



**Strategies for Effecting Gender Equity and Institutional Change**

## **Strategic Intervention Brief #4**

### *Development of Institutional Leaders*

More than half of the ADVANCE IT projects in Rounds 1 and 2 included some form of development activities for institutional leaders—or potential institutional leaders. This Brief outlines various approaches to leadership development, pointing out the wide array of audiences, types of programs, and topics addressed within leadership development efforts. Readers will also want to look at Brief 1, which addresses Faculty Professional Development Programs (which may incorporate components of leadership development); Brief 3 on Mentoring and Networking (for mentoring or networking approaches to leadership development); and Brief 11 on Strategies for Improving Departmental Climate (for programs that focus on helping department chairs improve the experiences faculty have within the department).

#### **Rationale**

Within the ADVANCE projects in Rounds 1 and 2, leadership development was implemented for several reasons—as a means to advance individual women in STEM fields, as an intervention to change the culture of the institution, and as a lever for long-range and broad institutional change. A key rationale is that leadership—in combination with institutional policies, structures, and processes—is a central and arguably essential tool for effecting major organizational change (Kezar, 2014). Higher education institutions today need both female and male leaders who understand the importance of a supportive, inclusive environment, recognize the barriers that can thwart the creation and sustainability of such environments, and know how to guide their institutions to create change that results in wide benefits for all.

Moreover, most higher education institutions have had an imbalance of men over women among those serving in leadership roles at the unit, department, college, and central administrative levels. One way to assist universities in becoming more inclusive environments is to ensure that women are represented in leadership roles, where their work can demonstrate the benefits of a diverse leadership group and where they can serve as models for other women and those from underrepresented groups.

#### **Purpose**

The leadership development programs designed as part of ADVANCE projects typically were intended to address one or more of the goals listed below.

- *To prepare institutional leaders with the capacity to understand and effectively carry out their roles at the department, college, or institution level and to have the specific skills and abilities to do so.* Those already in leadership positions may gain the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills, and others may be encouraged to consider expanding their careers to include greater leadership responsibilities.
- *To develop within institutional leaders a sense of being agents of change within their units and the broader institution.* This purpose responds directly to awareness that unit-level change, such as creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for all faculty members, is difficult to effect without the direct support and involvement of department chairs, deans, and other leaders.

- *To empower women leaders specifically by strengthening their capacity as leaders.* Women often have experienced fewer opportunities to learn leadership skills and to assume leadership positions. Thus, leadership development programs often are designed to help women see themselves as leaders and to expose them to career options involving leadership that they may not have considered.
- *To build relationships and a sense of common purpose among colleagues across units that will benefit the leaders as individuals and will impact the institution as a whole.* Leadership programs specifically for women in STEM fields were often designed to help women meet others in similar roles and feel part of a like-minded community of leaders within the institution.
- *To prepare institutional leaders committed to the recruitment, retention, and success of women scholars.* Leaders are helped to see the issues and challenges facing women scholars, the importance of diversity to institutional quality and excellence, and the role of implicit bias and other barriers requiring explicit attention.

### Audience

Institutions varied in how they defined the target audience for their leadership development programs. Some programs were open to both women and men—for example, offering all department chairs the chance to develop the skills needed to lead and manage their departments. These programs ensured that all had opportunities to learn about the challenges confronting women faculty and the appropriate interventions and strategies to create inclusive departments. At least as frequently, however, ADVANCE projects offered leadership development opportunities specifically for women.

Programs also varied in the level of the leadership role addressed. Some programs targeted the issues confronting department chairs, based on the recognition that chairs occupy a pivotal place where they support their faculty colleagues and interpret university policies and priorities, while also representing the interests of their departments to more senior administrators. Other programs included both deans and department chairs, while some focused on women interested in exploring senior-level administration. Some also targeted faculty seen as having the potential to consider assuming leadership responsibilities in the future. Finally, some programs also included research team leaders or those in non-departmental units, such as administrative leaders in grant development offices.

