

Project Leadership Team

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I AM *true* **BLUE**

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The overarching goal of our ADVANCE project is to identify best practices for the recruitment, retention and promotion of women STEM faculty and thus, promote gender equity at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). This study, A Catalyst to ADVANCE the Participation and Advancement of Women in Academic STEM Careers at Middle Tennessee State University, will help us identify barriers that affect recruitment, retention, participation, and promotion of women STEM faculty on our campus.

The Project Team (PLT) directed all major activities and provided answers to the following:

1. What is the distribution of MTSU STEM faculty by gender, rank, and department?
2. What is the gender distribution of MTSU STEM faculty in leadership positions?
3. What are the outcomes of the tenure and promotion process for MTSU STEM faculty?
4. What is the allocation of resources for MTSU STEM faculty by gender?
5. What are the processes that lead to divergent outcomes and resource allocation by gender in STEM disciplines at MTSU?
6. Which policy changes could improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of STEM women at MTSU?

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**MIDDLE
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ADVANCE

**A Catalyst to ADVANCE
the Participation and
Advancement of Women
in Academic STEM Careers
at Middle Tennessee
State University**



Why ADVANCE?

Women have made significant gains in educational and workplace achievements over the past 50 years. However, women's progress in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields has been slower and uneven. More men than women enter these majors in college and pursue careers as scientists and engineers. Women are underrepresented in STEM disciplines but especially so when examining higher-ranking and leadership positions. Research shows that this underrepresentation is not related to women's abilities in these fields but is related to continued gender bias. Our project report details evidence of the various factors that contribute to gender inequities for women STEM faculty at MTSU. We propose specific recommendations for improving women STEM faculty representation, retention, and promotion.

Notably, the state of Tennessee mandated a reorganization of higher education with the 2016 Focus on College and University Success (FOCUS) Act, which has now resulted in MTSU (and five other universities) moving from a state governing board to local boards. As a result, all University policies are being reviewed. Some of the recommendations below may be addressed as part of the transition.



Recommendations**

Recommendation 1

Because salary inequity appears to be a significant concern for faculty, we recommend a comprehensive salary study and serious lobbying effort to obtain the funds to make market adjustments. The Office of the Provost completed a peer-institution salary study in 2016. Simply pointing out the inequity without funding an adjustment confirms suspicions that faculty are not compensated fairly because the work they do is not valued.

Recommendation 2

Given the perceived lack of fairness in allocation of resources combined with the notion that women do not ask effectively or frequently enough, we recommend post-hire training for women focused on the processes for resource allocation and the importance of asking.

Recommendation 3

Given the concerns women STEM faculty have about the application of the tenure and promotion policy, we recommend all departments evaluate the tenure and promotion policies regularly to ensure the policies are consistent with college, University, and governing board policies and that the policies reflect the activities that the department actually values. New faculty should receive training about the allocation of workload and the tenure and promotion policy.

Recommendation 4a

A formal mentoring structure needs to be developed to ensure that new faculty receive mentoring regardless of department chair changes.

Recommendation 4b

We recommend a systematic effort to recruit women for leadership roles.

Recommendation 5a

We recommend that departments focus part of the review of tenure and promotion policy on the service criteria for promotion to full professor.

Recommendation 5b

We recommend that the MTSU Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance evaluate the criteria for representation on committees to ensure that we strike a balance that preserves inclusiveness without over-burdening minority and female faculty members.

Recommendation 5c

We recommend a series of workshops that help women learn and experience the value of a "strategic yes."

Recommendation 6a

As a state institution, MTSU has both comprehensive policy and institutional structure in place for family leave. We recommend an evaluation of leave policy to ensure that there is some flexibility for faculty who may want to take partial leave in order to continue an active research agenda.

Recommendation 6b

We recommend that MTSU invest in a work-life coordinator. A Work-Life Coordinator in the academy would facilitate resource support in a wide range of work-life issues including: parenting, childcare, aging and elder caregiving, family services, and other support for balancing work and personal life.

****Priority action items can be found at mtsu.edu/advance/resources.php**