Proposal to Establish

The University Institute for Teaching and Learning

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Our students have chosen this University with the expectation that they will have great learning experiences. Our faculty have chosen an academic career with the expectation that they will be involved with teaching and learning. We will build on those inter-related foundations. Ohio State is poised to be a pioneering institution with a university-wide, open, faculty-led initiative to create, adopt, and adapt pedagogies.

I. Mission:

A: Alignment with University Mission

The current mission and vision statement for The Ohio State University has as one of its four core goals: “Teaching and Learning: to provide an unsurpassed, student-centered learning experience led by engaged world-class faculty, and enhanced by a globally diverse student body.”

This year the mission statement is under review and as a point of departure, a draft statement is being developed for widespread discussion. It proposes supplementing that goal with statements that note that the University is dedicated to “educating students through a comprehensive array of distinguished and distinctive academic programs” and to “preparing a diverse student body to be leaders and engaged citizens”, and that it values “collaboration and interdisciplinary endeavor”. Stated simply, this Institute, from its inception, will be aligned with the University’s current mission and vision statement, and potentially even more strongly with a revised version.

For the past three decades, the University has moved forward on two important paths. Through strong faculty recruitment and retention, it has enhanced its research mission dramatically, and today, nationally, is a premier Research I institution, with graduate, undergraduate and professional student involvement in that activity. Simultaneously, it has attracted and retained a student body of increasingly high achievement – one that wants and expects a high quality educational experience offered by our faculty, in various teaching and learning settings. These two paths are inter-related, but often have not been seen, interpreted, or articulated in that way.

In his March 2015 Presidential Investiture Address, Michael V. Drake asked that The Ohio State University “be as highly regarded for world-class teaching and learning as we already are for world-class research." In effect, the University could work to enhance, and make more visible, both internally and externally, its ongoing and future teaching/learning activities. This is an exciting and ambitious goal. It aligns clearly with the national-level conversation on student learning outcomes, retention, persistence, and timely graduation, and there exists a strong base of activities within the University on which to build.

Institute Mission Development: The Process:

In February 2015, a 12-member faculty-based planning group was established and led by the Office of Academic Affairs. It organized and offered the President and Provost’s Teaching and Learning Summit, on May 13, 2015. A group of approximately 50 faculty members from across the institution met to discuss ideas for improving the quality of teaching and learning at the University. The President and Executive Vice President and Provost attended. The vigorous, engaged discussion at the Summit clearly demonstrated that we have many outstanding and highly-committed teachers, who have a desire to:
• engage regularly in productive conversations about teaching and learning;
• learn about and share effective and innovative pedagogy;
• improve their teaching practices;
• support students in achieving academic success; and
• develop and implement a research agenda on the characteristics and effectiveness of our teaching.

Participants in the Summit have since served on a faculty “advisory council” that, during the 2015-16 academic year, has shaped the formation of an Institute for Teaching and Learning as a way to help achieve the President’s goal. These faculty represent a diversity of intellectual backgrounds, academic ranks, and appointments, ensuring that multiple perspectives contributed to the process.

Throughout the 2015-16 academic year, there has been ongoing, broad outreach into the University – to faculty, students, staff, and academic leadership - seeking input to the development of this Institute. Formal presentations were given to: the University Senate and its Faculty Council and Steering Committee; the Leadership Team of the Office of Academic Affairs; and the President’s Council. In addition, focus groups were held with Columbus campus students (a combined session including undergraduate, graduate, and professional students); regional campus students; graduate teaching associates; and undergraduate advisers. Department Chairs/School Directors provided input through one of their campus-wide semester meetings.

The input received during this process has substantively informed and shaped the development of the proposal.

B: Interdisciplinary Nature of the Center

The overarching goal of the Institute is to serve as the convening and coordinating place and help provide leadership for a more unified institutional approach to aspects of the teaching and learning mission. It will play several main roles.

• The Institute will help coordinate activities currently underway in a set of units with portfolios that overlap with the Institute, but are not primarily focused on the kinds of activities proposed here.

They include: University- wide academic support units such as the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching (UCAT) and the Office of Distance Education and e-Learning (ODEE); Academic centers that focus on topical areas, such as the Center for Life Sciences Education (CLSE), and the Center for Higher Education Enterprise (CHEE); offices that play niche educational roles such as the Office of Undergraduate Research, and academic departments that have education, teaching and learning in their titles, such as the long established Department of Teaching and Learning, and the broader College of Education and Human Ecology, or the new Department of Engineering Education, and others.

