



Minnesota Journal

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Timing right to restore prominence, quality of 'U' as state's research flagship

With an energetic and visionary new president in Mark Yudof, the University of Minnesota appears primed for greater excellence. In a new report released this month the Citizens League urges the Legislature, business community and the University itself to support Yudof's agenda and take steps to improve the quality of the University's research and advanced degree programs.

In the report, *A Competitive Place in the Quality Race: Putting the University of Minnesota in the*

by Ron Wirtz

Nation's Top Five Public Research Universities, the League recommends a number of strategies for the University to achieve greater quality in its research and advanced degree programs. The report was prepared by a committee of 30 League volunteers cochaired by former League president Carl "Buzz" Cummins, vice president and general counsel of the Workers Compensation Reinsurance Association, and current League board member Jane Vanderpoel, a

research consultant with the Minnesota House of Representatives.

The need for high quality in research and advanced degree programs at the University is clear: In a rapidly accelerating global and information-based economy, the state's ability to remain prosperous depends on high-skill workers, new technology and continual innovation. Research and advanced degree programs at the University's Twin Cities campus provide much of this capacity. Yet, ironi-

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Shepherding 'U' offers challenges to public leaders

by Janet Dudrow

The University of Minnesota is an enormous public asset in the life of the Twin Cities and the state as a whole.

But the trials involved in leading the "U" reflect in microcosm—albeit a very large microcosm—many of the challenges of public leadership in general. As part of the Citizens League's continuing focus on public leadership, the *Journal* chatted with a handful of thoughtful people about some of the challenges public leaders from all sectors—government, business, communities and the University itself—confront while shepherding the University for the benefit of the state.

'It's so big'

"The single biggest challenge the 'U' faces is its size," according to Carlos Mariani, executive director of the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership Project and a DFL state representative from St. Paul. "It's so big, and people *feel* it as big," he said. Added to the mammoth size of the organization—it's as big as many metro suburbs—is its longstanding tradition of decentralized management. Budgeting and deci-

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Make Hiawatha corridor pathbreaking example of efficient, attractive transit

The possibility of turning the Hiawatha Avenue corridor between downtown Minneapolis and the airport into a dedicated transitway offers the Twin Cities area an opportunity to work smarter on our transportation needs.

The proposal for Hiawatha as it now stands would be to acquire and improve the corridor for use by buses, airport shuttles and taxis, while reserving the option to develop light-rail transit (LRT) later on. Hennepin County—wearing its "Rail Authority" hat—is advocat-

by Lyle Wray

ing for developing an LRT line in this corridor immediately, however.

No doubt about it, railroads defined the 19th century. The Upper Midwest map looks the way it does because of the transcontinental rail network, which developed between 1870 and 1880. In the 20th century, the car has been king, to our everlasting joy and dismay. As Twin Citians contemplate the solutions to their mobility and access requirements in the new millenni-

um, they ought to keep their brains in high gear and their sights forward. Focusing on either rail or the drive-alone automobile is looking backward.

Instead, the region should be thinking creatively. All the transportation players ought to be challenged to figure out how to plan, design, cost out and test services that will serve potential customers while meeting transportation policy goals. The region should be making commitments now to put together all of the

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Invest now in state's human capital for future success

Today's globalized and knowledge-based economy is demanding major departures from "business as usual"—not only from business, but from education institutions and governments as well. Now, just as this massive economic transformation is percolating through the public consciousness—bam!—we face a significant labor and skills shortage. Between 1970 and 1980, 462,000 new workers were added to Minnesota's workforce; between 2010 and 2020, only 46,000 new workers will be added.

Add up these trends and the bottom line is that Minnesota's success in the future depends on the brains, productivity and creativity of the people we do have. The Advisory Council on Minnesota's Economic Future, created by the 1997 Legislature partly at the urging of the Citizens League, should invest its time in outlining a human capital strategy. Where to start?

Take a broad view of a statewide strategy for the economy. There should be a clear, state-level vision to guide appropriations, bonding bills and tax policy. State policymakers don't have to—they shouldn't—pick winners and losers, but they should be clear about the key things the public sector must do right to succeed in the new economy. That vision and priority list ought to inform state and local governments' nuts-and-bolts spending decisions.

University of Minnesota President Mark Yudof has outlined four research priorities for the "U": digi-

tal science, new media, biotechnology and design. Yudof's leadership is welcome and his strategy is persuasive, but his list of research priorities for the "U" should not become the state's economic strategy by default. State leaders should have a vigorous public discussion about how and where to invest in new knowledge.

Strengthen research and development and technology transfer activities at the University of Minnesota. In our newly released report the Citizens League (see article on page one) recommends steps to build on the University's efforts in technology transfer and to boost research in critical areas. Building faculty strength, increasing funding for research and adding more graduate student fellowships are some of the steps that will pay dividends over the long term.

Attract top talent. A constant infusion of leading-edge thinkers with cosmopolitan perspectives creates the conditions that foster excellence, industry innovation and internationalism. Minnesota must be a place that attracts the most talented, promising faculty and students from throughout the United States and abroad. And bright, academically talented young people who grow up in the Twin Cities should have a reason to want to stay here.

Improving the graduate education

and research at the University of Minnesota by recruiting, supporting and paying excellent faculty and graduate research assistants must be front and center on the state's to-do list.

Fund industry clusters for training. In 1996 the Citizens League encouraged public sector leaders to look at developing specialized skills, new technologies and infrastructure to support the region's key industry clusters. A significant share of state funding for postsecondary education, for example, should be provided to key industry clusters to assess—in partnership with public postsecondary institutions—the priority training needs of the industries. And why not provide the funding directly to employers or industry consortia, then allow them to buy the training from whomever does it best? Making industries the paying customers of training and education would complement many other training efforts already underway. It would also nudge postsecondary education institutions to focus on what the ultimate customer of training—the employer—really needs.

