Why Minnesota Needs a New Museum and Planetarium

- The Bell plays a unique, statewide role in inspiring Minnesota students towards careers in science and technology with its invaluable collections and strong University connections.
- A flagship planetarium will strengthen Minnesota’s statewide network of planetariums by creating and sharing new programs based on University research in astronomy and the life sciences.
- Historic Jaques dioramas and associated art collections (valued at over $20 million) will be protected from the ravages of heat, humidity and insects.
- A new facility will build the state’s reputation for innovative research and education focused on Minnesota’s natural environments, supporting the exciting research occurring at our great University.

We have an historic opportunity to reimagine and combine two of Minnesota’s beloved public institutions into a single facility that will house a new state natural history museum and planetarium. A revitalized Bell Museum and Planetarium will inspire generations of Minnesota students to embrace careers in the sciences, engineering and technology. It will make the Bell Museum an even stronger partner with schools in efforts to close the achievement gap and address anticipated workforce shortages in STEM-related fields.

Our project supports collaboration on STEM education programs with greater Minnesota planetarium partners at MnSCU sites (Marshall, Moorhead and St. Cloud) and school districts across the state. Our formal education programs have served over 59,000 students and families in 92 of Minnesota’s 134 legislative districts over the past two years. In partnership with the University of Minnesota’s STEM education center, we will support educator professional development and lesson delivery through our technology-enhanced facility and classrooms.

This proposed facility is an investment in Minnesota’s educational and cultural infrastructure, putting Minnesota on a better path to a stellar future.

Project:
- $57.5 million to construct a new museum and 120-seat planetarium, seeking $51.5 million in state bonding
- Located on the southwest corner of Larpenteur and Cleveland avenues on the UM St. Paul campus
- More than $5 million in private and federal funds have resulted in nearly complete designs; we anticipate breaking ground in early 2015
- 12 acre site includes parking, co-location of Bee Research Lab, and five acres available for future development as outdoor science and nature observatory
A NEW BELL MUSEUM AND PLANETARIUM WILL:

- inspire the next generation of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) workers needed by Minnesota businesses,
- better address Minnesota’s achievement gap in STEM education by expanding University of Minnesota environmental, biological and astrophysical information and education for schools and families,
- create the flagship planetarium for Minnesota, with added capacity to create and provide educator training for new science programs based on University research in astronomy and the life sciences,
- enhance our museum programs that integrate science and art to educate, inform and inspire people of all ages,
- increase its statewide reach through expanded educational programs.

WHO WE ARE
Established by the Minnesota Legislature in 1872, the Bell Museum was created to “collect, skilfully prepare, and preserve for public inspection” specimens of the state’s biological and geological resources. Today it is a statewide provider of educational programs, serving 92 of Minnesota’s 134 House legislative districts over the past two years. The museum also operates the ExploraDome, an inflatable digital science theater that travels statewide.

Just as species evolve to thrive in changing environments, the Bell Museum continues to adapt. We are undergoing transformational change and recently embraced an expanded mission in astrophysics and planetary sciences. What has remained constant since 1872 is our University of Minnesota connection and commitment to serving the entire state.

Our evolving vision is centered on the principle that creativity and scientific literacy will flourish as people are inspired to ask about our place in the Universe. As a result, people will be moved to act and become teachers, researchers and community leaders in environmental issues.