All are respected units at the University, and there is no effort to diminish or duplicate their work. Indeed the leadership of many of them has been involved in the development of this
proposal. In its coordination role, the emphasis for the Institute can be on **efficacy** of effort, with reduced bureaucracy and redundancy. A mutually supportive, reciprocal working relationship between the leadership of the Institute and these units is expected.

- The Institute will **elevate the dialogue** about and activities related to teaching and learning to the **institutional level** in a way that does not exist today.

  It can become a front door or access point to and for both internal and external constituencies about our teaching and learning mission. In a large, decentralized institution, such a location is needed for both access to and communication about all that we are doing for this aspect of our mission.

- It will address, initially, **two** topical areas currently needing attention, both here and at all major institutions such as ours. One is research on teaching and learning such as evidence-based research pedagogies for learning effectiveness. In addition, it can help address research questions related to the actual progress of our students through our courses and programs. That work needs to be aligned with some ongoing efforts, for example, by the Center for Higher Education Enterprise and our partnership in the University Innovation Alliance.

  The other is as a place for enhanced university-wide dialogue on institutional polices relating to teaching – something for which there currently is not an institutional mechanism to do so.

- Through the Institute, we can **conduct a gap analysis** of what the full range of needs for teaching and learning within the University is, and work with the colleges and campuses to provide faculty with support for their teaching, with a focus on learning, and help students themselves become better learners.

The Institute will help coordinate and lead current and new efforts to improve the learning experience for our students, and help position the University for national leadership in teaching and learning within a research-intensive university setting. Moreover, nationally, **every** institution of higher education is expected, through its regional accrediting body, to be demonstrating its commitment to student learning outcomes assessment. The establishment of this Institute will demonstrate this University’s continuing commitment to that effort here and help coordinate it.

**Institute Activities**

The Institute will focus its initial activities on four key areas. In each case, a small set of activities will be initiated in the first year.

**Instructional Support:**

The Institute will seek to raise the profile of, and enhance collaboration among, current teaching enhancement efforts, leverage the expertise of existing program staff to most efficiently provide
appropriate assistance to our faculty, help establish new initiatives where gaps exist, and broaden and deepen the impacts of ongoing efforts and new initiatives across the institution. Faculty, department chairs/school directors, and graduate teaching assistants, strongly advocate for enhanced instructional support for all those involved in the instructional mission. The first major initiative is to:

- Offer a new program on teaching and learning for new faculty to the University. Among the goals for such a program are: learn OSU teaching and learning mission including policies, culture and resources; develop familiarity with Ohio State students; increase scholarly teaching; use evidence-based teaching practices; build active partnerships in cross-disciplinary cohorts; and advance university instructions support systems use.

Other options for consideration in the first and subsequent years:

- Create Faculty Fellows for Teaching Enhancement.
- Develop additional teaching support programs for graduate teaching associates.
- Provide additional seed grants.
- Develop “open classrooms” by master teachers, inviting others to participate in a course review that would involve classroom observations and discussions about the approach.
- Deploy support teams to work with faculty at the College and Unit levels.
- Create an easily accessible portal with both its own content and links to associated units’ sites.

A Faculty Fellow will be appointed to help lead this effort.

**Inquiry and Scholarship:**

Scholarship on teaching and learning already occurs in many academic units. In a highly decentralized environment, we often are not aware of what our colleagues are doing that may help in our own work in either our same, or a different, academic unit. The Institute will support faculty members’ innovations in pedagogical methods, sponsor structured inquiry and scholarship that tests the efficacy of these new practices, offer formal University-wide convening activities, and provide online efforts to share such work in ways that do not exist today. This represents an important, signature role for the Institute - informing aspects of the teaching and learning mission here and nationally.

Importantly, the Institute will help lead a more comprehensive approach to our teaching and learning mission, through the use of data analytics and robust qualitative analysis. It will help the University move to new levels of research impact on our own students’ progress and success.

In its first year, the Institute can:

- In partnership with Offices such as, Institutional Research and Planning, Diversity and Inclusion, and the Center for Higher Education Enterprise, help identify and analyze a set of research questions about how our students progress through our courses and programs, with the goal of
enhancing student success – a form of scholarship that will, in part, apply student-centered analytics to identify and broaden use of practices that will improve learning outcomes.

