TO:       Twin Cities Faculty and Staff
FROM:     E. Thomas Sullivan, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
          Robert B. McMaster, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education
DATE:     May 6, 2009
RE:       Update on Undergraduate Initiatives

We are pleased to provide you with an update on multiple undergraduate initiatives and our progress in improving all aspects of the undergraduate experience at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus. Several of these initiatives are the result of the ongoing Strategic Positioning process.

The 2008 Freshman Class

In the fall of 2008, the University enrolled its best-ever freshman class, with 44.8% of the students graduating in the top 10% of their high school class, and an average ACT score of 26.2. The percent of entering Twin Cities freshmen in the top 10% of their high school class went from 28% in 1996 to almost 45% in fall 2008, while during the same time period the average ACT score of entering freshmen went from 24.3 to 26.2. The 2008 freshman class contained 20.4% students of color, 5.5% international students, and 64.8% from Minnesota high schools. For its fall 2008 class, the University reviewed over 29,000 applications. This spring, we are in the final stages of shaping the fall 2009 class with over 33,700 applications for our 5,355 freshman spots, an increase of 16.3% over 2008 applications.

This past August, our 5,000+ new freshmen took advantage of an exciting new opportunity, spending Welcome Week learning about the campus, their specific colleges, and the range of educational opportunities available to them at a comprehensive research university within a vibrant metropolitan area. We are planning our August 2009 Welcome Week, which will include Convocation, as well as a University day, college day, and public engagement day before students begin classes.

We continue to make progress on our four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates. The four-year rate has risen from 15.2% to 45.3% during the period 1996 (i.e., for students who entered fall 1992) to 2008. During that time, the five- and six-year rates rose from 38.1% to 64.4% and from 43.5% to 66% respectively. For our fall 2007 freshman class, first-year retention was 88.5%, compared to 78.6% for fall 1992 freshmen. Although we have made excellent progress, much work remains to reach our four-year graduation target of 60% and first-year retention target of 90% for the entering fall 2008 class.
Curricular and Learning Initiatives

Liberal Education
Our revised undergraduate Liberal Education requirements will take effect for the fall 2010 entering class. The Council on Liberal Education is currently in the process of recertifying new and existing courses as to how they will fulfill the new liberal education requirements. The new curriculum will require the completion of seven core courses (Arts and Humanities, Biological Sciences, Historical Perspectives, Literature, Mathematical Thinking, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences) and five theme courses (Civic Life and Ethics, Diversity and Social Justice in the U.S., Environment, Global Perspectives, and a new theme in Technology and Society). The Council, chaired by Peter Hudleston (Professor of Geology and Geophysics), has met every two weeks during this academic year, and has now reviewed over 300 courses in terms of meeting the core and/or theme requirements. For those faculty and staff proposing new courses, a website for frequently asked questions has been created at http://onestop.umn.edu/faculty/lib_eds/instructions.html.

Undergraduate Writing
Undergraduate curricular writing reform continues with the First-Year Writing Program and the Writing-Enriched Curriculum project. The new University First-Year Writing Program (FYW) began fall semester 2007. The FYW program focuses on learning outcomes that include research-based writing, writing and revising, digital technology, and library research. The program provides students with small class settings, averaging 22 students, where they have close contact with their instructors. During 2007-08, a total of 3,961 students (78% of the incoming class) took FYW courses, and the initial data on student performance is excellent: in fall 2007, 95% of these students received a grade of C or above.

The Writing-Enriched Curriculum (WEC) project has been partially funded by a one million dollar grant from the Bush Foundation. WEC shifts the emphasis on writing from Writing Intensive (WI) courses to a more coherent disciplinary approach with students actively involved in writing throughout their major, as mapped out in the writing plan developed by each department. Nine pilot departments are in various stages of developing their writing plans, which can be found at http://wec.umn.edu/. Each plan has been reviewed by the Campus Writing Board, chaired by Will Durfee (Professor of Mechanical Engineering). Assessment of WEC pilot initiatives is proceeding, and the goal of a recent writing retreat was to begin working through both the fiscal and curricular harmonization of the current Writing Intensive (WI) model and WEC, where a likely structure will involve a set of WI courses embedded within the WEC writing plans. The Campus Writing Board will be working through further details of implementation over the summer.

