

Transforming the University

**Report of the Systemwide Academic
Task Force on PreK-12 Strategy**

Submitted on behalf of the Task Force by:

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PreK-12 Strategy Task Force
Executive Summary

The mission of the PreK-12 Strategy Task Force is to formulate recommendations regarding how to reaffirm and focus the University's commitment and capacity, system-wide and across all campuses, collegiate units, and support units; create meaningful and effective partnerships with preK-12 education; and provide a framework for the ongoing development of the Consortium for Post-secondary Academic Success and for other system-wide efforts around preK-12 education.

Task Force members are:

Geoffrey Maruyama, Co-chair, Interim Associate Vice President for Multicultural & Academic Affairs and Professor, Educational Psychology

Patricia Harvey, Co-chair, Campbell Visiting Endowed Chair in Urban Education

Charles Campbell, Professor, Physics Department

Paul Deputy, Dean, College of Education and Human Service Professions, University of Minnesota Duluth

Alex Hermida, University student

Patricia Phillips, Superintendent, North St. Paul/Oakdale School District

Art Rolnick, Senior Vice President and Director of Research, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

Carlos Mariani Rosa, Executive Director, Minnesota Minority Education Partnership

Bruce Schelskie, Director, TRIO Programs, University of Minnesota

Alice Seagren, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Education

Summary

In order for the University of Minnesota to move toward its goal of becoming one of the top three public research universities in the world, preK-12 engagement needs to remain a high priority within strategic positioning, because preK-12 schools provide us with our students. As the pool of high school graduates in Minnesota changes both in its demographics and its affluence, more graduates will come from groups that traditionally have been less successful in post-secondary education. Unless more students from the under-represented groups are prepared for college success, not enough Minnesota students will be qualified to enrich our scholarship, enhance the University of Minnesota student experience, and challenge us to become better at the work we do. Even if the University attracts more college students from outside Minnesota, investing in Minnesota students will produce a workforce that can keep the state's economy strong. If quality preK-12 experiences prepare large numbers and proportions of students from all backgrounds for post-secondary success, the state will thrive.

Within Minnesota, the University of Minnesota possesses the unique capacity to generate ongoing and systemic research that will improve the lives of all Minnesotans. This capacity is particularly critical in preK-12 education, where separating what is believed from what is known through research is critical for the success of education. The University has a history of extensive engagement with preK-12 schools around research,

teaching, and outreach that touches all parts of the University and includes programs that represent the best in partnerships—enduring, collaborative, complementary, and focused on issues of importance to the University and Minnesota. Nevertheless, successes have been limited by the way the engagements have been structured, largely as individual initiatives rather than as ordered and integrated activities. The task force recommendations frame and organize efforts, increasing their coherence and coordination without limiting faculty efforts to pursue personal research interests.

General Recommendation: The University should reshape its preK-12 agenda system-wide so it addresses the most important issues of education; brings research and theory to conversations of policy and practice; develops a cohesive agenda around preK-12 education; coordinates work that is being done; ensures that University policies facilitate preK-12 engagements; and makes the work visible and accessible to practitioners and policy makers.

Internal Recommendations:

- *Use the compact process to identify important ongoing and new preK-12 initiatives within each unit.*
- *Clearly articulate the value the University places on preK-12 engagement for faculty and staff, and provide ways for faculty and staff to become engaged.*
- *Define PreK-12 as focusing on all aspects of the lives of children, going beyond schools and including out of school time and summer.*
- *Ensure that issues of educational access and opportunity are an important component of the University's preK-12 strategy.*
- *Assure that projects that are the centerpieces of our work focus on systemic change and new, innovative models.*

Recommendations on the Role of the University in Minnesota:

- *The University needs to articulate in clear and consistent ways the importance of raising expectations and standards for achievement across the educational continuum from preschool to graduate and professional programs.*
- *The University should play a major role in supporting and emphasizing the importance of early childhood development programs.*
- *The University should play a role in creating high aspirations among all citizens and personal hope about the capability of our educational system to create success for all Minnesotans.*
- *The University needs to develop strong, ongoing partnerships with key groups to address the most critical issues of education, (e.g., literacy, math and science skills), prepare all students for college success, and provide teacher professional development.*

Work Outside the Scope of This Task Force

Although we framed our work broadly, the report focused on issues that directly affect student achievement and education, giving lesser attention to issues of youth and community, like those tied to clinical/counseling and social services for students and

youth. We also limited our discussion in areas where the Minnesota P16 Education Partnership is already working, and left details for implementation to be worked out by the Consortium for Post-secondary Academic Success.