### Models

Leadership development has been designed and implemented in a variety of ways. In addition to targeting different audiences, programs also may vary along the following dimensions:

- **Focus.** The possible topics to be addressed in leadership development are wide. Some programs focus on tools that department chairs need to help their units to function well and their faculty members to feel supported. Such topics might include budgeting strategies, conflict resolution, approaches to mentoring faculty at different career stages, strategic planning, and managing difficult people. Other programs, especially those targeted specifically to foster women's interest in pursuing leadership careers, might focus on topics such as the kinds of leadership careers available to women, balancing research commitments with leadership roles, the challenges that women may encounter, and how to communicate in ways that are effective with a wide range of people. The issue of how to handle diversity and the specific issues confronted by women, especially those in STEM fields, is addressed differently across programs. Some programs address diversity in specific and explicit programming, while other programs weave diversity issues throughout the various topics they address.
- **Use of peers versus "experts."** Some programs use peers as the central resources while others invite experts from inside or outside the university. Experienced department chairs, for example, may facilitate leadership development for newer chairs. The use of peers as resource people has various advantages.

- Participants can identify with institutional peers, and know they are well aware of the specific local context.
- Participants can identify peers with whom they may wish to cultivate longer-term mentoring or collegial relationships.
- As they present and facilitate, presenters have the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences, which is likely to help their own leadership development and therefore enrich the institution.
- The sharing of experience can show the diverse models of leadership within the institutions and thus encourage new leaders to see their own potential roles within the institution.
- Sharing responsibilities can mean that no single person needs to take the time to be responsible for a leadership development series.

On the other hand, the use of local or outside experts on leadership issues can elevate the status of a leadership development series and, if the experts study leadership, may bring in specific expertise and research knowledge not already present.

- ***Collaborative or top-down.*** Leadership development programs may be designed as collaborative activities, in which leaders or potential leaders work together to identify and then discuss or solve problems, or as “top-down” activities that bring specific expertise to the attention of participants. Programs that gather chairs, for example, to discuss common challenges confronted by those in the role, and the kinds of strategies participants find useful, help to create collegiality and share good ideas. Programs led by individuals with specific knowledge on a topic (called here “top-down”) can bring new resources and research to participants. For example, a provost or president may be invited to speak to participants about institutional directions, a higher education scholar might discuss with department chairs the literature on early-career faculty, or a sociologist or scholar of women’s studies might discuss implicit bias. Both approaches have advantages; some programs combine approaches.

Leadership development programs also vary in **format and duration**. Some common formats used by ADVANCE institutions are listed below; some projects used multiple formats.

- ***Leadership workshop series for chairs.*** Many universities have convened regular workshops (meeting a few times a term) for their department chairs (and often deans also) to discuss important topics in institutional leadership. Since chairs are key in shaping departmental climate and play a central role in faculty recruitment, these workshops can provide an effective way to disseminate information and highlight important institutional issues. Examples of topics addressed are budgeting, tenure and promotion, grants and contracts, team building, strategies for recruiting women, and family-friendly policies and leave policies. Such workshops enable participants to meet and network with other leaders from across the institution and to gain institutional perspectives. Some ADVANCE institutions hold regular workshops only for women leaders, thus enabling them to discuss issues and questions and create connections with other women leaders on campus.
- ***Leadership training for new chairs.*** Some universities offer a training workshop for those starting in department chair positions. These workshops offer a kind of “boot camp” to help new chairs gain essential skills and knowledge of key institutional resources.
- ***Events for women considering leadership roles.*** Some ADVANCE universities have offered workshops or lunch discussions targeting women who are considering leadership opportunities or who are beginning their leadership careers. These sometimes involve more experienced women sharing their leadership

experiences and provide a safe context for women faculty considering formal leadership roles or for those new to leadership roles to explore questions and concerns about such a career step.

