Changing any large institution with a long history usually requires defying the laws of human nature. The University of Minnesota with the aim to make it one of the three best research universities in the world, depends not just on internal leadership but public acceptance that today's U isn't good enough.

The university is making a cogent case for a new model for delivering a successful education especially notable at the point of greatest resistance to change — eliminating the General College. When the university's top administrators last month revealed their recommendations to get from the future, we said the burden was on them to sell the overall plan by cooling down the hot-button opposition to eliminating General College. If Minnesotans are listening, the cooling breezes of analysis should prevail over the fear of ending a segregationist model for the U's most visible education enterprise. It's time for General College as a separate entity to go.

Improving student outcomes for all is central to the strategic positioning recommendations that the Board of Regents next month. Using that framework, it is clearly time to try other approaches to students who need extra preparation and academic assistance to succeed at the U.

General College students haven't achieved high enough graduation rates. The four-year rate, for 7.7 percent for General College students compared with 32.2 percent overall on the Twin Cities campus. The six-year graduation rate for General College is 30.8 percent while for the overall rate is 56.4 percent. What's more, the General College rate is not rising.

The new College of Education and Human Development provides a well-reasoned approach to commitment to access while rethinking the systems of academic support and advising the university for all kinds of students in all its programs.

Those who are listening carefully also can hear a credible argument that the university intends to 12 educators more actively on strategies that prepare young Minnesotans better to enter the U's colleges. Things like increasing the number of Minnesota high school students of color who take SAT exams from a miserable 4 percent of students in the top half of their classes can increase the number of qualified college applicants.

We agree with University President Robert Bruininks that the status quo — at General College and the university as a whole — is not an acceptable vision for the future of a great land grant university.
globalized, increasingly complex social and economic system.

Is a plan with 31 major recommendations that reorganizes academic strengths while reducing financial issues and cause major disruptions throughout the institution? You betcha.

But the strategic repositioning process for the University of Minnesota has its eyes on the prize: academic success in any one of the following dimensions.

General college

7.7%

30.8% Overall for Twin Cities campuses

32.2%

56.4% Twin Cities campuses, without General College

37.8%

62.7% A compelling case to end General College