



November 2011 response to the question "What will collaborative research and education look like in the 21st Century?" drawn from Two Years to Two Decades focus group feedback and input from the Fostering Collaboration in the 21st Century initiative committee.

Fostering Collaboration in the 21st Century

...takes a team-based approach to solving society's most pressing issues

The best opportunity to address society's most pressing issues is through collaborative, problem-solving research and education that cross the boundaries of disciplines and draw on multiple methods and perspectives. Collaborative research rests on the foundation of collaborative education. As UW researchers make discoveries that address society's pressing issues, UW teachers will prepare the next generation of problem-solvers. Collaborative work will bridge the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, linking scientific and technological advances with ethical, behavioral, and economic implications and creating new niche fields. Solving complex 21st Century challenges will often involve collaborations beyond the UW, with other university, community, and global partners in the public, private, and government sectors. Public research universities will serve a key role in bringing these diverse groups to the table and convening the conversations that address society's most complex issues.

...rests on nimble structures supporting multiple models

The UW's core will continue to be the strength of departments and disciplines. While not all projects will be collaborative, increasingly research will involve multiple disciplines, allowing teams to combine perspectives. Research may involve big-bridge collaborations, in which teams pursue transformative conversations and research impacting several fields, or small-bridge collaborations, in which team members in different units approach the same question from different perspectives. Groups will share tools, using one instrument to study many questions. Nimble educational models will enable student collaboration as peers both at UW and across the nation and world work together. Nimble structures with flexible schedules and interaction patterns will help teams come together in both physical and virtual shared spaces, including collaborative learning environments, financial and grant-tracking systems, information-sharing around best practices, and common collaborative IT tools.

...is incubated in grassroots initiatives

Faculty will increasingly desire and demand opportunities to engage in collaborative work. Scholarship in the 21st Century will involve anticipating emerging fields, reaching out to colleagues, and building teams poised to lead as fields emerge. Campus leaders will need to recognize and encourage collaborative faculty-led, grassroots initiatives.

...is a key component of excellence

The breadth of our disciplinary core is a competitive edge that makes it possible for faculty and students to tackle complex problems with scope beyond their fields. Collaboration will be a key component of excellence, central to the recruitment and retention of high-quality faculty and students, allowing teams to incubate new ideas, anticipate and become leaders in emerging multi-disciplinary fields. Collaborative course options, multi-majors, team-work, and capstones requirements will increase. We will build appropriate infrastructure, policies, and practices to support collaboration as campus leaders increasingly broaden the definition of excellence to include collaboration.

... is sustainable

Fostering sustainable models for collaborative research and teaching in a time of reduced resources will require creative thinking and committed leadership. Some efforts, such as fully articulated team teaching, can be more costly than alternatives but will be prioritized where essential to the mission and supported by cost-effective infrastructures. Others can help increase revenues, bringing in research funding that favors large, complex, multi-disciplinary, multi-party teams.