

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Office of the Vice President for Research

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Date: February 19, 2008

To: Tom Jones, Astronomy
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Kelvin Lim, Psychiatry
Nevin Young, Plant Pathology
Darrin York, Chemistry
Tim Griffin, Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Biophysics
Mos Kaveh, Associate Dean for Research, IT

From: Tim Mulcahy, Vice President for Research

Re: Charge to the MSI Transition Planning Committee

In April 2007, internal and external advisory committees commissioned with advising the University administration on the future of the Minnesota Supercomputing Institute (MSI) recommended substantial changes to the current organization, all intended to facilitate the University's move into the top ranks of research institutions. The committee reports are available at:

<http://www.msi.umn.edu/general/miscdocs/review.html>

The committee recommendations have been accepted in principle by the administration. As recommended by the External Advisory committee, it has been determined that administrative responsibility for the MSI will transfer from the Institute of Technology to the Office of the Vice President for Research, where it will form the core of a larger campus-wide scientific computing support organization. The transfer is scheduled to be effective July 1, 2008, corresponding to the start of the new fiscal year, and Andrew Odlyzko's stepping down from his current role as MSI Interim Director and Director of the Digital Technology Center. This organizational move is intended to facilitate implementation of changes needed to preserve and enhance MSI's role as a vital computational resource across the entire University, without diminishing its already strong research contributions. Effective with this transfer, MSI will be renamed the Minnesota Research Computing Center, as suggested by the External Advisory Committee, to reflect its centrality to the research mission and ambitions of the University.

In order to accommodate this transition with a minimum of disruption to the research groups that rely on the resources and services of the MSI, I am appointing this Transition Planning Committee (the "committee") and charging it with the development of a plan for the transition. It is expected that it may take several years of evolution to reach a new steady-state incorporating the recommendations of the advisory committees and alignment with ongoing developments in national funding opportunities and with the

University's strategic priorities. Nevertheless, the University needs to start planning now to address the short and medium-range issue challenges to be confronted during this upcoming transition. Therefore I would ask the Transition Planning Committee to recommend a transition plan addressing each of the following issues:

1. How should the MSI be structured to most effectively meet the needs of the University research community and to support research in high-performance computing?
2. What services should MSI offer, how should they be made available and how should they be configured across campus?
3. What relationship should MSI have with other research computing support units?
4. How should future infrastructure needs be identified and prioritized?
5. What are the most promising initiatives (internal and external) for MSI to pursue?
6. What should the roles and responsibilities of the Director be and what are the relative advantages and disadvantages of selecting a new Director from campus versus following a national search?
7. Based on the answer to question 6, develop an outline for a job description for the Director's position.

Although the timeline is aggressive, I would like the committee to submit a written report summarizing their recommendations by April 15, 2008, in order to allow broad discussion of the recommendations in time to take any necessary action before MSI moves to OVPR, and to guide decisions with regard to the appointment of the next director.

I would like to thank each of you again for agreeing to serve on this important committee. I look forward to your advice as we move forward with the transfer of the MSI to the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Cc: E. Thomas Sullivan, Provost
Steve Crouch, Dean, IT
Andrew Odlyzko, Director, DTC
Steve Cawley, OIT