

Texas A&M University ADVANCE 2014 External Advisory Board Site Visit Report

The External Advisory Board for the Texas A&M University ADVANCE Program met with the ADVANCE Leadership Team, the Internal Advisory Board, Activity Leaders, Development Staff, and senior faculty from targeted colleges on the Texas A&M campus on October 3, 2014.

Summary of Findings

Results to date indicate a significant improvement in job satisfaction between 2009 (pre-ADVANCE) and 2013 (post-ADVANCE) for female STEM faculty, relative to male STEM faculty and non-STEM faculty. Furthermore, women faculty who participated as ADVANCE Scholars show a significant improvement in career satisfaction, job satisfaction, and in feeling valued. Women involved with ADVANCE are highly satisfied; those who are not are aware of it and appreciate having the opportunity to get involved if they choose. Texas A&M historically has had high retention rates, and overall, there are no systemic gender differences in salary or space allotment. However, other inequities might persist; it might be the case that women are more likely than men to be hired at the Assistant Professor level, and that start-up packages at this level are smaller.

- The ADVANCE Center previously was understaffed compared to other institutions. Two new staff members, a Dual Career Program Manager and an Office Associate, were hired using NSF Supplemental Funds.
- ADVANCE has expanded beyond its original Target Departments and into some non-STEM disciplines: College of Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, and College of Liberal Arts.
- ADVANCE submitted a proposal to the NSF in September to adapt and implement the ADVANCE Scholar Program at nine of the 11 universities in The Texas A&M University System across the state (excluding Texas A&M-San Antonio and Texas A&M-Commerce).
- The ADVANCE Scholar Program (which promotes and advances the success of STEM faculty of color) and the ADVANCE Administrative Fellows (which provides an opportunity for women STEM faculty at the associate or full professor level to work on a project jointly developed with the college or administrative office and supported by ADVANCE) have been successful to date.
- The FASIT Program, which seeks to improve relationships and the workplace climate between faculty and staff, has been successful to date. Texas A&M is the only ADVANCE Program in the nation (and/or the first) to include staff in workplace climate discussions, and NSF calls this program “ground-breaking.”

- The Student Diversity Training Program, which seeks to improve relationships and the workplace climate between faculty and students, has been successful to date. Texas A&M is the only ADVANCE Program in the nation (and/or the first) to include students in workplace climate discussions, which weighed heavily in NSF's decision to fund the Texas A&M effort.
- The Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence (STRIDE) Program, which aims to expand gender bias training for all members of search committees, has been successful.

Recommendations

The ADVANCE Program has grown to the point that those involved should determine what the institution does best and expand these areas, as well as leverage the present momentum to further enhance and sustain gender equity. The committee made the following recommendations, which are subject to approval by the President and Provost of Texas A&M.

- Institutionalize the preliminary findings and the targeted systemic interventions of the Evaluation and Social Science Study Teams.
- Institutionalize the ADVANCE Center.
- Gather more data on under-represented groups and engage more males, and faculty in other disciplines, such as through the mentoring networks.
- Address pipeline issues for faculty advancement by providing more mentoring for Associate Professors; hiring more mid-career women; and reviewing the time needed to move from associate to full professor. Determine if a sex difference exists, and if so, determine what factors drive it.
- Address pipeline issues for the selection of Distinguished Faculty by providing a process (especially at the department level) to recruit and/or mentor women faculty to meet the criteria; provide ADVANCE implicit bias training for Distinguished Professors and those who serve on the selection committee; and add a criterion regarding transparency in the selection process.
- Address the perception that the Advance Administrative Fellows program disadvantages those at the level of Associate Professor.
- Increase campus-wide awareness of ADVANCE results and of work/life balance activities and their impact.
- Provide all meeting materials, including questions to be considered by EAB, to the Office of the President at least one week prior to each scheduled site visit.