Proposed Initiative:
Support, expand and develop dynamic, high-quality nature-connected education for all ages, multiple disciplines throughout the university and community.

Proposed by:
Gay Ward and Molly Gerrish, Teacher Education; supported by the CEPS Executive Council

What strategic goal does this initiative support?
Distinctive Academic Excellence

Describe how the initiative supports the goal(s).
Developing nature exploration areas on campus will support the University’s goal to “…enhance and build distinctive academic programs that support a community of diverse, talented, and highly-engaged learners and scholars.” Devoted to nature exploration and activities, these areas would be outdoor laboratories that would expand and enhance learning of many disciplines by promoting critical and creative thinking to “…foster an inclusive, challenging, learner-centered environment that supports academic excellence.”

Based on the definition of university-wide initiative, indicate how the proposed initiative has a university-wide impact.
These would be nature exploration areas for all ages and invite the application of science as outdoor laboratories, the connection of nature to fine art, music, story telling, movement and drama, and demonstrate to future teachers how nature is connected to all disciplines. All are enhanced by a connection to nature, from preschoolers’ first-time explorations to student and faculty research and hands-on exploration of human connection to nature (both within a class setting or on an individual basis).

Please provide a set of benchmarks and/or indicators of success to support your initiative.
1. Planning workshop with consultants who have had experience with similar projects and with WEEB(Wisconsin Environmental Education Board); including representatives of multiple disciplines on campus.
2. Designated course projects for 2012-2013 that will contribute to the design and development of the two outdoor classroom / nature exploration areas. Projects will be in science, arts, and education classes (among others).
3. Initial site preparation and development completed and areas ready for use as outdoor classroom and community education by summer 2013.

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:** By involving students in the planning, implementation and maintenance of these areas through varying university course projects and clubs (bio-club, eco-club, EYE, etc.), they would become dynamic classrooms/workshops, sustained by the activities and research it offers.

- **Inclusiveness:** Developing these areas will promote inclusivity by providing opportunity for dialog between professionals in multiple disciplines. Also, future teachers will learn that the natural environment is an inclusive environment. Use of these sites will be appropriate for all ages, being used to promote knowledge and understanding of native culture and horticulture. The nature areas will bring to light the ecological perspective, emphasizing collaboration and cooperation. They will be an inclusive classroom for people of all abilities, learning styles and backgrounds.

- **Human Capital:** By involving students in the planning and design, as well as implementation and maintenance of the areas through varying university course projects and clubs (bio-club, eco-club, EYE, etc.) it is anticipated that labor costs for this project will be greatly reduced and no additional personnel will be required in the long term. Many aspects will be dynamic, providing for continual change and input from future faculty, students and community members.

- **Technology:** Technology will not be impacted.

- **Facilities:** Indoor facilities will not be impacted. If the outdoor classrooms are constructed, grounds maintenance will be required.

- **Finance:** $20,000. We will apply to Wisconsin Environmental Education Board for $10,000 in matching funds. Outdoor area: anticipated cost to be determined. Considerations: DNR restrictions, permission to use the areas, amount currently covered in landscaping costs for construction, and amount offset by use of student group labor.

- **Other:**