Proposed Initiative:
In support of strategic innovation and distinctive academic excellence, the University will establish and support an *Ideas and Innovation Incubator (I^3)* to provide small groups of UW-River Falls faculty and staff the time and resources, including during the summer, to develop ideas and proposals in key areas to support the university’s strategic plan, *Pathway to Distinction*. This approach will enable the University to thoughtfully plan and catalyze innovation that is visionary, information based, and fiscally sustainable. The I^3 will respect and work in concert with established shared governance and resource allocation processes.

Proposed by:
Chancellor’s Office and Provost’s Office

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

Describe how the initiative supports the goal(s).
As a university, there are many possibilities for enhancing innovation and distinctive academic excellence. However, given the University’s limited resources (including time) and its organizational complexity, it can be challenging for the university to be aggressive, transparent, and strategic in pursuing innovative ideas and initiatives that have high potential for impact. As expressed in Goal 3 of Pathway to Distinction, “UW-River Falls will *incentivize and support innovation*, often in collaboration with others, to support student learning, enhance the distinctiveness and stature of the university, and catalyze economic and sustainable community development.” The *Ideas and Innovation Incubator (I^3)* initiative would *incentivize and support innovation* (and distinctive academic excellence) in a tangible way.

The I^3 will bring together groups of 4-6 faculty and staff with interest and expertise in a key area of opportunity that often spans multiple disciplines and departments (e.g. rural issues, gerontology, biomedicine/biotechnology). External university partners may be invited to participate as appropriate, in some cases. The I^3 groups will typically begin work during the spring semester and will also convene for approximately 2 weeks during the summer to complete their work. The ability to devote focused time and effort during the summer will enhance the effectiveness of the groups. Participating faculty and staff on 9- or 10-month contracts would be provided with a stipend for summer work. The I^3 groups will engage in an internal analysis of assets and a focused external “environmental scan,” analyzing demographic, student, and external market demand data, understanding potential connections to businesses and communities, examining similar programs and “best practices” at other institutions, and projecting the potential to enhance recruitment and retention of students. The I^3 groups will be expected to develop and demonstrate the viability and “return on investment” of specific concepts and proposals. The concepts
and plans could include ideas for academic or non-academic programs, courses or certificates, innovation or research centers, multidisciplinary institutes, business partnerships, etc. These ideas/proposals would be considered as appropriate by governance groups and/or the administration. There would be a high level of accountability. The $I^3$ groups would be required to submit a written report to the Chairs of Faculty Senate and Academic Staff Council, as well as the Chancellor and Provost, and give a presentation to the campus community. No more than three $I^3$ groups would be established each year, and likely less than three as the strategic plan proceeds.

In support of Goal 1 (Distinctive Academic Excellence) and Goal 3 (Innovation and Partnerships) of the strategic plan, the $I^3$ will primarily focus on opportunities that have high potential to accomplish several of the following:

- Enhance and design distinctive academic programs
- Support effective student learning, including through “high-impact” educational practices
- Contribute to institutional fiscal sustainability through enhanced grants, charitable gifts, new enrollment, etc.
- Support economic and community development including through development of talent and/or expertise in areas of high-need in the region or State
- Enhance institutional distinctiveness—establish or further build points of excellence in the region, state, UW System, or broader higher education community
- Develop broad institutional ownership (multiple faculty, disciplines, Colleges, etc.)

Each year, the number and focus of the $I^3$ groups will be determined by the Strategic Planning Progress Committee in consultation with the Chancellor.

Members of each of the $I^3$ groups will be identified based on their knowledge and potential to contribute to new ideas in the area of focus. Faculty and academic staff members of the $I^3$ groups will be approved by Faculty Senate and the Chancellor.

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

The initiative would intentionally bring together groups of faculty and staff from diverse departments to focus on ideas that often span multiple disciplines, areas of knowledge and expertise. This is, in fact, one of the unique features of the $I^3$ initiative.

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

- Report from each $I^3$ group including critical analysis, proposals, plan and timeline toward fiscal sustainability/ROI
- Increased external grant or charitable gift support attributable to $I^3$ work within five years (where applicable)
- Increased new enrollment attributable to $I^3$ work within five years (where applicable)
- Number and description of external partnerships resulting from $I^3$ proposals that are implemented
• Number of faculty and staff in $I^3$ groups, benefitting from this collaborative, professional development opportunity

What elements are involved in the initiative?
Sustainability, Inclusiveness, Human Capital, Finance

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

• Sustainability: Focus of $I^3$ groups would include fiscal sustainability of institution, and some focal points may include other aspects of sustainability.

• Inclusiveness: $I^3$ activities would likely include and impact the entire campus, and the collaborative nature of the groups has potential to especially enhance “a community of mutual respect.”

• Human Capital: $I^3$ groups would require engagement of faculty and staff (9- or 10-month employees would receive compensation); would serve as excellent collaborative, professional development activity.

• Technology: None.

• Facilities: None.

• Finance: Funding (estimated at $25,000 maximum per year) would be needed to pay summer stipends and provide modest support for the work of the $I^3$ groups. It is expected that the ideas that emerge and ultimately are implemented would result in a positive “return on investment” within five years.

• Other: