, strategic positioning, and academic priorities into the annual decision-making process related to strategic investments. An integrated approach will feed a more deliberate process of considering compact requests and allocating resources in support of the University’s stated goals and academic priorities.

Collegiate Redesigns

Three newly configured collegiate units opened July 1, 2006:
• College of Design
• College of Education and Human Development
• College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences

1. Phase I – Through July 1, 2006

• Names for new colleges approved by Board of Regents (March 2006)

• Organizational restructuring: Implementation of the “single enterprise” initiative and best practice ideas, identified by the Administrative Task Force and the Task Force on Small Colleges, to regionalize and improve services and create efficiencies that will allow resources to be reinvested in academic initiatives.
  ▪ Administrative restructuring focused on integrating and building several functional areas within the new colleges, including finance, human resources, student services, communications, development, alumni relations, information technology, and Dean’s office structures:
    o Functional area directors determined (April 2006)
    o Professional training and support provided to standardize professional practices at the management level and to delegate more responsibility and accountability to directors of functional areas.

• Collegiate leadership issues addressed in all three new units:
• Dean Thomas Fisher will continue in his appointment as dean of the new College of Design.
• National search underway for dean of the new College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences; Kathryn VandenBosch named in May as interim dean.

2. **Phase II – Starting July 1, 2006**

The second phase of the redesign will primarily occur under the leadership of the collegiate deans, within the standard methods and processes of institutional management and oversight, e.g., the compact planning process. Deans will focus on further structural refinements, revisions to academic program offerings and curricula, identification of opportunities for strategic investment that advance the institutional priorities and goal of being top three, and refinement of each college’s vision, mission, and priorities.

Newly redesigned collegiate units have been allocated additional funds to support the successful transition of leadership and collegiate structures as a result of strategic positioning, and to strengthen colleges and academic programming.

| Strategic Action Area #4: Exceptional Innovation |
| Enhance and effectively utilize our resources and infrastructure. |

**Flexible Infrastructure to Advance Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Stewardship**

1. Provost has appointed and charged an advisory committee to make recommendations specific to the design and implementation of a world-class interdisciplinary Institute on the Environment.

2. **Library System Enhancement**
   - Enhancing E-research capabilities
   - New resources to support library acquisitions and priority programming

3. The University has qualitative strengths, distinctiveness, and comparative advantages in several key areas. We will develop coherent, disciplined strategies for making investments in these core areas of existing strength that will support major investments in emerging new academic areas, including, for example:
   - Biofuels
   - Neuroscience
   - Nanotechnology
   - Biomedical technology
• New Institute on the Environment
• Food Science
• The Institute for Advanced Studies, and the new Consortium for Post-Secondary Academic Success

4. Continue to make significant investments in the leading nationally and internationally renowned departments, and identify the next group of departments ready to move into distinction through increased investment.