



Institutional Portfolio
Kansas State University
(KSU)

**Kansas State University Institutional Transformation Project:
K-State ADVANCE**

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Key Elements of the Overall Change Strategy:

The project design was intended to address issues identified as primary barriers to women's advancement at K-State: lack of effective recruitment of women, exclusion from professional networks, and subtle biases working against women in negotiation and evaluation processes. The project sought to

- 1) institute changes in existing departmental policies, procedures, and practices, and develop new ones as needed, to foster a gender-equitable climate within partner departments;
- 2) 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;
- 3) implement effective programs that foster the careers of women faculty and encourage their retention through tenure and promotion; and
- 4) propagate the successes achieved in partner departments to all science, engineering, and mathematics (SEM) departments.

Efforts were carried out at multiple levels for explicit reasons related to institutional culture. The proposal was not theory-based but was grounded in prior institutional work and self-study.

Relevant Elements in the Institutional Context

- The project leaders described their institution as highly decentralized; they designed the project to align with this element of their culture, with ADVANCE activities led by and customized for each college.
- KSU is a land-grant institution with agriculture and veterinary medicine among the STEM fields. These fields have distinctive histories and issues for women's inclusion compared to the natural sciences.
- The university is located in a rural community where a lack of partner employment opportunities offer a notable challenge for hiring women who are part of academic or professional couples.
- Carnegie: Public RU/VH, comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary.

Scope of the ADVANCE Initiative

The project involved 27 STEM departments in four colleges (Agriculture, Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Veterinary Medicine), focusing on fields that exhibited challenges for women's representation. Six departments were lead partners that served as early adopters of ADVANCE initiatives and role models for other departments; specific initiatives were extended to other departments by the project's later years. Career development awards targeted women, while workshops and department activities often included men.

Project Elements

The project distinguished project-level, institution-wide activities from those initiated by specific colleges and departments and tailored to each unit.

Project-wide activities

- Faculty development workshops around issues of gender equity and bias served as a foundation for college and department activities. Participation was required of faculty in the partner departments; others were invited. Additional workshops addressed career development issues such as negotiation and conflict resolution.
- Faculty development opportunities targeted the career development of individual SEM women.
- The ADVANCE Distinguished Lecture Series supported pre-tenure women to host and interact with a major scholar in their field. It was intended to foster professional networks and collaborations.
- The Career Advancement Program for senior women supported mentoring or professional development activities that would help them advance to full professor or leadership roles.
- An 'internship' in the provost's office enabled tenured faculty to explore administrative roles.
- A website was developed to gather work/life resources for all faculty at the university.

College-level initiatives

- Small career development grants (in various forms) supported travel and networking or provided seed money for research to individual women, in A&S, Agriculture and Engineering;
- Funds for senior faculty or chairs to make special recruiting efforts, such as visiting meetings with lots of potential women candidates in their field (Engineering); and
- A group mentoring program for a cohort of junior and senior faculty (Veterinary Medicine).

Department-level work

Departments focused on reviewing departmental promotion and tenure policies to eliminate gender bias, reviewing and revising department websites to ensure inclusive communication, and implementing individualized faculty career development plans in an initiative called Career MAPS (Career Milestones for Academic Personal Success). Departments took individual steps that emerged from this process, such as formalizing and improving mentoring. Partner departments participated in all activities; about half of the 21 non-partner departments participated in these activities at some level.

Internal studies examined space allocation, tenure and promotion documents, and climate. Evaluation documented participation numbers and short-term benefits of specific programs. A pipeline-building activity for undergraduates was dropped as redundant with other KSU efforts.

Outcomes

- The proportion of tenure-track SEM women increased from 13.3% to 16.4% in 5 years; the proportion who were full professors rose from 4.7 to 6.9%. The project reported impressive gains in hiring new women faculty, with an increase of over 60% in women SEM assistant professors from 1997 to 2008.
- The number of women in formal leadership roles increased from one to 11.
- Multiple observers reported spillover of positive outcomes from one department to another and improved culture in certain meetings due to women's inclusion. Efforts to influence institutional culture, particularly the Equity Action Workshops, were viewed as an important foundation, especially for department heads' broadened understanding of how efforts to enhance gender equity could also advance an agenda of hiring and retaining excellent junior faculty.

Research Team Observations

- The alignment of the project design with the institutional culture of decentralization is interesting and somewhat distinctive in its explicit acknowledgement of this institutional feature.
- The institutionalization was strong and distinctive. After NSF funding ended in fall 2010, all activities were supported for 2 more years by the indirect cost return saved by the project. Since then, activities have been supported by the university under the umbrella of KAWSE, the K-State Office for the Advancement of Women in Science and Engineering, which also gathers other university-based programs that support women and girls.

For Further Reading

The program website provides details of the project's current activities and reports of prior work under the NSF ADVANCE award. <http://advance.k-state.edu/>

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