

Introduction

On April 10, 2020, President Gabel charged the Academic and Research Planning work group to advise her on strategies to advance the University in the midst of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Appendix A). The workgroup was guided by the shared principles approved by the Board of Regents (Appendix B).¹

The Academic and Research Planning work group was co-chaired by Executive Vice President and Provost Rachel T.A. Croson and Vice President for Research Christopher J. Cramer.

Members included:

- Kriti Agarwal, President, Council of Graduate Students (and, upon her graduation, Brett Heischmidt, subsequent President, Council of Graduate Students)
- Lori J. Carrell, Chancellor, University of Minnesota Rochester
- Valery Forbes, Dean, College of Biological Sciences
- Brett Heischmidt, Incoming President Council of Graduate Students
- Lynn Lukkas, Professor of Art, College of Liberal Arts
- Amy Pittenger, Associate Professor of Pharmacy Care and Health Systems, College of Pharmacy, and FCC Chair
- Sam Rosemark, Student Body President, University of Minnesota Morris Campus Student Association.

Consulting members included:

- Mary Holz-Clause, Chancellor, University of Minnesota Crookston
- Amina Jaafar, Assistant Vice President, Office for Equity and Diversity
- Robert McMaster, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education
- Heidi Meyer, Executive Director, Office of Admissions.

Work group members and consultants met collectively each week between April 24-July 10; the consultants participated as full members in all but one of those meetings. Work group members and consultants divided into four subgroups according to the four bulleted areas of the president's charge letter:

- How should the University curate its mission and ensure that the core attributes of our work endure despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic? (Carrell, Croson, Jaafar, Pittenger)

¹ A second work group, "Finance and Operations Planning Work Group" was also charged in April and co-chaired by Senior Vice President Brian Burnett and Interim Vice President Ken Horstman (Appendix C). The four co-chairs met weekly and had ex officio status on each others' work groups in order to ensure alignment.

- What steps should we take to remain a University of choice for both current and future students with respect to pricing, content, and modality? (Agarwal, Forbes, McMaster, Meyer, Rosemark)
- What criteria do you recommend for pausing, ending, accelerating or launching new programs (academic or otherwise) during the pandemic and beyond to maintain our academic and research strengths? (Agarwal, Carrell, Cramer, Holz-Clause)
- How do we “double down” on our research distinction, with an emphasis on our MNtersections? (Cramer, Forbes, Lukkas, Pittenger)

Each subgroup met independently to develop specific recommendations and draft sections of the report. During full-group meetings, subgroups received and incorporated feedback, to ensure alignment and consistency throughout the report.

During the months of May and June, governance organizations and additional groups were consulted (Appendix D). The workgroup’s draft was updated and then shared systemwide for broader consultation on July 13, 2020, with an opportunity for community members to provide input and comments via online survey. Comments and suggestions were then compiled and considered in preparation of the final report.

The [MPact 2025 Systemwide Strategic Plan](#) guided our work in the development of this report. We considered how to meet, accelerate, and prioritize plan goals in the context of our financial challenges. Commitments, Goals and Actions from the strategic plan are referenced in the document where applicable.

Throughout this report, we highlight the critical importance of advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and social and racial justice, especially in the midst of financial challenges. As difficult decisions are made, we must elevate our commitment to creating more diverse, welcoming, and just campus communities.

One key responsibility of this work group is to respond to the near certainty of declining resources. We approached this work acutely aware of the ambiguity and anxiety stemming from the pandemic, and also with the recognition that units have already faced significant budget pressure. We developed these recommendations with the understanding that change can be difficult, but is ultimately necessary, to ensure the health and stability of the University. We felt the challenge of working both collaboratively and quickly, while also adapting as new information emerged. We also recognize the inherent tensions in this work. We are grateful for the University community’s stamina and support as we developed initial drafts, shared ideas broadly, and used that input to further refine our recommendations. We are confident that we will emerge from this crisis stronger, utilizing the many disruptions we have faced as a catalyst for innovation.

