At the end of August 2006, The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) ADVANCE initiative concluded its third year of the five year grant period. The UTEP team looks forward to the October NSF Site Visit as an opportunity to reflect on what we have accomplished to date and to revisit plans for the remaining two years.

**WHAT IS THE UTEP ADVANCE INITIATIVE?**

The National Science Foundation (NSF) funds ADVANCE with the goal of increasing the representation of women in academic science and engineering careers. At UTEP, the ADVANCE mission is twofold: 1) to value and build a talented, diverse faculty and recognize that a collegial, productive environment can be created for anyone and everyone, and 2) to understand that organizational commitment and communication are vital to the realization of this mission.

The UTEP ADVANCE program directly involves eighteen departments in four colleges and is organized into three major components: Policy and Recruitment, Faculty Development, and Collaborative Leadership. Evaluation supports these components through formative and summative internal assessments, a semi-annual review by an internal Action Board, and an annual review by an external Advisory Board.

Our initiative is built upon efforts and processes already in place in fall 2003. As the nation’s only major research university serving a student population that is predominantly Mexican-American, UTEP has become a national model for access and excellence. In recognition of our success in creating educational opportunities for a population that has been traditionally underrepresented on U.S. college campuses, the NSF designated UTEP as a Model Institution for Excellence (MIE), one of only six in the country. The goal of MIE and other programs, such as the Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP), is to increase the numbers of students preparing for careers in engineering, technology, and the sciences.

UTEP’s commitment to diversity is also reflected in campus programs that address the unique needs and concerns of women students, staff, and faculty. These include the Women’s Advisory Committee to the President, created in 1996 and The Faculty Mentoring Program for Women (FMPW), established in 2000. Recognizing that non-traditional students, staff, and faculty often have work and family responsibilities, UTEP also offers affordable on-site day care through the Adelante Child Development Center, established in 1990. The Women’s Resource Center and the Women’s Studies program provide a wide range of services, including programs that address gender equity.
WHAT HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED TO DATE?

The UTEP NSF ADVANCE program builds upon these existing UTEP initiatives to recruit, retain, and promote women and provides the opportunity to focus specific attention on building collective responsibility for developing a diverse, highly qualified faculty. Indeed, the initiative is designed to address specific concerns reflected in statements as simple as “In my department, it’s hard for women to be heard.”

Policy and Recruitment

At both the national level and at UTEP, there are two recurring themes concerning barriers to female recruitment and retention: 1) institutional impediments, which include lack of guidance, role models, and support, and 2) the problem of balancing family needs with the demands of an academic career. The Policy and Recruitment component addresses these through recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty and development of policies that benefit all faculty.

Recruitment and Retention

Since fall 2003, 40% (40 of 99) of the tenure-track/tenured faculty hires in ADVANCE departments have been women. In 2006-2007, 22% of the tenure-track/tenured faculty in ADVANCE departments are women, up from 15% in spring 2003.

To assist with recruitment, the ADVANCE team has met with 95 percent of the female candidates who have come to campus for an interview in ADVANCE departments and has facilitated the hiring of nine dual-career academic couples. The team provides candidates with information about the UTEP ADVANCE program, including information on salary supplementation for dual career hires, start-up funds, and research support. A Human Resources staff member now meets with candidates who have spouses or partners in need of off-campus employment. To date, ADVANCE has provided $119,305 in dual career salary funds, $170,000 in start-up funds, and $164,897 in research funds.

In addition, data are collected on the search process, including number and percent of females named as finalists, offers tendered, offers accepted/declined, and reasons for the declined offers. These data suggest that if 33% of a UTEP on-campus interview pool is female, there is a 55% probability that the first job offer will go to a female. The majority of females who decline an offer at UTEP accept tenure-track positions at other institutions.

Advancement of women is also improving. All women who have come up for tenure and/or promotion during the three years of the ADVANCE initiative have been successful. A review of our data suggests that more women are chairing departments and serving on promotion and tenure committees and that overall there are no significant differences by gender for salary, space allocation, and start-up packages.

Policies

We identified the following policies as integral to improved working conditions, particularly for women: 1) tenure clock extension, 2) dual career employment, and 3) third year review.

Working with ADVANCE, the Provost’s Office has written policies for extending the tenure clock and included them in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. Open discussion of dual career placement has brought extremely qualified candidates to UTEP. The ADVANCE programs at UTEP and
New Mexico State University jointly published a dual career brochure to use as a recruiting tool. Policies for hiring dual career academic couples and a manual based on our experiences with dual career hiring are now in development.

