Final Report:
Task Force on Thinking and Acting Like a Doctoral Institution

Strategic Goal Statement

Minnesota State University, Mankato will capitalize on its status as a doctoral institution in ways that enrich the campus and surrounding communities. As the next step in its evolution from normal school to world-class university, Minnesota State Mankato will provide state-of-the art applied graduate programs with national reputations and international reach. These programs will be characterized by high quality educational experiences, innovative research that engages both faculty and students in finding solutions to real-world problems, and the resources necessary to support and sustain excellence.

Long-Term Vision

- Minnesota State Mankato will be known as the premiere university in the MnSCU system.
- Relative to the University of Minnesota, Minnesota State Mankato will be viewed as the “State University,” in much the same way that Iowa State University and Michigan State University are positioned relative to the University of Iowa and the University of Michigan, respectively.
- Though we do not have the land-grant status of Iowa State and Michigan State, we will have a similar reputation as the top “applied” institution in the state.
- We will offer a full array of doctoral degrees, including the Ph.D.
- Faculty in all Colleges will be involved in doctoral education.
- We will be regionally and nationally known for specific academic programs, which will draw doctoral students (and faculty) to the university.
- We will be branded in the public’s perception as a doctoral institution.
- Our faculty and students will be credited with innovative and important research contributions.
- We will have endowed chairs in virtually every doctoral program.
- Academic journals (or other serial publications) and professional conferences will be identified with our university.
- There will be a value added to attending Minnesota State Mankato as an undergraduate student because we are a doctoral institution. We will market that value to prospective students, rather than selling Minnesota State Mankato as a predominantly undergraduate institution.
- Our faculty members will have national and international reputations as scholars and leaders in their fields and the University will offer research incentives and other incentives to attract and retain them.
- Our faculty will have a teaching load commensurate with our status as a leading state university and doctoral institution.

Recommendations for Transforming the Campus Culture

Given our history as an undergraduate teaching university, thinking and acting like a doctoral institution will require a transformation of both the campus culture and our institutional identity. This transformation will compel us to rethink virtually every aspect of the university, including our policies, practices, traditions, programs, services, and systems. The Task Force on Thinking and Acting Like a Doctoral Institution submits the following recommendations for consideration by the

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campus community as we embark on this process of transformation. The recommendations address those campus systems and structures most critical to reimagining the University and achieving the long-term vision outlined above. The order in which they are presented is not intended to convey relative priority or magnitude of importance.

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Recommendation A: Increase external funding for research (grants and contracts)

1. Explicitly identify external support for research as a strategic goal and make our aspirations public.
   a. Through 2014, increase the dollar amount of external support for applied research by 20% each year.
   b. Increase the percentage of external funding from state contracts and federal and state earmarks for applied research.

2. Use indirect cost recovery dollars as strategically as possible to leverage additional external funding.
   a. Examine current indirect cost recovery rates and adjust our rates to be comparable with the rates charged by our aspirational peers.
   b. Consider centralizing the allocation and disbursement of indirect cost recovery dollars to ensure they are reinvested in a strategic manner, channeling resources (via a representative decision making process) to researchers and research teams with the highest potential for securing external funding.
   c. Use indirect cost recovery dollars to fund incentive programs that encourage faculty to submit—and resubmit—external funding proposals.

3. Use workload assignments, internal grant programs, and other decisions about resource allocation in ways that provide clear incentives to seek external support for research.
   a. Allocate graduate research assistants based on research productivity.
   b. Whenever possible, tie recognition, rewards, and incentives to success in securing external research funding.

4. Identify and nurture a select number of interdisciplinary research centers with the potential to bring in substantial external support.
   a. Use indirect cost recovery dollars to provide start-up support for centers with clear potential for generating substantial revenue.
   b. Allow University research centers to recover 100% of indirect costs from grants and contracts generated by the centers to expedite the process of becoming self-sustaining and revenue positive.
5. Increase pre- and post-award support and streamline the pre- and post-award processes.
   a. Consider moving responsibility for processing research contracts and subcontracts to
      the Research and Sponsored Programs Office.
   b. Provide additional pre- and post-award support at both the College level and the
      institutional level.
   c. Examine the pre- and post-award workflow from the Principal Investigator or
      Project Director’s perspective and streamline the processes as much as possible.
   d. Develop an electronic workflow system for grants and contracts.

Recommendation B: Assign Faculty Workload Using Models That Directly Support the
University’s Strategic Goals

1. By December 2010 provide ideas, forums, and resources for faculty members to redesign
   academic curricula and courses in ways that improve student performance and satisfaction
   and increase flexibility in faculty load and opportunities for faculty research and creativity
   activity.

