

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

*President and Provost's*

# Teaching and Learning Initiative

## **Draft Institute Proposal**

September 2015

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." This is an exciting and ambitious goal that aligns clearly with the national-level conversation on student learning outcomes, retention, persistence, and timely graduation. There is a strong base of activities within the university on which to build. A faculty-driven effort to move our university forward is gaining momentum.

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 student teaching and learning. We will build on those inter-related foundations. Ohio State is poised to be a pioneering institution with a university-wide, faculty-led initiative to create, adopt, and adapt evidence-based pedagogies.

### **A Faculty-based Foundation**

On May 13, 2015, the *President and Provost's Teaching and Learning Summit*, led by the Office of Academic Affairs, brought together a group of faculty members from across the institution to discuss ideas for improving the quality of teaching and learning at the university. The vigorous, engaged discussion at the Summit clearly demonstrated that we have many outstanding and highly-committed teachers, who have a desire to:

- regularly engage in productive conversations about teaching and learning;
- learn about and share effective, innovative, evidence-based 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 were invited to serve on a faculty advisory council that, during the 2015-16 academic year, will help shape the formation of an Institute for Teaching and Learning as a way to help achieve the president's goal. This faculty represents a diversity of intellectual backgrounds, academic ranks, and appointments, ensuring that multiple perspectives have a voice in the process. Throughout the 2015-16 academic year, there will be broad outreach into the university seeking engagement into the development of this institute.

### **Imagining the Future**

An institute will help coordinate and lead – in our large decentralized institution - efforts to improve the learning experience for our students and help position the university for leadership on a topic central to the ongoing national dialogue on accountability.

The institute will focus its initial activities on four key areas.



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Faculty 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 their impact across the institution.

Inquiry and Scholarship: The institute will help lead a more comprehensive approach to our teaching/learning mission, through the use of data analytics and robust qualitative analysis. It will help the university move to new levels of research impact. In partnership with the Office of Institutional Research and Planning and the Center for Higher Education Enterprise, it will 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 those practices that will improve learning outcomes. In addition, it will support faculty members' innovations in pedagogical methods, and sponsor structured inquiry and scholarship that tests the efficacy of these new practices. This represents an important, distinctive role for the Institute - informing aspects of the teaching and learning mission here and nationally.

Policy Development: The institute will help foster and lead an institution-wide discussion on the role of efforts in teaching and learning within 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 policies that recognize and reward such activities by our faculty members. 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/learning initiative to be broad-based and sustainable.

Communication: The institute will coordinate communication about teaching and learning excellence both within the university, and to our stakeholders, in a more detailed and consistent manner. Teaching our students is at the core of the academic enterprise. We have an excellent story about our teaching mission that needs and deserves to be shared. Regardless of academic discipline, our faculty share a commitment to challenge our students to achieve academic success. We need to communicate more with one another about our ongoing efforts. This institute will play a convening role, throughout each academic year, to promote a continuing institutional conversation. Similarly, the Institute will better inform our public stakeholders - parents, alumni, educational partners, policy makers – of our ongoing efforts, and our commitment to enhancing this aspect of our mission.

A process has begun to engage the university in a dialogue to ensure the Institute is well designed and prepared for a successful launch. Meetings with academic units, the University Senate leadership, student government, and related academic support units will occur, so that a draft institute proposal will be complete by the end of autumn semester 2015. Formal approval through the Senate Council on Academic Affairs and the University will occur by the end of Spring Semester. A university institute for teaching and learning will be in place by autumn 2016.



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