Focus economic development on higher value-added and export-related jobs. As the labor shortage tightens, state and local governments must further focus their economic development activities on higher-wage jobs, as the state's Department of Training and Eco-

nomics Development is already doing. It makes little sense to provide public subsidies—either directly or indirectly—for business expansion or relocations for low-wage jobs that businesses will have trouble filling.

It does make sense to focus also on encouraging export-related business. Exposure to foreign competition, ideas and customers has tended to be associated with many other benefits: pay levels are from five percent to 15 percent more than in nonexporting companies, productivity is up to 20 percent higher and capital investment is higher.

Step up the use of technology for on-the-job training and continuing education. A consortium of Minnesota higher education institutions is already building a "virtual university." That's a welcome development. Being able to respond to changing skill needs with timely and convenient training systems—including Internet-based systems—will be a major advantage in the future. We should make sure that Minnesota keeps pace with this growing opportunity.

A strategy for investing in Minnesota's human capital is essential in a not-enough-workers, brain-power-is-all world. Developing a strategy is hard to do when the economy is as robust as ours is, but human capital investment is a long-term proposition and there is no time to spare.

Lyle Wray is executive director of the Citizens League.

Return purse strings to MnSCU board, editors urge

On Balance

No spent opinions, these.

session and perhaps even a further reduction in classification rates. **Duluth News-Tribune** said (Dec. 26) concern over whether the Asian economic troubles could affect Minnesota is causing Gov. Carlson to delay a push for further cuts in business property taxes. It said legislators "should follow the governor's lead and go slow on any plans for this money that could be lost before it's ever found."

St. Cloud Times said (Jan. 2) the Governor and Legislature should "Exercise restraint in using the large surpluses from a booming economy, sales of Minnesota firms and less-than-expected use of health and welfare services." It said the state should use the surplus to shift taxing and spending priorities to meet the needs of a growing elderly and school-age population. It should also invest in training to achieve productivity gains.

Fergus Falls Daily Journal said (Dec. 23) the Legislature should either drop the requirement it passed last session for schools to add three days to their 1998-99 cal-

endars or pay for the extra time. "It only makes sense that the Legislature pays for what it requires or continues to give school boards the decision-making power." **Duluth News-Tribune** said (Dec. 31) the fact that four new members to the school board were elected based on opposition to the Edison charter schools should not lead to divisiveness. "The entire board should be open to assessing Edison's results...before undermining the program on principle...A lot of sincere effort and money will have been wasted if Edison is deemed a failure before the results are in." It said (Dec. 18) that Supt. Mark Myles "handled badly" announcing his planned summer departure by taking a full-page ad in a Duluth shopper, before talking to the full school board. It said (Dec. 16) that the newly elected board members "should give Edison specifically and school choice generally a chance...American education needs improvements and must be open to change."

St. Paul Pioneer Press commented (Dec. 11) on the controversy over

the State Board of Education's proposed diversity rule and called "sickening" the "politicization of the policy-making process in ways that ill-served the needs of disadvantaged students." It also criticized the Governor for "yanking the chain of an independent board, most of whose members he selected." **St. Cloud Times** said (Dec. 11) the criticism of the diversity rule was "overblown." It said, "To improve public school performance, we must have accurate information and train teachers to meet the needs of a more diverse population."

St. Cloud Times said (Dec. 15) the change in the system for distributing compensatory revenue to schools "simply tells school districts to do what they should have been doing since 1971...Instead of fighting the changes, schools should do everything they can to get through this difficult first year to make the program work as legislators intended 26 years ago."

Star Tribune lauded (Dec. 17) Gov. Arne Carlson's efforts to seek out working poor families who failed to file for the Minnesota Working Family Credit in 1995 and 1996 and send them their refunds.

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cally, they are often underappreciated for their contributions to the state's long-term economic and social well-being.

Where undergraduate degrees once sufficed, companies now need the specialized skills of workers with doctoral, masters and professional degrees; University research—almost \$350 million of it in 1996—produces new technology, processes, products, information and ways of thinking. Businesses statewide use such assets to compete in the marketplace.

Unfortunately, evidence suggests that the overall quality of these academic and research programs at the University is not what it should be, considering their importance to the state. That importance is magnified

by the fact that the Twin Cities campus conducts the great majority of all academic research and provides the majority of advanced degrees—including all PhDs—in the state's public higher education system.

National surveys indicate that the University's reputation—and perceived quality—has not kept pace with that of its national peers. Make no mistake, the University is still a very strong institution. But surveys done by the respected National Research Council, for example, demonstrate that the University's collective reputation for graduate programs could use a shot of quality improvement.

In fact, a lot is already happening at the University—the result of past initiatives from the Nils Hasselmo administration and the aggressiveness of new President Mark Yudof. Within the last year or so, the University Hospital merged with

Fairview Riverside, a wholesale reorganization of the biological science programs was initiated, and there are (or will be soon) new buildings for the Carlson School and Mechanical Engineering.

During his brief but active tenure to date, President Yudof has combined targeted, small-scale improvements—like campus esthetics, administrative cutbacks and the recent appointment of a vice president for human resources—with visionary long-term improvements, including new research initiatives in emerging high-tech areas. Yudof's early actions appear to have had a tremendous impact on University morale and the public's general perception.

However, as the League notes, much remains to be done at the University. In its report the League out-

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Yudof wants 'U' control of proposed research entity

From a statement by University of Minnesota President Mark Yudof on Jan. 7.

The Citizens League...report recognizes that new knowledge created in a healthy research environment at the University of Minnesota is the key to the future economic well-being of the state and its citizens. The report rightly points out that while agriculture and manufacturing remain extremely important, the state has entered the postmodern era when information and knowledge are the bellwethers of our economic

future...

Four of the recommendations contained in the report are consistent with actions the University is taking or soon will take to improve educational quality and streamline processes: the evaluation of graduate and professional programs, the need to establish programmatic priorities, and the need to improve human resource training and management...