Our report includes recommendations at virtually all levels of the University, and implementing them will need to be a joint effort, involving the President and her leadership team, chancellors, deans, department heads, and University governance bodies. We recognize that success will

be contingent on thorough consultation that balances the diverse needs and expectations of tenure- and non-tenure line faculty and instructors; early-career researchers; undergraduate, graduate, and professional students; and P&A, civil service, and labor-represented staff members.

The remainder of the report is structured around each of the four guiding questions, noted above.

Question 1: How should the University curate its mission and ensure that the core attributes of our work endure despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic?

This question is central in guiding subsequent recommendations, and we developed four principles to guide the process of curating and advancing the University's threefold mission of research and discovery, teaching and learning, and outreach and public service. We recommend that decision-making and subsequent implementation be:

Nimble - We will quickly modify and adapt our current processes to deliver high-impact outcomes in response to a rapidly changing world.

Inclusive - We will advance equity, diversity, and dignity in people and ideas by seeking partnership and consultation with diverse students, faculty, staff, community members, alumni, and employers to decide where contraction and expansion would be most appropriate. (Commitment 4)

Effective - We will foster resilience as we design for the future and identify areas where shared expertise and practices enhance the delivery of services and outcomes, and choose strategies that uphold and sustain the mission. (Commitment 5, Goal 4, Action 3)

Creative - We will employ collaborative, innovative, and imaginative methods to expand possibilities and opportunities across the University.

The following examples were developed to clarify the intent of each principle and provide practical examples for consideration.

Nimble:

- Modify the curriculum review and approval process to eliminate barriers and permit agile curricular changes and experiments. (Commitment 1, Goal 3, Action 2)
- Consider ways to quickly develop, explore and if necessary abandon new modes of learning (e.g. distanced, hybrid), new approaches (e.g. competency-based, experiential), and new credentials (e.g. certificates, badges). (Commitment 1, Goal 3, Action 1)
- Specifically to counter challenges posed by the pandemic, consider alterations to the calendar of instruction to maximize the safety of the community. (Commitment 5, Goal 4, Action 2)
- Address possible "bottlenecks" in liberal education and program requirements for undergraduate students. (Commitment 1, Goal 1)
- Solve problems related to financial aid and academic calendar flexibility. (Commitment 1, Goal 3, Action 2)

Inclusive:

- Consider and address the differential impact of decisions and systems on underrepresented populations. (Commitment 4, Goal 2)
- Be transparent about criteria for decision-making and provide processes for appeal and/or response.
- Engage in meaningful consultation with Tribal Nations. (Commitment 4, Goal 3, Action 2)
- Address barriers for undergraduate students transferring credits across system campuses as well as students transferring from outside the UMN system. (Commitment 1, Goal 1)

Effective:

- Adjust programs to be financially resilient, recognizing that subsidies may be appropriate for strategic purposes. (Commitment 5)
- Identify opportunities for shared equipment, labs, or personnel. Direct investments to research core facilities that can efficiently serve groups of researchers and thereby reduce dependence on more costly and more difficult to maintain local resources.
- Explore the potential for shared academic and administrative support across units where it benefits the campuses and the system, such as advising, career services, academic technology, as well as recruiting, grant administration, communications/marketing, and libraries. (Commitment 5, Goal 2, Action 2)

Creative:

- Consider new partners/collaborators; e.g. joint curricula with Minnesota State, across the BTAA (Big Ten Academic Alliance), or other partners. (Commitment 4, Goal 3, Action 3)
- Identify opportunities to leverage educational, research and operational offerings of multiple campuses and colleges.
- Build on the existing strength of Extension; for example, by developing high-impact, non-credit programs directed to address issues throughout the state. (Commitment 3, Goal 3, Action 3)

Question 2: What steps should we take to remain a University of choice for both current and future students with respect to pricing, content, and modality?