Other options for consideration in the first and subsequent years include:

- Create a clearinghouse for teaching and learning-related grants.
- Support research design on pedagogical questions.
- Provide funding for small research projects.
- Identify sources of external research funding.
- Work with IRB to develop standard processes for addressing human subject issues for this type of research.

A Faculty Fellow will be appointed to help lead this activity.

**Policy Development:**

Discussion and decisions about teaching and learning have occurred, understandably and necessarily, primarily at the local academic unit levels – college and department or school. Teaching and learning, though, is an institutional responsibility, and today, there are many issues that need discussion at the institutional level. The Institute can help facilitate important dialogue at and provide direction to the local levels.

The Institute will help foster and lead an institution-wide discussion on topics such as:

- the role of efforts at teaching and learning in the faculty review and reward processes. In order to promote initiatives in teaching and learning in a highly decentralized institution, the University will need to adopt coherent, effective central policies and guidelines for a range of unit-level policies that recognize and reward such activities by our faculty members;
- the changing roles and responsibilities of different faculty/instructor categories;
- the training and evaluation of graduate teaching associates; and
- the role that students themselves must play as we move forward – from the use of teaching evaluation methods, to better helping them learn and evaluate their own learning.

The Institute and its members will advocate for such policies and provide leadership in developing models that academic units can adapt to their local needs. Such policy changes are needed for this overall teaching and learning initiative to be broad-based and sustainable.

During the first year the Institute can:

- Collate and analyze existing literature on best practices to aid in policy development.
- Communicate examples of flexible policy implementation to Tenure Initiating Units (TIUs).

Additional topics for subsequent activities include:
Recommend teaching evaluation guidelines.
Enhance recognition and rewards for time spent on teaching improvement.
Address policy issues related to adjunct faculty.
Demonstrate institutional support for teaching and the scholarship of teaching.

Initially this activity will lie within the responsibilities of the Director. Ultimately there may be a Faculty Fellow in a lead role.

Communication:

The Institute will coordinate communication about teaching and learning excellence both within the University and to our external stakeholders in a more detailed and consistent manner than currently exists. Teaching our students is at the core of the academic enterprise. Regardless of academic discipline, our faculty share a commitment to challenge our students to achieve academic success. We have an excellent story about our teaching mission that needs and deserves to be shared.

We need to communicate more with one another about our ongoing efforts. This Institute, through periodic formal meetings, a list serve, and a vibrant website, will play a convening and interactive role throughout each academic year to promote a continuing institutional conversation and bring visibility to the efforts. For example, the Institute may collaborate with the Academy of Teaching, UCAT, and ODEE in sponsoring conferences where faculty can share their teaching successes. The Communications staff of the Office of Academic Affairs will support this effort.

Similarly, the Institute will better inform our public stakeholders - parents, alumni, educational partners, and policy makers – of our ongoing efforts, and our commitment to enhancing this aspect of our mission. Among the initiatives to be developed during the first year:

- Communicate the identity of the institute.
- Communicate success stories.
- Build communities based on topical themes and substantive content areas.

Longer-term activities could include:

- Increase visibility with donors and legislators
- Communicate/interact with peer institutions

Initially this activity will lie within the responsibilities of the Director. Ultimately there may be a Faculty Fellow in a lead role.

C: Goals of the Center That Cannot Be Met Within Existing Academic Units

Every academic unit and campus within the University plays a role in the teaching and learning mission at some level (with undergraduate, and/or graduate, and/or professional students) and in varying ways
(traditional classroom, on-line experiences, laboratories, individual instruction, as examples). Many faculty are involved in research on teaching and learning within their own disciplines. Graduate students play an important role particularly in introductory-level general education courses. The University gives awards for teaching at the local and institutional levels.

There is limited team teaching within or among units at the University, and there has not been a mechanism for interactions among those who are teaching, for purposes of mentoring or sharing best practices, for example. Institutes and centers provide such a function at this University, and this Institute will be a first effort to do so for this aspect our mission.

On another level, an important dimension related to the teaching and learning mission is interaction with other institutions. Through the Institute the University can become more actively involved in national groups such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) where there is a strong emphasis on teaching and learning activities. In addition, at the state level, in association with the Ohio Department of Higher Education, the University can work with the state’s 35 other public institutions on ongoing, broad state-wide discussions and activities related to general education, articulation and transfer, and student success and completion.