The report's focus, and one of its major recommendations, concerns the importance of increased

research support in areas of highest priority for the state's economy and of stronger ties between the University and private industry in order to increase and accelerate technology transfer from the University...I agree with the reports' conclusions that the University's technology transfer activities are not as effective or efficient as they should be. That is the major reason I recently appointed Dr. Christine Maziar to the post of vice president for research and dean of the Graduate School. Dr. Maziar is an expert in coordinating the transfer of new

knowledge...

I am sympathetic to the report's critique of the University's relationship with industry and the problems that exist in current technology transfer programs. I also agree that a new vehicle is needed outside of the established University channels to prospect for discoveries within the University, protect intellectual property, market these discoveries and transfer the technology. This new vehicle or entity should be fully accountable to the President and the Board of Regents...

Job of journalism should not be to lead, but to inform

Edited excerpts of remarks by Eric Black, staff writer, Star Tribune, to the Citizens League on Dec. 9.

I agree that the version of reality that is portrayed in a typical newspaper on a typical day, or on a TV broadcast, does not reflect a calm, balanced, constructive portrayal of that day in the life of the community. I also agree with the critics who say that a lot of what passes for journalism is too shallow, that it's hype. I would especially agree that we are engaging in way too much hype of what we have to tell you. I agree with those who accuse us of bias.

Some of the biases that I agree we have are a bias in favor of covering the negative over the positive, a bias in favor of covering conflict over resolution, a bias in favor of covering politics over governance and a bias in favor of covering events over ideas.

I'm sorry we don't do better. But I don't agree that we should do a better job of providing public leadership. To those who think that's what we should be doing, my reply is that's not our job. Our job is to inform. We need to do that better. But our job is not really to lead.

We should talk about what people have in mind when they talk about a desire to have the media lead. There may have been a time when the leadership of journalism was exercised through crusades that were run on the editorial page of great newspapers. But I don't know very many people who think that's a very effective tool any more for leading the public, even for getting the Legislature to enact some bill it doesn't want to or the city council or whatever.

The *Star Tribune's* current crusade on the editorial page seems to be in favor of funding for a Twins stadi-

um. That'll give you some sense for how effective we are.

Part of the reason the editorial crusade has gone out of fashion is what I call the "public utility" problem. I've heard our publisher describe the situation of a big newspaper in a one-newspaper town as being something like the situation of a public utility. You fall into a bland, all-things-to-all-people persona. It leads to kind of a caution and a straddle-happiness on the editorial page and throughout the paper.

Some people, when they say they want the media to do better in the area of public leadership, have in mind a set of proposed journalism reforms that go by the name of public journalism, sometimes called civic journalism.

It has many characteristics. It's journalism that listens more to the public and less to the experts. It's journalism that accepts that it has a job of helping society solve its problems. To advance that goal it gets involved in certain functions that traditional journalists were taught wasn't part of their job—like holding big public meetings and reporting about what happens at the meetings.

This journalism reform movement has been rejected by the biggest newspapers in the country. But it has caught on with the leadership of a number of big regional papers around the country, including both the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and the *Star Tribune*. When I say it's caught on with the leadership, I'm specifically telling you that it has mostly *not* caught on with the working journalists at most papers I'm aware of. Most journalists dislike it. They tend to see it as a menace to the sacred journalistic principle of objectivity.

I'm not one who holds objectivity to be sacred. But, in practice, I've found the kind of journalism that gets produced by these big public journalism projects to be neither very substantial nor very interesting to me. I also haven't seen any evidence that the kinds of stories that come out of these projects are catching on with the public, except for those few members of the public who find themselves quoted in the stories.

I guess I'm such an elitist that I would still rather read the views of someone who is an expert on a topic, rather than the views of someone who is not. I know that's terribly unfashionable. But I'm still hooked on an old-fashioned notion of a reader who, through the news media, can be exposed to a variety of well-informed views on a particular subject and then actually decide what he or she thinks. It's a quaint view. And you can rest assured that those of us who have that view are being hunted down and eliminated.

I'm also bothered by the big public meetings that public journalism projects tend to hold because they often seem to be on topics that other people are holding meetings about that we don't cover. So, when we cover the meeting that we organize and, of course, our competition doesn't—they cover the meeting that they organized—it takes, for me, something of the odor of self-promotion, masquerading as humility.

Another way some people feel the media should lead, or does lead, is through our so-called agenda-setting function. It's sometimes said that the media can't tell us what to think but they can tell us what to think about. We can put a topic on the public agenda or keep it on there.

We don't have a clear standard by which we can really judge whether one story is better than another, even what the quality is that distinguishes good journalism from mediocre journalism. The word we use in this endless argument is the ambiguous concept that we call "newsworthiness." There are two things that make stories newsworthy: Either they are interesting or important.

For as long as I've been in the business, newspapers have tried to run this balancing act between the interesting and the important. In the years I've been in the business, I've felt the balance has shifted away from the important and towards the interesting.

It feels to me as if we are getting to be afraid to be a news medium in a world where the entertainment media rule. We run the risk of becoming an entertainment media ourselves. I find that entertainment values are more and more the correct explanation for why a particular story gets chosen.

There actually is a culture war going on in the newsrooms around the country between those who seek to apply the marketplace logic ever more directly to what we do and a few dinosaurs who cling to a nation that was more fashionable when I first got in the business about a profession whose main function is not to lead, not to entertain, but to inform.

A more complete version of Black's remarks, as well as remarks of the other speakers in the Citizens League's series on Media and Public Leadership—Al McFarlane and Kathy Tunheim, are available at the League's web site at <http://free.net.msp.mn.us/ip/pol/citizen>.

be viewed as a stand-alone route, but should be expected to contribute to meeting the transportation needs of its surrounding area.

To do this, the transitway must meet two challenges. First, it must

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Hiawatha

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provide transit services not only to visitors and workers in downtown Minneapolis, the airport and the Mall of America, but also for many work trips destined to other nearby locations. Second, the transit services must be competitive with the private automobile.

