

Climate Workshops

Strengthening The Academic Work Environment To Attract & Retain Excellent And Diverse Faculty In Chemical & Mechanical Engineering

January 13, 2005

Purpose of Workshop

To increase awareness of the importance of creating and maintaining an excellent academic work environment for everyone and women scientists in particular.

Review of Initial Session

Participants from Chemical and Mechanical Engineering met with Barbara Sloan, an organizational change consultant, and members of the ADVANCE team. There were 3 inter-related goals of the session:

1. Identify Key Elements of a Great Academic Work Environment.

Participants were asked to think about their own experiences, and work in pairs and small groups to identify the key elements that would contribute to an excellent working environment in their departments. The list is attached. Participants voted on the most important of these, which included:

- The importance of new faculty
- Providing support for existing faculty
- Promoting a positive, collegial work environment
- Mentoring
- Good graduate students
- Improvements to facilities

2. Contextualize Workshop Within ADVANCE Goals .

A presentation was given describing the situation for women in academic science, nationally and at URI, emphasizing that the work environment is not experienced in the same way by all groups. A review followed of ways to promote the careers of new faculty, and women in particular.

3. Begin Planning For Future Change

Participants Were Asked To Divide Into Groups And Craft Vision Statements For The General Themes They Identified, And To Brainstorm Some Possible Action Ideas That Would Help Achieve The Goals.

Mechanical Engineering Vision Statement

Create A Department That Establishes And Maintains A Positive Work Environment That Includes: Faculty Collaboration, Positive And Constructive Review Structure; Active Recognition, Plus Other Similar Items.

Action Items

Faculty Collaboration
Provide Meeting Times On A Regular Basis (Brown Bag Lunch, Etc.)
Provide A Meeting For Joint Proposal Preparation
Positive & Constructive Review Structure
Review & Modify Existing Structure Using All Faculty Input
Active Recognition
Communication Of Awards By Chair And All Other Faculty
Provide Tangible Rewards
Create A Welcoming Climate
Ensure That All Voices Are Heard
Promote Sense Of Community
Create Informal Social Networks

Chemical Engineering Vision Statement

Enough Faculty To Meet The Future In Emerging Areas And Create An Environment To Recruit New Faculty

Action Items

Abet Profile
Reports On Present Conditions
Obtain Administrative Support
Soft Money

4. Next Steps

These Preliminary Ideas Should Be More Fully Elaborated, And The Mapped Out In A Plan For Implementation. Provided Here Are Worksheets That Can Be Used To Articulate Exact Steps, With Persons Responsible And Timeline Checkpoints. Advance Will Be Contacting Your Department For A Follow-Up Session To Continue This Planning.

Key Elements Of A Great Working Environment In Chemical And Mechanical Engineering

- Mentoring
- New Faculty Important
- More Faculty & Support
- Positive, Collegial Work Environment
- Good Graduate Students
- Facilities Improvement
- Review & Reward Structure
- Technology Support
- Support Student Goals
- Professionalism/Identification With Department
- Supportive Chair
- Take Advantage Of Opportunities
- Success Stories
- Initial Support For New Faculty
- Opportunities For Collaboration

Most Useful Aspects Of Session

- Discussing Things In Back Of Mind
- Getting Together With Faculty And Hearing What's Important To Them
- Learning That The Problems I See Are Universal
- Junior Faculty Talking With Senior Faculty
- Seeing Ideas On A List, Instead Of Lip Service
- Proposals For Action About Ideas Discussed
- Discussions Related To Improvements In Department
- Chance To Take Time To Discuss Issues That Are Important
- Learning About Advance