UNLV-ADVANCE: Leveraging Information Pathways to Transform Workplace Climate
(PATHWAYS)
Project Summary

The proposed NSF ADVANCE-Adaptation project is a multidisciplinary effort that seeks to reduce gender inequities in recruitment and hiring and improve the workplace climate for STEM women faculty at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Women, especially women of color, are underrepresented across all STEM departments. PATHWAYS will work collaboratively with administrative units to introduce interventions to improve departmental practices and procedures for recruitment and hiring. Simultaneously, through targeted education and training of faculty, chairs, and deans, project interventions will also (a) reform policies and practices surrounding promotion and tenure, (b) improve evaluation systems to recognize and reward interdisciplinary work and multiple forms of scholarship, (c) improve work-life policies and practices, and (d) clarify systems for workload distribution. Through these interventions, PATHWAYS will address the needs of existing faculty while also increasing the number of women faculty, particularly women of color, in STEM departments. Further, because women at the intersection of multiply marginalized identities are particularly impacted by their departmental climates, the proposed interventions are developed with a particular eye towards addressing the needs of this group. The proposed activities are adapted from NSF ADVANCE grantees and programs with demonstrated successes in implementing similar interventions. PATHWAYS thus expects successes similar to these ADVANCE grantees’ that will yield a diverse and satisfying workplace environment where current and future women faculty can thrive and advance at UNLV.

Intellectual Merit. This proposal aims to advance knowledge within the NSF ADVANCE network and transdisciplinary fields of research. UNLV-PATHWAYS has assembled a research team with a wide range of relevant research interests and expertise. Each researcher provides key insights into the status of women STEM faculty at UNLV and can impact their respective fields of study. This multidisciplinary approach affords a broad view of faculty equity issues, particularly as they pertain to women from multiply disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, one key innovation of the proposed project lies in the team’s ability to adapt existing gender-focused interventions such that they more effectively address challenges that women from intersecting backgrounds face in the academy. Documenting the impact of these interventions will constitute a meaningful contribution to the existing STEM equity literature, which has recently begun to consider inequities from an intersectional standpoint. A second innovation pertains to social network analysis, an innovative approach to evaluation that captures improvements in interpersonal relationships and the exchange of information and resources within departments. The network structures of women and women of color that emerge and change over the course of the PATHWAYS grant will provide insight into the dynamic processes underlying changes in climate.

Broader Impacts. This project will yield a number of important benefits that are transferrable to other higher education institutions. First, the interventions targeting inequities in university and department structures seek to catalyze fundamental shifts in policy and infrastructure which are ever-present, relevant elements of higher education. These activities will contribute to the body of knowledge on organizational change at higher education institutions. Second, UNLV’s approach to leverage an existing large-scale institutional initiative to link diversity to “research excellence” will demonstrate how institutions with similar pursuits can capitalize on institutional growth and forward momentum. Presentations and publications detailing our process, focusing both on successes and challenges, will provide actionable recommendations for other universities, and PATHWAYS resources and tools will be made available for scholars and institutions to study and adopt. Finally, the interventions and expected outcomes will broaden the understanding of women’s experiences in STEM disciplines to larger society, particularly women of intersectionally marginalized identities.