How? A long-distance transit service must provide passengers with express service from near their home to within a few steps of their destination. Transit customers, including visitors going from the airport or the Mall to downtown Minneapolis, must be able to reach downtown in 15 to 20 minutes. They cannot do this if vehicles have to stop to pick up passengers at stations on their way downtown.

Transfers between vehicles, especially transit vehicles, will only shrink the market of customers. It may be necessary for customers to drive their cars up to well-located auto-to-transit transfer points. This is especially the case in lower density suburbs with their cul-de-sac parking arrangements. However, initial auto collection and transfer point must be the only one. To compete with the private automobile, the transit service must be nearly as convenient and not take much more time than the entire walk and drive-alone trip.

Finally, backup services must be in place to insure that a rider who needs to leave work before or after the regular service isn't marooned.

What sorts of approaches might make sense to meet these requirements on the Hiawatha corridor?

● The transitway will function most effectively when, like a freeway, it funnels large numbers of people—for the express part of their trip—to a wide variety of destinations without requiring stops along the way. Vehicles must be able to safely and easily enter the facility every mile or two and pull off at these locations to pick up or deliver passengers to their ultimate destinations. That means allowing enough space for bridges and pull-off stops.

● Competitive transit services would likely use big and small

buses and vans radiating from the adjoining neighborhoods east of Cedar Avenue to the river in Minneapolis. Such services would express commuters to jobs in downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota or wherever there is a concentration of jobs. In Dakota County, along highways 55 and 110, small buses, vans or large carpools might start from individual companies or from interceptor lots at prime intersections, then express passengers via the transitway to downtown, the airport or to jobs and homes in Bloomington, Edina or Eden Prairie. Vans, shared-ride taxis and larger carpools might be the only reasonable, affordable transit options to jobs in these dispersed suburban locations.

● New state-of-the-art "auto-to-transit" stations could go a long way toward persuading people to use transit. These facilities must be at prime locations that permit non-stop access to the transitway; the church parking lot won't do. At the stations, commuters should find information on changeable message signs about departure times and estimated arrival times for bus, van, large carpool and shuttle services. Other personal services, such as a dry cleaner or convenience store, would ease end-of-day errands.

Such facilities could be constructed at the intersection of arterial roads and Highways 55 or 110 in Dakota County or at the intersection of Highway 62 and the transitway in Hennepin County. They could serve a variety of destinations beyond those immediately along the transitway.

● The auto-to-transit station at Highway 62 and the transitway might also include a test of personalized rapid transit (PRT). PRT is an elevated structure with computer-directed small vehicles that would respond on demand to carry people from the auto-to-transit station to entrances at the Veterans Hospital.

● Communication and information technologies should be exploited to the hilt along the transitway. Electronic signage along arterial roads approaching interceptor lots and transitway stations would let people know upcoming departure times and estimated arrival times at the final destination. Computer tracking of vehicles would provide advance notice of vehicles soon to arrive at the station. Riders could use transit smart cards to charge their fares and—why not?—accumulate "frequent rider miles" that could be good for discounts at station merchants. Rather than expecting commuters to dig in their pockets for cash, why not let them use a debit card and get a monthly bill in the mail?

Vehicles, facilities, services
Effective transit is a combination of vehicles (sometimes), facilities and services. The region should be thinking creatively about all three.

The challenge of developing and testing various transit services rests initially with Metro Transit in Hennepin County and Minnesota Valley Transit in Dakota County. Both will obviously want to route some existing bus services onto the transitway. More importantly, however, they should be challenged to expand and improve their product lines. If they can't, other organizations should be authorized to try.

Right now, the task of acquiring and setting aside land is perhaps the most urgent. The job of acquiring land, constructing facilities and maintaining them should rest with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). Expanding MnDOT's role beyond operating, managing and maintaining the freeway system—by adding this exciting new responsibility for facilities dedicated to various transit vehicles—would make the state a major investor in transit facilities. Cities and counties might even become partners in acquiring and

setting aside land for the auto-to-transit stations, which will most frequently adjoin county roads.

Putting MnDOT, or MnDOT and the counties, in charge of facilities development would leave the responsibility for buying and operating vehicles to other organizations and individual entrepreneurs who provide services. Best of all, this approach would allow the state to use dedicated gas taxes for moving people via transit—without waiting for changes in Minnesota's constitutionally defined highway financing system.

William A. McDonough, dean of the school of architecture at the University of Virginia and an expert on sustainable development, urged a local audience Jan. 8 to apply fresh thinking to the new generation of transit design, rather than looking for a "linear solution to a problem created by linear thinking."

Instead of lobbying Congress at the outset for federal funds for a huge investment in rail technology, with its limited flexibility, the region should ask for an investment in facilities and services that makes the best use of existing resources and builds on successes with new services.

The Twin Cities region should get beyond that great 20th-century technology, the private automobile. But we won't get there by investing in that great 19th-century technology, the railroad. There will be a role for both in the future; both inventions were ingenious and there's no reason to abandon either.

But in today's economy, value is created and added by information, innovation and productivity—not by machinery or raw materials. The transportation technology of the 21st century is between our ears. Successful transit will result when Twin Citians draw on all the information, communication, and transportation technologies at our disposal (yes, possibly even rail), permit our creativity free rein, then summon the discipline to subject it all to ruthless market tests. Successful transit will result when we work smarter.

Lyle Wray is executive director of the Citizens League.

Hiawatha

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elements necessary to make the Hiawatha corridor a pathbreaking example of transit that works—transit that competes successfully with the automobile to attract and move

people around the region, efficiently and at reasonable cost.