2. Within the guidelines of the faculty contract and parameters established by the University,
   develop mechanisms to allow those faculty members who wish to focus more heavily on
   criterion 2 (research and scholarly activity) the opportunity to do so. Such parameters might
   include the following:
   a. Research reassigned time should be accessible to everyone in the department.
   b. Research reassigned time should not disrupt FTE production or program delivery.
   c. Research reassigned time policies should include some mechanism for demonstrating
      outcomes (e.g., publications following a period of reassigned time) or documenting
      inputs (e.g., banking credits for publications and redeeming them for reassigned
      time).
   d. Research reassigned time should include options for upper level electives in addition
      to lower level General Education courses.
   e. The research reassignment policy could be folded into the Graduate Research
      Faculty Status process to include banked credits toward reassigned time for
      supervising doctoral dissertations and other capstone experiences.
   f. Deans’ Offices will continue to be required to account for 24 credits of workload for
      every faculty member.

Recommendation C: Emphasize Scholarly Productivity and External Support for
Scholarship in the Faculty Hiring, Promotion, and Tenure Processes

Introduction

1. Explore possibilities for changing the IFO contract to be more supportive of graduate
   education in general and doctoral education in particular.
   a. Review the contract to determine what should be deleted, changed and/or added to
      reflect—and facilitate—an increasing array of graduate offerings, especially doctoral
      programs.
b. For example, Article 12 Section C of the IFO/MnSCU contract could be changed to include independent studies and graduate thesis supervision as activities that qualify for overload pay.

2. Explore ways in which current contract language can be used to shape new behaviors that will accomplish the same desired goal.
   a. Base review practices on the two contractual specifications that a faculty member’s work must make a contribution to his or her field and represent achievement that is high enough and enduring enough for the desired rank.
   b. For example, outside reviewers who have no personal or direct professional connection with a promotion applicant might provide feedback to the Dean about whether the faculty member’s scholarship does, indeed, represent cumulative high achievement within the discipline.

3. Emphasize external research support in the hiring process for new faculty.
   a. Recruit and make every effort to hire faculty who have strong track records or a high probability of bringing in external support for their research.
   b. Whenever possible, hire faculty who will bring external support for their research (i.e. existing grants and contracts) with them to the University.
   c. Provide start-up packages for new faculty (research reassignment; equipment; research assistants) who show clear potential for securing external funding.

4. Explicitly reward external funding in the promotion and tenure process.
   a. Emphasize the importance of seeking external funding during the hiring process, at new faculty orientation, in Article 22 and annual PDP/PDR meetings, and at promotion and tenure workshops.
   b. Send clear and consistent messages that seeking external funding is an expectation and an important consideration in promotion and tenure decisions.

**Recommendation D: Allocate Graduate Assistantships in Ways that Directly Support the University’s Strategic Goals**

1. Fund teaching and research assistants with external grants and contracts whenever possible and streamline the hiring and compensation processes for externally funded graduate assistants.
   a. Remove barriers to hiring, compensating, and processing work authorization paperwork for graduate assistants who are employed on the timelines associated with grants and contracts rather than the University’s academic calendar.

2. Increase the graduate assistant allocation to programs that possess the capability to
   a. Employ graduate teaching assistants to instruct classes that will significantly increase undergraduate credit production, and/or
   b. Employ graduate teaching assistants in order to adjust faculty workloads to promote increased external funding and faculty scholarly productivity.

3. Establish a “University Graduate Assistantship” allocation model for doctoral assistantships that is similar to the UGA model in place for master’s assistantships.
Recommendation E: Foster, Support, and Market an Undergraduate Experience That is Directly Enhanced by Our Status as a Doctoral Institution

1. Reframe undergraduate recruitment materials to emphasize the benefits to undergraduates of attending a doctoral institution.

2. Fully utilize the talents of doctoral students to lighten faculty workload by having doctoral students teach undergraduate courses, grade papers, teach smaller lab sections or discussion sections, and advise student organizations.

3. Emphasize the value to undergraduates of research being conducted by our master’s and doctoral students: As new knowledge is created, it immediately becomes part of the undergraduate curriculum.

4. Encourage faculty to develop “vertical research teams” composed of one or more faculty members, doctoral students, master’s students and undergraduate students (representing first-, second-, third- and/or fourth-year status) so that faculty and advanced students mentor newer and less advanced team members, who in turn become mentors when they achieve advanced status.

5. Emphasize and support opportunities for undergraduates to participate in “high impact” educational experiences such as undergraduate research under the mentorship of a faculty member or doctoral student.

Recommendation F: Allocate Resources to Support Faculty Scholarship and Travel

1. Reallocate internal resources and seek new resources (indirect return on external grants and contracts, new endowed funds, redirection of current endowed funds) to support faculty research and dissemination of scholarship in significant venues (i.e., peer-reviewed national journals and/or presentations that are considered premiere venues within the discipline).

