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# Utilizing Campus Engagement for the Development of an ADVANCE Faculty Leadership Initiative

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## Abstract

A small engineering, science, and technology university located in the American Midwest received a National Science Foundation ADVANCE award to develop programs and policies to foster an institutional culture of development for faculty and research scientists. Two programs were adapted and implemented for the campus: the Advocates and Allies program and Facilitated Peer Mentoring Circles. During the first two years of implementation, results from these programs indicated that there was a need for campus leadership to strengthen commitment to diversity and inclusion. Campus culture assessment was conducted through three surveys administered pre-award (2019-2020) and post-award (2024-2025): the Gallup Q12, Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), and Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). The pre-award IDI revealed that the predominant campus mindset was Minimization, indicating that many individuals did not recognize significant cultural competency challenges. Post-award results showed modest gains in developmental orientation and a reduction in Polarization and Denial from 32% to 18%, though the response rate in 2024 was lower (40% vs. 72% in 2019). The results from these surveys for faculty engagement, intercultural development, and emotional intelligence, have been utilized to influence the development of a leadership initiative to empower faculty to enact positive change. To address identified leadership gaps, the ADVANCE Faculty Leadership Initiative was established to empower faculty to enact positive change. Program goals include defining campus leadership roles, building essential skills, leveraging individual strengths, navigating implementation challenges, and fostering community engagement through action-learning projects. The inaugural cohort consists of 21 faculty from 10 departments and seven academic ranks (Full Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Professor of Practice, Instructor, Senior Lecturer, and Research Scientist). The group includes eight gender minorities, five trained Advocates, and seven foreign-born or internationally trained participants. Participants collaborate with coaches and administrative sponsors (e.g., Vice President of Research, Provost, Department Heads) to develop Action Learning Projects. Anticipated outcomes include enhanced faculty engagement, strengthened institutional belonging, and initiatives promoting an equitable and inclusive campus culture. The Department Chair Conversations program was designed to strengthen inclusive leadership among department heads through six interactive sessions during the 2024-2025 academic year. So far, ten of fourteen department heads participated, engaging in discussions on leadership challenges and strategies for fostering equitable department cultures. Individual feedback sessions on their department's Gallup Q12 results provided personalized guidance, promoting reflection on leadership practices.

## **Introduction**

A National Science Foundation ADVANCE adaptation award was received by a small engineering, science, and technology university located in the US Midwest to develop programming for faculty and research scientists to increase awareness of implicit biases and promote pathways to faculty success. The university consists of thirteen departments, twelve of which are Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). The university's administrative structure does not include Deans, just Department Heads that oversee academic departments and report directly to the Provost. As of 2024, there are no female Department Heads, and only 22% teaching and tenure-track faculty are female, with few female faculty members hold the position of Full Professor.

Over the course of the first three years of the ADVANCE adaptation award, two programs were adapted and developed to aid in faculty retention and promotion. The results of surveys and feedback from these two programs indicated that faculty should be trained in leadership. Further, campus engagement was measured pre-award (2019-2020) and post-award (2024) using three surveys: the Gallup Q12, Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), and Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). The combination of results from these surveys and faculty feedback led to the development of a leadership initiative to empower faculty to enact positive change. During the development of this faculty leadership initiative, a separate leadership training course was developed for Department Heads.

### Advocates and Allies Program

The Advocates and Allies (A&A) program was adapted to address gender equity and inclusion on campus and increase awareness of implicit bias (Bilen-Green et al. 2013, 2015; Anicha et al. 2020, 2022). Volunteer male Advocates are faculty members who educate themselves about issues of inclusivity and gender inequality and developed workshops to train faculty, staff, and administrators to become Allies who support a more inclusive campus culture that specifically improves the day-to-day experiences of women and other underrepresented faculty groups as proponents for gender equity and inclusivity and carry the lessons learned in training into all their activities across campus. Over the course of the A&A program, 47 faculty, staff, and administrators were trained as Allies. The Advocates led round-table discussions in their workshops and resulting discussions indicated a disjunct in views of equity between faculty and administration.

