

## **2006-939: FOCUSING THE LENS ON WOMEN FACULTY ISSUES: THREE YEARS OF ADVANCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO**

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## **Focusing the Lens on Women Faculty Issues: Three Years of ADVANCE at the University of Texas at El Paso**

Twenty-five years since Congress first initiated the Women in Science and Technology Equal Opportunity Act, recruiting and retaining women scientists and engineers remains a critical national issue. Although the number of women earning doctoral degrees in science and engineering has increased over the past decade, the percentage of women holding academic faculty positions remains low. In 2000, the percentage of female science and engineering faculty at four-year institutions was only 19.5 percent; and only 10.4 percent were full professors.<sup>1</sup>

Research shows that the few women who are hired in faculty positions advance more slowly than men, are paid less, and are more dissatisfied with their jobs.<sup>2</sup> Studies on faculty retention and advancement suggest that women's experiences and perceptions of academe differ from those of their male colleagues.<sup>3,4,5</sup> For women, the decision to leave or stay at an academic institution most often hinges on their satisfaction with working conditions. Women mention that workplace satisfaction is affected by work conditions, including negative factors such as being actively discouraged from participating in departmental and institutional decision-making;<sup>6</sup> having to succeed by playing by even more stringent rules than their colleagues; lack of support for their research;<sup>3,7,8</sup> non-collegial and non-collaborative climates within the departments; greater social isolation; difficulty balancing teaching, research, and service;<sup>3,9,10</sup> lack of guidance on tenure expectations and realities; alienation from the institution; lack of opportunities in research; lack of respect from colleagues; lack of support from peers and administration;<sup>3,6,7,11</sup> and dual career situations where the spouse did not find work.<sup>7</sup> Family issues also derail women, as they try to time additions to the family and tenure. In Sue Rosser's study of academic women's struggles, over 60 percent of women interviewed reported that balancing their career and family was a concern.<sup>11</sup>

The National Science Foundation funds the ADVANCE Institutional Transformation for Faculty Diversity program with the goal of increasing the representation of women in academic science and engineering careers. At the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the ADVANCE mission is twofold: 1) to value a talented, diverse faculty and recognize that a collegial, productive environment can be created for anyone-and everyone, and 2) to understand that organizational commitment and communication are vital to the realization of this mission. UTEP works toward these goals through four ADVANCE program components: (1) policy and recruitment; (2) faculty development; (3) collaborative leadership; and (4) evaluation.

Located in the largest, bi-national region in the world, the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) is recognized nationally for serving a community that is under-represented in higher education. Over 70 percent of the student population is Hispanic, and approximately 55 percent of the students are female. However, the faculty profile is quite different, especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. At UTEP, 18 departments fall under the auspices of ADVANCE: 5 departments in the College of Engineering, 5 departments in the College of Science, and 8 social science departments in the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Business. During the past two years, 41% of the hires in the ADVANCE departments have been women. In 2003, the first year of the grant, only 16 percent of the faculty in ADVANCE

departments were women, but two years later, the percentage has increased to 20 percent. More women are chairing departments and serving on promotion and tenure committees and our research has shown that there are no significant differences by gender for salary, space allocation, and start-up packages.

This paper describes the three components of the UTEP ADVANCE program, details the successes to date, the challenges that remain, and makes recommendations to others who wish to develop similar programs.

At both the national level and at UTEP, there are two recurring themes concerning barriers to female recruitment and retention: 1) institutional impediments, which include lack of guidance, role models, and support, and 2) the problems of balancing family needs with the demands of an academic career. The Policy and Recruitment process addresses these problems through recruitment of diverse faculty and development of policies that benefit all faculty.

### Policy and Recruitment

The policy and recruitment component supports recruitment efforts, provides research support to women faculty, and proposes faculty support and retention policies. During the 2004-05 academic year, the ADVANCE team met with 95 percent of the female and dual career candidates (a total of 45 contacts) who visited campus to interview in the ADVANCE departments. The team provided candidates with information about the UTEP ADVANCE program, including information on additional start-up monies that ADVANCE provides to female hires, salary supplementation for dual career hires, and research support. In addition data have been collected on the search process, including number and percentage of females and minorities named as finalists, offers tendered, offers accepted/declined, and reasons for the declined offers. Since 2003, 41 percent of the tenure track hires in ADVANCE departments have been women; nine of these new hires have received a total of \$110,000 in additional start-up support. The ADVANCE team facilitated the hiring of 7 dual career couples during this time.

