

**Saint Paul Campus Strategy Committee Report (short version)**  
**July 11, 2025**

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### **Committee Charge**

The University has had a Saint Paul campus for over a century and the individual units present there have been very successful. Despite many efforts to develop a cohesive vision for the campus, none have been enacted. With System-wide Strategic planning in progress, this committee was asked to deliver a comprehensive strategy for the future of the St. Paul Campus. We were to recommend a strategy that is aligned with the system wide strategic plan's timeline and that informs the broader planning efforts.

The specific charge to the committee was twofold. We were to:

- a. *Provide guidance on priorities for future St. Paul campus programming related to - Student population; Research portfolio; and Community engagement opportunities.*
- b. *Make secondary recommendations, including—but not limited to - Land use; Facility changes; Public spaces; Student housing and dining; Common gathering areas; General space use and consolidation; Retail dining and other services for the campus and community; Sustainability; and Philanthropic opportunities.*

**Executive Summary:  
A Tripartite Vision for the Saint Paul Campus**

The Saint Paul campus of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities (UMTC) stands at a pivotal moment of opportunity and reinvention. A tripartite vision—centered on **Campus Life**, **Interdisciplinary Scholarship**, and **Community Engagement**—charts a path to reimagine the campus as an intimate, yet vibrant, innovative, and interconnected hub within the broader Twin Cities system.

**1. Campus Life Vision: A Vibrant, Inclusive Residential Experience**

The Saint Paul campus is uniquely positioned to offer a distinctive “small-campus” student experience within a Big Ten institution located in a metropolitan community. While students appreciate its safety, quiet, and welcoming environment, the campus currently lacks adequate infrastructure. It needs more “traffic” to showcase it as a lively and energetic setting. The vision calls for investments in the new Saint Paul campus center, residential communities, amenities, and transportation connectivity, combined with a marketing strategy that emphasizes an interdisciplinary academic theme. This will foster an inclusive and vibrant student culture, attracting students who value community and academic engagement in a setting that offers a small-campus feel with access to the larger city and research enterprise.

**2. Scholarship Vision: Interconnected Futures**

Grounded in the campus’s strengths in agriculture, sustainability, natural resources, and veterinary medicine, this vision positions the Saint Paul campus as a global leader in advancing the health of humans, animals, and the environment. By leveraging cross-disciplinary collaboration, the campus will address complex, interwoven challenges like climate change, food insecurity, and emerging diseases. "Interconnected Futures" reflects the campus’s scholarly identity and purpose: to generate applied solutions, inspire new leaders, and catalyze innovation for a sustainable and resilient future. This vision will necessitate targeted investments in facilities and infrastructure to support research and innovation activities aligned with the scholarship vision.

**3. Community Engagement Vision: A Welcoming Destination for All**

Despite a rich ecosystem of outreach programs and public venues, the campus currently lacks a unified approach to community engagement and the infrastructure to support it. This vision reimagines the Saint Paul campus as a visible and welcoming destination—“a welcoming place where the public can engage with the University.” Enhancing infrastructure, aligning programming, and building synergy among units will enable the campus to serve as a vibrant gateway where the public, including prospective students and their families, connect meaningfully with the University of Minnesota.

Together, these three pillars lay the foundation for transforming the Saint Paul campus into a dynamic, vibrant, future-facing environment that enriches student life, drives scholarly innovation, and deepens community relationships. This report includes a series of recommendations to help the campus achieve this vision through quick-win, short-term, and long-term actions (see Attachment 14). **However, the highest priorities are to:**

- 1. move forward with planning and implementation of the St. Paul Campus Center and Library project, and**

- 2. form a St. Paul Campus Implementation Team to guide implementation of this tripartite St. Paul campus vision, and**

Attachment 14 contains a number of recommendations for moving forward, at different levels of complexity, with potential phasing scenarios. The implementation team will be responsible for refining options and phasing where applicable and developing the corresponding cost estimates associated with each option or phase.

- 3. Form a St. Paul Student Housing Team to develop plans for the future of St. Paul Campus housing.**

### **Saint Paul Campus Planning Process**

In preparing for this work, the committee reviewed:

- the intellectual strengths on campus,
- the infrastructure that supports the student residential experience,
- the suite of activities on campus that engage the public, and
- the results of a series of prior planning efforts for the campus.