The University of Minnesota is unique in its breadth, comprehensiveness, and value, offering a wide variety of world-class opportunities to diverse students and communities across the state, nation, and world. The locations, communities, and cultures of each of our five campuses attract diverse students looking for distinct and tailored experiences. We must carry out our land-grant mission by ensuring and promoting inclusivity and accessibility to support current and future students. High-quality teaching and learning remain a hallmark of the University system, as well as a focus on community, belonging, and wellness. We work to support and enhance the positive mental health of our students, faculty, and staff.

We recommend the following to ensure that the University continues to be the top choice for current and future students in each of the three domains.

Pricing

- Increase aid targeted to students with demonstrated need, which includes a Free Tuition program. (Commitment 5, Goal 1, Action 3)
- Develop a strategic tuition plan for each campus that reflects the high value and breadth of the University of Minnesota student experience. Plans should rest on an ongoing analysis of non-resident, non-reciprocity rates, including student fees and reciprocity agreements, to increase the University's attractiveness to and affordability for future students. (Commitment, 5, Goal 2, Action 1)
- Increase strategic partnerships, including with corporate sponsors, to generate new revenue streams to offset the cost to students, and explore corporate-sponsored internships and experiential learning. (Commitment 5, Goal 2, Action 3)
- Invest in a coordinated, systemwide undergraduate recruitment strategy that builds upon the strengths of each campus through a collective vision and approach and recruits and supports a diverse student body. This includes increasing recruiting in key locations and enhancing communications and marketing with a focus on net price and value. (Commitment 4, Goal 1, Action 1)

Content

- Develop programs that enable students to finish both their undergraduate degree and a graduate or professional degree within the UMN system in an accelerated fashion, without compromising academic quality and learning. (Commitment 1, Goal 3, Action 3)
- Build flexible scheduling, curriculum, and financial aid to enable undergraduate degree completion in three years for appropriately prepared entering students. Examine credit requirements and prerequisites with an eye towards reducing time-to-degree and cost to all students, including addressing potential consequences for affordability. Take advantage of opportunities of open source and open textbook resources and initiatives to drive down students' overall costs. (Commitment 1, Goal 3, Action 2)
- Expand and enhance opportunities for all students to engage in research, creative, and/or co-curricular experiences that are relevant, authentic, and meaningful. (Commitment 2, Goal 1, Action 1)
- Enhance academic minors, internships, competencies or other experiences related to MNtersections. Expand multidisciplinary MNtersections courses and programs across the system. Increase unique and multi-campus programs. (Commitment 2, Goal 2, Action 2)
- Develop new, and continue to support existing, youth pathway programs, camps, etc. that actively identify and help high-school students successfully transition to the University.
- Enhance recruiting strategies that create systemwide and regional pipelines, including community colleges, from undergraduate to graduate and professional programs.
- Develop additional programs for non-traditional students based on market analysis and student services capabilities.

Modality

- Develop systemwide distributed learning models that increase access, center equity, and develop talent, including branding and coordination strategy, under one system leader/unit. (Commitment 1, Goal 3, Action 1)
- Leverage University expertise in evidence-based pedagogical practice (e.g. flipped classrooms, active learning, remote learning), including offering faculty development opportunities, to provide optimal educational opportunities to students. (Commitment 1, Goal 3, Action 3)
- Explore systemwide and BTAA partnerships for low-enrollment undergraduate and graduate courses. Consider minimum enrollments in decision-making on course offerings.
- Develop methods to ensure that campus climate issues are addressed in the classroom. This includes creating inclusive, welcoming, and equitable communities in remote and in-person spaces. (Commitment 4, Goal 3)

Question 3: What criteria do you recommend for pausing, ending, accelerating or launching new programs (academic or otherwise) during the pandemic and beyond to maintain our academic and research strengths?

The University must be increasingly forward-thinking and innovative as we invest in our many excellent, mission-focused programs. The following are recommended criteria for programmatic decision-making; programs that are prioritized should meet most, if not all, of the criteria. Programs that fulfill few or none of the criteria should be considered for pausing or ending. We anticipate shared governance plays a role in the prioritization of these criteria.