Two preliminary observations were made during the 2004-05 hiring cycle. First, open discussion of dual career placement has brought extremely qualified candidates to UTEP. The ADVANCE programs at UTEP and New Mexico State University jointly published a dual career brochure to use as a recruiting tool. A manual based on our experiences for dual career hiring is now in development. Second, the majority of females who decline an offer at UTEP are moving into the tenure system at other institutions. Current roadblocks to diverse hiring include inadequate training and resources for search chairs and active and passive resistance to qualified female candidates. At UTEP, the search process is often too slow and qualified women, as well as men, are hired by other institutions. Finally, in spite of improvements in dual career couple hiring, poor communication and coordination among colleges and departments continues to hamper the hiring of dual career couples.

UTEP ADVANCE also conducts a Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) competition each spring. The competition is open to all tenured and tenure-track faculty, but there must be a woman on the research team or the research must be about improving diversity. A committee of five representatives from the ADVANCE colleges evaluates the merit of the applications based

on the research the faculty member is conducting and how the research furthers the mission of ADVANCE. The award provides salary funds for graduate students so that they and their faculty sponsor can move forward in their research agenda. To date, 35 women have received \$160,644 in GRA awards.

The program has also been active in proposing policies for tenure clock extension, dual career, and third year review. Three of the four colleges that house ADVANCE departments have initiated a formal third year review; the College of Engineering is considering such a policy. A representative from the Provost's office has recently been appointed to facilitate the institutionalization of ADVANCE initiatives. This interaction with the Provost's office has led to a policy on extending the tenure clock and a commitment to work on dual career issues.

*Recommendations to other programs:*

- *Provide training to chairs of search committees on how to diversify pools and avoid biases in hiring*
- *Develop written policies for extending the tenure clock and distribute them widely through handbooks of operating procedures, fliers, and the university Web site*
- *Provide a university contact for candidates with spouses or partners who need help finding jobs in the region*
- *Develop written policies for hiring dual career academic couples on campus or across two campuses and distribute them widely*
- *Develop a faculty exit interview process to better understand the reasons that some faculty choose to leave*

In the national and UTEP context, the recurring themes of acculturation into the university climate, access to campus information and resources, and meeting the demands of research, teaching, and service are seen as significant barriers to advancement. The Faculty Development process addresses these as a way to empower others to take action and generate short-term successes for our faculty.

## Faculty Development

The faculty development component helps faculty define a holistic and integrated academic career. The program includes a Faculty Mentoring Program for Women (FMPW) for all tenure-track women and an Impact Seminar Series for men and women designed to increase faculty effectiveness by developing new ways of integrating teaching, research, and service.

The FMPW, which now includes 80 women, was begun in 2000, and folded into the ADVANCE initiative in 2003. All new tenure track women are invited to participate in the program. During the first years of the program, the women were paired with senior faculty members, mentors, from their college, but not from their department. Due to a shortage of qualified mentors, the program adopted a "group mentoring" model in 2004. Now, a group of women from the same college are paired with one or two mentors from their college. Participants attend monthly luncheons with their mentors to talk about issues that concern them. In addition, all tenure track women are invited to attend brown bags lunches in which topics such as how to negotiate the

challenges of maternity leave, grant writing, and progress towards tenure are discussed. The brown bags provide a venue for peer mentoring among women faculty.

Participants report that they find support from the program in ways that departments cannot or are not providing. Participants mention that being able to meet other pre-tenure women outside their department helps them to discuss and solve problems and to feel less isolated. In addition, the mentors express a sense of renewal from having the opportunity to work with junior colleagues.

IMPACT, a two-week seminar, is designed to increase the effectiveness of participating faculty by developing new ways of integrating teaching, research, and service and focuses primarily on the development of leadership skills. Each cohort meets for one week in May for two consecutive years and then meets throughout the year to work on specific career goals. To date, 19 faculty have participated in the program. The program has attracted the attention of other institutions, and discussions of conducting the series at other institutions or including faculty from other institutions are in progress. On program evaluation surveys, participants list the following benefits:

- Enhanced interdisciplinary collaboration and collegueship
- Offered a sense of connection to others on campus
- Introduced ways to identify new leadership roles in department, college, and university
- Explored effective ways to increase productivity through integration of research, teaching, and service
- Provided support in overcoming barriers to success

All women who have come up for tenure and/or promotion during the two years of the ADVANCE initiative have been successful. Challenges for the faculty development component include finding qualified mentors, lack of resources for both programs, and continually refining the mentor and mentee orientations so that relationships can be more effective.

