Grand Challenges Research: Identifying Campus Priorities

From Provost Karen Hanson

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, our Twin Cities campus has declared that it will be a place where research, teaching, and engagement integrate to bring solutions to society's complex problems. Which of those many problems should we collectively affirm to be our first targets? I write to ask for your help in answering that question.

Your best thoughts are needed as we work toward the goals identified in the Twin Cities campus strategic plan. The Provost's Grand Challenges Research Strategies Team, 30 distinguished faculty members led by Professor Bud Duvall, developed steps that, with your participation, will lead us to define a set of Grand Challenges that our campus will very publicly embrace. A description of the process to identify Grand Challenges priorities is posted on the strategic planning website, along with submission guidelines--the "Call for Ideas."

Please respond to the "Call for Ideas," offering ideas that can help foster interdisciplinary connections with colleagues across the campus. The guidelines include web links to full details and instructions for submission. This process will continue into the fall semester, but I encourage you to be an early contributor and submit your idea or ideas by the initial June 26 deadline.

You may be aware that the Strategic Plan includes three Grand Challenges areas, noted as examples of strong interdisciplinary efforts already under way on our campus. Your suggestions might, e.g., be directed to the enhancement of work in the three identified areas--food, industry/environment/climate change, and vibrant communities--or you might instead indicate ways that our institutional strengths can address additional pressing societal issues. By the end of the fall semester, we intend to have identified three to five additional Grand Challenges.

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We need your intellect, your curiosity, and your passion for addressing the difficult, multi-faceted problems that weigh on populations locally and globally. As noted in the attached information, campus forums will be planned to support collaboration and enhance strengths in existing and emerging areas of scholarship. But first, we need your ideas.

I want to emphasize that the campus will be making a significant commitment to the Grand Challenges that are adopted as institutional priorities. Please help determine the direction and force of that commitment.

Thank you for joining with other faculty across the Twin Cities campus to contribute to these steps in the implementation of the Strategic Plan, helping both our institution and the communities we serve.

As always, I invite your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Karen Hanson
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

This message was sent May 19, 2015 by Provost Hanson to Twin Cities faculty.