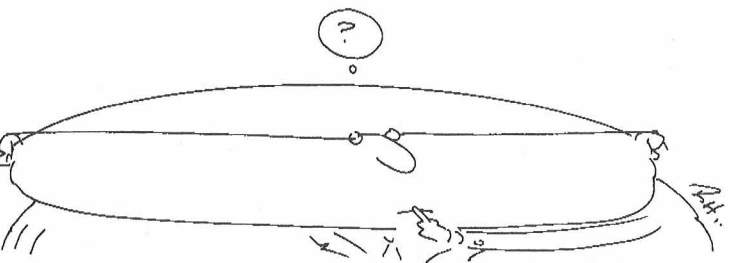
Not a stand-alone route
The Hiawatha corridor connects downtown Minneapolis and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP), two of the Twin Cities' major job and visitor loca-

tions. However, together those two destinations account for fewer than 15 percent of the total job trips in this region. And the corridor between the destinations probably accounts for fewer than one-fifth of those—or fewer than three percent of the region's job trips. The Hiawatha corridor, then, shouldn't

be viewed as a stand-alone route, but should be expected to contribute to meeting the transportation needs of its surrounding area.

To do this, the transitway must meet two challenges. First, it must

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The transportation technology of the 21st century: It's all between the ears!

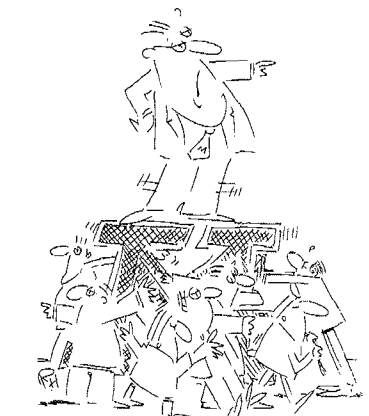
Leadership

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sion-making authority are all over the place and the challenge for a president is to get everyone moving in the same direction, said Robert Vanasek, legislative consultant and former Minnesota House Speaker.

The relationship between University administration and faculty is a unique one, Vanasek said. In a private business, the chief executive officer makes a decision and people are expected to carry it out. Even in government, underneath the apparent messiness there is a straightforward process for making decisions, he said. A vote is taken, a bill is passed or rejected. At the University—where faculty have a great deal of autonomy—no decision is ever final and the dialogues are never-ending, Vanasek said. Gaining the support and commitment of the University faculty is critical to any attempt to set priorities, he said.

Securing that commitment is often made difficult by the culture of academia. That culture leads faculty to prize the recognition and respect of scholarly peers over managerial ideas about priorities or productivity, said Charles Denny, a retired businessman who recently chaired a University task force on human resources. Most faculty members believe that any direction from outside the collegial environment is inappropriate, he said.

Duane Benson, executive director of the Minnesota Business Partnership, noted that the system of incentives within which the University (and the other institutions in the higher education system) operates doesn't routinely require either productivity or responsiveness. "This is



The challenge: Getting everyone to head in the same direction.

a system that has, itself, become the customer," Benson said. "The higher education institutions don't look over the horizon and ask what the customers want," because they don't have to, he said.

External pressures

Public leaders in the Legislature and elsewhere outside the gates of the University face their own dilemmas. The University is a public institution, with public responsibilities for creating knowledge, disseminating knowledge and serving the community, Denny said. But it also is an academy whose commitment to independent scholarship and academic freedom must be respected. And because the University of Minnesota was chartered before Minnesota became a state, it enjoys constitutional autonomy from state government.

"It's a balancing act," Vanasek said. Legislators hold the power of the purse strings, and they hear from all kinds of constituencies and interest groups, he said. The Legislature has legitimate responsibility for looking out for the state's well-being. Vanasek said it's tempting to step in and say what the "U's" priorities should be. On the one hand, the Legislature is trying to nudge the University in some direction, but on the other hand, "you're trying not to go over the line into meddling," he said. "It's a necessary tension, but we have to keep it a healthy tension."

Added to the pressures on legislators and University officials alike is Minnesota's populist and egalitarian culture. Winston Wallin, retired chairman of Medtronic, recalled the attempt by former University President Kenneth Keller to aim for a higher standard of excellence and selectivity. Keller proposed reducing the access of students with less talent and ability to the University's undergraduate programs, and many citizens labeled his program elitist, Wallin said.

Wallin believes a commitment to excellence at the University is compatible with Minnesota's populist commitment to all its citizens. "I think we need some institutions where the goal is excellence, as compared to looking for equality," he said. "We want the society to progress, and we're not going to do that with a lot of mediocrity," he said. "You want people to strive for

excellence, because that results in a better life, a higher standard of living, for people collectively," he said.

That tension between excellence and access isn't likely to go away anytime soon, according to Gerald Christenson, a distinguished professor at the University of St. Thomas and head of the search committee that recommended Mark Yudof for the University presidency. The University of Minnesota should strive to excel but it will never be like the University of Michigan, Christenson said, because we don't have an institution like Michigan State. "In Minnesota, the 'U' is the only game in town," and the public will never be persuaded to support an institution that their own sons and daughters can't attend, he said. "Yudof is smart enough to know there will never be a consensus on that issue."

Among the most nettlesome of the challenges of leading the University is its governance system, which is based on representing constituencies, rather than what's good for the state, according to Benson. "The Legislature names constituencies to the Board of Regents"—a student representative, a union representative—and the individuals then feel honor-bound to represent that constituent group, he said. Christenson noted that Regent candidates are expected to go "hat in hand" to ask for legislators' votes, a process many consider demeaning. He and many others have said that the key role played by Congressional caucuses in the selection process reinforces the notion that Regents represent constituencies.

Is that selection system an inevitable outgrowth of the University's public role? Benson doesn't think so. When the Legislature created the merged Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU), it consciously sought to avoid the pitfalls of the Regents selection process. MnSCU trustees are appointed by the Governor (rather than the Legislature)—and that fixes accountability with one person, Benson said.

Adapting to change

The University—with its immense size, competing interests and delicately balanced roles—will have to adapt to a changing economy and society. Or else. "Either the University will begin to change or the market will change it," Benson said.