*Recommendations to other programs;*

- *Find an upper-level administrator who will support the program verbally and financially. Grass roots efforts are valuable, but without such administrative support, the program cannot be sustained.*
- *Ensure proper rewards for mentoring within the university reward system.*
- *Find ways to incorporate more fully into the existing departmental and college structures, so that women faculty aren't sent "over there" for mentoring.*
- *Ensure that there is a mentoring coordinator or director to ensure consistency and quality programming across the colleges.*
- *Include peer mentoring opportunities, not just one-on-one mentoring.*

The Collaborative Leadership process is designed to stimulate change at the departmental level by assisting each department to create ways of fostering a supportive climate through which faculty can advance. The specific barriers to advancement of female faculty, which are addressed by the Collaborative Leadership process, are workplace environment and marginalization. The

involvement of faculty in this process will build a collegial and supportive environment that benefits all faculty.

### Collaborative Leadership

The collaborative leadership component works at the departmental level to enhance collaboration among faculty, identify and support innovative leaders, share best practices, and facilitate improvement of departmental climates. A major focus of this component is the adaptation and implementation of the “Study of Faculty Work Life” survey instrument, which was developed by the University of Wisconsin.<sup>12</sup> The survey was administered to all tenured, tenure-track faculty and full-time lecturers in January 2004, with a 43% response rate, and will be repeated in 2007. As a result of this survey, we learned that females, Hispanics and Assistant Professors are significantly more likely to feel:

- isolated in their departments
- they do not have a voice in how resources are allocated
- their department chair does not involve them in the decision-making process
- dissatisfied with the way their careers have progressed at UTEP
- unsupported in their advancement towards tenure/promotion
- they do not understand the criteria for tenure/promotion
- there is not a strong fit between the way they did/do research, teaching and service and the way it was/is evaluated for tenure

In addition, individual interviews with department Chairs, “Chair chats” where chairs come together to discuss needs and concerns, women faculty forums, and interviews with women have been conducted and have provided insight into the campus culture and climate. Best practices on recruitment, retention, and promotion continue to be gathered with special emphasis on issues affecting women of color. These practices are shared through newsletters, fliers, the ADVANCE Web site, and through presentation at national conferences, and publication in book chapters and journals.

In fall 2005, UTEP ADVANCE co-sponsored a workshop on conflict mediation in the College of Engineering. An outcome of the workshop was the creation of a Faculty Advisory Council in the college to address the feedback received from the college’s climate study, address policy that affects faculty, and promote discussion of faculty concerns.

During the second half of the grant, the ADVANCE team will facilitate the development of departmental action plans that outline each department’s strategic plan to recruit and retain a diverse faculty. Working with the Provost Office, ADVANCE will also develop a plan to promote and recognize efforts that lead to effective collaborative communities among faculty.

#### *Recommendations to other programs:*

- *Provide incentives for departments to develop action plans for diversifying the faculty*
- *Promote and recognize efforts that lead to effective collaborative communities*
- *Hold workshops on how to navigate the tenure process*

- *Develop an effective process for disseminating best practices for recruiting, retaining, and promoting women*
- *Create avenues of communication such as a Chairs' Council or Chair Chats where chairs can exchange ideas*

## Conclusion

As the UTEP ADVANCE program enters its final two years, the primary focus will be the institutionalization of initiatives and dissemination of best practices. Specific tasks that remain include developing a system for holding departments accountable for hiring a diverse faculty, including training for department and search chairs; developing guidelines for dual career couple hires and working to ensure that candidates have a place to discuss such issues; encouraging Deans and Chairs to appoint women to endowed/named professorships; looking for resources to help expand the Faculty Mentoring Program for Women to all faculty and the IMPACT Seminar to all colleges; developing mechanisms for promoting and recognizing effective research communities, and developing and administering an exit survey to determine why some faculty leave in spite of all of the above efforts.

In the end, the UTEP ADVANCE initiative benefits all departments and colleges as the university develops processes through which we identify needs, create strategies, and implement plans to improve the quality of the faculty.

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