Strategic Plan 2012-17
Proposed Initiative

Proposed Initiative:
Establish an Academic Excellence Coordination Center (providing support services to coordinate university programs focused on teaching, learning and research).

Proposed by:
Faculty and Academic Staff Development Board

What strategic goal does this initiative support?
Distinctive Academic Excellence; Innovation and Partnerships

Describe how the initiative supports the goal(s).
Data suggest that brief programs and efforts that support academic excellence, such as one-day workshops or guest speakers, are unlikely to engender long-term institutional change. We need a change that promises long-term positive effects, and that potentially would involve a significant number of faculty and staff.

This initiative provides the necessary conditions to formally encourage contact between professionals across disciplines to ensure sustained long term support for teaching and research. This initiative can identify areas of need across campus to ensure that resources can be brought to bear in ways that most efficiently support excellence in teaching, research and learning.

This centralized coordination can provide efficiencies to free up resources for programs. For example, centralized coordinators can engage in grant writing to provide “soft money” to support programs and initiatives via campus partnerships.

Based on the definition of university-wide initiative, indicate how the proposed initiative has a university-wide impact.
Numerous groups on campus currently provide support services and programming to faculty members, academic staff members, and students to promote academic excellence on campus.

This support has taken many forms as detailed in the list below.
- Undergraduate Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activities
- Summer Scholars Program
- Faculty and Academic Staff Development Board
- Learning Technology Development Council
- New Faculty Orientation
- UW System Office of Professional and Instructional Development Initiatives (OPID)
- Online Teaching Institute
- Global Connections
Other ideas for support for those seeking to promote academic excellence include:

- Ad-hoc workgroups (active learning classroom, “flipped classroom”, process oriented group inquiry learning (POGIL)
- Other opportunities to share new innovations in pedagogy for established faculty (Excellence in Teaching Series)

Those scattered programs are currently operating without central coordination so that the total impact on academic excellence continues to be significantly less than its potential.

Listed below are the ways in which the initiative will have university-wide impact:

1. A continuity of services will be established with these programs by having central coordination. This provides institutional knowledge and history that will allow a successful program to continue in the event that the current program organizer is unavailable (on leave, absent, etc.)
2. Current programs will be able to focus on their core functions related to academic excellence. Whereas, these groups currently work independently to carry out their work, they can use the resources of an Academic Excellence Collaboration Center to have their time and resources shared in a larger group.
3. Applying the principle of economics of scale, central coordination will allow the university to better utilize existing resources and bring better visibility, awareness, and involvement in programming by the campus community. Just as products and services are branded, the university will allow us to clearly communicate how we engage in academic excellence at the university, to our own institution, local government stakeholders, and nationally.
4. When the campus community investigates or implements an emerging idea in higher education that focuses on academic excellence, there will be an existing institutional infrastructure to mobilize efforts efficiently.

**Please provide a set of benchmarks and/or indicators of success to support your initiative.**

As a result of this initiative, the assertions made below are attainable and are appropriate benchmarks for success.

As of 2017 UWRF Faculty and Academic Staff will have produced:

1. Two more Regents Teaching Award winners
2. An increase of 10-20 percent of the teaching faculty/academic staff presenting and/or publishing research, scholarly and creative activity on an annual basis as measured by the number of participants reported in Undergraduate Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activities (URSCA) and Celebrating Research, Scholarship, and Creative Achievement (CTSCA) events.
3. An Innovations in Teaching Series that provides all teaching faculty and academic staff with data, reports, and other opportunities to promote student learning and effective instructional strategies.
4. An annual report documenting the participation of teaching faculty and academic staff in development opportunities at the local, state and national levels as well as a documentation of their publications and/or presentations.
What elements are involved in the initiative?
Sustainability, Inclusiveness, Human Capital, Technology, Facilities, Finance

Indicate how each element would be/would not be affected by the initiative.

• **Sustainability**: As our current endeavors (like URSCA) are worthy, they need to be sustainable and consequently avoid individual burn-out. The coordination of these efforts would not only support individuals who have taken the lead and thus reduce the risk of burn-out, but also identify “vice leaders” the way organizations identify a “vice president/president elect” to ensure continuity. The designated “next in line” would not only assist the lead but also learn the hows of the program to provide for smooth transitions institutionally.

• **Inclusiveness**: One focus of the development opportunities afforded by this central coordination will be inclusively in the teaching and learning process. Research consistently shows that there are several key elements that can improve student learning, increase academic achievement (particularly by students of color or others at-risk of underperforming), and improve retention. Increased development will allow more teaching faculty and academic staff to use these techniques and to better understand the ways in which the teaching environment can be improved upon for all students.

• **Human Capital**: A full-time position of an existing faculty or academic staff member on special assignment should be made available to adequately meet the needs to properly coordinate these services.

• **Technology**: Individuals involved in this initiative would benefit from the efficiencies gained by using existing university technology resources when appropriate (web resources, technology tools, etc.)

• **Facilities**: Although it is certainly not essential, it may be deemed helpful to allocate an existing physical space to help coordinate these services.

• **Finance**: Using financial incentives as a way for faculty members and academic staff members to participate in these programs is an essential component that will lead to the success of the program.

• **Other:**