Three of the four colleges that house ADVANCE departments have initiated a formal third year review; and the College of Engineering is considering such a policy. All faculty, but particularly female faculty appreciate this opportunity as one woman put it, “to ensure that the department and college vision for me matches the reality.”

**Research Support**

UTEP ADVANCE conducts a Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) competition each spring. The competition is open to all tenure-track/tenured faculty with a female on the research team or male faculty when conducting research for improving diversity. A committee of five representatives evaluates the merit of each proposal and how well it furthers the mission of ADVANCE. The award provides salary funds for graduate students so that they and their faculty sponsors can move forward with their research agenda. To date, 28 women have received 37 GRA awards.

**Sustainability**

Written policies that provide for a more family-friendly, flexible work environment will remain in place at the conclusion of the grant. The university has committed to continued funding of the dual career couples already hired and the funding of a dual career couple line each year. Departments will continue to provide start-up funds and the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects will continue to provide research support.

**Faculty Development**

In the national and UTEP context, the recurring themes of acculturation to the university climate, access to campus information and resources, and meeting the demands of research, teaching, and service are seen as significant barriers to advancement. The Faculty Development process addresses these as a way to empower others to take action and generate short and long-term successes for our faculty.

The faculty development component helps faculty define a holistic and integrated academic career. The program includes a Faculty Mentoring Program for Women (FMPW) for all tenure-track women and IMPACT Seminars for women and men, all ranks, designed to increase faculty effectiveness by developing new ways of integrating teaching, research, and service and fostering leadership development.

**Faculty Mentoring Program for Women**

The Faculty Mentoring Program now includes over 100 women. During the first years of the program, all new women faculty were paired with senior faculty members, mentors from their college, but not from their department. Due to the unexpected success of peer mentoring and a shortage of qualified mentors, the program adopted a group mentoring model in 2004. Now, a group of new faculty women are paired with one or two mentors from their college.

Participants attend monthly luncheons with their mentors to talk about issues that concern them. In addition, all tenure-track women are invited to attend monthly brown bag lunches on topics such as how to negotiate the challenges of maternity leave, grant writing, and progress towards tenure. The brown bags provide an additional venue for peer mentoring among women faculty.
Participants report that they find support from the program in ways that departments cannot or are not providing. Participants mention that being able to meet other tenure-track women outside their department helps them to discuss and solve problems and to feel less isolated. In addition, the mentors express a sense of renewal from having the opportunity to work with junior colleagues. As one senior faculty member put it, “Listening to my mentee’s enthusiasm reminds me of why I took this job in the first place.”

**IMPACT Seminars**

IMPACT, a two-week seminar, is designed to increase the effectiveness of participating faculty by developing new ways of integrating teaching, research, with a focus on the development of leadership skills. Each cohort meets for one week in May for two consecutive years and then meets throughout the intervening year to work on specific career goals. To date, 30 faculty have participated in the program.

On program evaluation surveys, participants list the following benefits:

- Enhanced interdisciplinary collaboration and colleagueship
- Introduced ways to identify new leadership roles in department, college, and university
- Provided support in overcoming barriers to success

**Sustainability**

UTEP will continue the Faculty Mentoring Program for Women and IMPACT Seminars. As a result of these two programs, UTEP will have a junior faculty who understand what is necessary to succeed at the university and a senior faculty willing and able to serve as university leaders.

**Collaborative Leadership**

The Collaborative Leadership component is designed to stimulate change at departmental and college levels by facilitating ways of fostering a supportive climate through which faculty can advance. The specific barriers to advancement of female faculty, which are addressed by the Collaborative Leadership process, are workplace environment and marginalization. The collaborative leadership component works to enhance collaboration among faculty, identify and support innovative leaders, share best practices, and facilitate improvement of departmental climates. The involvement of faculty in this process builds a collegial and supportive environment that benefits all UTEP faculty.

**Assessment of Departmental Climates**

A major focus of this component is the adaptation and implementation of the “Study of Faculty Work Life” survey instrument, originally developed by the University of Wisconsin. The survey was administered to all tenure-track/tenured faculty and full-time lecturers in spring 2004 and will be repeated in spring 2007. In 2004, we learned that females, Hispanics, and Assistant Professors were significantly more likely to report feeling:

- isolated in their departments
- that they did not understand the criteria for tenure/promotion
- that there was not a strong fit between the way they did research, teaching, and service and the way it was evaluated for tenure
The 2007 survey will be one measure to help us determine whether departmental climates have improved. ADVANCE, the Provost’s office, and the UTEP Human Resources department have developed a faculty exit survey to provide yet another source of information about departmental climates.