The committee used a variety of approaches to solicit input from on- and off-campus audiences over the course of our work. Given that many past planning efforts have highlighted the investments that people wanted made to campus infrastructure, our strategy was to first get people to help us develop a unique vision of what the campus could/should be within the UMN system and as part of the UMN-Twin Cities. To accomplish this we conducted a survey of the colleges with a presence on the St. Paul campus and we received 1179 responses. Using the results of the survey as a starting point, we then asked the colleges to provide the names of thought leaders who could help us refine a campus vision. These thought leaders were invited to a working session on March 18, 2025. We set the stage for the 61 participants using a PowerPoint introduction to the committee's work and then small groups were asked to share ideas about a compelling vision for the campus.

Although the focus of this first phase of engagement was intended to solicit suggestions about a vision for the campus, many suggestions about potential infrastructure and programming investments were received. Using those suggestions as a starting point, we then conducted an additional survey focused specifically on the campus infrastructure and programming needed to achieve the kinds of vision that we were considering. We received far fewer responses (394) to this survey, presumably because people had already made infrastructure/programming recommendations when they completed the first survey. Following this second survey, we held a series of listening sessions and meetings to solicit input regarding the infrastructure/programming recommendations.

### Campus Vision Recommendation

The campus vision suggestions we received fell into three distinct categories. For students, as well as for many staff and faculty, the campus atmosphere, resources, and pace was of critical importance. For administrators, community leaders, and many faculty, the scholarly focus and research potential of the campus was top of mind when thinking about a vision for the campus. For the public, local elected officials, and some staff, the role of the campus in community engagement was the perspective that resonated most strongly. As the committee discussed these three alternative views of the campus, we realized that they were not competing views, but rather were complementary. Therefore, we are recommending a tripartite vision for the future of the St. Paul campus.

In the pages that follow we briefly describe the three parts of this vision along with a set of recommendations for each that the committee believes are essential. However we have two primary recommendations to advance the tripartite vision as a whole.

### OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Recommendation #1: Move forward with the St. Paul Campus Center and Library project -**

Implementation of the St. Paul Campus Center is absolutely essential if we are to realize the potential of the St. Paul campus. The 2024 pre-design report describes the vision for the project as follows:

*The vision of students, faculty, and staff for the St. Paul Campus Center is to celebrate a truly unique campus that will:*

- *Capture St. Paul Campus' Spirit: Embody the unique character of the campus, blending its small-town charm with the beauty of its natural surroundings. Foster a connection to the outdoors, even when inside.*
- *Create a Centralized Hub for All: Provide students, faculty, and staff with convenient access to essential resources, services, community gathering space, and dining.*
- *Spark Campus Vibrancy: The Center will be a catalyst for campus life, offering inclusive programming, and hosting large events tailored to the Saint Paul community.*
- *Be a Home Away from Home: The Center will cultivate a welcoming environment that fosters intellectual curiosity and a sense of belonging. It will be a place where the Campus can connect, relax, and feel at home.*

We strongly recommend making the completion of this project an institutional priority.

**Recommendation #2: Establish a St. Paul Campus Vision Implementation Team** - Our St. Paul campus committee has helped identify a vision for the campus, but many difficult decisions will need to be made in the coming years to bring the vision to life. We recommend the President form an Implementation Team (under central leadership and composed of the Deans of colleges with a presence on the campus) to guide implementation of the tripartite St. Paul Campus vision. Given that there will be some skepticism about whether these recommendations will be implemented, we recommend:

- that the Implementation Team identify a series of “quick wins” to clearly signal that investments are being made in the Saint Paul campus, and
- implement a communication to keep on-campus and off-campus communities engaged.

It is further recommended that the Implementation Team form working groups for each of the three parts of the campus vision in order to ensure coordination between those efforts.

**Recommendation #3: Form a St. Paul Student Housing Team to develop plans for the future of St. Paul Campus housing.** - While our committee is recommending investments in upgrading student housing on the St. Paul campus, the nature of that housing and the audience to be served remain to be determined. We recommend that this team:

- Determine whether the primary undergraduate occupants of St. Paul student housing will be underclass, upper class, or some combination.
- Determine how new housing would relate to the Campus Center/Library project.

