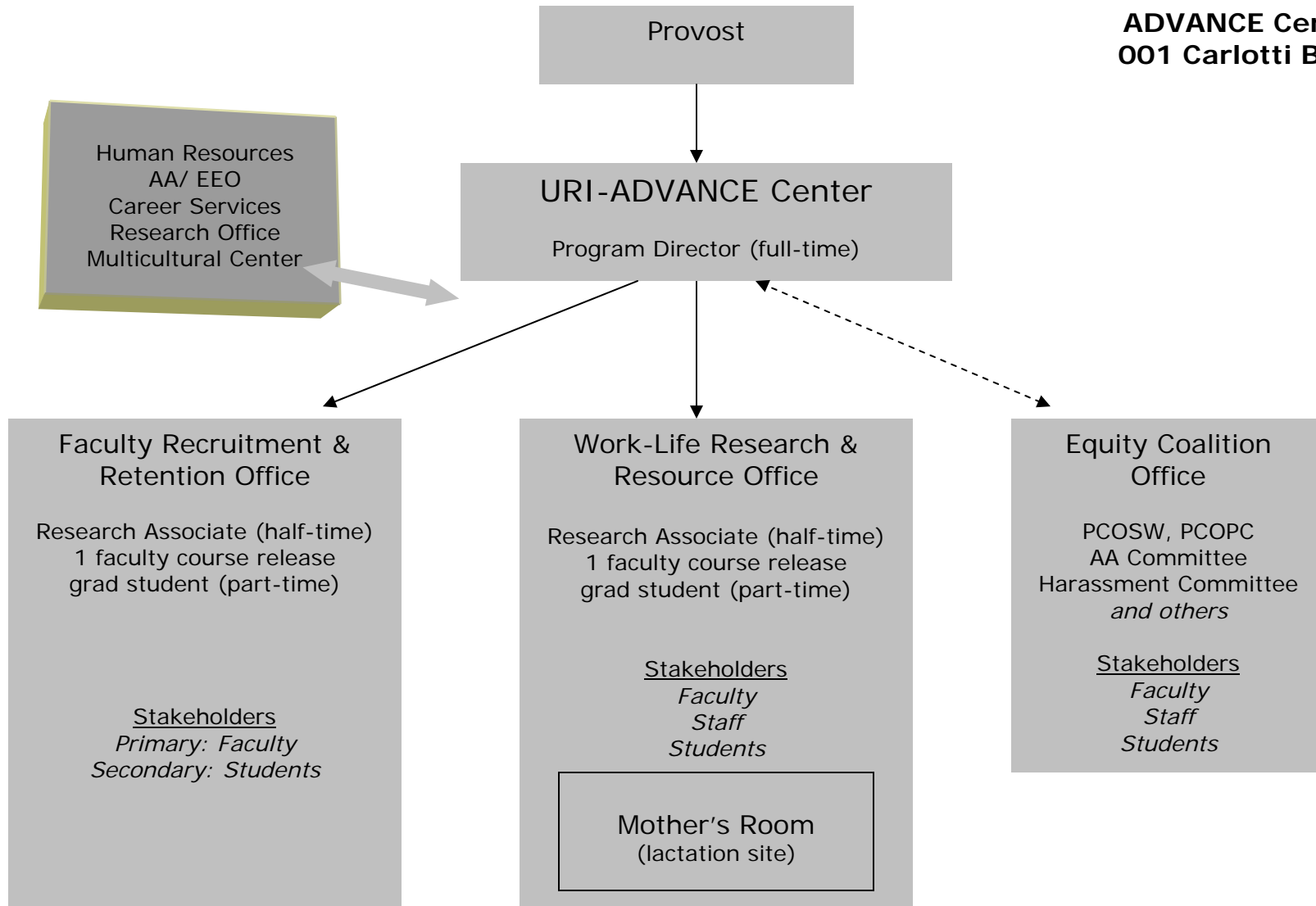


**ADVANCE Center  
001 Carlotti Bldg.**



**ADVANCE Center Proposal**  
**November 5, 2007**

**Vision Statement**

The vision of the ADVANCE Center is to expand, sustain, and streamline campus initiatives that promote diversity, inclusion, and climate change, to the ultimate betterment of everyone at the University.