Alignment with systemwide strategic plan

Prioritize programs that are aligned with the [MPact 2025 Systemwide Strategic Plan](#) using the Commitments and Goals as guideposts for areas of excellence and investment.

Commitment to advancing educational equity

Prioritize programs and initiatives that serve underrepresented students (for example, first-generation students, low-income students, Black students, American Indian students, and students of color) and address systemic, historical and institutional factors that contribute to achievement/opportunity gaps that have been prevalent in the state for generations. (Commitment 1, Goal 1, Action 2)

Ensure the delivery of education around justice

Prioritize programs that provide curricula, education, and experiences that advance racial, social, economic, and environmental justice.

Use of high-impact, evidence-based practices

Prioritize programs that demonstrate utilization of practices that have been demonstrated to increase student success, with a focus on teaching and learning. (Commitment 1)

Strong student outcomes and student success

Prioritize programs that demonstrate successful, equitable student outcomes. (Commitment 1, Goal 1, Action 2; Commitment 4, Goal 1, Actions 2 & 3)

Talent needs

Prioritize programs that meet state, global, and University talent needs, that include a commitment to diversity, support students' competencies relevant to talent development, and situate the University as a core component that helps drive Minnesota's innovation economy. (Commitment 1, Goal 2, Action 2)

Financial sustainability

Prioritize programs that demonstrate financial sustainability with regard to their local context of enrollment, grants, and other funding mechanisms. (Commitment 5, Goal 1)

Extraordinary strength

Prioritize programs that are world-class and reflect a signature strength of the University. Prioritize new programs that the University is uniquely qualified to develop as a result of our disciplinary breadth.

Focus on engagement and outreach

Prioritize programs that provide evidence of engaged scholarship and interaction of applied research through Extension and other University outreach efforts. (Commitment 3, Goal 3, Action 3)

Question 4: How do we “double down” on our research distinction, with an emphasis on our MNtersections?

The University of Minnesota is a world-class institution conducting breakthrough research across a broad range of fields and disciplines. Research distinction implies that we are defining the boundaries of research, discovery, creativity, and public engagement. Our students experience research distinction through opportunities to work closely with experts: teaching is an implicit part of our discovery activities and providing our undergraduates with authentic research experiences with field-shaping faculty is key to this work. Our research informs practice, and our practice — in the clinic, classroom, lab, studio, and field — informs our research.

We “double down” on our research distinction by:

Recruiting and retaining excellent faculty, early stage researchers, graduate students, and support staff

Faculty and staff transfer their research and teaching talents to students, and many of these individuals are in highly competitive demand. Research distinction requires recruiting and retaining faculty, early stage researchers, graduate students, and support staff, from diverse backgrounds who bring complementary perspectives to challenging problems and have the resources they need to pursue groundbreaking discovery, innovation, and creativity

(Commitment 4, Goal 1, Actions 1 and 2). Successful recruitment and retention initiatives include family-friendly policies, assisting significant others with employment, proactive retention strategies, ensuring that salaries and benefits are competitive, and eliminating barriers that disproportionately affect Black faculty and staff, Indigenous faculty and staff, and faculty and staff of color. We recognize specific challenges faced by diverse and Indigenous faculty and staff and the need for responsive policies and resources.

Ensuring faculty and staff have the necessary infrastructure, core facilities, and support services to pursue their scholarship

The impact, knowledge-sharing, and visibility of our research must be aggressively supported through a commitment to making the outcomes of scholarship and creativity publicly available. Indeed, researchers at all levels should have training on communications and storytelling to make this possible. Further, we must elevate our community through aggressive internal advocacy that promotes eligible faculty and staff as candidates for high-profile awards and honors (Commitment 2, Goal 3, Action 1). We must also work hard to increase efficiencies and return on investment in shared resources, including exploration of partnerships and collaborations through organizations like the BTAA and other national and international organizations.

