Alternative Proposal for an ORSP and a Center (Institute) of High Impact Practices

Introduction
In a previous communication I gave you feedback that did not support the creation of an ORSP that had as its subunits Pre-Award, Post-Award, and PACCE/URCE. However, I did not offer an alternative and I thought it might assist the conversation if I did.

One of my primary arguments of the current proposal is that the mission of PACCE and URCE is very different than that for ORSP and that each may lose sight of their objectives and be less than what they could be. ORSP’s mission of enhancing research productivity, increasing grant funding, facilitating technology commercialization, coordinating outreach, and nurturing economic development is in my opinion a very good and needed one. However, it is a mission that does not involve student education. The metric of success is economic development for the university and taking advantage of one of our largest assets – faculty expertise - to promote economic activity for the university and academic achievement for the faculty member. Student education may well benefit in a secondary way, but it is not the focal point, nor should it be as to do so would take the eye off what is a singularly good and needed mission. Their metrics of success, assessment activities, communications, faculty development, and etc. should be squarely focused on enhancing research productivity, increasing grants, etc.

On the other hand, PACCE, URCE, and other programs have a singular mission of creating deep learning (high impact) experiences for students. These organizations are completely focused on student education. Their metrics of success, assessment activities, communications, faculty development, and etc. are and should be focused squarely on improving deep learning experiences. Any time spent doing something else is time, creativity, and talent spent in pursuit of something other than their mission.

Alternative Proposal
An alternative proposal is to create a structure that takes advantage of units with like missions and benefit from the synergy and efficiencies that can hopefully result.

PACCE, URCE, and First Year Experience are three units that all have a mission and operating strategy that are similar and they also have similar challenges. They each have a mission of creating deep learning (high impact) experiences for students, they each have student education as their focal point, and they each have a strategy of working through faculty to create greater capacity for deep learning experiences. They each have very similar metrics of success, assessment needs, communication needs, and similar types of faculty development.
They each have the challenge of not enough resources/staff to carry out those needs in ways they would like – or said another way, to take their mission to scale.

An alternative structure:

This structure aligns the focus and mission of both areas, which in-turn aligns the time and creativity of the personnel in each. Such an alignment will hopefully result in much greater synergy and efficiency in:
- Faculty development activities
- Assessment
- Communications
- Operations

Personnel and operation needs for the Institute of High Impact Learning would likely be minimal since these operations are currently running and the efficiencies gained by combining them would help solve some of their individual needs.
Personnel would be needed for the ORSP. To accomplish the focus and mission as stated it takes people who are talented, experienced, and eager to devote their time and creativity to that mission. Also, success will not happen quickly. It takes time to develop and empower faculty capacity, develop areas of excellence for research activity, and develop infrastructure for developing potentially commercial products. But, in time and with the right support it can be done. Distance Learning is a good example. It started small but with a focused mission. It took about ten years to get to the very successful program it is today. Sponsored research and education may be able to be developed more quickly and be a springboard for other activities. However, the need for a successful ORSP and its mission is in my opinion paramount for the university.