



# Middle Tennessee State University ADVANCE: Specific Recommendations and Action Items Needed for Change to Increase the Advancement of Women STEM Faculty

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## ABSTRACT

MTSU was awarded an NSF ADVANCE grant, *A Catalyst to ADVANCE the Participation and Advancement of Women in Academic Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Careers at Middle Tennessee State University* (HRD-1409638) to collect data on the recruitment, retention and promotion of women STEM faculty. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the climate for women STEM faculty on our campus. Our goal was to identify and understand barriers which hinder the advancement of women STEM faculty through the tenure and promotion process and into academic leadership positions. Our data collection consisted of administering an online campus climate survey and then conducting focus groups. We found several areas of concern for women STEM faculty at MTSU, ranging from compensation to frustration with the allocation of service responsibilities. Based on the findings, we recommend a set of modest yet comprehensive institutional changes and action items that should improve the persistence, retention, and satisfaction of women STEM faculty.

## MTSU ADVANCE CATALYST STUDY

- Campus survey: emphasized resource allocation, evaluation process, compensation, climate and work-life balance
- Focus groups
- Sample of 523, or 56% of full-time faculty employed by MTSU in Fall 2014
- STEM response rate of 46% of tenure-eligible faculty
- Distribution by sex in the sample and population is identical (70% men and 30% women)
- Distribution by rank varies minimally from the population.
- Untenured faculty make up 16.5% of the populations and 17.6% of the sample

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Our task was to identify best practices for the recruitment, retention and promotion of women STEM faculty at MTSU. By identify barriers affecting the success of women STEM faculty, we would promote gender equity on our campus. The Project Team 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 processes lead to divergent outcomes and resource allocation by gender in STEM disciplines?
6. Which policy changes could improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of STEM women at MTSU?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

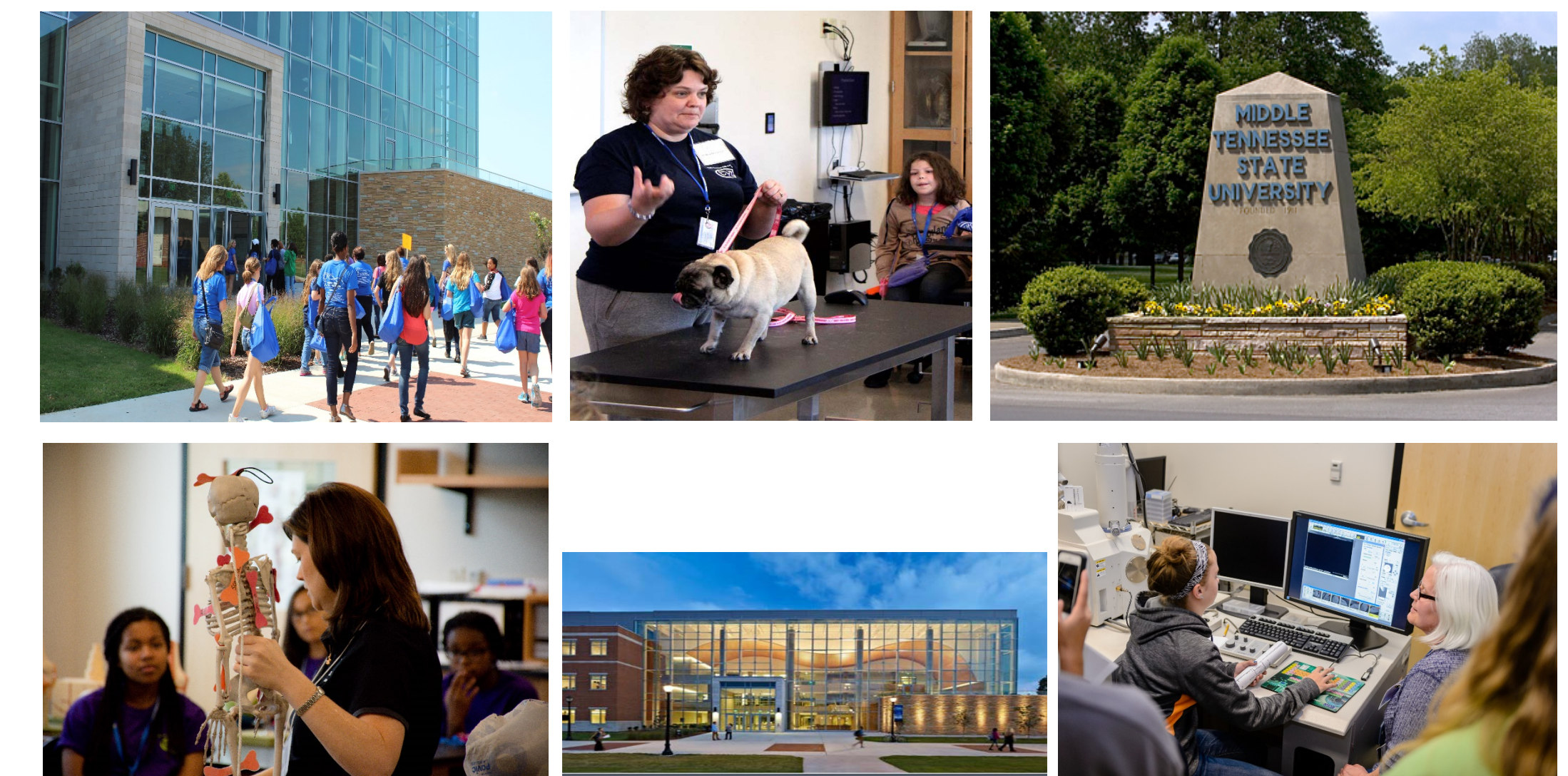
- A comprehensive salary study leading to a lobbying effort to make market adjustments.
- Post-hire training for STEM women focused resource allocation processes and the imperative of requesting funds.
- A comprehensive university evaluation of promotion and tenure policies to ensure that department and college policies reflect institutional priorities.
- Training for new faculty about institutional workload and the tenure and promotion policies.
- Formal mentoring.
- Committed, systematic recruiting of women for leadership roles.
- Review by MTSU Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance of the criteria for committee representation to ensure inclusiveness without over-burdening faculty of color and women.
- Evaluation of leave policy to ensure flexibility for women STEM faculty to continue an active research agenda.
- Investment in a work-life coordinator to facilitate resource support in a range of issues including: parenting, childcare, aging and elder caregiving, family services, etc.

## PRIORITIES

**Priority One:** Work-Life Balance initiatives facilitated by MTSU's Work-Life Coordinator

**Priority Two:** Tenure and Promotion policy examination and training for faculty

**Priority Three:** Salary and Workload goalsetting to advance equity and advancement of women STEM faculty



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