

## **Activating Advocates and Allies for Gender Equity: Engaging with Male Colleagues**

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Collaborations that include men offer distinct benefits in efforts to achieve institutional transformation for gender equity; indeed, the importance of men as allies to the overall success of institutional transformation cannot be underestimated. Several studies have documented the importance of department chairs/heads (Bensimon, Ward, & Sanders, 2000) and senior faculty in creating a productive and welcoming departmental climate (Ponjuan, Conley, & Trower, 2011). Since such positions continue to be held largely by men in many institutions, men continue to play a key role as advocates and allies for institutional change regarding gender equity and parity. This paper describes the development and evaluation of a unique and important component of our NSF ADVANCE program, one designed to cultivate collaborations among faculty men and women and to foster gender equity ally identities and actions among faculty men.

In the past five years FORWARD has, through its NSF ADVANCE program, developed and implemented an Advocates and Allies initiative for male faculty, designed to augment its goal to transform the climate of the institution. This two-part program is composed of Advocates, tenured male faculty who educate themselves about issues of gender [in]equality, and Allies, male faculty whom the Advocates train as proponents for gender equity in their departments. While there is a substantial body of literature in which allyship is partially addressed in regard to systems of privilege/unearned advantage, the bulk of research on allyship in higher education has focused on the experiences of university students. Empirical research on male *faculty* acting as allies for gender equity is essentially nonexistent.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The Advocates and Allies approach to gender equity allyship is premised on the work of numerous scholars and practitioners working in social justice and equity domains. Scholars have explored unearned advantage and allyship relevant to identities that are gendered (Case, 2007; Casey, 2010; Casey & Smith, 2010; Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2003; Harper & Harris III, 2010; Hillenbrand-Gunn, Heppner, Mauch, & Park, 2010; Laker & Davis, 2011; McIntosh, 1988), racialized (Howard, 2006; Lowery, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2007; Maher & Thompson-Tetreault, 2007; McIntosh, 1990; Pinterits, Poteat, & Spanierman, 2009; Prime, Foust-Cummings, Salib, & Moss-Racusin, 2012; Reason, Scales, & Roosa Millar, 2005; Roybal Rose, 1996), enabled (Barnes, 2003; Barnes & Sheldon, 2010; Beretz, 2003; Evans, Assadi, & Herriott, 2005; Kudlick, 2003), and heterosexed (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; Broido, 2000; Burn, Kadlec, & Rexer, 2005) – and there is a growing literature on the intersections thereof (Block, Balcazar, & Keys, 2001; Coston & Kimmel, 2012; Knapp, 2008; Montgomery & Stewart, 2012). While the majority of empirical research has involved college-age individuals, a smaller but growing literature is emerging on gender equity advocacy research

with men in corporate settings (Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Prime, et al., 2012; Prime & Moss-Racusin, 2009) and other socio-cultural milieus (Barker, et al., 2010; Casey & Smith, 2010; Flood, 2005). Taken together, these literatures provide sound preliminary roadmaps for men in academic positions and the FORWARD Advocate and Allies program has made deliberate and intentional use of those findings. Allyship on behalf of gender equity does not, of course, ‘stand alone.’ In fact, many members of the FORWARD Advocates and Allies program have previously educated themselves as anti-racist and/or lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/questioning allies. The learning acquired in those settings informs the work of the FORWARD Advocates and Allies.

In a qualitative analysis of Advocates and Allies training materials and meeting minutes, we compared (*author names to be added for the final version*, currently under revision) the FORWARD Advocates and Allies approach to elements of a successful gender equity ally program developed for adult men (Berkowitz, 2002). The findings showed that the FORWARD Advocates and Allies program utilized 12 of Berkowitz’s (2002) 19 recommendations for successful allyship. For example, themes-in-common included the necessity for men to take responsibility for gender equity/parity and to acquire knowledge about gender inequality along with an understanding of the impacts of a range of subtle gendered behaviors on workplace climate. Additional important shared elements identified as keys to the success of such programs were ongoing collaborations and consultation with women and the formation of a cohesive group identity as gender equity allies.

