Plan trades away access

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It is President Robert Bruininks' responsibility to announce to Minnesotans that under the administration of the University of Minnesota would no longer be a land-grant institution. Land-grant institutions were established by the 1862 Morrill Act to provide education and access for all Americans.

In shrinking General College to a department, we would shrink opportunities for students who a because of their admission score. I do not call these students "at risk." I have taught in General College and never taught an at-risk student. I have taught many students whose academic histories were marked by poverty and injustice. If General College becomes a department, there will be fewer spaces for students who come from poor rural and inner-city school systems. I believe this will mean fewer opportunities for color and poor students.

General College research shows students who transfer after attending community college do not have the same graduation rates as students who started at the U.

The U's administration claims General College graduation rates are poor compared to other colleges. Let me explain some missing data. After students have successfully completed several semesters at General College, they move to the college of their major. Therefore, if it takes them a long time to graduate, this won't show up on General College's responsibility.

Students of color face racism at the U. It is the responsibility of the entire university community to work against racism and its impacts on students of color, and to make sure that there are funds available for this. This plan blames General College and lets the rest of the university off the hook. Read the data College's Web page (www.gen.umn.edu) and see for yourself who will lose if this plan goes forward.

One of the reasons Bruininks gives for this re-structuring is that the U has too many small colleges. Let me ask a different question: Why not create an Honors College that will serve a small population of our most privileged students? The enormous gap in this country between the haves and the have-nots. An Honors College will only make the problem worse.

Minnesotans, it is our responsibility to address the forthcoming changes at the U. The collegiate symptoms of larger societal problems. We must close the gap between the haves and have-nots for more funding for public education. We must fight against solutions in higher education that promote elitism, and less opportunity for our most marginalized citizens. The University of Minnesota must strive to be a land-grant institution for all Americans.

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remain an institution that serves us all. That is what makes us a world-class university.

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