



**Institutional Portfolio**  
*Hunter College*

**CUNY Hunter College ADVANCE Institutional Transformation Project:  
Gender Equity Project (GEP)**

**Dates of Grant:** June 2002-May 2008 (Round 1)

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**Key Elements of the Overall Change Strategy**

The Gender Equity Plan (GEP) centered upon Virginia Valian's research showing that implicit, largely non-conscious notions about sex differences—gender schemas—play a central role in shaping women's professional lives. The GEP offered a model for identifying, measuring, and reporting indicators of gender equity that include hidden and subtle, as well as visible and obvious, factors. It specified a plan for educating administrators and others who evaluate women about how gender schemas influence evaluations of women, often to their detriment, and about how to equalize men's and women's ability to advance. From this perspective, successful interventions should be grounded in:

- the best available evidence about what has worked to advance women,
- a thorough understanding of the nature and extent of gender disparities,
- institutional as well as individual strategies for change,
- the regular monitoring and reporting of outcomes, and
- alliances and collaborations among women and between women and administrators.

Success thus relies on making procedures routine that help to affect gender equity, track outcomes, and sustain gains.

**Relevant Elements in the Institutional Context**

- Hunter College is part of the City University of New York (CUNY), the nation's largest public urban university, and has a long-standing record in educating women and other underserved populations.
- CUNY is a teaching-intensive institution, a context in which faculty members may find it challenging to sustain research programs and obtain external funding.
- Carnegie Classification: Public Master's Colleges and Universities, high undergraduate.

### **Scope of the ADVANCE Initiative**

The GEP was directed at women faculty, particularly early-career women, across the natural and social sciences. Men were included in several of the ADVANCE activities such as professional development workshops. The GEP also led educational outreach activities on gender equity to other CUNY campuses and to other institutions in New York and the region.

### **Project Elements**

#### *Faculty development*

These efforts sought to sponsor talented beginning and mid-level women scientists and increase the recognition and leadership of outstanding women scientists. Specific activities included the following:

- Three-day workshops for early-career men and women faculty covered topics such as managing time, teaching effectively, balancing research, teaching and service, negotiating, moving through tenure and promotion (T&P), and writing grant proposals.
- A mentoring program focused on research productivity, the GEP Sponsorship Program was open to Hunter College women scientists of any age and at any point in their career. Each GEP associate worked with a sponsor who was a senior and successful member of the same field (in or out of CUNY), and received up to \$10,000 for research expenses and course-release time. About 30 associates were funded in all, for up to three years each.
- Informational events and colloquia brought prominent women to speak and to explore the research base on gender equity in academe.

#### *Review of policies and procedures*

- To address work-life accommodations, the GEP called for a review of policies on child care, employee assistance, and different types of leaves of absence.
- The GEP had a stated goal to review T&P policy and modify and establish policies to ensure gender equity.
- To strengthen recruitment, the project worked to offer strong start-up packages and to standardize offer letters through the use of templates and hiring checklists for departments.

#### *Education of faculty and administrators about how gender affects careers*

The GEP focused on developing department chairs through active outreach to science departments and administration about gender schemas, subtle bias, and departmental gender disparities.

#### *Measuring and reporting gender equity benchmarks*

The GEP was research-intensive, including studies to investigate hidden and subtle gender biases in academe and using results to construct materials helpful to academic women. Analyses examined work orders and facility repairs, allocation of laboratory space, salaries, advancement through faculty ranks, hallmarks of success in different disciplines, and more. A faculty-wide survey addressed collaboration patterns, departmental policies and procedures, organizational commitment, and various aspects of job satisfaction.

### **Outcomes**

- A Professional Development Office and a new position of Senior Advisor for Faculty Affairs were institutionalized within the provost's office, which continues to oversee many of the initiatives originated by the GEP, especially surrounding faculty development.

- Collection of gender equity benchmarks is ongoing at Hunter, and departments are encouraged to use them in their progress and planning reports. Gender equity is used as a criterion in faculty line and space decisions via annual departmental reports.
- Three-day workshops for junior women scientists were offered CUNY-wide under an ADVANCE PAID grant.
- The Sponsorship Program supported 38% of Hunter's women scientists. Analysis of associates' reports suggests the program significantly increased participants' scholarly productivity and yielded a high return on investment in terms of new grant awards. Together with other efforts, the initiative is seen as helping to strengthen and communicate research expectations to early-career faculty members.
- Prior to the project, women accounted for 27% of new hires in the natural sciences; from 2003 to 2006, women accounted for 61% of new hires. Attrition of women professors also decreased, especially the gap in men's and women's attrition.
- Satisfaction survey results indicated an increase in job satisfaction and a reduced gender gap in satisfaction over the lifetime of the grant.
- The team shared its research products and tools with other institutions, including approaches to analyzing and communicating NSF-required indicators. These research-based materials served as the basis of materials for educating department chairs and faculty about unintended bias and practices that inhibit women faculty members' success.

### **Research Team Observations**

- The team had high-level institutional support from the president, provost, deans, and science department chairs. This support was sustained through the life of the project and bolstered when co-PI Vita Rabinowitz became provost midway through the project.
- Though the GEP programs focused on multiple levels (individual, department, college, and system-wide), we have little evidence about policy efforts or impact. More evidence is available about the program's successes in the hiring and professional development of early-career faculty.
- Many instruments and tools remain available to help others explore and assess gender equity issues on their campuses.

### **Project Team Observations**

New internal funding mechanisms to support faculty research grew from the GEP's Sponsorship Program. Regular nomination of Hunter faculty for awards and fellowships developed from the GEP's work on the hallmarks of success. Workshop concepts and activities developed by the GEP—in particular those on balancing research, teaching and service, developing a circle of advisors, making the most of conferences, and negotiation—have been institutionalized at Hunter College as part of the provost's annual New Faculty Orientation and Tenure and Promotion Workshop. A grant-writing assistance program for junior women scientists was established CUNY-wide under an ADVANCE PAID grant and subsequently institutionalized at Hunter College for all research faculty.

### **For Further Reading**

The project website preserves the professional development materials and activities pursued under the NSF ADVANCE award. <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/genderequity/home>

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