Building and Maintaining an ADVANCE Leadership Team

at the University of Rhode Island

Roundtable Discussion
NSF ADVANCE PI Meeting, Alexandria, VA
May 12-13, 2008

Lisa Harlow, Helen Mederer, Nancy Neff, Joan Peckham, Barb Silver
High level (current and former) administrators, senior faculty, social/natural science project staff

Composition has had a dynamic lifecourse
   Open $\rightarrow$ insulated $\rightarrow$ open

Passionate commitment, strong investment due to an array of personal experiences as women in academe
Composition

- **PIs:**
  - Vice Provost of Research, Graduate Studies, initial PI, Janett Trubatch
  - Vice Provost, Academic Affairs, Lynn Pasquerella

- **Co-PIs:**
  - Professor, Computer Science, Joan Peckham
  - Professor, Graduate School of Oceanography, Karen Wishner
  - Professor, Quantitative Psychology, Lisa Harlow

- **Senior Personnel**
  - Professor & Former Chair, Sociology, Helen Mederer
  - Professor & Chair, Electrical, Computer, & Biomedical Engineering, Faye Boudreaux-Bartels
  - Professor & Former Vice Provost, Academic Affairs, Judith Swift
  - Assoc. Professor & Former Associate Dean, Engineering, Mercedes Rivero-Hudec
  - Associate Dean, Human Science and Services, Nancy Fey-Yensan

- **Project staff**
  - Project Director, Assistant Research Professor, Psychology, Barb Silver
  - Budget Manager, Nancy Neff, MS, Geology
How the LT Functions

• Organization
  • LT is non-hierarchical and collaborative
  • Structure has broad visibility and a wide participation net is cast

• Meetings
  • The LT meets monthly & in semi-annual strategic planning retreats
  • Committees meet monthly or less

• Member Participation
  • Each member chairs or is a member of an ADVANCE committee
  • LT members rotating as chairs at monthly meetings
  • All LT members are good ambassadors as they are aware of all project aspects

• Decision-making
  • Major decisions made via full consensus
  • Program manager addresses and delegates routine operations
  • PI operates in a supportive, “hands-off” role, but is key facilitator in implementing major decisions
Challenges Faced

- Budget limitations and high salaries
- Reach of authority - difficulty coordinating faculty hire arrangements
- Overload of volunteer work provided by LT members
- Lack of funds to compensate additional volunteers who contributed to the project
- University management system (People Soft) is cumbersome
Lessons Learned

• Clarify boundaries and roles of participants, e.g.,
  • what are authority limits of Program Director?
  • how to handle overlapping committee decisions?

• Expand expertise of LT, e.g.,
  • Need initial development/fund-raising focus – include development-minded person on LT
  • Need to follow a business model – include a business-minded person on LT
  • Need adequate personnel if the budget is large and complicated

• Plan for post-grant institutionalization of project staff (and activities) from Day 1

• Formalize volunteer efforts as legitimate service contribution and plan for adequate compensation
Success of the URI LT Model

- Pivotal Project Manager
- Highly placed LT members respected across campus
- Inclusive outreach to faculty, staff & administrators
- Communication across several disciplines
- Wide collaboration across natural and social sciences
- “Speak softly and carry a big stick”
- Close working relationships fostered unfailing commitment and loyalty to program and each other

The URI ADVANCE LT offers thanks to:

- National Science Foundation and our ADVANCE collaborators nationwide
- URI ADVANCE Internal Advisory Council
- URI Community of faculty, staff & students
- URI Administration for ongoing institutional support