

Project Summary

The Kansas State University (K-State) ADVANCE project team has a vision of an academic world in which women's concerns, interests, and contributions are recognized and valued, and where women and men work together in equal partnerships for the benefit of society. The intent is to create a transformed institution that purposefully attracts, retains, supports, and advances women in the disciplines of science, engineering, and mathematics (SEM). Six SEM departments have agreed to engage in the transformation initiatives described below. The project goals are:

- Institute changes in existing departmental policies, procedures, and practices, and develop new ones as needed, to foster a gender-equitable climate within partner departments;
- Expand and enhance departmental recruitment practices to attract more women applicants and ensure that candidates are not subject to subtle bias in the search and hiring process;
- Implement effective programs that foster the careers of faculty and encourage their retention through tenure and promotion; and
- Propagate the successes achieved in partner departments to all SEM departments.

Achievement of these goals will move reality closer to the vision and will be accomplished through a set of integrated initiatives that address three primary barriers to the advancement of women faculty in SEM: lack of effective recruitment; exclusion from networks; and subtle biases. The project's initiatives are (1) Equity action workshops; (2) Departmental policy development and review; (3) Recruiting strategies; and (4) Mentoring and networking activities. These initiatives include university-wide, college-wide, and department-specific elements. They address every stage of an academic career, with programs for students and for tenure-track and tenured faculty members. Faculty members will examine and make changes in departmental policies, procedures, and practices to create a gender-equitable environment. Successes and lessons learned in partner departments will then be disseminated within K-State and to other universities. Together, these components form an integrated program of institutional transformation of SEM at K-State.

Intellectual merit

The new tools, policies, and procedures resulting from this project will foster retention and success of both women and men faculty in SEM at K-State and can be used as models for institutional transformation elsewhere. The proposed project includes a balance of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The project team includes the K-State Associate Provost, the Director of the Women in Engineering and Science Program, the Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, and the deans of the four colleges that include most of the SEM departments. Six SEM department heads have made a commitment to engage in this project. Innovative aspects of this project include: a seminar series connecting new faculty members with disciplinary leaders; formal group mentoring; an academic career exploration program for undergraduate students; creation of inclusive departmental web sites that appeal to faculty candidates of both sexes and all ethnic backgrounds; and career mapping that spans faculty life from "hire to retire."

Broader impact

The direct emphasis of the proposed project is on fostering a gender-equitable climate and enhancing the participation of women, who are an underrepresented group in SEM. While the primary focus of the project is on faculty members, we have included aspects that deal explicitly with undergraduate students. This is part of K-State's responsibility to prepare the next generation of faculty members in SEM. A network of partnerships within and among departments at K-State, and among SEM faculty at K-State and elsewhere, will be created. The partnerships will function to connect new faculty members with disciplinary colleagues and promote efforts toward gender equity.

The PIs will disseminate information about the project internally through college-wide retreats, at the University's department head workshop series, on K-State's ADVANCE project website, in presentations at national conferences, and through publication in refereed journals.

This project will enhance the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women, resulting in an increase in the SEM talent pool and the creation of an intellectual workforce that is more representative of society.