II: Faculty

Membership in the Institute will be open to all involved in the University’s instructional, research, and outreach missions – regular tenure track, clinical track, and associated faculty, and graduate students. Emeritus faculty will be encouraged to participate.

It is important for assessment and impact purposes, that the Institute maintains a record of its membership. Membership needs to be secured through the Institute Director, with a formal request, accompanied by a current curriculum vitae, to be updated every two years. There is no term of membership and members may join or withdraw, formally, at any time. Tiers of membership, based on members’ levels of interest and commitment, should be considered early in the implementation of the Institute.

Members may align with one or more of the four specified areas of activity.

III: Administration

A formal Pattern of Administration (POA) needs to be developed within the first year of operation of the Institute. To date, the following characteristics have been proposed:

The Institute will be administered by a Director – a faculty member - with at least a 50% time appointment, for a 3-4 year term, and who will be supported by an administrative assistant. The selection process for the Director will be overseen by the Office of Academic Affairs.

Two of the four areas of focus needs a lead Faculty Fellow, at least 25% time, to convene interested Institute members and identify and oversee a small set of activities for each year.
The Institute will have a formal location for administrative purposes but will function as both a traditional and virtual Institute. It must and will have a strong website presence overseen through the Office of Academic Affairs.

The Director will report to the Executive Vice President and Provost, or designee, within the Office of Academic Affairs, with a possible dotted-line report to the Office of the President.

The Institute will have an Internal Advisory Committee composed of faculty across academic ranks, disciplines and campuses; student representatives; advisors; and the directors of existing support units (UCAT, ODEE, CHEE). The Committee will meet at least once each semester and advise the Director on activities and administrative matters.

The Institute will have a small External Advisory Committee composed of faculty and/or directors of similar types of institutes from peer institutions, that will be convened annually. The Committee will advise the Director and Executive Vice President and Provost on ongoing and future Institute activities – within the national context.

IV: Funding

Continuing funding will be provided by and administered through the Office of Academic Affairs.

Approximately $550,000 is needed for the first year.

Five areas of funding are needed:

- Administration: a Faculty Director (at least 50% time); an administrative assistant; and ultimately 4 Faculty Fellows (20% time each): **$290,000**

- Programming: Instructional support can continue to be provided through more coordinated existing efforts by both UCAT and ODEE ($60,000 in kind the first year) – and with some new funding for seed grants. **$50,000**

- Research: in consultation with ongoing efforts at CHEE and OIRP, some new funding for targeted research projects on student progress. **$150,000**

- Website development

- Visiting Speakers: for both internal professional development purposes, and external visibility, a visiting speakers program will be initiated and maintained. **$25,000**

This type of Institute is viable/attractive for sources of external funding. The Director, working with the Office of Academic Affairs, and the Office of University Advancement, should begin work on identifying and securing such sources.
V: Evaluative Criteria

Each year, the Institute will be assessed on a variety of criteria, including the following:

- Completed activities in each of the 4 areas: instructional support; inquiry and scholarship; policy development; and communication efforts
- Assessment of participant achievement of stated goals and outcomes for every Institute project
- Assessment of Institute impact in each of the 4 areas
- Website use (hits and downloads)
- Levels of external funding – through gifts and donations

Formally, the Council on Academic Affairs will review the Institute after its first year of operation (2017-18), then again after its fourth year (2020-21), and every four years thereafter. Annually the Director will be reviewed through the Office of Academic Affairs.

In the interest of openness and communication the Director will report annually to the University Senate on the activities and impact of the Institute and its members’ work to advance teaching and learning.

Within the first year, the Director, working with the Faculty Fellows, and Internal and External Advisory Committees, shall establish goals and outcomes and a formal assessment plan to collect, analyze, and use data to improve the efforts of the Institute.

The Institute will proceed in stages of development, starting with a small set of activities associated with each of the four main dimensions of its work in the first year, and then building from that base in subsequent years. For each activity carried out by/through the Institute, goals, objectives, and an assessment plan will be developed.

VI: Supporting Materials

- Internal letters of support (deans of all Colleges/campuses)
- External letters of support (at least 5 from prominent national institutions).