BACKGROUND

A Unique and Valuable Setting

- Located at the headwaters of the Mississippi, within Itasca State Park, Itasca Biological Station and Laboratories was founded in 1909.
- Three major biomes—pine forests, hardwood forests and tall grass prairie—converge within Itasca, providing access to plant and animal species that have disappeared from other parts of the state.
- Itasca is an exceptional place to study biology; biology students need access to the natural world, just as medical students need access to patients.

Innovative Curricula

- Every summer, College of Biological Sciences (CBS) freshmen start their educational journey at Itasca with Nature of Life, a biology immersion program and national education model.
- Graduate students, in programs spanning from molecular biology to health sciences, begin their introductory coursework at the field station and laboratories to gain hands-on research training and to form bonds with students and faculty.
- The summer field biology session, open to undergraduates of all Minnesota colleges and universities, offers a variety of courses and on-site student housing to foster an intensive educational experience.

Cutting-Edge Research

- The Itasca field station and laboratories are as essential to the University’s research mission as the most sophisticated molecular biology laboratory.
- Researchers conduct a broad spectrum of research on topics such as aquatic ecosystems, climate change, endangered species, and plant and animal ecology.
- One research effort, the Mississippi Metagenome Project, is enlisting students to study the microbial ecosystem beginning at the headwaters and continuing throughout the Mississippi watershed.

Growing demand

- In addition to the 3,200 freshmen that have attended the Nature of Life program, over 4,600 students have studied at the field station and laboratories over the past decade.
The number of students using the field station and laboratories has increased 20 percent over the past five years.

• CBS’s enrollment is expected to increase 25 percent over the next two years.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Construct a new 12,000-square-foot, year-round campus center with laboratories, classrooms, offices, and an auditorium—all well equipped with the latest technology.

Consolidate functions from three deteriorating WWII-era facilities into the new campus center.

Convert an existing library into a laboratory.

BENEFITS

Improve Education and Research Opportunities

• This new year-round facility will allow the field station and laboratories to meet their growing demand by increasing capacity to 130 students and faculty.

• Timely replacements will make it possible to continue offering these innovative programs that are currently at risk of elimination.

• New infrastructure will enable more sophisticated research, and help retain and recruit top researchers.

Create jobs

• This project will quadruple the number of full-time employees at the field station and laboratories.

• New facilities will increase competitively awarded grants that create research jobs.

Energy Efficiency

• Design incorporates the latest passive and active strategies for minimizing energy use.

• Replacing single-function buildings with a multi-use campus center will reduce energy and operational costs.

• This project will move the field station and laboratories toward its goal of energy self-sufficiency.

INVESTMENT: $6.1 MILLION

• $4.1 million in state funding*
• $2.0 million in University funding*

*Dollar amounts have been rounded