Proposed Initiative:
Increased High Impact Practices for CAFES Majors

Student retention can be increased if they are involved in high impact practices - learning communities, undergraduate research, internships, international travel, team competitions, student clubs, and leadership development. Many students in CAFES already engage in some high impact activities but we would like to expand the number who benefit from these types of experiences as well as the variety of experiences for individual students.

Proposed by:
Animal and Food Science Department, College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences

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

Describe how the initiative supports the goal(s).
Distinctive Academic Excellence: CAFES has surveyed fall incoming students the past 4 years. One question is ‘What most influenced your decision to come to UWRF?’ Consistently, the most common answer is ‘CAFES’s reputation for quality programs.’ We believe that distinctive excellence of our programs accounts for much of the enrollment growth in CAFES over the past 4 years. An initiative to expand student participation in high impact practices will build on this excellence. Students in CAFES place a high value on the practical and these initiatives would infuse additional hands-on experiences in the college’s curriculum.

Global Education and Engagement: International trade accounts for about 10 percent of the overall U.S. GDP but about 25 percent of the agricultural GDP. Relative to other sectors, agriculture is heavily dependent on global markets, and it is increasingly important for students to understand international markets, and the best way to gain an understanding is by experiencing it directly. This initiative supports this goal by increasing the number of students from CAFES who have an international experience prior to graduation through existing UWRF opportunities and by developing international study experiences with an agricultural focus.

Innovation and Partnerships: Many high-impact practices promoted by this proposal would involve partnerships with industry, business, and other external entities, and lead to graduates who are more attractive to prospective employers. For example, this initiative would increase the number and quality of internships, expand involvement in
industry-sponsored conferences and workshops developing student leadership abilities, and promote undergraduate research sponsored by off-campus partners.

**Based on the definition of university-wide initiative, indicate how the proposed initiative has a university-wide impact.**

This initiative would engage programs across CAFES and would serve as a model for other programs with professionally-focused curricula. Further, to the extent that this initiative raises the profile of the University with industry partners and the general public, we expect it will increase interest in other UWRF programs outside of CAFES.

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

During the first year of the initiative, CAFES would gather benchmark data to determine the proportion of students who have participated in the high-impact activities that are the focus of this initiative (learning communities, undergraduate research, national student-club competitions, for-credit internships, international experiences, and national leadership development conferences/workshops). Based on the outcome of this data-gathering effort, we will commit to expanding participation by 10% or more per year during the strategic plan period with an overall goal of increasing participation rates by 50% from the current levels in each high impact practice over the next 5 years.

**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:** This initiative would affect sustainability in two ways. First, because it is aimed at all majors within CAFES, many of the high-impact activities it would promote would likely have sustainability foci. For example, some applied undergraduate research efforts or internships would be expected to focus on sustainability issues. Second, the initiative would promote sustainability of this effort by ensuring a compensation structure for faculty who mentor and supervise internships, RSCA activities, and other high-impact initiatives.

- **Inclusiveness:** This initiative would be inclusive in terms of the students involved and the focus on the initiatives undertaken.

- **Human Capital:** The focus of this initiative is to build the human capital of our students by increasing their involvement in these high-impact activities. We believe it will also enhance the human capital of faculty in the College through their interaction with students and with off-campus partners engaged in these activities.

- **Technology:** At least some of the initiatives that would be covered by this initiative may require additional investments in technology. For example, some of the RSCA activities may require the purchase of equipment that CAFES doesn’t currently have or databases to which we don’t currently have access.

- **Facilities:** The recent master plan for the campus noted a shortage of laboratory space on campus. Again, some of the activities covered by this initiative (RSCA) may place additional demands on those lab spaces.

- **Finance:** If this is to be an initiative that is sustainable beyond the timeframe of Pathway to Distinction, it will have to include a different financial model. For example, mentoring RSCA projects, supervising an expanded number of internships,
and developing and chaperoning international experiences place additional demands on the time of faculty members. Some of these additional demands may be funded by off-campus partners but we expect that the University will also have to provide some faculty-support funding.

To foster our students’ participation in these activities will require funds for travel and conference fees and faculty compensation for expanded internship supervision and research, scholarly and creative activities (RSCA) mentorship.

To be sustainable, faculty will need to be compensated (in release time or overload pay) for the additional mentoring that will be required.

• **Other:**