

Executive Summary of the 2007 External Evaluation Site Visit of the MU-ADVANCE Project

The external evaluation site visit of the Marshall University ADVANCE project was on May 7, 2007. The External Evaluator met extensively with the PI and Program Director and in 45-minute blocks of time with representatives of the three Initiatives (Recruitment and Networking, State and Institutional Policy Changes, and Faculty Development) including administrator partners and co-PIs. Some of the results of the climate survey were presented to the External Evaluator during this visit.

It was evident from data gathered during this site visit that there is a strong commitment among all those involved with the project to increasing the number of women faculty members at Marshall University, especially in science and mathematics. Vision 2015, the West Virginia Science and Technology Strategic Plan, is important to MU-ADVANCE because of the emphasis within the Strategic Plan on broadening participation of women (and other underrepresented groups) in science, technology, engineering and mathematics as well as revising promotion, tenure and workload policies. MU-ADVANCE is an important National Science Foundation project for helping West Virginia attain its 2015 science and technology goals. In turn, MU-ADVANCE can draw on WVEPSCoR and other state entities in an integrated approach to advancing the role of women within Marshall University.

An important strength of the project is the attention to detail including email distribution of minutes of meetings to all project stakeholders including Advisory Board members. Attention to communication maintains momentum and keeps everyone involved on the “same page”. The two fellowship types provide support that was not available before this project: (1) New ADVANCE Fellows are new hires who receive \$10,000 as part of their start-up supplements and (2) MU-ADVANCE Fellows who are pre-tenure tenure-track female faculty who apply for additional support for their career development (up to \$15,000 and \$5,000 for a partner).

The following are External Evaluation comments and suggestions for improving the project:

- In a project like MU-ADVANCE it is important to build relationships with the people who can make the changes. It appeared to the Evaluator that the women who are the leaders of the project need to continue to focus on building relationships with the men and women who can make the changes that ADVANCE supports. Only one man was present during the site visit discussions. It is important for the women in ADVANCE to not isolate themselves, but instead, to position themselves at all levels of power and authority within the university.
- Integral to this project’s success is the Advisory Board which includes representation from Marshall University, West Virginia University and the Legislature. It is important for the Advisory Board to be proactive in working with MU-ADVANCE to make changes that will broaden participation of women at MU and throughout the state. The Advisory Board can be instrumental in positioning the project to make the prioritized changes and help coordinate changes in policies that will impact institutions state-

wide. The Advisory Board can help MU-ADVANCE develop its own strategic plan and can then work side-by-side with the project leadership team in accomplishing policy changes that are also consistent with Vision 2015. Perhaps a state-wide meeting midway through Year 2 would be a way to build and disseminate information within the state regarding revision of promotion, tenure and workload policies.

- One obstacle to effective and efficient implementation of the project appears to be a clear work plan with explicitly stated progress indicators and targets. Developing an explicit implementation plan would mean replacing words like “increase” and “improve” with precise metrics and measures such as “increase by 30%” and “improve as indicated by”.

- Collaboration should be fully implemented at all levels of organizational change. It appeared to the External Evaluator that it would be helpful if a strategic plan with very specific strategies within a specific benchmarked time frame was developed and periodically reviewed. Change must be realistic, achievable and measurable: a helpful source for understanding and managing change is John Kotter (*Leading Change*, 1995; *The Heart of Change*, 2002). Kotter's eight step change model is summarized at <http://www.businessballs.com/changemanagement.htm>:

- **Increase urgency** - inspire people to move, make objectives real and relevant.
- **Build the guiding team** - get the right people in place with the right emotional commitment, and the right mix of skills and levels.
- **Get the vision right** - get the team to establish a simple vision and strategy, focus on emotional and creative aspects necessary to drive service and efficiency.
- **Communicate for buy-in** - Involve as many people as possible, communicate the essentials, simply, and to appeal and respond to people's needs. De-clutter communications - make technology work for you.
- **Empower action** - Remove obstacles, enable constructive feedback and lots of support from leaders - reward and recognize progress and achievements.
- **Create short-term wins** - Set aims that are easy to achieve - in bite-size chunks. Manageable numbers of initiatives. Finish current stages before starting new ones.
- **Don't let up** - Foster and encourage determination and persistence - ongoing change - encourage ongoing progress reporting - highlight achieved and future milestones.
- **Make change stick** - Reinforce the value of successful change via recruitment, promotion, new change leaders. Weave change into culture.

- The need for this project was established when the proposal was written. The recently administered climate survey will provide additional information but over-dependence on the findings appears to have almost brought the project's work to a halt. A clear work plan for analyzing the data disaggregated by the important “gender” variable needs to be initiated as soon as possible. It is important to use the findings that help clarify needs and

solidify the overall project work plan. At the time of the site visit no one seemed “in charge” of this project component. The information collected needs to be summarized for the university as a whole; it seems unreasonable to expect this project to make changes at the departmental level.

- In today’s competitive academic workplace it is more important than ever to conduct research and get grants. The project team might consider strengthening their power structure by developing a comprehensive plan for submitting proposals (some already have this) with collaborative proposals that link MU women professionally with other faculty women within West Virginia (e.g., WVU) and with other collaborative partners (e.g., universities in other states).
- Consider sponsoring a Women’s Research Day that highlights research by undergraduate and graduate students.
- Leverage ADVANCE funds with other grant funds to build collaborative partnerships. This type of activity helps to bring a diverse body of interested individuals together.
- Produce the “How to Get Tenure” and “How to Get Promoted” documents for junior faculty so they can be on a fast-track to attaining these important professional goals.
- It appeared that considerable information about the day care center was collected but the strategy for making day care more easily accessible for faculty did not appear to be in place. Being inclusive would probably help this change occur: this is probably an important issue for men as well as women faculty members.

It is important for MU-ADVANCE to accomplish its first change so that everyone involved can say, “We must continue to succeed.” It appeared to the Evaluator that there are many ideas about what needs to be changed and that one of the next important steps is to prioritize targeted change. It is not uncommon for program skeptics to predict that in a grant like MU-ADVANCE there will be a “little burst” of activity and then the reservoir of resources for ensuring sustained full integration and institutionalization of change disappears. It is important for these obviously very dedicated members of the MU-ADVANCE team to establish their highest priorities and to set out to accomplish them and, then, to publicize the successes.

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