**Mission Statement**

The ADVANCE Center will provide services, resources, research, policy development, and advocacy related to faculty development, work-life balance for all employees, and equity initiatives within the context of a changing 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. Embedded within an overall focus on the entire URI community is a particular focus on the needs of people from underrepresented groups. Relying on social science research and a strong theoretical foundation, the Center will increase the awareness about these issues and how inclusive practices benefit everyone at the University. Nationally, fields of research focusing on inclusion and work-life balance are expanding exponentially, and with evidence of strong institutional support, we believe research funding will be forthcoming. Thus, the ADVANCE Center will provide a continuous loop of improvements to the University by melding research into evidence-based best practices.

**Rationale**

The workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is undergoing significant change. An increasingly diverse student and employee population now requires that academic institutions develop specific and focused diversity agendas, targeting proactive recruitment and retention strategies for underrepresented groups. To be most effective, these initiatives should include 1) leadership commitment at various levels of the organization, 2) a strong diversity/compliance professional, 3) employee involvement, 4) ties to performance evaluation and the reward system, and 5) data collection and dissemination (Matton & Hernandez, 2004).

Concurrently, workers are demanding more flexible employment options as the working population ages, as more dual career couples enter the workforce, and as caregiving responsibilities continue to increase. Partner hiring is becoming commonplace and necessary to maintain a competitive edge. We know that more responsive and flexible workplaces experience a variety of positive effects, including increased job satisfaction and higher retention rates of their employees (Bond, 2003).

Meeting these demands requires organized and concrete actions, as an increasing number of forward-thinking universities are realizing. The ADVANCE Center at URI has been focusing on these issues for 5 years, and provides a turn-key, pre-existing entity that is well poised to inform and enable continuing inclusion initiatives at URI.

Addressing emerging issues. The ADVANCE Center can provide an expedient solution to a myriad of current concerns. ADVANCE provides critical facilitative support services to the URI community that supplement the services offered by Affirmative Action and Human Resources, through a Work-Life Center and a Faculty Recruitment and Retention

Office. It will promote unified collaborations with the variety of offices and diversity initiatives on campus, including an expanded Equity Coalition. It has been engaged in data collection and climate study for 5 years, and has a strong cadre of senior faculty supporters.

Realizing the University's Strategic Plan. The ADVANCE Center will provide the realization of much of the President's 2006-2009 Strategic Plan by focusing on diversity in faculty recruitment and promoting a climate of inclusion, to the ultimate end of producing role models and mentors for our students. In this way, the ADVANCE Center will be a concrete and lasting testament to the importance of inclusion and diversity under this Administration at URI, ultimately fueling student diversity.

Institutionalize ADVANCE. ADVANCE is an "institutional transformation" grant. Institutionalizing the ADVANCE Center will capitalize on the investments URI has put into the ADVANCE program, whose accomplishments have been significant but not sufficient to achieve ultimate diversity goals at URI. It will provide an easy transition, absorbing and expanding an existing, thriving grant-funded enterprise into an institutional office that responds to the needs of faculty, staff, and students at URI. A permanent center is an expectation of NSF as an outcome of the program (see *Attachment A*).

Forming a Partnership. The President has approved a permanent space to be allocated for a continuation, a broadening, and a coalescing of diversity and inclusion initiatives and research at URI, now separately spearheaded by the ADVANCE program, the Equity Coalition, Student Affairs, AA, HR, College Diversity Committees, and the Multicultural Center, among others.

Legitimize and re-distribute volunteer efforts. URI depends on a "culture of volunteerism" to promote campus diversity efforts on campus. These efforts often inordinately overburden women and underrepresented groups, and need to be augmented with professional standing and continuity. Responsibly attending to pressing and changing needs of today's workers and students requires proactive and concrete institutional commitments, not a continued reliance just on volunteerism.

### **Benefits of Having an ADVANCE Center**

1. A permanent ADVANCE Center meets the intended requirements of the NSF funding, and responds to the commitment made to NSF in the original proposal and in response to the Site Visit team (Summer of 2006) to institutionalize ADVANCE principles at URI.
2. The following issues will be explicitly and formally addressed: a concerted focus on faculty diversity; the subtle but real challenges women and underrepresented groups in certain work/study environments face; awareness and education about creating healthy and equitable work environments
3. The Work-Life Research and Resource Center will meet faculty, staff, and student needs, while it simultaneously seeks to improve policy and to secure external funding for continued research efforts.
4. The Faculty Recruitment and Retention Office will benefit faculty, as well as administrators attempting to achieve inclusion goals, and AA and HR offices which are not positioned to provide a variety of needed services.
5. Morale and retention: an opportunity to put a visible face to URI's efforts to be a diverse, proactive, family-friendly, 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace.