## CAMPUS LIFE VISION

### Campus Life Vision Recommendations

#### Leadership:

- The Implementation Team should charge a working group to continue advocacy and planning for implementation of the Campus Life Vision.

#### Residential Infrastructure:

- Task Enrollment Management and Housing & Residential Life to develop a recommendation regarding targeted undergraduate residents for a future housing option: a modernized Bailey Hall or something completely different; incorporate student focus group input
- Consider options for graduate level housing: the future of Commonwealth and Como
- Explore Public/Private partnerships for student housing
- Begin pre design work for student housing

#### Landscape Infrastructure:

- Install Amenities to accentuate the intimate small campus vision. For example, tables, chairs, benches, hammock groves, and walking/running trails would encourage use of the natural spaces and would be a quick and very visible signal of the university's commitment to the campus life vision.

#### Retail

- Investigate expanded retail opportunities on the St. Paul campus (e.g., Food Trucks, Campus Brew Pub serving campus-made food and drink )

### **VISION: An intimate, inclusive and vibrant campus with a Big10 educational experience**

At present, the University of Minnesota Twin Cities appeals to students and faculty interested in the opportunities of an R1 institution in an urban setting. However, students desiring an R1 experience but who don't want to live in an urban setting must look elsewhere, and evidence supports that we are losing students to our neighboring states. We believe that investing in the St. Paul campus is a mechanism to further attract this latter population. Alumni of specific programs noted this was true for them but without investment in infrastructure, this is an unrealized opportunity for a broader population. (Note: the concepts and ideas described in the following paragraphs should be considered within a broader context of the system-wide enrollment management plan currently being developed.)

The campus life vision we propose for the Saint Paul campus would enhance both Minnesota and out-of-state student recruitment by addressing the demand for the resources and reputation of a major research university in a less-urban/less-daunting setting. The proposed enhancements and clear intellectual identity of the Saint Paul campus offer a great option for these students, creating a niche that can appeal strongly to prospective students nationwide. Out-of-state students pay a premium to attend the University, so offering them an option that most major research universities do not offer would be a helpful differentiator for our national recruitment. By marketing Saint Paul as a community-oriented campus where students enjoy meaningful social connections and personalized experiences without sacrificing big university opportunities, we can effectively attract a segment of the out-of-state student population that might otherwise opt for private institutions or large universities closer to home.

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As one user posted on Reddit, the Saint Paul campus offers “both a big school and a small school with only a 20-minute bus ride.” In other words, students living in Saint Paul can have the intimate, idyllic campus life with quieter settings and open green spaces, and still tap into Division I athletics, extensive research labs, countless student groups, and career fairs on the East and West Banks whenever they please. This best-of-both-worlds proposition is powerful if executed and communicated effectively.

To capitalize on this, we should embrace what makes Saint Paul distinct rather than trying to remake it in the image of the East Bank campus. As a brainstorming concept, one idea is that if the East Bank is known for its energy and nightlife, then Saint Paul should proudly become the daytime friendly, community-oriented, “Sunday brunch” campus—a place of cozy charm, relaxation, and close community ties: think farmer’s markets, coffee shops, and friendly faces.

Saint Paul already has the foundation for all of this with its agricultural setting and beautiful grounds. We can enhance it to be distinctly different yet complementary to Minneapolis. Students who prefer a quieter home base—including nature lovers, or those from smaller towns—would thrive in this environment, especially if they knew they were not sacrificing opportunities. In fact, with intentional development, Saint Paul could become a showcase campus that draws students specifically for its unique character. In a time when loneliness is at an all-time high, an environment where creating life-long friendships could come more naturally would appeal to many young students leaving home for the first time.

Marketing the Saint Paul campus experience should emphasize the close-knit community while reassuring students that they’ll have access to big-school perks. For instance, promotional materials can feature students studying under the shade of trees on the lawn in Saint Paul in the afternoon and cheering at a Gopher football game in Minneapolis that same evening, highlighting the ease of having both experiences. This kind of positioning will attract not only students already in CFANS, CBS, CDES, or related fields, but also undecided students and those in any major who prefer a more intimate community. It may even draw students who might otherwise choose a smaller college over the Twin Cities because they put so much weight on the residential environment; now they do not have to compromise. In short, Saint Paul can be a magnet for students seeking a calm, community-oriented college life without giving up the opportunities of a large university. This is already a recruiting strength for graduate and professional students.

