

*A message from Robert H. Zimmmerman*

April 6, 2005

Dear UMC Faculty, Staff, and Students:

We are in the midst of a comprehensive strategic positioning initiative to ensure the future excellence of the entire University of Minnesota system—our campuses, colleges, departments, programs and services. The Board of Regents unanimously endorsed our strategic positioning initiative last month. In May I will forward recommendations to the board based on two task force reports issued last week for academic and administrative enhancements (www.umn.edu/systemwide/strategic_positioning). After its own consultation, the board is expected to take action on the plan in June.

The strategic positioning process is aimed at meeting the many challenges we face today in order to become one of the best public research and educational systems in the world. Our goal is to build on our academic and administrative strengths and to make the University better able to serve its educational, research, and public service obligations to the people of this state.

The quest to improve the excellence of the University requires the full resolve and creativity of our entire community. Its roots go back to my inaugural address two years ago when I said that the University must invest in our distinctive strengths, capture new areas of potential and make strategic choices, leverage our breadth and strength to create new academic synergies, and deliver the best possible education to our students. I continue to emphasize these key areas today as a part of our strategic positioning process.

The Academic Task Force Report recommends that central administration work with each of the coordinate campuses to initiate a process that establishes a financial and academic accountability framework under which it will operate. Each campus's annual progress will be evaluated within its own context, consistent with its history and mission. Because the University of Minnesota, Crookston faces the greatest number and perhaps the most significant challenges among the coordinate campuses, driven by demographic and other constraints, it has been chosen to be the first to pilot this process, with the other campuses to follow by the end of the year.

Senior Vice President Robert Jones is in Crookston today to meet with faculty, staff, and students to review the strategic positioning process and to begin work to define and prepare the UMC campus for the future. Although there are no predetermined outcomes, one thing is clear: The need for change and improvement is urgent.

I have reviewed the Background Report and Analysis of Current Trends at UMC, prepared by Robert Jones's office (available at www.academic.umn.edu/crookston_strategic). It underscores the need for UMC to think carefully and creatively about its future. The University of Minnesota has continued to support Crookston but

demographic, financial, and other trends make it clear that UMC must develop a new strategic direction and strategies to strengthen its future. The promise and potential are there, and we are committed to partnering with you to help UMC best serve the region and the state—today and in the years ahead. I look forward to learning more about your plans in the coming months. 

Best regards,



Robert H. Bruininks
President