

National Science Foundation Awards Washington State University \$3.69 million in Science and Engineering

Washington State University has received a \$3.69 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to increase the representation and advancement of faculty women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The five-year grant, awarded under the National Science Foundation's ADVANCE program, will be used to develop and disseminate new strategies for faculty recruitment, retention and advancement, according to Candis Claiborn, Dean of the College of Engineering and Architecture, and one of the grant's principal investigators.

Women remain significantly underrepresented on the science and engineering faculties of research universities. At Washington State University, women make up less than 15% of the STEM faculty, says Robert Bates, past Provost and co-principal investigator on the grant. More than ever there is a dramatic need for qualified engineers and scientists to solve critical national and global challenges like energy and the environment. "We are underutilizing half of the population in addressing these issues," said Claiborn.

Qualified individuals, both male and female, are "leaked" along the academic pipeline at critical professional transition points and personal milestones, she added. These include graduation, the job search, tenure, promotion, marriage, and childbirth. Women are disproportionately "lost" from the academic pipeline at many of these transition points. Efforts to "plug" the leaky pipeline will improve the recruitment, retention, and advancement of all faculty, including women.

"This grant is the fruition of significant collaboration between several colleges, the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, and the Division of Student Affairs, Equity and Diversity, and it has full support of the Washington State University administration," says Provost Steven Hoch. "It represents a rich opportunity for WSU to enhance its recruitment and retention of world-class faculty, including women, and is closely aligned with other recent initiatives to provide the very best faculty friendly atmosphere at a research university."

The key initiatives funded with this grant will include enhanced faculty recruitment to ensure the widest possible applicant pools; leadership development for both current and future faculty leaders; changes in departmental culture and policy transformation to retain and advance faculty in STEM fields; a partnership with the University of Idaho to assist both universities in identifying career opportunities for spouses or partners of faculty hires; and an extended mentoring program. This grant will establish the Center for EXCELinSE (Excellence in Science and Engineering) that will implement these initiatives.

The awards made by the NSF ADVANCE program are part of a comprehensive effort undertaken by NSF to diversify the scientific work force. The intent is that programs created by the participating universities will become models that can be replicated by institutions across the nation.

Co-investigators for the Washington State University ADVANCE program include Candis Claiborn, Dean of the College of Engineering and Architecture; past Provost Robert Bates; Amy Wharton, Professor of Sociology and Director of the College of Liberal Arts at WSU Vancouver; K. D. Joshi, Associate Professor of MIS in the College of Business; and Gretal Leibnitz, CEA Faculty Recruitment Coordinator.