### Facilitated Peer Mentor Circles

Mentoring strategic planning sessions were held for faculty by rank with members grouped into (1) Research Scientists, (2) Non-tenure track Teaching Faculty, (3) Tenure-track Assistant Professors, (4) Associate Professors, and (5) Full Professors, Program Chairs & Department Heads. These sessions engaged over 70% of campus faculty members, and introduced the NSF ADVANCE award initiatives and determined main concerns raised by faculty which determined topics that were discussed in Facilitated Peer Mentor Circles. The Facilitated Peer Mentor Circles program was an adaptation from other universities (Gilfoyle et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2015; Li et al., 2023). A novel adaptation was the hiring of a Faculty Development Coordinator (FDC) to facilitate all circles to: (1) Top-down support and commitment for continuity; (2) Creating psychological safety through respect for everyone and confidentiality; (3) Responsiveness to individual career needs/paths; (4) Seeking input to tailor offerings for success;

and (5) Collecting feedback/offering aggregated, bottoms-up input to administration.

Participation for the program grew substantially each semester since implementation, with 25 faculty members in the first cohort of the program and 58 faculty members participating in the most recent cohort. Participation from underrepresented groups increased over time and by the most recent cohort, half of female faculty were participants. Individuals from every campus department had participated in the Facilitated Peer Mentor Program. Evaluation and assessment of the program included monthly meeting surveys to measure psychological safety of participants, value of meetings, and willingness to recommend. Open discussions resulted in participants requesting that the FDC relay messages back to university administration such as the need for clear and consistent university messaging, need for recognition and celebration of achievement, and the need for feedback for evaluations, mid-term reviews, and the P&T process. All groups were interested in career advancement opportunities. In particular, Associate Professors discussed the need for career advancement, dossier preparation, leadership, and transitions into administrative roles. Survey results from the first year indicated low response for: “The campus leadership demonstrates a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion.” Written survey feedback included comments about leadership training for administration, such as: “We expect department heads and senior professors to join the meeting, admit there are problems, and support our problem solving, not keep saying how miserable and difficult their situations were when they came here two decades ago, and how we should sort out all the problems ourselves without bringing the problems up to career development people.” and “How do we fix the problem of lack of transparency from the administration? Frustration occurs when no one will claim what decisions are made. What is possible to accomplish via these circles?”

## **Campus Engagement Surveys**

### Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

The adaption the A&A program focused on developing intercultural competence by shifting from a culture of attrition to a culture of development. This shift requires the campus community to prioritize adult human mental development, professional development, and faculty development. The assessment of campus culture is measured through the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Prior to the ADVANCE award, the IDI report for the campus community (faculty, staff, and administration) indicated that the predominant mindset on campus was Minimization, where commonalities were emphasized, and differences were minimized. In the Minimization stage, commonality is highly valued, and differences related to gender and cultures are overlooked. This mindset, prevalent within the dominant majority group, may explain why many individuals do not perceive significant cultural competency issues on campus. As a result, those in non-dominant groups may feel unheard, with members of those groups (consciously or not) employing strategies such as intentional invisibility (Ballakrishnen et al. 2019) or code-switching (McCluney et al. 2019) to navigate campus culture.

The desired shift in campus climate can be achieved if a significant number of departments, individual faculty members, and staff complete IDI debriefs and engage with their individual development plans based on their IDI developmental orientations. For faculty and staff who have taken the IDI multiple times and worked on their development plans, there has been a consistent and significant increase their personal intercultural competence score. The key formative and

summative assessment used with the Advocates was also the IDI. Several members of the initial cohort of Advocates had taken the IDI in 2019 as a part of the institution's assessment. The IDI was offered again to the first cohort of Advocate after their first semester of activities, with all Advocate scores increasing by an average of 13.5.

The post-ADVANCE award IDI survey was released in April 2024. Participation rates in the IDI have varied over time. In 2024, 129 of 315 invited participants (40%) completed the IDI, compared to 350 of 483 (72%) in 2019. The higher participation in 2019 was likely due to strong backing from the President's and Provost's offices, which sent an email encouraging campus staff and faculty to participate. In 2024, messaging came solely from the Office for Inclusion, which may have contributed to the lower response rate.

