



**Institutional Portfolio**  
*University of Montana*

**University of Montana Institutional Transformation Project:  
PARTnership for Comprehensive Equity (PACE)**

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**Key Elements of the Overall Change Strategy**

The PARTnership for Comprehensive Equity (PACE) initiative is an example of “change by committee over time.” Based upon common agreement about the causes of the slow advancement of women in STEM academic careers that is presented in the literature, PACE was founded upon “an alliance of administrators, deans, department heads, and faculty who share concern about gender-based inequity and recognize the need for change.” Focusing on unconscious and unintended accumulation of gender-based disadvantages, the project sought to identify and address these disadvantages. To accomplish system-wide change, the overall strategy was to institutionalize policy change “campus-wide” with high-level administrative buy-in.

The project worked through two committees to address both department-level and campus-wide issues:

- The Campus-wide Policy Committee (CWPC) of senior administrators and scientists reviewed diversity reports from individual STEM departments and assisted them in developing diversity plans.
- The Campus-wide Task Force on Policy Development and Revision included deans, associate provosts, department chairs, legal counsel, the equal opportunity officer, and senior faculty. This Task Force assessed work/life policies and professional development opportunities for faculty in four areas: child care and family leave, modification of job duties and the tenure clock, partner accommodations and two-for-one hiring, and maintaining leadership in family-friendly policies.

**Relevant Elements in the Institutional Context**

- The university’s location in a small city in a sparsely populated state generates issues for faculty recruitment, retention, and geographic isolation; its “small town” atmosphere and quality of life are perceived as positive by many faculty.
- The relatively small scale of the institution meant that the ADVANCE team had good access to leaders and networks around the institution and could easily communicate with all types of stakeholders.
- The faculty are unionized, and policy changes that affect faculty working conditions must be included in collective bargaining agreements. This raises the bar for developing new policies and practices but also helps to secure their permanence once they are instituted.

- The university serves as a hub for American Indian women scientists and a link to the state's seven tribal colleges.
- Carnegie classification: Public RU/H, Doc/Prof: doctoral, professional dominant.

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

PACE's recruitment, retention, and outreach components focused on participating departments in STEM and NSF-funded social and behavioral sciences, but policy efforts were intended to benefit faculty men and women university-wide.

### **Project Elements**

#### ***Recruitment***

- Each science department undertook a self-evaluation with the assistance of PACE staff. This evaluation provided detailed input to the development of departmental diversity enhancement plans.
- A department-based mentoring program was formalized, and an Outstanding Mentor Award was established to recognize senior faculty for their mentoring work.
- Educational resources were provided to search committees to aid in developing diverse and well-qualified pools of job applicants. Brochures and presentations promoting diversity in recruitment and hiring were shared widely.
- For faculty candidates, the project website gathered information on university and community resources, and PACE personnel met with potential candidates to provide resources and answer questions confidentially, independent of the formal hiring process.
- PACE funds were targeted to support three new tenure-track positions targeted at STEM women.

#### ***Retention***

- The Task Force assessed work/life policies and professional development opportunities for faculty, including on-site child care options, parental leave, partner employment opportunities, and tenure clock adjustment. They reviewed research and campus data on faculty needs and concerns, examined policy at similar institutions, and made a series of policy recommendations to the university president.
- The Visiting Scholar/Mentor program supported pre-tenure women STEM faculty to interact with an external scholar in order to reduce isolation and build off-campus research collaborations.
- Writing retreats for women scientists were intended to support professional productivity and serve as a form of group mentoring.
- Periodic *Women in Science* gatherings highlighted a researcher's work and provided opportunities for networking between departments.

#### ***Outreach***

- PACE helped to create an on-campus office focused on educational opportunities for native scientists, Research Opportunities in Science for Native Americans (ROSNA).
- PACE also helped to establish a national network to offer support and collaborations to native women scientists, the Indigenous Women in Science Network (IWSN). One goal of the IWSN was to promote the integration of cultural values with science.

## Outcomes

- PACE funds were leveraged to hire six new tenure-track women, including two women of color—beyond the three positions targeted in the proposal. Four more women and a man of color were hired through the “2 for 1” hiring policy. These efforts increased diversity in many STEM departments, reduced the number of units with zero or “solo” women, and yielded an overall increase from 17% to 26% of tenure-track STEM women (at all ranks) during the grant period.
- Recruitment and hiring ‘best practices’ that were part of the PACE training for search committees and department chairs were incorporated into trainings offered by the Human Resources office.
- Deans were given sign-off authority on short lists for campus interviews and held accountable for the diversity of hiring pools.
- New policies for work/life flexibility included
  - tenure clock extension and temporary reduction of job duties for family reasons,
  - spouse/partner accommodation policy to alert faculty candidates to partner employment opportunities, and
  - modified duties policy to cover a variety of life events. These policies are standardized across units, open to all tenure-track faculty, and included in the faculty collective bargaining agreement. Program leaders report these features make the policy “warmly received.”
- Nearly all STEM departments completed diversity plans; these were perceived to bring awareness of demographic data and climate issues to departments and raise their interest and accountability for diversity in hiring and retention. Best practices from across the plans were shared with chairs. However, these were not felt to have a long-term effect, given turnover of department chairs and lack of institutional mechanisms to hold units accountable for their diversity plans.
- Data from PACE research and evaluation studies were used to prepare a Retention Guidebook for department chairs and faculty, which remains available through the Faculty Development Office.
- Substantial progress was made in establishing on-campus child care for faculty and staff, under the umbrella of an existing child care program run by the student association. The center was later institutionalized and is reported to be thriving. PACE staff also helped to implement a new state policy requiring provision of facilities for breastfeeding infants.
- Many PACE activities and policies were institutionalized through a new Faculty Development Office directed by the former PACE program manager. This office coordinates and provides resources for faculty to grow personally and professionally; it also supports department chairs. Its inclusion in the faculty collective bargaining agreement helps to secure the future of this office.

## Research Team Observations

- The PACE team consistently used information gathered through research, such as interviews, climate surveys, department hiring data, and data from comparable institutions, to enrich policy discussions and to inform the design of their recruitment and retention initiatives.
- Due to the focus on policy development, evidence of substantial impact was slow to emerge. However, high-level buy-in and administrative support, including the appointment of the PI as Special Assistant to the Provost for Comprehensive Equity, enabled substantial institutionalization in the long run.

### **For Further Reading**

The program website provides an overview of the project's activities under the NSF ADVANCE award.  
<http://pace.dbs.umt.edu/>

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