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Abstract: Faculty Mentoring Programs: Increasing Institutional Capacity for a Highly Qualified Faculty

In response to growing recognition that programs must be established to support the professional advancement of women in higher education and to increase institutional capacity for developing and maintaining a highly qualified faculty, The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) established the Faculty Mentoring Program for Women (FMPW).

Now part of the ADVANCE: Institutional Transformation for Faculty Diversity grant, the FMPW is designed to meet three goals: (1) Increase women faculty's effectiveness and visibility through improved access; (2) Facilitate the attainment of individual career goals; and (3) Orient women faculty to the university.

In its third year, the program now has 53 mentees. One newly hired faculty member describes her decision to accept the UTEP position as a result of hearing about the program: "She spoke to me about the potential to achieve at UTEP; tempted me with the possibility of being able to collaborate on various international projects with her; and mentioned her own experience with the strong support new faculty receive at UTEP, particularly faculty women. She made me realize if a university goes to such great lengths to support women faculty, it must be a positive place to grow."

Benefits of the program to the institution include increased hiring, retention, and promotion of women faculty; increased productivity and job satisfaction; a climate of collegiality and cooperation; and the opportunity to nurture future institutional leaders.

Benefits to the mentor include the satisfaction of having helped a colleague and having contributed to the overall success of the university, increased knowledge from discussions with the mentee, joint research potential, and improved mentoring skills.

Benefits to the mentee include assistance in defining career goals that may improve chances for tenure and promotion, improved access to UTEP information and resources, a better understanding of the UTEP organizational structure and culture, and practical advice on balancing the faculty workload with the sometimes conflicting demands of family.

Through the Mentoring Program, institutional structures and processes were created and/or strengthened, thus building the capacity of the institution to maintain a highly qualified faculty. Presentation of the program/evaluation cycle will highlight the lessons learned and how we use assessment data for continuous quality improvement and accountability purposes. Participants will also examine opportunities and/or alternatives for fostering new faculty success or establishing mentoring programs at their own institutions.