Despite reduced participation in 2024, results indicate a modest increase in the Developmental Orientation (DO) score, averaging 97.47 in 2024 compared to 92.69 in 2019. However, this 5-point increase may not reflect a significant cultural shift, particularly given the smaller respondent pool in 2024. The mean DO for the higher mode in both years remained consistent at approximately 100. Additionally, the proportion of respondents in the Polarization and Denial categories decreased from 32% in 2019 to 18% in 2024. Regarding perceptions of institutional challenges, only 2% of 2024 respondents believed there were no significant cultural competency issues, while 27% acknowledged such challenges, with 9% specifically citing gender-related concerns. A considerable number of respondents chose not to answer identifying questions, complicating data interpretation. While the upward trend in DO scores is promising, the lower response rate in 2024 limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions about campus cultural change. Future surveys with broader participation will be essential for tracking progress and clarifying these emerging trends.

### Gallup Q12 Survey

The Gallup Q12 survey for employee engagement was administered to faculty and staff in November 2020 (pre-ADVANCE award) and again in April 2024 (post-ADVANCE award). All faculty and staff were invited to participate, resulting in 326 participants in 2020 and 235 participants in 2024. Faculty participation was notably high in 2020, with over 80% of faculty members completing the survey; however, this declined to 47% in the 2024 post-award survey.

Initial results indicate that the overall engagement mean remained stable throughout the award period, while the faculty engagement mean slightly increased from 3.44 to 3.52. The data and analysis from the Engagement Index found a noticeable increase in engaged employees from 36% to 41%, a slight decrease in not-engaged employees from 47% to 45%, and a reduction in actively disengaged employees from 17% to 14%. These changes suggested that previous interventions and management strategies positively impacted employee engagement, though there remained room for improvement.

A consultant conducted a gap analysis, interpreted results, and provided feedback on the Gallup Q12 from both 2020 and 2024. The analysis focused on (1) composite data, (2) data separated by faculty and staff, (3) faculty data separated by rank, (4) faculty data separated by gender, and (5) faculty data separated by department. To further foster a productive and satisfied workforce, the report recommended implementing enhanced communication and feedback mechanisms,

expanding recognition programs, and offering more professional development opportunities. Additionally, it emphasized the importance of maintaining regular engagement surveys with actionable follow-up to ensure continuous improvement. Overall, the data underscored the effectiveness of previous actions and highlighted the need for sustained efforts to cultivate a positive and inclusive work environment. These efforts align with the institution's strategic goals and contribute to enhancing its educational excellence. Key improvements and strategies included enhancing communication clarity and work expectations (Q1) through structured onboarding and regular feedback sessions, addressing the need for better equipment and resources (Q2) via streamlined procurement processes, and actively involving employees in leveraging their strengths (Q3) through professional development opportunities. Despite improvements in recognition (Q4), the institution's industry ranking declined, indicating a need for more effective recognition strategies. Noteworthy progress was made in supervisor-employee relationships (Q5), with recommendations to further strengthen these relationships through support for work-life balance and more robust team-building efforts. The slight increase in support for employee development (Q6) called for enhanced mentorship programs and clearer communication of promotional criteria. Although there was a significant improvement in how much employee opinions seemed to count (Q7), the strategies suggested focusing on enhancing feedback mechanisms and empowering managers to act on feedback. Mixed signals were observed in the alignment with the institution's mission (Q8), with recommendations to improve communication of the mission and involve employees more actively in mission-driven initiatives. Additionally, improved competitive positioning was noted in the commitment to quality work among coworkers (Q9), with continued efforts needed to benchmark against higher-ranked institutions. While social connections at work (Q10) improved, a decline in the industry rank pointed to the need for further initiatives to foster workplace friendships. Significant positive shifts in discussions about employee progress (Q11) were marked by a decrease in industry ranking, suggesting the need for more regular and transparent discussions about employee progress. Lastly, modest improvements in opportunities for learning and growth (Q12) were observed, with recommendations to continue successful strategies and set more ambitious goals for ongoing improvement. This comprehensive analysis and its subsequent recommendations provided a strategic pathway for the university to enhance its employee engagement practices, ensuring sustained improvements and maintaining a competitive edge in employee satisfaction and productivity.

### EQ-i Survey

At the beginning of the ADVANCE award, participants involved in the ADVANCE project completed the EQ-i assessment of emotional intelligence (EQ). Emotional intelligence skills are essential for relationships and teams, and the results were analyzed across five composite areas: Self-Perception, Self-Expression, Interpersonal, Decision Making, and Stress Management. The participants included members of the ADVANCE project team (PIs, Senior Personnel, and coordinators), the first cohort of the Advocates, and university administration. Total emotional intelligence scores were similar for the ADVANCE project team (102.7) and the university administration (103.3), with the Advocates scoring a little lower (94.9). These groups will retake the EQ-i in Spring 2025 as part of a post-project assessment.