- ***Executive coaching.*** This form of leadership development provides leaders with individualized and focused coaching through sessions with experienced professional coaches (see also Brief 3). One variation is to provide coaching for individual faculty women interested in moving into leadership roles.
- ***Executive leadership shadowing and internships.*** Women considering moving into senior-level administration can benefit from the opportunity to try out the role of a senior leader for a specified period. Some programs arranged for women to shadow a senior leader for part of each week or in a more intensive and regular arrangement. In others, a women scholar took on an internship or fellowship in senior leadership for several months to a year in order to explore her interest and skills in this arena. Such internships may involve a specific project that the woman leader carries out during this period.
- ***Occasional symposia.*** A major institutional event can highlight a visit from a well-known scholar or higher education leader who discusses topics such as careers for women in leadership, barriers as implicit bias, or how women overcome challenges as they pursue leadership opportunities. Major symposia can bring key issues to the attention of the whole university community and can gather women from across campus for networking (see also Brief 12).
- ***National workshops.*** The *University of Washington's* national leadership workshops have prepared women and men from many campuses with leadership knowledge and skills that they take back to their own universities. Other long-standing national programs specifically target the preparation of women for senior-level leadership, including the American Council on Education (ACE) National Women's Leadership Forum and its Regional Women's Networks, the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) institutes, and other programs. Some ADVANCE projects have supported individual leaders to attend these national programs.

### Examples

The examples below illustrate approaches to leadership development at various ADVANCE institutions.

***Case Western Reserve University.*** Case's Executive Coaching Program drew on expertise available in the university's Weatherhead School of Management to offer specially trained coaches to work with deans and chairs, or with faculty women, to support them in achieving personal and organizational goals and in undertaking productive change in their work. The coaching for the deans and chairs involved eight to 10 sessions and, for the women faculty, six to eight sessions. Evaluation surveys showed very high satisfaction with the program. Hotline Coaching provided trained coaches who were available to answer questions from women faculty and administrators about such issues as salary negotiations, moving from non-tenure-track to tenure-track positions, handling budget issues, work-life integration issues, and questions about collaboration and interpersonal relations.

Case also has held a Provost's Leadership Retreat each year to build collegiality and common purpose among department chairs and senior administrators. The retreat includes well-known national leaders involved in supporting women STEM faculty and in creating organizational change. Participants have the opportunity to network, review data about Case, discuss the climate for women on campus, and identify best practices in recruitment and retention. Evaluations have been very positive and the event is well institutionalized.

***New Mexico State University (NMSU).*** The Advancing Leaders Program at NMSU offered monthly luncheons and a 2-day retreat for faculty members interested in developing leadership skills. Participants from all six colleges and the library met regularly over lunch with an array of institutional leaders who discussed

issues of importance within the university and in academic careers. While men and women were invited, the majority of participants were women.

*University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).* The Department Chair Series at UAB included monthly meetings for chairs, each focused on a topic of relevance to the chair role. Topics included developing administrative and personal skills necessary to be an effective leader, case studies of difficult situations, strategic budgeting, family-friendly policies and leave policies, and tenure and promotion processes. In addition, UAB offered a New Chairs half-day orientation and follow-up seminars for those starting out in the chair role. Topics included the roles and responsibilities of chairs, managing expectations and evaluating performance of faculty, new program development, and working with the Office of Human Relations.

*University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC).* UMBC offered a Presidential Leadership Fellowship opportunity for a woman scholar to be released from teaching responsibilities to intern as a senior administrator, but found that few women applied. Instead, they developed a Leadership Cohort Initiative that was very successful. Each year, a small group of women associate and full professors met regularly to identify leadership topics that they wished to explore through reading, discussion, and interactions with senior leaders. The participants explored their career aspirations and leadership styles, developed plans for intentional career and leadership development, and met with female university presidents. Evaluations indicated that participants found the experience to be very valuable, and some went on to institutional leadership roles. One woman also participated in the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) Wellesley Institute for Women Leaders in Higher Education.

