

Transforming the U through Strategic Positioning: Update on Academic Recommendations

At the March 10th meeting of the Board of Regents, Senior Vice President and Provost Tom Sullivan presented a strategic positioning progress report on the broad academic recommendations emerging from the task force work to date. These preliminary academic recommendations result from specific task force recommendations, broad consultation, and discussion among President Bruininks, the Senior Vice Presidents, and other members of the President's Executive Team at the first of three strategic positioning retreats scheduled through July 2006, and build on last spring's initial strategic positioning reports:

Advancing the Public Good

(http://www1.umn.edu/systemwide/strategic_positioning/report.html)

Academic Task Force Report and Recommendations: Academic Positioning

(http://www1.umn.edu/systemwide/strategic_positioning/pdf/SP_Acad_Task_Force_Report.pdf)

Transforming the U

(http://www1.umn.edu/systemwide/strategic_positioning/pdf/umn_pres_rec.pdf).

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES ACROSS THE ACADEMIC DOMAIN

Analysis of the recommendations from the first 11 task forces reveals four cross cutting strategic imperatives. These four core imperatives are essential for the success of any research university, and must pervade the entire academic enterprise:

- a. Culture of Excellence: pursuing excellence in everything we do
- b. Global/International: cultivating an international learning community
- c. Interdisciplinary: maintaining agility across intellectual boundaries
- d. Diversity: pervasively promoting diversity in University culture and curriculum

STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

The University has a responsibility to focus its intellectual power to address the most pressing societal issues facing the state, nation and world. The University must build a strong infrastructure and invest the necessary resources in research and education in order to produce transformative results. The University has qualitative strengths, distinctiveness, and comparative advantages in several key areas. We need coherent, disciplined strategies for making investments in these core areas of existing strength that will support major investments in emerging new academic areas, such as:

- Biofuels research
- Neuroscience breakthroughs
- Advancing biomedical technology

- Sustaining the environment, through the establishment of a new Institute on the Environment
- Food science solutions
- Addressing societal and cultural issues through interdisciplinary structures such as the Institute for Advanced Studies and the new Consortium for Post-Secondary Academic Success

ACTION STRATEGIES

Among the five action strategies articulated in the initial strategic positioning report, Advancing the Public Good, there are two areas under which the initial group of academic task force recommendations fall. Following are task force recommendations, grouped by action strategy, that we will emphasize in this first phase of implementation:

I. Recruit, Educate, Challenge, and Graduate Exceptional Students

Provide a Distinguished Undergraduate Education

- Greater and more pervasive emphasis on writing and persuasive communication (system-wide)
- Improved advising and personal attention that guides students toward their academic goals, and enhances their total student experience (system-wide)
- A campus-wide honors program that spans disciplines across the University
- A considerable expansion of hands-on research and community engagement opportunities (UROP) (system-wide)
- Diversity in the University culture and curriculum (system-wide)
- Increased emphasis on international applications for all disciplines (system-wide)
- Increased graduation rates (system-wide)
- Fast-tracking for undergraduates
- Increased opportunities in freshman seminars

Provide a Superlative Graduate Education

- Superior academic advising and mentoring throughout the graduate experience
- Enhanced block grants and fellowships for targeted disciplines
- Focus on quality programs and quality graduate students
- Fast-tracking undergraduates for early consideration to graduate school
- Connect UROP to graduate program opportunities
- More emphasis on interdisciplinarity at the graduate level

II. Promote an Effective Organizational Structure Committed to Excellence and Responsive to Change

Realigning & Redesigning Resources for Impact

- College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences
- College of Education and Human Development
- College of Design
- Library System Enhancement
- Institute for Advanced Studies
- Institute on the Environment

Each of the colleges involved in the collegiate redesign effort has been engaged deeply in transformative efforts with the July 1, 2006 deadline in mind. Of particular note are efforts to implement best practice administrative structures in light of the ongoing work of the Administrative Task Force. As a result, in creating these new colleges, faculty and staff are not simply combining existing administrative structures, but are truly transforming in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness of service.

With over half of the task forces remaining to submit their final recommendations, further decisions and detail will result from a cumulative process that unfolds throughout the spring and summer months. Preliminary recommendations from another 10 strategic positioning task forces will be posted for public review and comment March 31 through April 30 at http://www.umn.edu/transforming_the_u . Final recommendations from these task forces are due May 5.