6. This Center will provide formal recognition for the important work of The President's Commission on the Status of Women, People of Color, and the other Equity Committees through allocation of space and some modest resources, as they work to collaborate and streamline initiatives.
7. Ultimately, students will be the primary beneficiaries, as diversifying the faculty promotes underrepresented student recruitment and retention, and provides all students work and life tools for interacting effectively with a wide variety of people.
8. An ideal lactation space on campus will be created and closely monitored as a prototype. This will identify URI as a progressive leader in the state in supporting new mothers trying to return to the workplace.

### Description

The ADVANCE Center will be composed of two primary offices, a Faculty Recruitment and Retention Office and a Work-Life Research and Resource Center (please see enclosed figure), which will engage in the following activities:

#### 1. **Faculty Recruitment & Retention Office:**

- a. Provide training and materials in **best search practices**, including consulting with search committees, and meeting with prospective hires
- b. Work with the Provost's office in implementing a **dual career hiring program**, including promoting an active regional New England network
- c. Secure **extramural recruitment funding** to continue ADVANCE hiring initiatives
- d. Institutionalize and oversee a **faculty mentoring program**, including faculty-student mentor training
- e. Work with the Provost's office to contribute to **faculty development** initiatives (topical lunches, workshops, incentive funding, leadership training, etc.)
- f. Continue **department and college climate change initiatives** to ensure a healthy working environment for everyone, including advising college diversity committees
- g. Work with Institutional Research to **institutionalize data collection**, conduct research, and disseminate information about the status of the URI workforce, especially underrepresented groups
- h. As it currently does, this office will serve as a neutral and confidential **information and referral resource** for all faculty concerns, especially for junior and underrepresented faculty.
- i. Provide social and professional **networking opportunities** for women and underrepresented groups.

#### 2. **Work-Life Research and Resource Office**

- a. Conduct **work-life research** including the securing of outside funding
- b. Promote **flexible and responsive work policies** that continue to effectively meet the needs of our changing workforce and the changing needs of the student population. First steps have included the creation of a Work-Life-Family website, passage of a Paid Parental Leave Policy, a Dual Career Hiring Policy, the creation of the University's first Lactation Room, and the sponsoring of a Work-Life Conference Series.
- c. Provide continuing **education and awareness** about work-life balance issues, including literature, workshops, etc.

- d. Serve as an ***employee and student advocate and resource*** for issues pertaining to work-life balance issues, such as finding child and elder care, promoting family-friendly work environments, negotiating leaves, negotiating flexible and part-time work options, dual career hiring, arranging tenure stops, maintaining the Work-Life website we have created ([www.uri.edu/wlfc](http://www.uri.edu/wlfc)), etc.
- e. Maintain and evaluate use of the ***Mother's Room***, a lactation space for new mothers returning to work

### References

Bond, J.T. with Thompson, C., Galinsky, E. & Prottas, D. (2003). Highlights of the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce. New York: Families & Work Institute

Matton, J. N. & Hernandez, C.M. (2004). A new study identifies the “makes and breaks” of diversity initiatives. Journal of Organizational Excellence. Vol. 23(4), pp. 47-58.

## Attachment A

### URI Response to the July 2006 NSF Site Visit Report *Submitted to NSF October 2006*

*Relevant excerpt from the report:*

#### 10. Institutionalizing ADVANCE

The President and Provost reiterated their strong support for the ADVANCE program and sustaining its initiatives. **The President has agreed to approve a permanent space for an ADVANCE Center.** As campus re-organization plans develop, a more precise description of what this Center will focus on will unfold. The President was willing to consider the ADVANCE Center playing a central role in this re-organization and subsuming some of the functions of AA and HR. Presently, the Center is planned to serve as a focal point for diversity initiatives across campus, provide continuing recruitment and retention efforts for faculty, and provide research and resources related to the creation of a family-friendly workplace for all employees. He has agreed to a phased implementation of appropriate staffing, which will begin at the conclusion of the ADVANCE grant, with the exception of some modest amount of course release time for a faculty member, which will begin this year. The President recognizes that there needs to be support for an organized convergence of diversity efforts that presently exist on campus.

The Administration has already endorsed in writing the continuation of the Incentive Fund program through the Council for Research. In addition, they agree that several of the other successful initiatives of ADVANCE requiring modest funding should continue post-award. These include an institutional mentoring program, topical lunches, career and climate workshops, and a chair's discussion forum.