Focusing our MNtersections research distinction on investments in programs and initiatives related to health, sustainability, natural resources, and agro-food systems
(Commitment 3)

MNtersections opportunities will be enhanced through both the development of new and the expansion of existing business, industry, and community partnerships, particularly within the state of Minnesota (Commitment 2, Goal 2, Action 1). We should leverage our comprehensive expertise by investing in support resources that will make us even more competitive in obtaining funding for large-scale, multi-disciplinary projects (like those presently targeted for support by the Strategic Programs and Research Collaborative) (Commitment 2, Goal 2, Action 2). The arts and humanities will be key to such work that recognizes and addresses the full scope of grand challenge endeavors (Commitment 2, Goal 2, Action 3), to include especially the importance of applying an equity lens to work on all three MNtersections topics. It is well established that Black communities, Indigenous communities, and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by climate change; healthcare disparities, including adverse health outcomes; and food and housing insecurity. To ensure greatest impact, research in the MNtersections areas must include addressing societal inequities by disrupting biases and dismantling systemic racism (Commitment 4, Goal 3, Action 3). Noting the strategic plan focus, judiciously chosen portions of seed investment programs should add priority to projects related to MNtersections.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Office of the President

*202 Morrill Hall
100 Church Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0110*

MEMORANDUM

April 10, 2020

To: Rachel Croson, Executive Vice President and Provost, *Co-Chair*
Chris Cramer, Vice President for Research, *Co-Chair*
Kriti Agarwal, President, Council of Graduate Students
Lori Carrell, Chancellor, University of Minnesota Rochester
Valery Forbes, Dean, College of Biological Sciences
Lynn Lukkas, Professor of Art, College of Liberal Arts
Amy Pittenger, Associate Professor of Pharmacy Care and Health Systems, College of
Pharmacy, and FCC Chair
Sam Rosemark, Student Body President, University of Minnesota Morris Campus Student
Association

From: Joan T.A. Gabel, President 

Subject: Academic & Research Planning Work Group

Thank you for serving on the Academic & Research Planning Work Group. Your critical charge is to advise me with academic and research planning strategies to advance the University in the midst of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to Provost Rachel Croson and Vice President Chris Cramer for providing leadership and to all of you for sharing your creativity and insights during this challenging time.

In light of uncertainty around the future, I suspect our work will come in phases. As an initial effort and in full recognition that this will evolve, I request that you prepare a preliminary set of recommendations by June 1, 2020, regarding the following:

- How should the University curate its mission and ensure that the core attributes of our work endure despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What steps should we take to remain a University of choice for both current and future students with respect to pricing, content, and modality?
- What criteria do you recommend for pausing, ending, accelerating or launching new programs (academic or otherwise) during the pandemic and beyond to maintain our academic and research strengths?
- How do we “double down” on our research distinction with an emphasis on our MNtersections?

I ask that you consult with key stakeholders and invite other University leaders to participate in your conversations, as appropriate. In anticipation of some of the specific questions you are likely to explore, I have already asked the following people to serve as consulting members who are available to you on an ad hoc basis:

- Mary Holz-Clause, Chancellor, University of Minnesota Crookston
- Amina Jaafar, Assistant Vice President, Office for Equity and Diversity
- Bob McMaster, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education
- Heidi Meyer, Executive Director, Office of Admissions

Brianne Keeney in my office will provide staff support to the work group.

If you have any questions, please let me know. Thank you for your leadership and service to the University of Minnesota.

cc: Brianne Keeney, Assistant to the President

Principles to Guide Academic & Financial Decision Making in Response to the COVID-10 Pandemic

Academic & Research Work Group

- Ensure the safety, health, and wellness of our students, faculty, and staff
- Ensure the continuity of the student academic experience and support research-related initiatives, including MNtersections
- Leverage the world class excellence of our teaching, discovery, and engagement with an emphasis on research and discovery that directly addresses the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and serves the local, state and world communities
- Examine the delivery of instruction and consider evolving learning models for the short- and long-term
- Make decisions with respect, transparency, and timeliness, and with the best interests of our students, faculty and staff in mind

