Moving Beyond STEM: Enhancing the Mid-Career Faculty Experience Across Campus

Kathleen Moore, Leanne DeVreugd, Laila Guessous, Julie Walters, and Brad Roth
Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan

The Women in Science and Engineering at Oakland University (WISE@OU) program is in its 4th year, with anticipation of no cost extension funding a 5th year of activities. Our proposal to the NSF ADVANCE PAID program had a comprehensive design. The timeline below illustrates our activities:

• Year 1 was a “mini IT” looking at campus culture in the STEM areas. (2013 ADVANCE Workshop, Beyond a Broad Climate Survey: Using Focus Groups to Drill Down to STEM Issues)
• Year 2 began our retention efforts with new STEM faculty, including a “proactive pathway to grants” and initiation of our mentoring program. (2014 ADVANCE Workshop: Engaging New STEM Faculty: A Cohort Model)
• Year 3 continued our mentoring efforts and expanded our partnerships across campus, including STEM-focused workshops in the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). Other activities revolved around criteria analysis and implicit bias training.

With the above activities well in hand, we turned our attention to promotion of tenured faculty to the rank of full professor. The percentage of women in the full professor ranks of STEM departments does not reflect the percentage of women in those departments. Our climate survey feedback indicates problems with both the process and criteria associated with promotion.

To have greater impact, we structured our mid-career efforts as a university-wide initiative. By serving the greater academic community, we hope to position WISE@OU initiatives for campus-wide sustainability as we near the completion of our funded work.

Consultation with Female STEM Associate Professors

WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion. WISE@OU invited 21 tenured associate professors in STEM departments (including psychology and political science) to an informal discussion.

From Associate Professor to Full: Productive Decision Making at Mid-Career

Plenary Session for Associate Professors

The first special event for mid-career faculty featured guest speaker Dr. Deborah DeZure, Assistant Provost for Faculty and Organizational Development at Michigan State University. WISE@OU identified her as a speaker through our state-wide network and feedback from ADVANCE colleagues. Dr. DeZure is a leader in research on faculty development, with expertise on leadership, mentoring, and chair training.

The Provost agreed to co-sponsor this event, providing funding for the lunch and refreshments during the plenary and chair sessions. Invitations were sent to faculty from across campus.

The lunchtime plenary session provided guidance for mid-career faculty as they plan their post-tenure careers. Dr. DeZure shared her tips for successfully surviving and thriving in this career stage with almost 70 faculty members and administrators. She focused on a framework for supporting faculty success and presented proactive strategies for mid-career faculty to utilize. She also addressed issues and opportunities to consider when pursuing leadership roles. Dr. DeZure’s presentation included real-life examples as well as data from a number of studies about faculty motivation and expectations. Attendees were able to ask for her advice on their own personal or department challenges.

Mentoring Session for Department Chairs

The plenary session was followed by a department chairs training session on best practices in mid-career faculty mentoring. This event was attended by 20 department chairs and administrators, including the Provost. Dr. DeZure used models for mentoring programs and answered questions about how to establish mentoring at the departmental level. Participants shared their experiences with diverse formats such as cohort mentoring and team mentoring.

Setting Goals at Mid-Career

In this workshop, WISE@OU described a step-by-step process for setting career goals. To help faculty plan their career path, workshop activities included:
• examining career path
• assessing personal strengths and weaknesses
• reviewing departmental criteria for promotion
• setting goals

This workshop was also a networking opportunity, as 20 faculty members from diverse departments on campus attended. They worked on their own and in pairs during the workshop. WISE@OU stressed the importance of having a mentor or accountability partner to provide support and encouragement, and gave faculty some recommended resources for finding such support. The importance of annual reporting was highlighted, and attendees were provided with samples of an annual report for tracking accomplishments.

Best Practices: Becoming a Full Professor

WISE@OU PI Kathleen Moore and panelists discussing best practices for promotion

Faculty members wanted to hear more about the promotion process from higher level administrators and recently promoted faculty. WISE@OU facilitated a panel with 4 campuses leaders to provide this opportunity for associate professors to learn more about best practices in the process of becoming a full professor. Panelists included the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost James Lentini, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Kevin Carcoran, the Associate Dean of the School of Engineering and Computer Science Beth Zou (a recently promoted Professor), and the Chair of Political Science Department and Professor David Dulio.

This event had an excellent turnout, with 42 faculty members attending and representing various departments on campus. There was a lively discussion. The question and answer session addressed topics such as criteria, unwritten expectations, department politics, and how to balance teaching and research.

Evaluation of Events

Faculty were pleased with our events, with the majority rating the sessions as “Excellent.” Comments, such as the ones below, praised the programs. Respondents provided comments about the best aspects of the programs and also wrote suggestions for improvement.

“I liked that so many of my post tenure experiences and emotions were validated. I found out that there are answers for how to move on. It articulated this odd stage of my career really well.”

“I thought similar ongoing presentations could be a valuable part of faculty development at OU.”

On average, our audience was 37% male faculty and 63% female faculty.

• The audience was broadly representative of campus faculty: 19% STEM; 17% Health Sciences/ Nursing/ Medical School; 17% Social Sciences; 25% Humanities; 13% Education, and 9% Business.

• The average response rate to our evaluation surveys was 54%.

Sustainability

Comments from the evaluation surveys, as well as anecdotes from colleagues, have helped WISE@OU confirm the value of the events for mid-career faculty and indicated faculty members’ enthusiasm about future events. To continue the discussion of best practices for faculty development programs, the WISE@OU leadership team facilitated a site visit for the Provost and his staff at Dr. DeZure’s home campus. The group had a positive discussion of additional models and ideas for faculty development, mentoring, and chair training, and plans are being developed to adopt similar programming at OU. Following the example of our sister institutions (Michigan State University, University of Michigan), WISE@OU is working to institutionalize faculty mentoring. A proposal for a faculty success program, similar to the one at the University of North Texas, is currently being developed.

Contact Information

Visit our website at www.oakland.edu/advance

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Email: WISE@OU-Oakland.edu or lmoore@oakland.edu

Phone: 248-370-4516 or 248-370-2338

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