Proposed Initiative:
This initiative aims to place even greater distinction on UW-River Falls as an incubator for sustainability efforts. In close partnership with the City of River Falls and the River Falls School District along with our local economic development organizations, UWRF will offer its undergraduate and graduate students even greater research opportunities in a broad range of sustainability efforts ranging from economic, social, and environmental. An important element of the initiative is the further development of the SCISCD Fellows and the newly created Sustainability Faculty Fellows program. The goal would be to provide funding for student research grants for individual or team efforts on an annual basis. Guided by faculty and staff in the respective Fellows program, successful applicants will focus their work around a broad-base of sustainability issues with a regional focus.

Proposed by:
Administrative Services Team (Connie Smith, Richard Trende, Elizabeth Frueh, Wendy Helm, Kelly Cain, and Mike Stifter)

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

Describe how the initiative supports the goal(s).
Distinctive Academic Excellence: With the Sustainability Working Group and the SCISCD at the forefront, distinctive research opportunities are to be created in a broad range of sustainability activities. A proposed further expansion of the SCISCD Fellows program is to be developed allowing for individual or group-based proposals to be submitted annually and small grants to be available to help fund the projects. Independent Study or other academic credit may apply.

Innovation and Partnerships: UWRF is in the process of completing a sustainability focused community audit in partnership with the River Falls School District and the City of River Falls. Distinctive collaborations are the focus of the audit with possible ‘incubator’ space being identified for each entity. In addition, each of the partnering entities hope to identify possible project initiatives either unique to their area or across boundaries. An example includes the recently closed City Power Plant serving as an incubator for biofuels. Because of its close proximity to the campus and its use already of solar thermal panels and hydropower, other opportunities include space for biofuel production (lipid producing algae, biomass/cogeneration, etc), solar photovoltaic research, and possibly a site for small wind. The results of the audit should suggest countless other opportunities for exploration and research both on and off-campus.
Based on the definition of university-wide initiative, indicate how the proposed initiative has a university-wide impact.

Since the university has developed a broad definition of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental) and because it wishes to build an even greater educational leadership role in the St. Croix Valley and beyond, this initiative will allow for an impact well beyond that of just the university’s walls. This initiative has the opportunity to engage students, faculty, and staff in sustainability-based initiatives that while modest in their investment has the potential to return greatly across all aspects of our Strategic Plan’s foundational elements. Furthermore, with primary support from the Sustainability Working Group, Sustainability Faculty Fellows, SCISCD, and Facilities along with additional support from the entire Division of Administrative Services; it has a strong base of support to sustain it over time.

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

1 – Establish a base budget of $10,000-$12,500 to support up to 5 individual or team initiatives annually.

2 – Develop an annual submission process and set of criteria to effectively evaluate and award research grants. It is recommended that the Sustainability Working Group or an assigned committee of its members serve as the review and recommendation committee.

3 – The number of submissions to the number of successful applications will be notable measures.

4 – Finally, a report summarizing the project submitted by the individual or team will focus on the success and impact of the project as well as ongoing or future initiatives.

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 strikes right at the core of this foundational element and does so in a broad-based way, both in terms of definition and scope. It should positively impact sustainability in a broad sense of the word.

• **Inclusiveness**: Given the broad-based definition of sustainability, social justice issues are a key component of potential research projects. There is no presumption that projects focus solely on energy conservation and/or renewable energy development, two often thought of elements when discussing sustainability. A positive impact should occur here, especially given the broad range in scope and area that this initiative could cover.

• **Human Capital**: Students, faculty, staff, and community partners have the opportunity to participate in this initiative in a collaborative and meaningful way. The initiative is designed to draw on leverage points of one entity versus another while at the same time looking at the community and region as an opportunity for research. It will require some additional time of faculty and staff, especially the Sustainability Working Group membership and quite possibly staff in the St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development and Facilities Management.
• **Technology:** Technology plays an ever increasing role in areas of sustainability. In terms of energy conservation and renewable energy production, the advent of new controls, processes, and systems is occurring in rapid fashion. While no immediate negative impact or limitation is expected in regards to technology, it quite likely could play a role in terms of renewable energy systems or monitoring devices.

• **Facilities:** As the project opportunities are endless, it is quite possible some projects will have a direct impact on our facilities. Whether it making them more energy efficient or having them serve as energy producers, opportunities abound for our facilities to play a key role in this initiative, both on-campus as well as around the community. While incubator space will require dedicated square footage, the aim of this initiative is to focus on currently underutilized space around campus or the extended community. Three examples across the three partnering areas could be: Hagestad Hall (campus), Power Plant (City of River Falls), and/or the Academy Building (River Falls School District).

• **Finance:** While an outlay of up to $12,500 annually is notable, the opportunities for increased education and awareness activities allowing for improved energy efficiency and conservation efforts could alone support this program each and every year. Given the potential for block grant funding as it applies to utilities for our campus, projects focused around this area in particular could have a significant impact. It is quite possible a future student fee could be assessed to help support, expand, as well as further guide the program. A small to modest fee of $5 or less would be more than sufficient to fund the program. In addition, current energy rebate dollars may be sufficient for getting the program up and running. Small initiatives that lead to proposed bigger projects could lead to future funding requests.

• **Other:**