

Transforming the University

**Recommendations of the Task Force
on Collaborative Research**

Submitted on behalf of the Task Force by:

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I. Executive Summary

Mission

To create a plan to identify and promote interdisciplinary, interprofessional, interscholastic, and inter-institutional partnerships/programs/activities, consistent with the University's goal to become one of the top three public research universities in the world.

Deliverables:

- A. *Recommendations regarding the role of interdisciplinary, interprofessional, interscholastic, and inter-institutional partnerships/programs/activities in achieving the University's goal of becoming one of the three public research universities in the world.*
- B. *Identification of the research areas (current and emerging) that will require or benefit most from interdisciplinary or team-oriented approaches, including the following:*
 - *How should future opportunities be identified, evaluated, and prioritized?*
 - *For which of the anticipated opportunities does the University currently enjoy a comparative advantage?*
 - *Which areas should be considered a priority for development?*
 - *What promising large-scale research areas require special attention and investment?*
- C. *Recommendations regarding how the University can optimally encourage increased interactions and collaborations among researchers across departmental, disciplinary, and collegiate boundaries, including identification of current impediments (cultural, administrative, structural, infrastructure) to such collaborations and recommendations for overcoming these impediments.*
- D. *Recommendations regarding the financial resources that will be necessary to support interdisciplinary or collaborative research, and how such resources should be identified and allocated.*
- E. *Recommendations regarding "best practices" from other institutions that should be considered for implementation at the University of Minnesota, including a comparison of the University's current practices with the recommendations of the National Academies with respect to facilitating interdisciplinary research.*

Task Force Members

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II. Introduction

The task force anticipates that its recommendations will promote the opening up of currently unimagined venues of inquiry (NIH - Interdisciplinary Research Consortium , 2006) as well as complementing and supporting extensive, existing efforts. In order to accomplish this, the task force intends that its recommendations be broadly encompassing and meaningful to the wide range of types of research and scholarly activity. To further clarify what we mean by breadth, we offer the following definitions.

- When using the term “collaborative,” the task force means to embrace all types of collaborative work including interdisciplinary, inter-professional, interscholastic and inter-institutional partnerships/programs/activities. Although the task force did not specifically focus on intra-disciplinary or intra-departmental collaboration, many of its recommendations apply to those types of collaborations as well.
- “Inter-institutional” refers to the full range of institutions including, for example, coordinate campuses, regional centers, and community organizations, in addition to other universities. The University must be prepared to embrace the development of national and international collaborations.
- Use of the term “research” is intended to represent the variety of research and scholarly inquiries, including those with major educational or public engagement components. Similarly the term “laboratory” is meant to be any place research investigations are conducted. Additionally, the term “researcher” refers to anyone engaged in the research enterprise, including faculty, staff, and students at all levels from undergraduates to postdoctoral associates.
- Although the task force was asked to focus on research issues, it recognizes the close and necessary relationship between education and research. Many of the strongest collaborative and/or interdisciplinary research programs also have integral educational components. The task force’s recommendations for collaborative research should be combined with those of other task forces that are specifically addressing collaborative and interdisciplinary education. Furthermore, the task force’s recommendations should be applied whenever possible to strengthen and support collaborative and interdisciplinary educational activities.

The task force envisions a University that will be known internationally for its innovation and excellence in collaborative research and scholarship and for the ease with which collaborations are established. This substantive and culturally supportive environment will attract highly talented investigators and team leaders from all over the world. Our vision requires a new model which incorporates supportive policies and procedures and an infrastructure with facilities, equipment, and resources that fosters interaction and removes administrative and logistical barriers.

To achieve this vision the University must

- enhance the value of collaborative research and foster a culture in which it can flourish
- provide incentives and recognition for collaborative work
- develop mechanisms for bringing scholars together to promote the synergy provided by collaborative work
- develop, recruit, retain, and provide opportunities for highly talented researchers to lead and administer important collaborative projects

- support educational and training opportunities to make collaborative research understood and accessible to all participants
- publicize internally and externally the important findings and outcomes of collaborative work

Ensuring development of these aspects of our vision will require a robust background of support, both financial and cultural, from the State and from the University's governing bodies, administrators, and research leaders.

The following responses to the five deliverables further define our vision and provide guidance for how best to achieve it.