Competition from new providers of higher education and new technologies is already having an effect. "The (business) school at St. Thomas probably did more to improve the Carlson School at the University than any internal improvement strategy did," Benson said.

The University also will have to mirror what's happening in Minnesota, including the concentration of the population in the central cities and Twin Cities suburbs, the increasing racial diversity and the aging of the population, Mariani said. "The University will have to become more intentional and probably come up with different responses" that likely will require greater involvement in the K-12 system and more attention to the requirements of older and returning students. The University should be leading the way in applying technology to continuing education, Mariani said.

He said the University has a particular challenge to discover and invent different processes that people can use to make decisions and solve problems in an increasingly diverse, pluralistic world. "I'd like to see the 'U' be a leader in framing. What does a healthy, functional, pluralistic and multicultural society work like?" Mariani said.

On one point there appears to be general agreement—a least among the *Journal's* tiny sample. There's a positive "buzz" about the University right now that bodes well for the future. And Yudof gets most of the credit for turning the public mood around.

"Sometimes the challenge for the leader is just a matter of setting a positive tone and empowering people," Mariani said, "and my sense is that Yudof is doing that." Denny said Yudof seems to have a knack for setting a course by harnessing the power of the prevailing winds and Benson observed "a lot of willingness among people to grab the rope with him."

Memo to President Yudof: Enjoy the upbeat mood now, and store it up for the challenges ahead. Christenson and Vanasek agreed that being president of the University of Minnesota is the toughest job in the state.

Janet Dudrow is a research associate at the Citizens League.

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lines five basic recommendations to supplement ongoing improvement efforts at the University:

1. Create a new University-industry-research partnership called the Northstar Research Alliance. This partnership would make strategic investments for new research in four emerging areas already outlined by President Yudof: digital science, biology at the molecular and cellular levels, multimedia and design.

The intent behind Northstar is to improve the University's high-tech expertise, with the expectation that such expertise will attract significant new external (nonstate) research funding for the University. It also would facilitate greater technology transfer to industry, while fortifying the reputation of the University and contributing to high-tech economic development throughout the state.

The League recommends that the Legislature allot \$20 to \$30 million annually for three to five years as start-up funding for Northstar, contingent on matching funds from private sources. This money would be used for only three basic purposes: to fund the start-up of research projects, to endow faculty chairs and to purchase research equipment—again, with the expectation that external research funding will support research projects after an initial, subsidized start-up phase. With no project management responsibilities, Northstar creates little new bureaucracy and, instead, channels money almost exclusively into research-related expenditures.

Unlike similar partnerships that have been attempted—with limited success—in the past, this effort would focus exclusively on University research in emerging high-tech areas. The Northstar Research Coalition proposal is also unique because it would give control of resources and general decision-making to an external board of directors made up of local CEOs and key University representatives.

The League advocates a separate

external control for two reasons. First, it would give the private sector a tangible opportunity to help shape University research and ultimately invest in it. Second, it would speed up decision-making and bypass the internal bureaucracy and infighting common with resource allocation decisions at the University.

2. Evaluate the quality of all graduate and professional programs and publish results of quality measures. As with any improvement campaign, the University needs benchmarks to gauge how well it is doing and how far it needs to go. National Research Council rankings come out only every 10 to 12 years and rate only a small fraction of the University's advanced degree programs. The University's "critical measures" program is a good start toward more frequent updates of this information, but the University still has an incomplete picture of institution-wide quality. As a result, the University should track long- and short-term results and publish a biennial report card for each graduate and professional program.

3. Eliminate low-quality and low-priority programs, reallocating resources to higher priorities and meeting student and state needs through cooperative ventures. In a comparatively small state with limited resources, the University's advanced degree programs cannot afford to be "all things to all people." The University should narrow its field of about 165 doctoral, masters and professional programs.

One useful strategy is to create alliances with other universities to either offer important programs that would otherwise be cost prohibitive—medical or high-technology programs that come with expensive labs—or to reduce costs in low-priority programs that might be offered elsewhere in the Midwest region. Niche programs, such as, say, a hypothetical "Icelandic Studies" program, need not be offered by all Midwestern universities and should be appropriately delegated to increase overall program efficiencies on a regional basis. In fact, the Graduate School

has been negotiating such alliances with the likes of the University of Wisconsin; the report encourages the University to increase such activity.

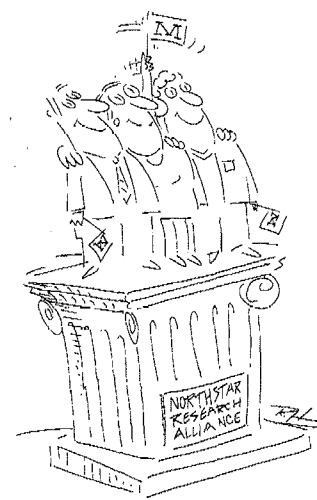
4. Strengthen graduate and professional programs by concentrating in areas that offer significant payoffs for improved quality. There are innumerable small efforts that individual programs and departments could undertake to improve quality. However, on a systemwide basis, the University should invest in a few areas that affect quality throughout the institution.

A good example is expanding the Grant-in-Aid program, which provides research "seed" money to young faculty and to faculty doing interdisciplinary research. This money enhances faculty members' ability to later attract external research funding. Better financial support for graduate and doctoral fellowships also would send a strong message about the University's interest in recruiting the very best students in the world.

5. Improve human resource training and management to unleash human capital resources of the University. The University today employs about 3,000 faculty. Any changes in quality will require faculty buy-in, along with a concerted effort to ensure that faculty are involved, managed and rewarded for productivity.

The University should reevaluate the traditional faculty duties of teaching, research and outreach and look instead to maximize individual talents. It should also provide better training for faculty in policy leadership positions, while slowly transferring all administrative functions to professional administrators.