The FORWARD Advocates and Allies program offers an excellent model for leveraging these keys to successful allyship and for training Advocates and Allies in other institutions. Its strategies are designed to bring awareness; engage men in solution-building; provide ongoing training and discussion; increase empathy and understanding of impact; provide opportunities for men-only dialogues; encourage reverse mentoring; acknowledge the costs that men face as gender equity allies; and be inclusive. The uniqueness and the effectiveness of the Advocates and Allies program has attracted the attention of other institutions, including requests to provide Advocates and Allies program training, invitations from other institutions to share information about the program, and requests to use the materials developed in and for this program.

### **Goals and Objectives of the ADVANCE FORWARD Advocates and Allies Program**

Specifically, the overarching goals of the ADVANCE FORWARD project are to improve the climate across campus, enhance recruitment efforts, increase retention and advancement, and open leadership opportunities especially in STEM disciplines. The work of the FORWARD Advocates and Allies has been instrumental in educating faculty men to bring about positive climate changes and create a supportive network for and with faculty women. As a result of these combined efforts, transformational change is being accomplished at our institution.

Evidence of this change includes the fact that there are more women in administrative positions and more women full professors (a more than 50% increase over five years), due in part to programming that targets promotion from associate professor to professor. New or revised policies have changed promotion and tenure procedures (clarified tenure track extension);

required announcements of opportunities for intra-institutional administrative appointments; addressed changes in students' evaluations of instruction; supported on-campus childcare; emphasized spousal/partner hiring; and created the option for modified duties. As a result of search committee training that addresses best practices and unconscious bias, members of faculty search committees have developed greater awareness of search pitfalls and improved skills for successfully completing their work. Substantial funding has been devoted to research support for women faculty (LEAP grants; course buyouts; travel grants; leadership/development grants; laboratory remodeling). In addition to these efforts and accomplishments, the project has directed efforts to enhance recruitment and retention of Native American women faculty. Most recently, the program has initiated a focus on women faculty experiencing disability/disablism.

### **Advocates and Allies: Planning and Implementation**

The Advocates and Allies component of the ADVANCE FORWARD program is based on the knowledge that in traditionally male dominated disciplines and in male dominated institutions, men are critical partners in achieving institutional transformation. With that dynamic in mind the ADVANCE FORWARD project has created a component designed to develop a critical mass of faculty men who can serve as advocates and allies for and with their female colleagues. The mission of the FORWARD Advocates and Allies Program is to:

- educate male faculty about ADVANCE FORWARD's goals for institutional transformation,
- introduce men to skills and strategies for bringing about positive change in their departments and colleges, and
- use that knowledge to build a supportive network of male allies for female faculty.

Faculty members of the Advocates and the Allies groups have somewhat different roles in these efforts. The NSF ADVANCE grant proposal identified an "Allies" program as an innovative way to garner support from male faculty for institutional transformation. In the fall of 2008, an initial steering committee, working from the grant proposal, suggested that the program be called "Advocates and Allies" as a way to distinguish members who meet more frequently and offer on-campus training (Advocates) from those who attend that training and other campus events, and function as allies for women faculty within their departments and colleges (Allies).

The Advocates are faculty men with a strong interest in and commitment to supporting faculty women in their departments, colleges, and the university. They are expected to be active and effective proponents of gender diversity and equality specifically in terms of increasing the number of female faculty, encouraging the hiring and promotion of female faculty in administrative positions, and ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of women within their academic units. Advocates intentionally develop and enhance their own understanding of gender bias and its impact on the academic careers of women. The Advocates develop and regularly administer the Ally training. They also schedule informal meetings as a follow-up to the initial Ally training to discuss situations that arise in departments and possible ways to address those situations.

