

Transforming the University

**Final Recommendations of the
Task Force on Collegiate Design: CNR, COAFES, CHE**

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*“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present
are certain to miss the future.”*

–JFK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Integration of the broad range of scholarship present in the College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences, the College of Natural Resources, and the Food Science and Nutrition Department provides a host of new opportunities to achieve greater excellence in research, teaching, and outreach. Our review and discussions over the past three months lead us to believe that this consolidation will enhance the University's biological and social science contributions to the environment, agriculture, human health, food systems, and natural resources.

The mission of the New College is to promote creative scholarship supporting agriculture, food systems, and natural resources. Our work should benefit humans and sustain the ecosystems upon which society depends. The principles guiding the college include interdisciplinary teams conducting fundamental and translational research to enhance the educational opportunities for students and to improve the quality of life in Minnesota and beyond.

Our key recommendations are summarized below, organized around the five Strategic Areas in the President's Repositioning report. These recommendations include having world class faculty and outstanding students, formation of transitional clusters of departments for development of synergies and principles for reconfiguration. Such clusters would serve as a platform for strengthened teaching and outreach efforts and growth in competitive research funding. We also recommend establishment of a University-wide Institute of the Environment, enhancement of interdisciplinary efforts with other units, expansion of scholarly activities related to translational biology, and further development of public engagement.

Recruit, mentor, reward, retain and involve in the decision process world-class faculty and staff who are innovative, energetic, and dedicated to the highest standards of excellence. We must strategically invest in faculty with competitive salaries, start-up packages, and on-going staff support. Faculty should be provided "intellectual mobility" to foster interdisciplinary scholarly activity and disciplinary evolution. Interdisciplinary faculty participation, such as in the proposed system-wide Institute of the Environment, must be both rewarded and evaluated.

Recruit, retain, nurture, challenge, and graduate outstanding knowledgeable, diverse, curious, and highly motivated students. Students reflect the strength of any University unit. The recruitment of top students and providing an excellent learning environment is central to achieving excellence. Joint degrees between disciplines should be achievable via a streamlined process. Because the 21st century is said to be the century for biology, we recommend that the Council of Biological Deans be re-established to maximize curricula development for attracting and educating top quality students in forward-looking areas and reducing barriers for intercollegiate cooperation.

Promote an effective organizational culture that is committed to excellence, responsive to change and more faculty-driven. To provide greater opportunities for interaction and to provide opportunities for reconfiguration of departments, we recommend the formation of three transitional clusters of existing departments and reconfiguration of departments, when

appropriate, via a faculty-driven process (see appendix D) within a two-year time frame. Reconfiguring into larger departments will allow sufficient faculty turnover and critical intellectual mass to provide excellence in teaching, collaborative research and public engagement. We recommend the development of an “Allied Department” concept to increase communication across college structures.

The recommended name of the new college was determined using significant internal and external input. Recognizing the importance of having the name be highly descriptive of the mission of the new college, we recommend that the name be “College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences” (CFANS).

We recommend the formation of the system-wide Institute of the Environment, to coalesce the University’s tremendous resources in environmental education and research. This Institute must embrace talent from all across the University, and should not be associated with any one college. Core faculty having joint appointments with the Institute will be accountable to the Institute Director as well as their department heads, and funds will follow faculty effort to the Institute. We recommend that this Institute must have physical space with labs and offices for the core faculty and staff. The Institute should reside on the St. Paul Campus, and the Director would report to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

Translation of fundamental discoveries in science to applications in agriculture, food, renewable resources and the environment will be an increasingly important focus of the New College. Success in this arena depends upon a strong continuum of basic to applied sciences, with effective communication between ends of the spectrum. Enhancement of translational biology is recommended by increasing investment in this area and by establishing joint appointments between the New College and other units. New priority themes should be developed to focus investment towards interdisciplinary goals and foster community in the newly merged college. Moreover, new technologies and instrumentation for biological research and teaching will require planned investments.

The new college must develop new tools to measure progress toward excellence. Investments should always be assessed relative to enhancing quality within the new college.

Exercise responsible fiscal stewardship by setting priorities, and enhancing and effectively utilizing resources and infrastructure. A number of efficiencies will be realized by our recommendations. We believe our recommended structural changes will allow for the needed flexibility to respond to and anticipate new research directions and allow faculty to reconfigure in such a way as to maximize the return on investments.

Communicate clearly and credibly with all of our constituencies and practice public engagement responsive to the public good. Public engagement has always been a hallmark of the units in this New College, especially through Research and Outreach Centers and other off-campus sites. Public engagement should be expected and evaluated for all faculty, staff, and students. Partners in outreach activities should be established or reinforced.