



**Institutional Portfolio**  
*New Mexico State University*  
**(NMSU)**

**New Mexico State University ADVANCE Institutional Transformation Project:**  
**New Mexico State ADVANCE**

**Dates of Grant:** January 2002-April 2009 (Round 1)

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**Key Elements of the Overall Change Strategy**

The ADVANCE project sought to support underrepresented faculty through training, mentoring, and networking; to enhance diversity; and to build community. Specific aims were to increase awareness of diversity issues and to attract excellent women STEM faculty to the university. NMSU's change approach emphasized the development and initiation of "groundbreaking" recruitment and retention programs. Providing competitive start-up packages has been a key recruitment strategy. The ADVANCE team established an institutional Committee on the Status of Women in STEM, which in turn carried out the work of the program through various sub-committees, thus involving a large number of faculty members and administrators.

**Relevant Elements in the Institutional Context**

- The ADVANCE grant came at a time when a wave of retirements in the STEM fields had left several tenure-track positions open, thus enabling the ADVANCE program to focus on attracting excellent women scientists and engineers to the university.
- NMSU is a Hispanic-Serving Institution located in a small community in rural New Mexico. Its isolated location offered challenges for attracting and retaining faculty, including those part of dual-career couples.
- Because NMSU was the major STEM-related institution in the area, the ADVANCE project sought ways to have its efforts "trickle down" to local K12 schools through innovative outreach components.
- Carnegie classification: Public RU/H, comprehensive doctoral programs.

**Scope of the ADVANCE Initiative**

The program targeted nineteen STEM departments and six behavioral and social science (SBS) departments in three colleges: Agriculture and Home Economics, Arts and Sciences, and Engineering. While recruitment and research supports focused on women, mentoring and workshops were also offered to men.

## Project Elements

### *Recruitment*

- The initiative worked to create competitive hiring packages to attract excellent, diverse faculty. Start-up award enhancement totaling nearly \$1 million was provided to 25 new hires, and four additional women received a total of nearly \$100,000 to help accommodate dual-career situations.

### *Training, Leadership, and Faculty Development*

- Department Head and Search Committee Training was designed to improve the capacities and beliefs of department heads and search committees around the importance of diversity, appropriate search techniques, and common cognitive errors which result in subtle discrimination. Annual department head retreats also addressed recruitment and retention. The program for department chairs has been institutionalized as the Department Head Academy and includes workshops and a reading group.
- Tenure and Promotion workshops targeted early-career faculty and those seeking promotion to full professor or within the college track for teaching faculty.
- The year-long ADVANCING Leaders program sought to develop leadership and managerial skills among up-and-coming faculty leaders, to provide networking opportunities, and to enhance participants' "big picture" of the institution. The program included monthly meetings, a summer retreat, and a group project focused on a campus-wide issue.

### *Retention*

- ADVANCE offered mentoring for faculty in STEM and SBS. The program, now institutionalized and open to all faculty, matches pre-tenure, post-tenure, and college-track faculty with mentors suitable to their professional goals.
- Travel and research awards were used to encourage retention and professional development of faculty women. By the end of the project, 59% of women faculty in STEM had received these awards.
- ADVANCE Undergraduate Research Awards provided funds to recipients of ADVANCE start-up and research awards and other women STEM faculty to support women undergraduates on research projects.
- STEM Visiting Professors were nationally recognized scholars who engaged with faculty and students both at the university and in local K12 schools, consulted with other scholars to review programs, goals and possible collaborations, and enhanced the visibility of women scholars through their presentations to different community groups. Eleven such speakers visited NMSU between 2002 and 2007.

### *Support for Work/Life Issues*

- The ADVANCE team provided information resources about organizational change, produced a brochure on dual-career couples, disseminated information about women's status in STEM fields, and created an Ombudsperson Office with staff and faculty ombuds appointments.
- Dual Career Support: ADVANCE worked with five couples to make accommodations that resulted in the recruitment and retention of six female STEM faculty.
- Policies: ADVANCE helped lead efforts to revise tenure and promotion policies, which included new policy components on tenure clock stoppages, part-time tenure-track positions, and definitions of scholarship.

### *Research*

- Stating that little prior research on women at NMSU had been carried out previously, the team conducted a study of the Status of Women and an Employee Climate Survey. The team was also a leader in establishing and making use of common metrics across the national ADVANCE community.
- ADVANCE assisted in creating the Provost's Taskforce on Roles and Rewards, the President's Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on Diversity, and the Employee Climate Survey.
- An Exit Interview study included 34 interviews with faculty who had departed from the university for reasons besides retirement. The results were shared with deans and the faculty senate, and the process was a model for efforts to develop a university-wide exit interview.

### **Outcomes**

- The ADVANCE program surpassed its initial goal of increasing the number of women in STEM fields by 20%, as by 2008 the net increase in STEM female faculty was over 40%.
- The hiring rate for women faculty in STEM fields increased from 17% in the years before ADVANCE to 35% in the seven years the grant was active. A focus on start-up packages and other research supports, along with attention to dual-career couples, was credited with increasing the representation of talented STEM women at NMSU.
- Core activities were institutionalized within the university's Teaching Academy, which was a partner throughout much of the project and now supports faculty mentoring, promotion and tenure programs, leadership development, and department head training. The mentoring program is now open to all faculty, with particular attention to those in underrepresented groups.
- NMSU ADVANCE received a PAID grant to disseminate best practices to local institutions, especially mentoring and the tenure and promotion workshops.

### **Research Team Observations**

- Strong support from senior institutional leaders, ADVANCE committee chairs, and ADVANCE leaders contributed to the wide impact of the program. A sizable number of faculty were engaged in the project through the ADVANCE committee structure.
- The project carried out many interventions and had noteworthy success in terms of increase in numbers of women, reflecting its focus on recruitment and retention, but also providing programs for more senior faculty and leaders. Key change strategies included directing substantial funds to improve start-up packages and using research-based findings to educate the university community and to raise awareness about issues of gender and gender equity.
- Although the first, highly engaged PI moved to another institution, the program continued to grow and make an impact under the next PI.
- Institutionalization was strong, as new policies were instituted, core programs were maintained under permanent funding, and access to them was broadened, notably including professional development for non-tenure-track faculty. Upon institutionalization, the ADVANCE name was retained but the programs were folded into an existing faculty development structure—ADVANCE at the Teaching Academy. This approach is distinctive in comparison to other institutions in the early rounds of ADVANCE, which tended to either retain an ADVANCE office or embed particular programs entirely into existing units.

### **For Further Reading**

The original project website was not archived, but some materials are available through the ADVANCE portal: <http://www.portal.advance.vt.edu/index.php/institutions/new-mexico-state-university>

Ongoing work by ADVANCE at the Teaching Academy is described at <http://teaching.nmsu.edu/advance/>

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