Many of the recent initiatives for quality improvement in research and advanced degree programs have focused on new buildings and other "bricks and mortar" strategies, which are an important component of high-quality programs. But maximizing the University's



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existing human resource capacity, building additional faculty expertise where it is lacking and attracting the world's best students, will, in the end, dictate how high and how far the University will go toward quality improvement.

Putting the University of Minnesota in the top five public research universities will be a necessarily slow and deliberate process, one which requires a cooperative vision by University officials, state legislators, the business community and the general public. While quick action is needed in some instances, improving overall quality will not occur overnight.

But the importance of a top-notch research university cannot be understated. The state's long-term economic and social development depends on it. Additional funding, properly targeted, could go a long way toward enhancing quality. But, in return, the University must take steps now long overdue to become more focused, more responsive to state needs, less bureaucratic, and generally more productive.

Ron Wirtz is a research associate at the Citizens League. He staffed the committee that produced the report *A Competitive Place in the Quality Race: Putting the University of Minnesota in the Nation's Top Five Public Research Universities*. Copies of the report are available from the Citizens League at 612-338-0791 or at the League's web site at <http://freenet.msp.mn.us/ip/pol/citizen>.



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Census catches up with industry changes. — Page 8.

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January 20, 1998

Timing right to restore prominence, quality of 'U' as state's research flagship

With an energetic and visionary new president in Mark Yudof, the University of Minnesota appears primed for greater excellence. In a new report released this month the Citizens League urges the Legislature, business community and the University itself to support Yudof's agenda and take steps to improve the quality of the University's research and advanced degree programs.

In the report, *A Competitive Place in the Quality Race: Putting the University of Minnesota in the*

by Ron Wirtz

Nation's Top Five Public Research Universities, the League recommends a number of strategies for the University to achieve greater quality in its research and advanced degree programs. The report was prepared by a committee of 30 League volunteers cochaired by former League president Carl "Buzz" Cummins, vice president and general counsel of the Workers Compensation Reinsurance Association, and current League board member Jane Vanderpoel, a

research consultant with the Minnesota House of Representatives.

The need for high quality in research and advanced degree programs at the University is clear: In a rapidly accelerating global and information-based economy, the state's ability to remain prosperous depends on high-skill workers, new technology and continual innovation. Research and advanced degree programs at the University's Twin Cities campus provide much of this capacity. Yet, ironi-

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Shepherding 'U' offers challenges to public leaders

by Janet Dudrow

The University of Minnesota is an enormous public asset in the life of the Twin Cities and the state as a whole.

But the trials involved in leading the "U" reflect in microcosm—albeit a very large microcosm—many of the challenges of public leadership in general. As part of the Citizens League's continuing focus on public leadership, the *Journal* chatted with a handful of thoughtful people about some of the challenges public leaders from all sectors—government, business, communities and the University itself—confront while shepherding the University for the benefit of the state.

'It's so big'

"The single biggest challenge the 'U' faces is its size," according to Carlos Mariani, executive director of the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership Project and a DFL state representative from St. Paul. "It's so big, and people *feel* it as big," he said. Added to the mammoth size of the organization—it's as big as many metro suburbs—is its longstanding tradition of decentralized management. Budgeting and deci-

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Make Hiawatha corridor pathbreaking example of efficient, attractive transit

The possibility of turning the Hiawatha Avenue corridor between downtown Minneapolis and the airport into a dedicated transitway offers the Twin Cities area an opportunity to work smarter on our transportation needs.

The proposal for Hiawatha as it now stands would be to acquire and improve the corridor for use by buses, airport shuttles and taxis, while reserving the option to develop light-rail transit (LRT) later on. Hennepin County—wearing its "Rail Authority" hat—is advocat-

by Lyle Wray

ing for developing an LRT line in this corridor immediately, however.

No doubt about it, railroads defined the 19th century. The Upper Midwest map looks the way it does because of the transcontinental rail network, which developed between 1870 and 1880. In the 20th century, the car has been king, to our everlasting joy and dismay. As Twin Citians contemplate the solutions to their mobility and access requirements in the new millenni-

um, they ought to keep their brains in high gear and their sights forward. Focusing on either rail or the drive-alone automobile is looking backward.

Instead, the region should be thinking creatively. All the transportation players ought to be challenged to figure out how to plan, design, cost out and test services that will serve potential customers while meeting transportation policy goals. The region should be making commitments now to put together all of the

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Citizens League Matters

January 20, 1998

News for Citizens League Members

Welcome New and Returning Members

Terry L. Bock
Eric Black
Cindy Carlsson
Marcia Droeger
John F. Finn
John L. Hannaford
Rick Hanson
Georgia L. Haug
Coral S. Houle
Barry A. Kelner
Lawrence King
Susan King
Katherine Lehmann
Walter Lehmann
Al McFarlane
James Pagliarini
Margaret Preska
Marge Schwab
Darryl Sedio
Zona Sharp-Burk
Sylvia Strobel

Thank you recruiters:
Ernest Lehmann, Shef
Lang

Citizens League

708 South 3rd St. Suite 500
Minneapolis, MN 55415
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Promoting the public interest in Minnesota by involving citizens in identifying and framing critical public policy choices, forging recommendations and advocating their adoption. Suggested dues for membership are \$50 for individuals and \$75 for families. For more information, please call 338-0791.

Work begins on leadership response to labor shortage

Committee chairs and staff are busy preparing for the next League study, which will explore the question: How should Minnesota's public leadership—which includes the government, business and civic sectors—tackle the problem of Minnesota's labor shortage?

Co-chairs **Gary Cunningham** and **Steve Keefe** are in the midst of a rigorous schedule of 14 meetings with key leaders from government, business and the non-profit sector. Information from these briefings will help chairs and staff to frame the research questions and design a study process based on the feedback from important leadership groups.

The new study will begin with a series of Mind-Opener-type forums. While committee members will be recruited and selected prior to this series, the forums will be open to the public. Following the initial testimony stage, the committee will also conduct roundtable interviews with constituencies—such as employers and educators—who have a stake in the labor shortage problem.

