University administrators are putting together roughly 25 task forces for the second round of a plan to become one of the world’s top three public research universities.

Officials said they hope to have the task forces finalized by the start of the fall semester.

Tom Sullivan, University vice president and provost, said he is evaluating more than 500 candidates for task forces and is identifying the chairmen and chairwomen and co-chairmen and co-chairwomen.

Sullivan is one of five task force team leaders, along with Robert Jones, senior vice president for system administration; Frank Cerra, senior vice president of the Academic Health Center; Kathy Brown, vice president and chief of staff; and Kathleen O’Brien, vice president of University Services.

R. Timothy Mulcahy, University vice president for research, will oversee two special task forces on research and will report to Cerra and Sullivan.

Alfred Sullivan, associate vice president for system administration, will be in charge.
of metrics and measurement.

Alfred Sullivan said his role will be to determine how the University will measure its progress as it moves toward the goal of becoming one of the world’s top three public research institutions.

“At the loftiest level, I think the question is: ‘How will we know when we’ve become one of the top three public research universities in the world?’ ” Tom Sullivan said.

Some opponents of the plan decried the University for not being open enough with the public during the first decisions of the plan, a charge that Tom Sullivan refutes.

Tom Sullivan noted that the University hosted three town hall meetings and two open forums, sent out multiple communications to students and staff and that he and University President Bob Bruininks made more than 100 public appearances related to the plan.

“(The last round) was very transparent and very open,” he said.

Still, he said, communication is the biggest factor the University needs to be careful of as it moves forward with the plan.

Affected units are anxiously awaiting the announcement of the task forces and hope to have a say in the final outcome of the plan.

Rick McCormick, director of the College of Liberal Arts honors program, said he feels confident that the plan will move forward in a positive direction but hopes his department has input on what it will look like in the future.

“What it’s going to come down to now is who’s on the task forces and what they recommend,” McCormick said.

Tom Sullivan said he wants to fill the task forces with a mixture of “specialists and generalists,” both people who are familiar with specific problems as well as people who can attack issues from a “new, fresh perspective.”

“We think you really get a much better product when you have both as opposed to just one or the other,” he said.
Cerra wrote in an e-mail that it is essential multiple University groups are represented in the task forces.

“It is also important to make sure that there are sufficient numbers of faculty (on the task forces) and a balance with staff and administration,” Cerra said.

Tom Sullivan said the University is also reviewing applicants for a new post, vice president of Access and Diversity. He said it will be an important position as the University attempts to ease fears that access and diversity will diminish in the future.

Tom Sullivan said most of the task forces should be done by December, with periodic updates to the Board of Regents and the rest of the University community between now and then.

Bruininks will give his final report sometime in early 2006, with the goal of implementing the changes by July.