**Communication Processes**

Individual interviews with department chairs, “chair chats” where chairs come together to discuss needs and concerns, women faculty forums, and interviews with women have provided additional insight into the campus culture and climate.

In fall 2005, UTEP ADVANCE co-sponsored a workshop on conflict mediation in the College of Engineering. An outcome of the workshop was the creation of a Faculty Advisory Council in the college to address the feedback received from the college’s climate study, address policy that affects faculty, and promote discussion of faculty concerns.

This component is currently conducting research on the pathway to the PhD created or followed by all women faculty in the 18 ADVANCE departments, including Latinas, an important group of faculty at UTEP. By reviewing journal articles and books, most of which have been written in the last 5-7 years, we have determined the obstacles faced by women in general and Latinas in particular as they pursued the doctoral degree. This information was helpful in creating strategies for recruitment and retention of Latina faculty and to create questions for interviews of all women faculty that began in May 2006.

**Sustainability**

Faculty will serve as change agents to work toward building relationships based on trust, respect, integrity, risk-taking, empowerment, and openness. Departments that understand the importance of facilitating diversity will serve as examples for all departments irregardless of their unique cultures.

**Evaluation**

After a period of six months without an evaluator, we have hired two (one full and one part-time) to help us catch up on the many qualitative and quantitative evaluation projects planned or partially underway. The three ADVANCE components have gathered a great deal of data that still needs to be analyzed.

With respect to qualitative data, our new evaluator is assessing questionnaires, reports, transcriptions of focus group meetings, and chair chat series and is developing analytical reports on such programs as the Faculty Mentoring Program for Women and IMPACT Seminars.

The ADVANCE faculty database was created based on data retrieved through past evaluation reports and certified institutional data. The quantitative data housed in the ADVANCE faculty database serve as the primary source for updating the NSF 12 Indicators.

The Institutional Action Board and especially the external Advisory Board have provided invaluable advice and inspiration to the initiative, offering an important feedback loop for making changes to the initiative.
WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

As the UTEP ADVANCE program enters its final two years, the primary focus will be to complete our objectives and evaluation, to institutionalize our initiatives, and to disseminate best practices.

Objectives and Evaluation

Specific tasks that remain include developing a system for holding departments accountable for hiring a diverse faculty, including training for department and search chairs; developing guidelines for dual career couple hires and working to ensure that candidates have a place to discuss such issues; encouraging Deans and Chairs to appoint women to endowed/named professorships; looking for resources to help expand the Faculty Mentoring Program for Women to all faculty and the IMPACT Seminars to all colleges; and developing mechanisms for promoting and recognizing effective research communities.

Results gathered from interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and quantitative indicators need to be analyzed and compared to national data to determine needed changes in existing policy, procedures, and climate. Institutionalization and dissemination of components will be data-driven, based on this formative evaluation.

Institutionalize Initiatives

Institutional change is seldom sustainable unless top administration is involved in the effort. Early in our initiative, we submitted a proposal to the Provost and President, requesting that a permanent position be created to oversee the recruitment, retention, and promotion of faculty. In summer 2006, Provost Richard Jarvis created the position of Associate Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs. Dr. Sandra Hurley, who was recently named to this position, has been attending ADVANCE team meetings with institutionalization of our efforts as her goal. She has plans, for example, to create a Chairs’ Council, a forum for department chairs to discuss concerns and continue to share best practices.

Disseminate Best Practices

Since 2003, the UTEP ADVANCE team has conducted 32 on-campus presentations, including Town Hall Meetings, talks to campus groups and graduate classes, and meetings with the Institutional Action Board and upper administration. What is learned about leadership in the Faculty Mentoring Program for Women and the IMPACT Seminars is shared with the entire campus through invitation to workshops presented by experts and dissemination of best practices.

The team has made 24 presentations at national conferences, regional meetings, and to community organizations. To date, ADVANCE team members have written four papers and one book chapter about our initiative. For example, members of the ADVANCE team authored a chapter on faculty mentoring for a book on ADVANCE practices to be published by the Michigan Press.

Best practices on recruitment, retention, and promotion continue to be gathered with special emphasis on issues affecting women of color. These practices are shared through newsletters, fliers, and the ADVANCE Web site.