And for the first time, the Citizens League will involve teen leaders in the study process. The League has formed a partnership with the Downtown Minneapolis YMCA to involve 5 to 12 teen leaders in the study sessions. The youth will also be respon-

sible for developing a plan for increasing awareness in the youth community of the opportunity a labor shortage represents. **Makeda Zulu-Gillespie**, director of community programs at the Downtown YMCA, will coordinate the teen project.

Minnesota's vigorous economy and demographic pressures are both contributing to a shortage of workers. Minnesota's labor market is shifting in favor of jobs that require advanced education and skills, so there is not simply a shortage of potential workers, but a mismatch between the skills of potential workers and the skill requirements of the jobs available.

A shortage of workers might not appear to be a problem, but a prolonged labor shortage can result in inflation, slower economic growth, inefficiency, and the departure of local businesses. There can be social repercussions, too—for example, if employers import high-skill workers at the same time large numbers of lower-skill, inner-city residents are unable to find jobs.

The League study will explore the range of policy options for responding to a labor shortage and will outline the challenges for public leadership on the problem. Applications to serve on the committee will be mailed soon.

U of M report captures media attention

The Citizens League released its latest report, *A Competitive Place in the Quality Race: Putting the University of Minnesota in the Nation's Top Five Public Research Universities*, on January 7 at a packed press conference in St. Paul. (See the accompanying Journal story.) Handling the work for the League were Committee Co-chairs **Buzz Cummins** and **Jane Vanderpoel** and League President **Mary Anderson**. Committee members **Jack Evert**, **Linda Ewen** and **Marvin Marshak** and League Executive Director **Lyle Wray** and staff member **Ron Wirtz** also assisted.

The report garnered a great deal of attention. Both the *Star Tribune* and the *Pioneer Press* ran prominent stories—it was the

front page lead story in the *Pioneer Press*. Both papers also ran an editorial on the report. The *Minnesota Daily* also covered the report.

Lyle Wray was a guest with University President **Mark Yudof** on KTCA-Ch. 2's *NewsNight*. Committee co-chair **Buzz Cummins** and committee member **John Adams** joined host Gary Eichton on MPR's *Midday* and Cummins was also on a call-in show on WMNN.

In addition, WCCO-radio's Eric Eskola featured the report on the "good neighbor's" 9:00 a.m. news show. And television stations KARE-Ch. 11 and KSTP-Ch. 5 covered the report on their six o'clock news programs.

From the Citizens League Mailbox

December 18, 1997

Dear Lyle:

Not that I needed your timely letter about year-end contributions to the Citizens League to remind me of the League's contribution to the community.

No, your letter prompted me to do some personal reflection on some of those contributions, specifically the father and daughter I came to know at early-Tuesday Citizens League breakfasts in the basement of Central Lutheran Church.

As I recall I began visiting with the daughter, first, as she looked about for her father, who very shortly appeared, all smiles, as she was. It seems that they were both professional people with time constraints that threatened to restrict their times together. As a remedy they had decided to meet for these breakfasts—to visit a bit, to keep up with lively community topics, and share this early morning meal with each other. And, with me, as it happened.

Over the years, I greeted the father at other mind-opener breakfasts, and learned that all was well with each of them. Always a friendly smile—the kind of welcome I have come to treasure in these Citizens League breakfasts—that nourishes one's soul in necessary ways.

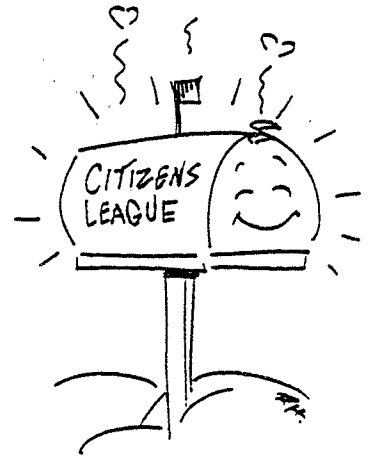
It was not until last month when I read about the passing of "esteemed cardiologist Frank E. Johnson" that I realized that this is the father who came to breakfast with his daughter, Katherine Johnson, "a psychologist," who greeted me with a friendly smile, through the years.

So my 1997 year-end contribution is in memory of Dr. Johnson, humanitarian and Citizens League member, who continued to help others in ways of living and service which may have escaped more official notation. And in this memorial, I salute the Citizens League for continuing to provide space and time for people to gather, to learn and to smile together.

Sincerely,

Lots of mail and correspondence crosses our desk each day. But from time to time a few pieces really hit home and remind us of the wonderful collection of people who make up the Citizens League. The letter at left (the author prefers to be anonymous) is testament to that. And the email note highlights the fine volunteer work of Diane Gibson.

We're fond of saying that the League is only as good as its members. Well by that standard the League can't get much better.



With increasing frequency, people across the country are running into the League through our web site. We owe a great debt of gratitude to League member **Diane Gibson** for her care and feeding of our web page. Diane was the driving force behind the creation of the page a couple of years ago and has volunteered considerable time since then to keep it updated.

During the release of the University study, many media outlets and other interested parties wondered if the report was on our site. Diane worked through the night of the report's release to ensure that it was on the site the day the newspapers covered the story.

The following email is just one of many we have received lately.

After learning about the Citizens League in your web site, I am very impressed! If I lived in Minnesota, I'd jump at the chance to join.

Do you have any idea whether similar organizations exist in Chicago? I would like to get involved at this level but have never been aware of any group that takes the same approach.

The writer discovered that no such similar organization exists in Chicago. But he was so impressed with the League that he joined anyway—despite living in Chicago.

Visit our web site soon—<http://freenet.msp.mn.us/ip/pol/citizen> and look for more changes and features in the months to come. And make sure that while you're perusing the League's web page you say a hearty thank you to **Diane Gibson** for all of her hard work on the League's behalf.