ADVANCE at Michigan Tech

ADVANCE at Michigan Tech seeks to improve the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) by 1) increasing the diversity and quality of the faculty applicant pool 2) increasing the number of women hired into STEM tenure-track faculty positions, and 3) assisting all our faculty members in the achievement of successful careers at Michigan Tech and elsewhere.

ADVANCE endeavors to transform the campus climate and build community at Michigan Tech through a series of initiatives, including:

• Developing greater accountability in the hiring process

• Tackling unconscious gender bias in faculty hiring practices through the development of campus wide training programs, such as the Diversity Literacy Workshop and Legal Aspects of Hiring seminar

• Implementing a campus-wide mentoring program

• Reviewing and revising promotional and marketing materials to encourage a greater number of female applicants

Unconscious Bias in Academia

Implicit or unconscious bias refers to cognitive processing patterns such as cognitive schemas that affect our perceptions and evaluations of others without our conscious awareness.¹ For example, gender or racial schemas may affect subtle advantages or disadvantages in perceptions of candidates for a faculty position.

Unconscious bias occurs despite our best intentions and regardless of our explicitly stated attitudes and strongly held beliefs. Such biases are evident, however, in both day-to-day interactions and important professional decisions. For example, a mounting body of research shows that unconscious bias is especially prevalent in the selection and promotion decisions about tenure-track faculty—despite the fact that committee members may strongly feel they have made an objective decision. While the impact of implicit bias may not be evident in any specific decision, there is evidence of a cumulative impact that contributes to statistically lower numbers of women at higher organizational levels and in STEM fields.²

ADVANCE aims to enrich Michigan Tech by helping faculty recognize and revise such schemas. The ADVANCE website lists an exhaustive range of books, articles, and web resources on academic diversity, including how to recruit, retain, mentor, and promote more female faculty in STEM fields, as well as how to facilitate work/family balance.

Provost’s Message

Michigan Tech is a forward-thinking institution and is firmly committed to the diversity which distinguishes it as a leader in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

As a STEM-intensive technical university, Michigan Tech is especially aware of the value in building a gender-diverse campus community. With generous support from the NSF, our ADVANCE team explores and authors best practices in recruitment, retention and promotion which can help Michigan Tech build a rich faculty pool, with particular attention to the advancement of women in the STEM fields.

The ADVANCE team and I welcome your suggestions and participation in this important and continuing work.

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