WSU-RC Transforming for the Future: A Sneak Preview

“Good is the enemy of great.” Jim Collins

“This is one of those periods when the old solutions no longer work. One can clearly see new priorities.” Peter Drucker

“You can’t redesign your system by dividing it into parts; everyone must look at the whole together.”
Peter Senge

Now is the time to collectively reevaluate higher education in Rochester and to stretch beyond our current thinking.

Future success in Rochester depends upon collaboration and the leveraging and investment of resources from multiple sources. Thus, we suggest a world class research and discovery enterprise coupled with an enhanced University Center model that collectively integrates the learning, research, and economic development needs of the region, state and nation. The community could then leverage U of M, IBM and Mayo research capacity AND enhance the University Center concept to build on the combined educational capacity of Minnesota’s two public higher education systems, MnSCU and the University of Minnesota.

What would this new approach look like?

Development of this model will take local and national expertise. Yet one can imagine what it would look like.

Let’s imagine a research institute, aligned with a research park where…

- Graduate students are working side by side with experts from around the world on issues that will result in new innovations or will solve community problems.
- Students and faculty are engaging in interdisciplinary research that results in new discoveries. With the help of local capital venturists, a research park tenant is then able to take these new discoveries, develop new products and market them worldwide.
- The U of M, Mayo, and IBM connection has positioned Rochester as a world leader in technology transfer.

And let’s further imagine the experience of a local community business person or community leader…

- The business owner will contact the University Center with a business problem and receive the opportunity to:
  ◊ contract with a faculty member to analyze specific business problems, or
  ◊ engage a class of students as part of a class project to develop a new strategy or product
Through the use of technology, business leaders would be asked to be part of a class project analyzing global business issues. Students and businesses from other countries would be linked via technology.

Business leaders are asked to be part of a roundtable discussion on building youth assets in the community, solving poverty in a community of wealth, or building tomorrow’s diverse workforce. Students and faculty are actively engaged in these discussions and in developing projects around identified needs.

Downtown Rochester business owners would engage with students in a downtown revitalization program. Expanded tourism opportunities and development strategies could be further explored through a senior capstone experience.

Or let’s imagine the experience from the student perspective...

- The students will have community-based projects integrated into a majority of their classes. For example, as part of a counselor education major, the students might develop a career exploration program for new immigrants and deliver that program at the local Hawthorne Center, a literacy center for new immigrants.
- Students in an interdisciplinary approach will work collectively with the local school district to develop a strategy to decrease the achievement gap for underrepresented populations.
- Students in the new computer science bioinformatics track will work with bioscientists from the Mayo Clinic analyzing research data.
- The students will engage in solving a community problem as part of their senior capstone project. For example, science majors could be working with the local pollution control agency to solve environmental issues.

These scenarios are all possible. WSU can be a change agent and leader in changing the landscape of Rochester, the state, and the nation.

**WSU-RC Assets:**
Here are some WSU assets that could be leveraged to create a new national model in Rochester:

- Brand is strong, represents quality and has served Rochester since 1917.
- Outstanding signature undergraduate programs in nursing, education, business, technology and liberal arts.
- Quality masters programs in education and nursing.
- Strong relationships with local school districts, health organizations, nonprofits, and business and community organizations.
- A multicultural learning initiative that will build cultural competencies as well as educational opportunities for underrepresented groups.
- Synergistic relationships with RCTC and UMR.
- Significant experience with organizational change and continuous improvement.
- The Winona Experience.
The Challenge and the Opportunity:

Referring back to Jim Collins, the collective challenge for us is to determine HOW we can be world class. Collins indicates that it is “not a goal to be the best, a strategy to be the best, an intention to be the best, a plan to be the best. It is an understanding of what you can be the best at. The distinction is absolutely crucial.”

Thus, let’s work together to integrate research and education and link both to economic development through sharing university expertise, building entrepreneurial strengths and expanding regional strategic alliances that create jobs and wealth for the citizens of Rochester, Minnesota and the nation. The opportunities are endless. We can be world class in aligning education, workforce development and economic development in a tightly defined set of signature areas – biomedical sciences, advanced computation, nanoscale science and informatics in Rochester – developing within the context of a truly sustainable community.

References: