



Institutional Portfolio
*University of Maryland-
Baltimore County (UMBC)*

**University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC) Institutional Transformation Project:
ADVANCE at UMBC**

Dates of Grant: Sept. 2003 – Feb. 2010 (Round 2)

PI: Freeman Hrabowski

Co-PIs: Marilyn Demorest, Patrice McDermott, Govind Rao, Phyllis Robinson, Janet Rutledge, Lynn Zimmerman

Key Elements of the Overall Change Strategy

This project identified three main goals:

1. Develop, revise, and institutionalize policies, practices, and resources that support recruitment, hiring, and advancement of women, especially minority women.
2. Educate campus members on issues of racial and gender diversity in STEM fields and build a constituency of advocates for these issues.
3. Create and communicate a clear and understandable pathway for STEM women to achieve tenure and promotion and to take leadership positions at the university.

Each project activity was linked to one or more of these goals. Institutionalization—through permanent change to departments’ diversity goals, practices, and actions, rather than by sustaining particular programs—was built in from the start. Leadership from the president and provost was also important from the start.

The project design was based in prior institutional self-study and in previous initiatives to increase student diversity, led by the president himself, a charismatic African-American mathematician. Leaders described ADVANCE as grounded in a “strengths-based” approach that made wise use of local lessons learned from efforts to increase student diversity, such as the importance of an empowered community of STEM women whose voices defined the problem, after which research and expertise could be applied by seeking solutions.

Relevant Elements in the Institutional Context

- Typical STEM departments have 8-15 faculty and STEM dominates the doctoral programs offered. As the institution has grown from a small, suburban campus to a mid-sized research “honors” university, pressure on faculty has increased to bring in grant dollars and demonstrate research productivity.
- Institutional data reflect proportions of STEM faculty who are married and have children that are rather higher than national averages. Leaders cite family-friendly policies as quite important in retaining faculty.
- The undergraduate census is 20% underrepresented minority and over 40% non-white.
- Carnegie: Public RU/H, doctoral-STEM dominant, high undergraduate.

Scope of the ADVANCE Initiative

All departments in the Colleges of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, and of Engineering and Information Technology, plus Geography and Environmental Systems, were included. Both men and women were invited to the short professional development workshops, but recruiting and mentoring efforts focused on women. Several efforts targeted minority faculty and future faculty in particular.

Project Elements

Major activities included the following:

- ***Improved faculty recruiting.*** Department diversity plans were required from all departments before a search was approved, specifying how the department would recruit a diverse pool, evaluate fairly, and retain their new hire. Some education was provided to chairs to help them develop the plans. ADVANCE also funded some enhancements to start-up packages—primarily support for a graduate student research assistant the first year—to help attract women who were made an offer.
- ***Promotion, tenure, and mentoring practices.*** Departments were required to develop individual career plans for their new faculty hires and mentor the new hires through the pre-tenure review. Chairs and deans had some accountability for these plans and their execution. Departments also had to develop clear, specific guidelines for promotion and tenure. The ADVANCE office provided centralized support for mentoring by an external scholar through the Eminent Scholar Mentoring Program.
- ***Faculty development for career success.*** Programs addressed several career stages: one-off topical workshops, lunches, and other opportunities for young faculty learning career skills; grants to support a graduate RA for mid-career faculty preparing for promotion or returning from extensive service roles; and a cohort-based leadership development program for senior women.
- ***Work/life support.*** The team publicized an existing policy about family leave. Previously unused, it was reframed in combination with other policies as a “family support” plan and has become well-used. The plan also includes a one-year tenure clock extension. Later institutionalized by the University of Maryland system, this is seen as both a recruiting feature and as support for diverse work/life needs for all faculty.
- ***Pipeline development.*** A national, annual conference, known as Faculty Horizons, targeted women and minority students thinking about faculty careers, especially alumni of UMBC’s nationally known Meyerhoff Scholars program for undergraduates. The conference succeeded in its aim to offer career development and planning resources to the future professoriate, but did not succeed in its aim to attract them to apply for jobs at UMBC. As a side benefit, it exposed UMBC faculty to bright and ambitious scholars from diverse groups, thus combating the common myth that “there are none” to recruit in STEM fields. The conference was discontinued when grant funds ended, because it was seen as expensive and as duplicating a similar effort hosted elsewhere.

Outcomes

- The project yielded a 50% increase in women in STEM departments, from 30 to 45 during the grant period. Over one third of assistant professors are now women, and the numbers of STEM women who are associate and full professors have increased notably.
- The proportion of women invited to interview for STEM faculty jobs increased by about 60%, and the proportion of women among those hired increased even more, doubling from pre-ADVANCE times. This phenomenon was thought to reflect the cumulative impact of recruiting stronger women candidates, making more offers to women, and more women accepting. The increases for women in non-STEM fields were much smaller, suggesting the gains can be attributed to ADVANCE efforts.

- The proportion of minority candidates interviewed and hired also increased, although the net change in numbers was much smaller.
- The strongest aspects of institutionalization lie in departmental recruiting, diversity plans, tenure and promotion practices, and the family support plan. The ADVANCE program continues through the provost's office, through a designated coordinator who implements the faculty development programs and data monitoring, and with advice from a faculty committee. The vice provost for faculty affairs provides ongoing visibility and effort on these issues, monitoring gender and racial diversity.

Research Team Observations

- Evaluation measures focused on documentation more than impact, but interview data provide some evidence of sustained practices and observations of cultural change on the campus.
- The president's leadership was meaningful in both substance and symbol, but this campus also made savvy use of leaders at other levels. An interviewee described a multi-stage approach to building support: first, involving high-status men as key allies; next, recruiting support from "neutrals," often pre-tenure men who shared with pre-tenure women concerns about work/life issues and lack of clarity in advancement processes; and, finally, strategically engaging opponents to invite their particular expertise. Some retirements of chairs or deans were used as opportunities to put more supportive leaders in place.
- Interview data cite the value of learning from the national community of expertise on ADVANCE—an opportunity that this and other second-round and later projects (in particular) drew upon.

Project Team Observations

As of fall 2014, there are 47 tenure-track women in STEM, and the number of women full professors has increased from five in 2003 to 12 in 2014. Many of ADVANCE's high-impact initiatives are now institutionalized for all faculty members, regardless of gender, college, and discipline. Eminent Scholar Mentoring is now built into faculty start-up packages. Past participants of the Leadership Cohort Program have taken initiative to revitalize this program and have also assumed formal institutional leadership roles. In 2011, UMBC launched the Postdoctoral Fellowship for Faculty Diversity, a two-year program designed to support promising scholars who are committed to diversity in the academy and to prepare those scholars for possible tenure track appointments at UMBC.

For Further Reading

The website provides an overview of the project's current activities, many of which are ongoing since the original award: <http://advance.umbc.edu/>

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