A question remaining to be answered is whether St. Paul campus housing should be designed for freshmen who would take classes primarily on the Minneapolis campus or for Juniors and Seniors taking classes primarily on the St. Paul campus.

## SCHOLARSHIP VISION

### Scholarship Vision Recommendations

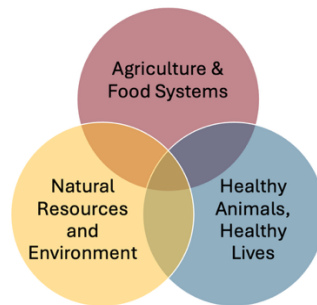
- **Leadership** - Implementation Team should charge a Working group to continue advocacy and planning for implementation of the Scholarship Vision. Charge to include:
  - refining the scholarship vision
  - prioritizing building infrastructure investments based on research and teaching needs to support this scholarship vision (e.g., Research laboratories, Active Learning Classrooms, interdisciplinary gathering spaces, outdoor classrooms...)
- **Programming** -
  - Refine and implement a series of programming recommendations that will enhance intercollegiate collaboration (joint seminar series, a cross-college graduate journal club, “Lunch and Learns” for staff and faculty...)
  - Maximize opportunities within new and ongoing planning related to interdisciplinary efforts on the Saint Paul campus. Two examples show strong potential:
    - **Future of Advanced Agricultural Research in Minnesota (FAARM)**: Saint Paul has the potential to educate the next generation of agriculture (animal and crop) leaders and to advance agricultural research by investing in learning and research facilities and spaces that will allow students and faculty to deeply engage in animal management care and crop production, within changing climate conditions and while using sustainability best practices. Working at the intersection of animal health, soil health, and human health requires new discoveries and new lessons in the classroom that can be applied to a real-life setting at scale.
    - **Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing Innovation Center (BBIC)**: BBIC is an effort to build a biomanufacturing ecosystem in Minnesota that fosters interdisciplinary research, innovation, entrepreneurship, education, training, outreach, engagement and partnerships. The proposed Biomanufacturing Innovation Lab for the first floor of the new building on the St. Paul campus is an example of the kinds of interdisciplinary opportunities that exist as a consequence of the resources and expertise present on the St. Paul campus and broader Minnesota innovation ecosystem.

**VISION: Interconnected Futures: Supporting the Shared Health of Humans, Animals, and the Environment** - Building a healthy future for people, animals, and the environment through shared discovery, learning and innovation reflects the heart of our collective mission. This vision embodies the essential links between human, animal, and environmental health, natural resources, food systems, and sustainable agriculture. It aligns with the St. Paul campus’s role in advancing ecosystem health, safeguarding the food supply and economy, and developing new approaches to disease prevention and environmental stewardship—critical issues that ripple across both local communities and global systems. This mission also aligns with many companies in the region that focus on developing innovations in these areas.

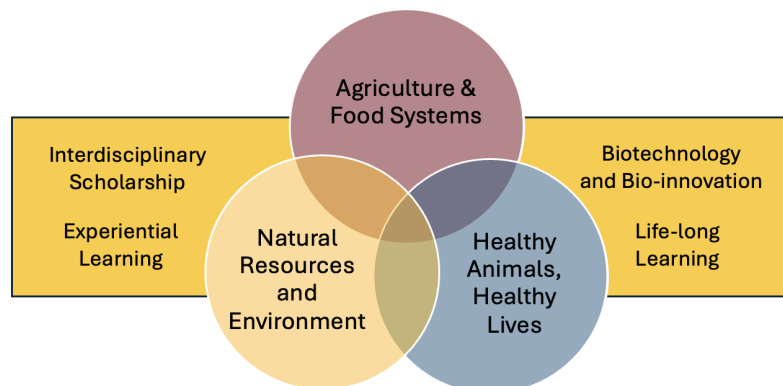
Across the St. Paul campus, daily work demonstrates the power of integration. Climate change, biodiversity loss, emerging diseases, food and water insecurity, and ecosystem degradation are not isolated problems—they are interconnected challenges that demand collaborative, interdisciplinary solutions. The proposed Biomanufacturing Innovation Lab for the first floor of the new building on the St. Paul campus is an example of the kinds of interdisciplinary opportunities that exist as a consequence of the resources and expertise present on the St. Paul campus and broader Minnesota innovation ecosystem. By connecting expertise across environmental science, agriculture, natural resources, and veterinary medicine, we develop applied solutions today while preparing tomorrow’s leaders to build a more sustainable and resilient world.