Student Learning and Development Outcomes
In May of 2007 the Faculty Senate adopted seven Student Learning Outcomes and seven Student Development Outcomes as official policy. Together, the learning and development outcomes are intended to frame the undergraduate experience.
- **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):** In 2003-04, a curriculum assessment working group of the Provost’s Council for Enhancing Student Learning developed seven proposed student learning outcomes for all undergraduate students at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus. See [http://www.slo.umn.edu/](http://www.slo.umn.edu/). Effective fall 2010, each undergraduate course on the Twin Cities campus is required to address at least one of the SLOs; all new and revised course proposals being submitted now include information about how particular SLOs are addressed in a course. In addition, a number of departments are working with the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs to pilot the implementation of the SLOs in their classes and programs. The goals for the pilot units include mapping their courses and then their major programs to the outcomes, developing a clear, ongoing assessment plan at the major level, and identifying faculty development/resource needs.

- **Student Development Outcomes (SDOs):** The SDOs were developed to define a set of skills and characteristics we expect of our graduates. We have made progress incorporating the SDOs in student employment in selected areas, such as Student Unions. Programming has also been tied to the SDOs, most notably the Welcome Week program for new freshmen. See [http://www.osa.umn.edu/outcomes/index.html](http://www.osa.umn.edu/outcomes/index.html).

A new tool, the *Engage!* search tool (see [http://engage.umn.edu/twincities/search](http://engage.umn.edu/twincities/search)), helps students to find a range of involvement, leadership and employment opportunities at the University and in the Twin Cities community. The learning and development outcomes are the focus of many of these opportunities, designed to optimize student engagement and learning outside of the classroom.

**University Honors**
This is the first year for the new University Honors Program (UHP), directed by Serge Rudaz (Professor of Physics). In the fall of 2008, we brought in our first-ever University Honors Program class of 611 students whose average ACT score was 31 (i.e., in the top 4% of those who take the ACT). The Honors Program now has 2,406 students, including those who were previously in collegiate-based programs. The UHP, housed in Nicholson Hall, has put in place a creative, University-wide advising structure and a revised curriculum with newly-developed Honors seminars. Within the UHP, the Office for National and International Scholarships assists students and recent graduates (both honors students and other students) in identifying and becoming competitive candidates for scholarships. The number of such awards received by University of Minnesota undergraduates since 2000 is impressive, with 5 Rhodes Scholarships, 7 Harry S. Truman Scholarships, 16 Fulbright Grants (6 in 2008 alone), and 23 Barry M. Goldwater Scholarships. The University now ranks second in the number of Rhodes Scholarships received by public institutions over this period.

**Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program**
We continue to invest significant funds into the UROP program, directed by Marvin Marshak (Professor of Physics). Last year, the UROP office funded over 650 proposals from all of the Twin Cities undergraduate colleges and the coordinate campuses. Each UROP award pays the student a stipend of $1,400 plus research expenses (up to $300) for one semester of research work. Students receiving UROP awards are required to publish their results at national or local
conferences or symposia. In early April of each year, UROP sponsors an all-University undergraduate research symposium. This spring, our students delivered over 250 poster presentations on a range of topics, including “Transnational Labor Markets: How IT Outsourcing is Affecting Minnesota’s Workforce,” “Heat Diffusion from an Optical Source in a Low-Temperature Experiment,” and “Widespread Recycling in Local Kitchens to Reduce Waste.”

The impressive list of accomplishments of our remarkable undergraduate students continues to grow, and on all fronts we clearly are making sustained progress towards our goals for undergraduate education. The substantial improvements in the undergraduate education we provide are a result of the collective efforts of our dedicated faculty and staff. For those efforts we offer our sincere thanks.