## **Provost's ADVANCE Faculty Leadership Initiative**

Building on results from the A&A program, Facilitated Peer Mentor Circle program, and the campus engagement surveys, the Provost's ADVANCE Faculty Leadership Initiative was launched for the 2024-2025 academic year. The program includes three in-person workshops: one at the beginning of the academic year, one at the beginning of the Spring semester, and one at the end of the academic year. Faculty participants will also work on group active learning projects throughout the year.

### Program Goals

The initiative aims to empower faculty to enact positive change through the following outcomes:

- 1) Defining Campus Leadership: Clarifying roles and responsibilities
- 2) Developing Tools: Building knowledge, skills, and awareness
- 3) Leveraging Strengths: Using individual strengths for professional development
- 4) Understanding Change: Recognizing challenges to implementing change and influencing others
- 5) Action Learning Projects: Designing and implementing impactful projects that enact positive change
- 6) Broaden Community Engagement: Enhancing service-learning projects
- 7) Promoting an Inclusive Culture: Supporting development over attrition

### Workshop Overview

The first and last workshops take place in August 2024 and May 2025, respectively. These workshops focus on leadership development through personal assessments, including Gallup CliftonStrength 34 and DiSC. The CliftonStrengths 34 assessment highlights four domains to help faculty apply their strengths in leadership and advocacy: Executing, Relationship Building, Influencing, and Strategic Thinking.

Key workshop topics include:

- Leveraging Strengths in Pursuit of Goals
- Overcoming Barriers to Advancement
- Building Resilience and Well-being
- Fostering Trusting Teams
- Developing Action Learning Projects
- Leading Change through Influence
- Crucial Conversation Skills
- Creating Cultures of Excellence

### Initial Workshop Feedback

Survey responses were received from 9 of the 20 program participants. All nine respondents indicated that the program met or exceeded their expectations, rating it as “about what was expected,” “better than expected,” or “much better than expected.” However, one respondent noted they would not recommend the program to colleagues or continue participating. When asked about workshop content, all nine respondents selected “Strengths in Leadership” as the most valuable topic. Open-ended responses highlighted appreciation for collaborative activities, leadership-strength assessments, and the facilitator's enthusiasm. While this feedback reflects a positive initial experience, the limited response rate underscores the need for more comprehensive input to fully evaluate the program's impact.

### Group Active Learning Projects

Throughout the entire academic year, faculty participants are collaborating on Active Learning Projects focused on community engagement. These projects include group coaching sessions, individual coaching, and administrative sponsorship (from leaders like the VPR, Provost, or Department Heads).

By mid-year, project teams will present progress reports addressing:

1. The problem or opportunity being explored
2. Major challenges encountered and mitigation strategies
3. Goals for the Spring semester
4. Key learnings and insights

Project assessments will involve Likert-scale questions, open-ended reflections, and group climate evaluations focusing on problem-solving, listening, asking powerful questions, constructive feedback, and active learning practices.

### Future Workshops

The mid-program workshop in January 2025 will emphasize enhancing the sense of belonging and community engagement, while the final workshop in May 2025 will conclude the program with Action Learning Project presentations and reflections.

### **Department Chair Conversations**

Department heads were offered a program adapted for upper management, *Department Chair Conversations*, facilitated by a consultant. This program consists of six 2-hour sessions throughout the 2024-2025 academic year. The first session, held in August, saw participation from ten out of fourteen Department Heads or interim Department Heads participated. Additionally, these Department Heads were offered individual 30-minute conversations to discuss pre- and post-ADVANCE award Gallup Q12 results. These sessions provided an opportunity for departmental feedback and reflection on changes. Six Department Heads completed a survey following these discussions. While qualitative feedback was minimal, comments included one participant finding the advice helpful, another appreciating insights on how to improve, and a third requesting more information on critical conversations. The program continued with two virtual sessions in October and November and will host two additional virtual sessions in the Spring, concluding with an in-person 2-hour session in May 2025.

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