Building and Maintaining an ADVANCE Team: Leadership, Sharing Responsibility, and Maintaining Morale

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The University of Alabama at Birmingham uses a team approach to administration of ADVANCE programs and activities. The team (ADVANCE Steering Committee) consists of individuals in leadership positions within the university: Provost, Vice President for Equity and Diversity, and deans of the schools of Engineering, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and Social and Behavioral Sciences. These individuals are in positions to effect change within the university and the ADVANCE schools. The principal investigator serves as Interim Associate Provost for Faculty Development and Faculty Affairs, which allows ADVANCE activities to be integrated with university-wide faculty development and recruitment.

The UAB ADVANCE Steering Committee started the year with a strategic planning retreat to define anticipated outcomes for the coming year. The Steering Committee meets once a month for 2 to 2.5 hours with communication through email and at ADVANCE activities between monthly meetings. Each Co-PI has assumed responsibility for a major initiative. Initiatives led by Co-PIs include the mentoring program, “Lunch and Learn” series, department chair training and family friendly policy revisions. The program manager provides detailed information prior to each Steering Committee meeting that allows the committee to make data-driven decisions. We also have identified a three-member external advisory committee that visits campus twice a year to provide feedback to the Steering Committee.

Next year will be the final year for our ADVANCE award. We will be planning a transition to a university-wide team that will serve to coordinate activities to continue the advancement of women in science and engineering at UAB.