2. Examine internal grant, incentive, and recognition programs to ensure that resources are aligned with our strategic goals.
   a. Ensure that there is support for faculty at each phase of the research trajectory—not only early in their careers.
   b. Invest in those scholars who show the greatest promise of developing a national reputation and/or securing external support for their research.

3. Develop models to allow faculty who direct a minimum number of graduate theses/dissertations to be compensated for work in load if it does not negatively impact department credit generation targets or result in other faculty assigned overload.

4. Establish a research mentorship program for new faculty members.

5. Develop mechanisms for interdisciplinary interaction among graduate faculty that will result in collaborative research.
Recommendation G: Provide Support for Graduate Students’ Academic and Professional Development

1. Provide support for graduate students’ research.
   a. Ensure that doctoral faculty and students are active in their professional organizations and present their research at national conferences.
   b. Align doctoral courses with ongoing research projects of the department.
   c. Offer research grant programs to support thesis and dissertation research.

2. Enhance research support, IT support, and other academic and technical support for graduate students.
   a. Provide doctoral students the same level of IT and CESR support as faculty and staff.
   b. Provide doctoral students access to statistical software applications and site licenses and other software and computer support.
   c. Enhance library resources, including book collections.

3. Enhance student support services for graduate students.
   a. Hire a Coordinator of Graduate Student Services who can serve as the “Campus Hub” for graduate students and a liaison with other campus offices that serve graduate students.
   b. Train front-line campus staff to be knowledgeable about graduate programs and the programs and services available to graduate students.

4. Implement programs and services to create a strong graduate community.
   a. Strongly encourage participation in the annual Graduate Research Conference and include featured sessions by doctoral students.
   b. Develop a series of on-campus presentations (including networking receptions) featuring prominent scholars in the disciplines offering doctorates.
   c. Develop an e-newsletter for doctoral students, for dissemination of news, and information on resources and support.
   d. Develop awards for outstanding dissertations and doctoral advisors.
   e. Integrate doctoral students into the campus community by having them teach undergraduate courses, mentor undergraduates and master’s students, assist faculty with research, etc.
   f. Explore options for establishing graduate student housing on campus.
   g. Provide advising to prospective students.
   h. Assign advisors and require accepted students to schedule advising meetings shortly after accepting an offer of admission into the program.
   i. Assess student satisfaction with the quality of advising.

5. Implement career and professional development programs for graduate students.
   a. Provide regular and repeating workshops on topics specific to doctoral students, such as dissertation research and writing, job searches, etc.
   b. Fund doctoral travel to conferences and other professional development opportunities.
   c. Subsidize doctoral student memberships in professional organizations.

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d. Establish mentoring programs that connect graduate students with practicing professionals.

e. Offer a career fair targeted specifically to graduate students.

f. Enhance academic advising for doctoral students.

6. Support Minnesota State Mankato faculty and staff who wish to enroll in one of our doctoral programs—both to recruit and retain quality faculty and staff and to build “buy-in” for doctoral programs across campus.

   a. Approve sabbaticals for eligible staff working on doctoral degrees.
   b. Approve release time for eligible staff working on doctoral degrees.

Recommendation H: Recognize and Celebrate Graduate Education and Research in Our Communication with Both Internal and External Stakeholders

1. Intentionally “sell” Minnesota State Mankato as a doctoral institution in University branding and marketing campaigns.

2. Aggressively market to prospective donors the opportunities for endowing Distinguished Chairs or other named gifts in support of research and doctoral education.

3. Enhance the web presence of graduate education and research.
   a. Ensure that links to the Research and Graduate Programs web pages are prominently featured on the University home page.
   b. Allocate marketing resources strategically, recognizing that the web is the single most important marketing tool at the graduate level.
   c. Perform usability testing on graduate program web pages and make necessary enhancements to improve functionality.
   d. Provide graduate program coordinators with web development and editing support.

4. Implement an internal marketing campaign that “sells” the value of doctoral programs to the campus community by emphasizing the benefits of a strong graduate presence on campus.

Recommendation I: Elevate Graduate Education and Research within the Administrative and Decision-Making Structures of the University

1. Replace the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research with an Associate Vice President for Research who is a senior member of the Provost’s staff (and also serves as Dean of the Graduate School).

2. Include the AVP for Research as a member of the President’s Cabinet.

Recommendation J: Mobilize university resources to pursue legislative approval to offer doctoral programs in all disciplines

1. By 2015, obtain permission to offer applied doctorates in any discipline.

2. By 2020, obtain permission to offer the Ph.D.