What sets us apart is our ability to bring together innovators from across disciplines and sectors, from both basic and applied science perspectives, sparking collaborations that lead to meaningful change and training creative problem-solvers who can think critically and work collaboratively. Interconnected Futures captures this spirit—inviting dialogue, inspiring leadership, and fostering the innovation needed to create the future we all aspire to achieve. In short, Interconnected Futures is more than a vision—it is a reflection of who we are, and a bold statement of where we are headed: working together to shape a healthier, more sustainable world for all.

This Interconnected Futures vision is made possible by strengths in three primary conceptual areas on the St. Paul campus (Agriculture & Food Systems, Environment and Natural Resources, and Healthy Animals, Healthy Lives).



Collaboration between these conceptual areas already exists as a result of the current culture of interdisciplinary scholarship and recent entrepreneurial planning around Biotechnology, Biomanufacturing, and Bio-innovation more generally. Collaboration is further enhanced by a shared campus commitment to, and expertise in (e.g., CCAPS) Experiential and Life-long Learning approaches as well as opportunities for partnerships with business and industry.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT VISION

### Community Engagement Recommendations

- Coordination
  - Develop a St. Paul Communication & Engagement Working Group to continue advocacy and planning for implementation of the Community Engagement Vision. Here we define *community engagement venues* as intentional spaces developed or curated to host public events and highlight key intellectual and cultural components of the St. Paul Campus (Fig 1 below). Charge to include:
    - Promote coordination and cooperation between St. Paul campus community engagement venues
    - Develop a mechanism for ongoing engagement with St. Paul campus neighbors and advocates.
    - Provide input to the Campus Center project
- Communication
  - Install signage on campus and on the campus circulator that 1) highlights the community engagement venues (Fig 1 below) and 2) has stops close to those venues.
  - Develop a social media presence for the St. Paul campus
    - Coordinate with ongoing marketing efforts around Saint Paul to students.

**Vision: A community resource and window to the University** - The St. Paul campus serves not only as a center of learning and innovation but also as a cultural anchor within the surrounding communities. The campus' community engagement venues offer transformative opportunities to connect neighbors in meaningful, enduring ways.

### Enhancing Community Relations

These public venues serve as accessible entry points for local residents to engage with the intellectual and cultural life of the university. These spaces foster a sense of shared ownership and belonging, helping to break down barriers between "town" and "gown" and reinforcing the university's role as a public good. In bringing students, faculty, staff and the public together, they also enhance the vitality of the physical spaces on campus.

### Expanding Educational Impact

Such venues provide rich, informal learning environments that extend the university's educational mission beyond traditional classrooms. Local K-12 schools, families, and adult learners benefit from exhibitions, workshops, and programs that make research and scholarship more tangible and relevant to everyday life.

### Showcasing University Strengths

These venues highlight faculty research, student creativity, and institutional values in visible, accessible ways. Whether through rotating exhibits, performances, or public lectures, these spaces help communicate the university's contributions to knowledge, culture, and society.

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However, at present these venues operate as independent destinations. The vast majority of community members visit a single venue. Their connection is with the individual entity not with the University of Minnesota. We believe that there is an opportunity to market the St. Paul campus as a place that invites the public to visit, to learn, and to connect with their university. The vision is for the St. Paul campus to become a destination - to make the campus accessible and truly welcoming to the public. This public engagement vision is designed to strengthen the bond between the University of Minnesota and the community, amplifying our impact, deepening mutual understanding, and fulfilling our mission as a place of public scholarship and service.

We also have more opportunity to highlight the reach that the St. Paul campus has across the state - beyond the metro area. Collectively, the work of CBS, CCAPS, CFANS, Extension, the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, and the Veterinary Medical Center serve every Minnesota county and beyond. By working together to elevate this collective impact, we can strengthen the brand and visibility of the entire University.

Figure 1. Examples of existing Community Engagement Venues on the St. Paul Campus

