Introduction
This report is in response to the following *Center for Academic Excellence Resolution*, passed by the College Senate on September 26, 2011:

Whereas, the 2010 Strategic Plan of the SUNY College at Oneonta states that a goal of the College is to, *Promote a learning-centered environment that facilitates excellence in teaching, research, and creative activity*; and;

Whereas, the first action item listed under this goal is that the College, *Explore the need for and establishment of a center that enhances and supports the campus culture of teaching, learning, research, and scholarship*, and;

Whereas, the Faculty Committee on Instruction has submitted to the Faculty its *Proposal Regarding a Center for Faculty Excellence*, and;

Whereas, the scope of the Committee on Instruction’s report is limited to teaching, and;

Whereas, teaching is but one of the four areas mentioned under the Strategic Plan’s action item.

Be it resolved, that the College Senate charge the Chair of the Senate to charge additional Faculty committees to investigate the creation of a center that enhances and supports the campus culture of teaching, learning, research, and scholarship, furthermore;

Be it further resolved, such committees will report back to the Senate by the last Senate meeting of the Fall Semester, furthermore;

Be it resolved that subsequent to these reports to the Senate, the Faculty of the College or its representative bodies consult to decide whether such a center should be created and, if it is to be created, what its scope, purpose and structure should be, furthermore;

Be it resolved that the Faculty or its representative bodies make its decision regarding such a center prior to the end of the 2011-2012 academic year.

On October 10, 2011, the Chair of the Committee on Research (CoR) was contacted by the Chair of the College Senate with the charge “to look into how a Center for Academic Excellence would enhance the campus culture of teaching, learning, research and creativity from the point of view of the constituents your committee represents.”

According to the Organization and Bylaws of the State University College at Oneonta Faculty (rev October 1998), Article V: Standing Faculty Committees, §12, the CoR shall:

a. study and recommend means for enhancing research among students and faculty;

b. keep the faculty informed concerning sources of funds and opportunities for conducting research; and

c. be charged with overseeing the faculty/student research grant program that is offered twice a year and funded by the investment income of the College at Oneonta Foundation’s Unrestricted Endowment, made possible through charitable gifts and grants to the college.

General Discussion
As a starting point, the CoR discussed the Committee on Instruction’s *Proposal Regarding a Center for Faculty Excellence* and its relationship to the Senate’s resolution and charge to the CoR. It was agreed
that the proposal put forth by the Committee on Instruction focuses almost entirely on the scholarship of teaching and learning. The role that the CoR has traditionally played is one that supports non-pedagogical scholarship, so any insight that the CoR could provide would be inconsistent with the stated mission of the previously proposed Center for Faculty Excellence. Instead of the proposed Center for Faculty Excellence, the CoR could envisage a Center for Academic Excellence that would enhance and support the campus culture of teaching, learning, research, and scholarship (as articulated in the College’s Strategic Plan 2010), and the integration of these components. However, based on role of the CoR and the constituencies it serves, this report focuses solely on how such a Center for Academic Excellence would enhance research and creative activity conducted by faculty (and students with faculty sponsorship), and makes recommendations on possible initiatives and programs that would positively impact faculty scholarship at SUNY Oneonta.

The CoR has not been charged with investigating the infrastructure of a possible Center for Academic Excellence (e.g. location, staffing, funding and other resources). However, a recurring point of the CoR discussions has been the lack of a central physical space dedicated to faculty on this campus. This deficit inhibits cross-disciplinary collaboration, informal meetings, new faculty integration, faculty camaraderie, and overall faculty presence on campus. Such a space would be critical to the effectiveness of a future Center for Academic Excellence, in any configuration, as faculty buy-in and use of such a Center is essential. Although specific recommendations as to the Center’s infrastructure are not under the purview of this report, suggested locations for such a dedicated faculty space include the proposed Welcome Center or Milne Library’s Academic Success Center, as presented in the College’s Facilities Master Plan Final Presentation.

**Supporting Scholarship through a Center for Academic Excellence**

From a broad perspective, a Center for Academic Excellence would create a space for both senior and junior faculty to discuss and learn how to integrate teaching, learning, research and service on our campus. More specifically, there are a number of ways that a Center for Academic Excellence could support the needs of faculty to effectively engage in research and scholarship.

1. **Help forge connections between faculty members**
   a. Facilitate collaboration
   b. Advocate for and provide the means for interdisciplinary teaching and research
   c. Provide opportunities to learn from each other’s experiences
   d. Provide an insider’s guide to campus resources
   e. Shorten the scholarship learning curve for new faculty
      i. Facilitate orientation for new faculty to various offices and services available (incorporate and expand program currently offered by Academic Affairs)
      ii. Provide a central place for faculty to go to find out “where to go” (e.g., which office can help with what issue)
      iii. Inform faculty of resources available (e.g., release time for a special project)
      iv. Inform faculty on how to get recognized for scholarship

2. **Act as a clearinghouse for faculty experiences/inside information**
   a. Internal and external grant-seeking
      i. Pitfalls to avoid/best practices (e.g., it is best to have more than one student if including student summer work)
      ii. Things to include in a grant that would help with the time issue (i.e., course coverage/release time)
   b. Time management and prioritizing with respect to scholarship
   c. Guidance for working with undergraduates (suggestions from those who have both successful and unsuccessful experiences)
d. Resources (e.g., internal and external equipment and collections: what is available and procedure for access)

3. Provide advocacy for issues important to success in scholarship
   a. Visiting faculty/collaborators
      i. Extended-stay housing
      ii. Facilitate participation in campus (e.g., giving a special lecture)
   b. Summer student housing
   c. Recognition and promotion of faculty scholarship

Recommended Programs/Initiatives
Members of the CoR discussed a number of specific initiatives and programs that could either fall under the purview of, or be facilitated by, a Center for Academic Excellence.

- Establish an Office on Research
  o Coordinate research compliance-related issues (human subjects, animal care and use, export controls, scientific misconduct, conflict of interest, biohazards, etc.)
  o Create and support a comprehensive Student Research Program
    ▪ Consolidate and enhance various components of student research into one office (Grant Program, Student Research Day, awards programs, Student Travel for Excellence Program)
    ▪ Provide support to the CoR in coordinating the student grant program
    ▪ Increase student-faculty research partnerships
    ▪ Work with faculty and students to develop long term research programs
  o Arrange for the use of facilities during summer months for scholarly activity (e.g., students and faculty who are awarded grants from the CoR have often found it difficult to find housing and research space during the summer months)
- Provide orientation and support for new and junior faculty
  o Further develop the excellent mentoring program already in place
  o Organize workshops and individual consultations to help new faculty balance their teaching duties with their research and service activities, and to enable them to successfully pursue, and share the outcomes of, their research projects
  o Offer a mid-year retreat for new faculty
  o Help new and junior faculty with practical matters such as building a portfolio and preparing renewal and tenure folders
- Establish a Center for Academic Excellence Lecture Series to highlight research on campus, and fund additional research events, guest speakers, etc.
- Create a "Scholars in Residence Program" whereby each year the Center of Academic Excellence would develop a theme and bring scholars to campus (e.g., a "sustainability" theme would attract scholars from economics and environmental science, etc.) to develop a year-long series of courses, lectures, research programs for faculty and students); such events would also improve our "public relations" with the region’s population
- Foster research that focuses on the needs of, and issues facing, rural and small town communities (ranging from economics to culture), to improve the College's relations with the rural and small town communities in the region by providing useful information
- Work with the College Senate to provide a training program for faculty serving as Committee Chairs