The Allies are faculty men who identify themselves as allies of faculty women; they participate in the Ally training and sign an Ally Agreement, a brief statement formalizing their

commitment to institutional transformation for gender equity. Allies are expected to take action primarily within their departments: speaking up at a meeting, inviting a female colleague to collaborate on research, talking about teaching and observing each other in the classroom, or serving on a committee so their female colleague doesn't have to. It might also mean making sure that coffee runs, lunches, or after-work social events are open and inclusive. The objective is to have at least one Ally in every academic unit at our institution. Although any male faculty can become an ally, the focus for participation is on tenure track men who, as they are tenured, create a pool from which future Advocates can be selected.

### **Advocates and Allies: Activities**

Following a call for applications for faculty men interested in serving as FORWARD Advocates, eight senior men were appointed as Advocates in spring of 2009. This initial group worked to clarify their role, identify what they would need from a trainer (someone to train Advocates to be trainers of Allies) and select future readings as part of their training. The Advocates spent over a year undergoing extensive training and preparing their own training curriculum for future Allies. FORWARD Advocates read materials about unconscious bias and gender bias such as *The Gender Knot* and *Privilege, Power and Difference* by Allan Johnson. They attended a number of gender training sessions offered on campus through the ADVANCE FORWARD program and worked to bring additional supportive male faculty into the group. Every year through a campus-wide call for applications new male faculty join the Advocates group.

Advocates meet once a month as part of their own ongoing education and to coordinate trainings for the Allies. These monthly meetings allow Advocates to have men-only discussions drawing on various gender equity and allyship literatures (a reading list developed by FORWARD Advocates is available upon request as a resource for education and discussions). FORWARD Advocates piloted two Ally training sessions in fall 2009 and since then have offered two training sessions per semester. The Ally training is structured to help men understand basic aspects of male privilege and being an ally (Table 1) and to equip them with skills that will help them enhance their department climate and support their female colleagues (Table 2). The ADVANCE FORWARD project maintains a list of Allies who have signed the Ally agreement (Table 3).

Using the feedback from training sessions, the Advocates revise and update their Ally training materials. Advocates also provide four Ally follow-up trainings (two per semester) to help Allies enhance their skills for addressing gender equity and improving the climate for women faculty on campus. Advocates have developed case studies to use in their Ally training and in the follow-up discussions (Tables 4 and 5).

The Advocates and Allies program has helped the ADVANCE FORWARD project extend its efforts more deeply into institutional life. Several Advocates have been elected to serve in key leadership positions such as president of faculty senate, department chair, or associate dean. Three deans have set goals for male faculty participation (50-60%) in the Advocates and Allies program. In addition to regular Ally training sessions, Advocates have offered Ally training for men in specific colleges at the request of several deans. Since spring 2009, 24 faculty men

have served as an Advocate for the ADVANCE FORWARD project. Over 120 (30%) tenure-track faculty men have attended an Ally training and have signed an Ally agreement.

**Table 1: Examples of Male Privilege**

- Never having to be the first male faculty member or department chair in your department.
- Never having to be the first male full professor in your department, or be an associate professor who has to wonder: will this department ever promote a man to full professor?
- Never having somebody raise the question: was he hired because of his gender?
- Never having somebody wonder: did his gender give him an edge in that grant competition?
- Never having to wonder: would the department accept a man as a chair or head? Would the college accept a man as the Dean?
- Always having role models or mentors of your same gender in your department or college.
- Seldom feeling out of place at departmental, college, or university meetings because of your gender.
- Never having to feel like you stand out in a room full of men.
- You can deviate from group ground rules, expectations, and “appropriate” group behavior (e.g., sitting outside a circle, coming late to a meeting, turning down a committee assignment, etc.) and not have it be attributed to your gender.
- Feeling confident that your gender won’t be used to determine whether or not you fit in your department
- Knowing that you can go to a meeting with an administrator and be fairly confident that you will meet with someone of your same gender.
- Knowing that your evaluations for tenure will be reviewed by faculty of your same gender.
- Being able to address a family issue and not have it reflect negatively on your reputation or commitment to your career.