*The University of Washington (UW)* has offered quarterly half-day workshops for chairs, designed to help chairs to be more effective in running their departments and in creating better departmental climates for all faculty. Diversity is woven into the topics taken up in these workshops. They also have offered quarterly mentoring-for-leadership lunches, designed to enable women attendees to hear the personal stories of those invited as resource people and to envision themselves in leadership roles. Designed with the feel of a “dinner party,” according to UW reports, these events reduce the sense of isolation and increase a sense of belonging among the women attending, thus contributing to a stronger pipeline of potential institutional leaders. While UW initially developed the workshops for their own campus leaders, they now open these to participants from throughout the country. Evaluations of these activities indicate positive and enthusiastic responses.

### **Evaluation**

The simplest form of evaluation records the level of participation in leadership development; attendance and participation suggest program responsiveness to interest and need. As an example of the formative use of such data, some institutions found few women faculty were interested in executive shadowing or internships and thus discontinued these programs. Most programs also have been evaluated with simple surveys that participants complete after the event (e.g., the end of a workshop or seminar) or at the conclusion of a longer experience (e.g., after a year-long series). Most of these evaluations have been very positive, indicating participants find the time spent to be of value. For some programs, interviews have been conducted to learn about participants’ experiences, but this form of assessment seems to be infrequent (as well as more time-consuming). We are unaware of evaluation efforts that have tracked participants’ use of new leadership skills or knowledge over time, but anecdotal observations from some institutions suggest positive repercussions in departments where heads have participated in leadership development and training on gender equity.

### **Affordances and Limitations**

Leadership development programs have been assessed as particularly important components of an effective institutional change strategy. While different types of programs may target different groups and involve differing commitments of time, important affordances overall include the following:

- **Individual career development.** Participants in leadership development gained specific knowledge and skills that helped them achieve career goals or consider new goals previously unexplored or deemed unattainable. Thus individual possibilities were encouraged and institutional human capital was expanded.
- **New levers for institutional change.** Most programs included some attention to challenges confronting STEM women and others underrepresented in the academy) and addressed strategies to advance organizational change in support of more inclusive environments.
- **Wide institutional impact.** In addition to promoting change by ensuring that a number of community members have the necessary leadership skills, these leadership development programs promoted overall understanding of institutional priorities, plans, and issues and enabled development of cross-institutional connections that, in turn, pave the way for collaboration and productive working relationships. Thus, the benefits to the collaborative and cooperative culture of an institution are high.
- **Relatively affordable.** While the specific financial costs associated with leadership development varied based on the particular program, many programs were organized as discussion groups or workshops. In many cases, expenses for food and speakers were the main costs. Released time for individuals to intern involved higher costs, but typically involved only a few people.

#### ***Limitations of leadership development initiatives***

Each university must assess which leadership development approaches are appropriate for its goals, context, and needs, as well as the interests and purposes of the participants. What is successful in one situation may be less appealing to those working elsewhere. For example, the executive coaching that has been so successful at Case Western University did not attract much interest at other ADVANCE institutions, although particular reasons for variability of interest in programs among potential participants is not always evident.

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#### **For Further Reading**

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#### **Program Resources**

ACE Leadership Academy for Department Chairs

<http://www.acenet.edu/leadership/programs/Pages/Leadership-Academy-for-Dept-Chairs.aspx>

National Women's Leadership Forum (ACE)

<http://www.acenet.edu/leadership/programs/Pages/National-Womens-Leadership-Forum.aspx>

Regional Women's Leadership Forum (ACE)

<http://www.acenet.edu/leadership/programs/Pages/Regional-Womens-Leadership-Forum.aspx>

Higher Education Resource Services (Creating & Sustaining a Community of Women Leaders in Higher Education) <http://hersnet.org/>

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