Finance & Operations Work group

- Support the University's academic, research and outreach mission with emphasis on research that directly addresses the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Prioritize the retention of our current workforce to the greatest extent possible
- Balance strategic financial decisions with maintenance of the institutional mission
- Scrutinize all existing budgets to identify efficiencies
- Position the University for both short-term and long-term financial viability
- Make decisions with respect, transparency, and timeliness, and with the best interests of our students, faculty and staff in mind

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Office of the President

*202 Morrill Hall
100 Church Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0110*

MEMORANDUM

April 14, 2020

To: Brian Burnett, Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations, *Co-Chair*
Ken Horstman, Interim Vice President for Human Resources, *Co-Chair*
Lynn Black, Chancellor, University of Minnesota Duluth
Phil Buhlmann, Professor of Chemistry, College of Science & Engineering, and FCC Vice Chair
John Coleman, Dean, College of Liberal Arts
Matt Kramer, Vice President for University Relations
Colleen Flaherty Manchester, Associate Professor of Human Resource/Labor Studies, Carlson School of Management
Rhonda McFarland, Deputy Athletics Director & CFO, Department of Intercollegiate Athletics
Michele Morrissey, HR Director, Medical School
Kimberly Rosenfield, MBA Student, Professional Student Group
Julie Tonneson, Associate Vice President, University Budget & Finance

From: Joan T.A. Gabel, President

Subject: Finance & Operations Planning Work Group

Thank you for serving on the Finance & Operations Planning Work Group. Your critical charge is to advise me with financial and operational planning strategies to advance the University in the midst of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to Senior Vice President Brian Burnett and Interim Vice President Ken Horstman for providing leadership and to all of you for sharing your creativity and insights during this challenging time.

In light of uncertainty around the future, I suspect our work will come in phases. As an initial effort and in full recognition that this will evolve, I request that you prepare a preliminary set of recommendations by June 1, 2020, regarding the following:

- In light of the University's desire to retain its workforce, our greatest asset, how do we leverage existing and new tools and policies as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves over time?
- As a system, how do we leverage or renegotiate economies of scale (without additional obligations) to identify and capture savings?
- What are new ideas for cost saving measures across the institution?
- Where might the University consider outsourcing or insourcing to achieve greater revenue or institutional savings?

I ask that you consult with key stakeholders and invite other University leaders to participate in your conversations, as appropriate. In anticipation of some of the specific questions you are likely to explore, I

have already asked the following people to serve as consulting members who are available to you on an ad hoc basis:

- Michelle Behr, Chancellor, University of Minnesota Morris
- Brent Benrud, Associate General Counsel
- Shelly Carthen Watson, Associate General Counsel

Kate Stuckert in my office will provide staff support to the work group.

If you have any questions, please let me know. Thank you for your leadership and service to the University of Minnesota.

cc: Kate Stuckert, Senior Assistant to the President

Appendix D: Spring 2020 Consultation

The following groups were consulted during Spring 2020 to discuss and give feedback on the Academic and Research Planning work group draft report:

Chancellors
TC Deans (includes Extension)
TC department chairs/heads
Council of Graduate Students (COGS)
Professional Student Government (PSG)
Graduate Student Council - Duluth
Critical Race & Ethnic Studies Interdisciplinary Graduate Group (CRES)
UMN Postdoctoral Association (PDA)
Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC)
Crookston Student Association (CSA)
UMD Student Association (UMDSA)
Minnesota Student Association (MSA)
Morris Campus Student Association (MCSA)
Rochester Student Association (RSA)
TC Union officers and representatives
Civil Service Consultative Committee (CSCC)
P&A Consultative Committee (PACC)
University Senate, including FCC
Diversity Community of Practice (DCoP)
Council of Research Assoc. Deans (CRAD)
Research & Develop. Prof. Network (RADPN)
Senate Research Committee (SRC)
Research Animal Users
Researchers engaged with Human Participants
Undergraduate Associate Deans
TC Advising Community
MN Office of Higher Education