**Table 2: Examples of Things Allies Can Do to Improve Department Climate**

- Give women faculty your full attention (e.g. make eye contact, nod your head in agreement) when they are speaking to you privately or in departmental meetings.
- Make sure that women faculty members have equal space to speak in departmental meetings. Men are far more likely to interrupt women when they speak compared to other men.
- Make sure that women faculty members are invited to informal departmental gatherings (e.g., lunches and other social activities).
- Talk to women faculty about their research. Men are far less likely to ask women faculty about their research activities compared to their other male colleagues.
- Nominate women for important awards, prizes, committees, and positions.
- Pass along information equally to female and male colleagues. Men often receive information key to success in academia through informal mechanisms. It is hard to be successful accidentally.
- Educate yourself about gender bias and discrimination in academia (see list of recommended readings on ally blackboard page).
- Educate yourself about male privilege and advantage (see list of recommended readings on all blackboard page).
- Volunteer to serve on departmental and university committees (e.g. search committees, PTE, faculty senate, etc.) with the specific purpose of being an ally for gender equity.

**Table 3: Ally Agreement**

- I will continue to educate myself about unconscious bias, male privilege and other barriers that contribute to a chilly climate for women faculty.
- I will work to educate my male colleagues about gender equity, unconscious bias, and male privilege.
- I will do my part to create a more equitable climate for women faculty in my department, college, and university.
- I will participate in periodic ally trainings and other ADVANCE FORWARD sponsored events in an effort to be more supportive of female faculty and students.
- I will encourage those who have experienced or witnessed acts of bias, bigotry or hate on our campus to report those experiences so they can be addressed.

**Table 4: Sample Case Study I**

**Description:** Dr. Wagner is a professor in an engineering department that, like many engineering departments in the country, has a student body dominated by men. In fact, female enrollment in Dr. Wagner's department is only about 10%, which is well below the already low national average of 20%. Dr. Wagner has noted that his female students often outperform their male counterparts and he values the unique perspectives that his female students often provide. Long term, Dr. Wagner hopes to see an equal distribution of women and men enrolled in his department, and, to this end, he strives to be an effective advocate for women.

Currently, Dr. Wagner teaches a junior-level course to a class of 24 students, three of whom are women. The course includes a laboratory component, which students traditionally complete in teams of three. Although there are not enough women to ensure that each of the eight laboratory groups includes a woman, Dr. Wagner does the best he can and forms groups so that three of the eight include one woman each. Shortly after posting the group assignments, the three female students approach Dr. Wagner and request that they be assigned to the same laboratory team. Dr. Wagner gently denies the request, explaining that group assignments are effectively random, that neither male or female students choose their own partners, and that diversity often helps improve overall group performance.

**Activity:** Discuss Dr. Wagner's approach to team formation and his decision to deny the request of three female students to be placed on the same team. Would there be any difference if it had been a group of three male students who requested to be placed on a single team? What if the class instead had four women and all four women had desired to be on the same laboratory team, keeping in mind that laboratory teams in this course are traditionally sized at three? What other factors come to mind?

**Table 5: Sample Case Study II**

A group of senior male faculty in your department invite either of the women in the department. While these gathering are basically social, work issues do frequently come up. Should you say something?

## **Advocate/Allies: Evaluation of Impact**

In ongoing efforts to evaluate the impact and assess the effectiveness of the Advocates and Allies program at our institution, we continually collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Because so little is known about the development and efficacy of male faculty advocacy groups, we are guided by several research questions:

- Why do men participate in an Advocate or Ally program?
- How do institutions engage male faculty to be Advocates or Allies for gender equity?
- What strategies exist to be effective as an Advocate or Ally?
- What role do supportive members of the majority group play in changing gendered institutions?
- Does training increase the effectiveness of these groups? In what ways?

The majority of the data that we have collected on the impact and effectiveness of the Advocates and Allies program have come from interviews and focus groups of Advocates, Allies, and women faculty. The external evaluator for the ADVANCE FORWARD program interviewed 15 of the Advocates and also conducted two focus groups with faculty men who identified as Allies and two focus groups with faculty women. The initial results of the focus groups and interviews conducted by the external evaluator demonstrate the positive impacts that the Advocates and Allies program has had on the men as individual faculty members and on the overall campus climate.

