MINNEAPOLIS - The University of Minnesota Board of Regents voted Friday to eliminate the General College as part of a larger effort to transform the university into one of the top three public research institutions in the world.

With an 11-1 vote, the board approved President Robert Bruininks’ sweeping plan that would combine the university’s 23 colleges into 15 by July 1, 2006. The plan would save up to $25 million over the next two to five years depending on when initiatives are implemented.

"You can't stand still in this world," said David Metzen, chairman of the board. "To resist change, hold your breath."

Doing away with the General College received the most attention as about a half-dozen demonstrators held up signs in the McNamara Alumni Center accused university administrators of being elitist.

The General College is a non-degree-granting arm of the university. For nearly 75 years, its students received intensive English, writing and math instruction to prepare them to transfer to other colleges in the University of Minnesota system.

However, less than a third of them go on to earn degrees within six years, while 56 percent of students on the main Twin Cities campus receive degrees in that time. In addition, less than 50 percent of students in the General College are still at the university three years after entering, according to Bruininks.

Bruininks touted the plan as one that improves overall student success.

"We don't believe this is the final step in the process. We believe this is the first step in a much longer journey," he told the regents. "We need our people to walk through the doors each morning, actually change the world, because they can."

Bruininks said his plan would not eliminate the curriculum or any programs in the General College.
plan turns the General College into a department within the College of Education and Human D

Several regents said the plan ensures the university would keep a close eye on issues of acces traditionally served by the General College. Among other things, the plan recommends working with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and increasing academic support wi university.

"The status quo is not good enough," said Marvin Marshak, the chairman of the Faculty Consult Committee and a physics professor. He said faculty members support the plan's overall momer change, and the University Senate, consisting of faculty and students, approved the plan 120-3

"The plan has brought together the spirit that we can do better," Marshak said. "I won't say then consensus on what should be done ... The strongest support is for motion."

Protesters on Friday said some low-income and minority students would suffer.

"If we lose the General College, then we are losing a whole group of students who could potent leaders at this institution," said Minerva Munoz, 24, a graduate student studying public policy.

The General College is important, Munoz said, because it has an admissions process that looks holistically, not just at grade point averages and test scores.

Munoz and others held signs that said, "Bob Bruininks ate my dream," or "Eliminate Elitism, Save demonstrators wore T-shirts that said "General College."

Regent Steven Hunter said he voted against the plan because he had too many unanswered q plan sets up task forces to examine several issues - but he said those task forces should have d before a vote was taken.

Overall, the plan would eliminate the College of Human Ecology, the College of Natural Resour General College. It also would create an honors college for top undergraduate students, increas emphasis on writing programs, and work to attract and retain top faculty members.

The plan also calls for the university to work with the K-12 system, to make sure that students a prepared for post-secondary education.

"That's a naive perspective to take," said Kwabena Siaka, a graduate teaching assistant at the College who studies education policy and administration. "There will be fewer students coming University of Minnesota as first-generation immigrants."

Regent Clyde Allen was enthusiastic about the plan. "In my own mind, the decision is clear," he absolutely the right step to take at the right time for this university."

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