



Institutional Portfolio
University of Washington
(UW)

University of Washington ADVANCE Institutional Transformation Project:

UW ADVANCE

Dates of Grant: October 2001-September 2007 (round 1)

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Key Elements of the Overall Change Strategy

The UW ADVANCE project, as explained in the original proposal, was designed to “create an environment in which all are welcome and provided with the resources and support they need to excel.” The rationale was that “diversity and excellence go hand in hand” and that “a more gender- and ethnically diverse faculty will lead to an enhanced learning environment and a higher quality research program.” Because barriers to diversity and excellence were perceived to be both structural and psychological, the plan included both institution-level transformation, involving both departmental culture change and policy work, and leadership development of individuals. The project especially focused on department chairs, as departments are the loci of many challenges that women faculty face, especially under a strong faculty governance culture.

Relevant Elements in the Institutional Context

- Some institutional efforts to support diversity were already in place on which to build. For example, at the start, the College of Engineering had a higher percentage of women ladder faculty (13%) than the national average in that field, and monthly networking opportunities were already available for women. The College of Arts and Sciences had a Climate and Community Project to improve departmental culture, and the university had a Faculty Recruitment Toolkit.
- The original PI, then-Dean of Engineering Denice Denton, was an energizing force behind the original proposal. The project also cultivated the support of deans, chairs, faculty members, and the vice president for minority affairs.
- The university created the UW ADVANCE Center for Institutional Change (CIC) to drive the transformation process, focusing on implementing programs designed to eliminate existing barriers and to precipitate cultural change at both the departmental and institutional levels.
- Carnegie: Public RU/VH, comprehensive doctoral with med/vet.

Scope of the ADVANCE Initiative

The project focused on increasing participation and advancement of women faculty in academic sciences, engineering, and mathematics (SEM). Participating academic departments have included all ten within the College of Engineering and nine of the 11 in the Division of Science, College of Arts and Sciences. The project focused on SEM faculty, but once strategies were piloted, most programs were offered to all faculty.

Project Elements

Leadership development for SEM chairs and deans

- Half-day quarterly workshops for department chairs, deans, and other faculty, especially emerging leaders, sought to help them become more effective leaders. Topics included equity issues, leadership, faculty recruitment and advancement, policy implementation, and specific issues of importance to women and faculty of color.
- Annual National Leadership Workshop for Department Chairs, two days in length, were offered annually to a national audience. This program continued under an ADVANCE PAID grant to develop a toolkit to allow universities to run similar workshops on their own campuses.

SEM department cultural change

- Department Transformation Grants to five departments sought to create opportunities for women and to address departmental cultural change. They supported activities such as alumni speakers, new courses, websites, meetings on promotion and tenure, and women faculty lunches.
- Faculty Recruitment Toolkit and Faculty Retention Toolkit, both available online, have been widely disseminated throughout the UW campus and beyond.

Policy transformation

- A part-time tenure track career option and tenure clock extension policy were developed with support from a Sloan Foundation grant that supported a study of the implementation of part-time tenure-track faculty careers. Balance@UW focused on further developing policies and programs on work/life issues.
- Policies: The team highlighted the dual career hiring policy and family-friendly policies.

Mentoring women for leadership

- The Mentoring-for-Leadership Lunch series provided networking opportunities intended to encourage women faculty to pursue positions of academic leadership.
- Mentoring pre-tenure faculty was done through quarterly professional development workshops offered to pre-tenure women in ADVANCE departments.
- Graduate student training in leadership and interpersonal skills was offered for two years. Graduate student mentoring one-on-one with a UW faculty member was supplemented with career development seminars on making the transition from graduate student to faculty careers.

Other activities

- Transitional Support Program (TSP) grants supported SEM faculty (regardless of gender) who were in the midst of major life transitions or needed modest support to advance in rank. Grants covering course release, lab personnel support, and supplies were used by 42 women and six men academics.

- The Visiting Scholars Program found it difficult to attract scholars for extended periods, but several visitors came for 2-3 days each. This program was not continued.

Outcomes

- The numerical data indicate substantial impact: a 28.3% increase in the number of tenured or tenure-track women faculty (60 to 77) from 2001 to 2006, and a 17.8% increase in number of women full professors (28 to 33). At the project's end, 42.9% of women faculty in ADVANCE departments were full professors. Nine women from the leadership mentoring program took leadership positions.
- The recruitment and retention process has improved: ADVANCE leaders explained that it is "inconceivable" now that searches would have final pools without female candidates. Almost all ADVANCE departments have hired at least one woman.
- The Center is very visible on campus and UW is seen as a national leader in leadership development. Reports indicate that the culture of the university has shifted toward valuing flexibility, and ADVANCE has created a sense of community across STEM fields.

Research Team Observations

- This project has been extensive and focused, making good use from the start of pre-existing momentum in the university toward greater diversity and inclusiveness. The project exudes an aura of confidence, having an intent from the start to disseminate their materials and "be a national model." This commitment toward being a model seems to have contributed to their success; for example, from the start materials were prepared with an eye toward national dissemination.
- One question is whether the ADVANCE initiatives can be sustained in tight economic times and as senior administrators change. Leaders have been innovative in demonstrating to deans the extent to which their faculty use ADVANCE services, and requesting funding from the colleges in response to levels of use. Many programs were ultimately sustained through these mechanisms.
- The ADVANCE leaders recognized early the importance of having social scientists on the leadership team, involving male allies, and making it easy for people and units to support the ADVANCE program, such as ensuring that all communications were accurate and easy to read.

For Further Reading

The project website documents the current activities of the ADVANCE Center for Institutional Change. <http://advance.washington.edu/>

To cite this document

Austin, A. E. & Laursen, S. L. (2014). Institutional Portfolio: University of Washington. In Laursen, S. L., & Austin, A. E. (2014). *StratEGIC Toolkit: Strategies for Effecting Gender Equity and Institutional Change*. Boulder, CO, and East Lansing, MI. www.strategic toolkit.org

This research study and development of the StratEGIC Toolkit and other products has been supported by the National Science Foundation through ADVANCE PAID grant #HRD-0930097. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations are those of the researchers and do not necessarily represent the official views, opinions, or policy of the National Science Foundation.