From the quantitative data we have learned that the Allies program is having a positive impact on the male faculty who attend the trainings. In particular, 92.7% of male faculty attending the Ally trainings agreed that they would be able to implement new strategies to promote a more equitable climate for women faculty at our institution as a result of participating in the training (36.4% Strongly Agreed; and 56.4% Agreed).

One important change shared by an Advocate was that the trainings “really did make me more aware of a lot of things going on around me.” A second Advocate explained, “I know just from being involved with the Allies and Advocates I’m getting a better understanding and a better appreciation for broader climate, which is not terribly easy to define, it’s not something that you can point and say, ‘This is the problem, this is the problem.’” In addition to this growing awareness, each of the Advocates who were interviewed identified concrete actions in which he was now engaged as a result of the training. For example, one male faculty administrator shared, “...maybe being an Advocate helped me to realize that I could try to put in as a requirement for a position, something that acknowledged diversity.” In addition to the individual changes and actions, Advocates also identified positive impacts on the broader campus climate. For example, one Advocate noted, “The emphasis [of the Advocates] has been on getting Allies in departments and getting those men to be more aware of things and being able to speak up and bring issues to the front. It is about climate change.”

The Allies who participated in these focus groups named several ways that the Ally training helped to create positive change within themselves. For example, one Ally shared, “I did the training last year and I found it was helpful, in terms of, getting us to think about various kinds of biases that we ourselves might have, things we’ve seen, what we might do.” Another Ally

commented, “I’ve learned some things that I wasn’t as aware of or maybe not aware of it at all. And, it also keeps reminding you about some things that you need to pay attention to, look for, respond to, and so on.” A further example of a new insight gained by a male faculty as a result of the Ally training was described this way:

Going through the ally training I started to think more about having a lactation space available. That was something I had never considered before. And I was like, embarrassed that I had never thought of it before. That piece of information made me think like, how many other things am I doing that I don’t realize? And I can talk the talk, but what am I, what kind of signals am I sending? Or what kind of things am I doing, especially in the classroom in science where it’s a really, it’s a pretty scary place for a lot of female students.

The Allies who participated in the focus groups also shared that they had become more mindful of the ways in which they interacted with women faculty. One Ally shared that he became more “supportive of the female faculty at the university and, especially in our departments, and, to be there, to be accessible or to have our antennae out and be watching for situations that are troubling.” Another Ally reflected on the possible impact the program was having on the larger campus climate, “I mean, the existence of the group, I wonder if that sends a signal all over campus that there now is this formal group [the Ally program] that includes men who are interested in [gender] equity.”

Finally, a key component of our evaluation of the Advocates and Allies program was carrying out two focus groups with women faculty discussing their impressions of this program. These focus groups were also conducted by the external evaluator, and the participants identified a number of benefits related to the Advocates and Allies program. For example, one woman faculty member explained, “It’s nice to know that if I have a problem I can go maybe to this man [an Advocate] who has tenure on campus who might support me if tell him my story. Or that I know that there is going to be a group of men [Advocates and Allies] who are going to be advocating for an issue that is relevant to women specifically on campus.” Another woman faculty member shared that one of the benefits of the Ally program was having male colleagues who “recognize something that happened that makes them feel uncomfortable and talk about it with other men and then go back and [address it in the department]. That’s exactly the type of thing that should be going on...”

## **Conclusion**

The FORWARD Advocates and Allies program offers a promising model for engaging men as advocates and allies for gender equity in higher education institutions and we are continuing to expand the dimensions of this program in our own university. Our current effort is to identify an advisory group of women who will help us formalize a reverse mentoring component. We also continue to research the impact of the Advocates and Allies program while at the same time we are sharing what we have discovered so far as part of our ADVANCE grant dissemination plan. As part of the implementation of that plan we have taken the training to other institutions and have shared the materials already developed. As a result of these dissemination efforts, we have begun collaborative work with other institutions to enhance our understanding of how/why faculty men become allies. This type of collaboration will

undoubtedly lead to further development of and research about male allyship on behalf of gender equity in higher education.

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