



Departmental Gender Diversity Planning at The University of Montana

Eight science departments at The University of Montana (UM-Missoula) completed “Gender Diversity Plans” since the start of the NSF ADVANCE PACE Project. Plans consist of three components: a history of efforts to recruit and retain diverse faculty, a series of actions that faculty will carry out to increase gender diversity, and a set of recommendations to administrators indicating how they can support this effort. Development of these plans functioned to increase awareness among science faculty concerning gender diversity issues and led to department faculty making commitments to take action to increase and maintain gender diversity. In addition, the Diversity Plans provided direct evidence of the clear interest in hiring and retaining women that UM-Missoula science faculty voice in the plans.

Department commitments to diversifying faculty include an array of activities. Many are aimed at achieving a diverse applicant pool, such as recruitment at national meetings, advertising more widely, creating broad job descriptions, and wording advertisements to attract women applicants. Others deal with additional aspects of the search process: including women on search committees, including gender diversity as a criterion for selection of candidates, and inviting additional candidates for interviews to increase the number of women visiting campus. Retention of women faculty was also addressed in these plans with departments indicating they would: focus on good mentoring, reduce teaching in a hire’s first year, practice “family-friendly” policies, promote a positive departmental atmosphere, conduct careful pre-tenure reviews, and consider family/gender issues in faculty evaluation. Faculty discussed and considered these issues in depth. This process provided an opportunity for “hands on” learning for faculty which delineated their role in increasing gender diversity.

The final component of the Diversity Plans outlined recommendations from departments to administrators. While these vary across departments there are some commonalities. Many focus on increases in salary, startup and support for graduate programs, along with more adequate research space. Importantly, they also mention the need for family-friendly policies such as spousal accommodation, on-site child care, gender aware recruitment practices, parental/family leave, redefinition of tenure and promotion procedures to account for family leave, and an overall increase in investment in family-friendly practices. These recommendations offer a powerful voice in the process of institutional change.

Departmental Diversity Plans, once they are completed and approved by faculty members and the appropriate dean, are presented to a committee consisting of all the science chairs and all deans overseeing science departments. This committee reviews and comments on the plans, again offering an opportunity for highly effective training and dissemination of model practices. Once the committee review is complete, the plan is forwarded to the Provost and becomes a document to be used in future planning.

The PACE external assessment team (Arlen Gulickson and Jerry Horn of the Western Michigan University Evaluation Center) investigated the impact of this practice on faculty, deans and administrators to determine its effectiveness as a training tool and as a means of changing attitudes. After a visit to campus involving intensive interviews they report; *“The development of departmental diversity plans has been an important activity, and the procedure of self-examination has been particularly recognized for its value.”* attesting to the importance of this activity as a training procedure. The impact of these diversity reports was highlighted recently by the UM-Missoula Provost who considers them to be important feedback from faculty and was particularly interested in the commitments of each department along with their recommendations to the administration. He plans to request a revision of Departmental Diversity Plans on a regular basis.