



July 18, 2006

Dear Members of the NSF Site Visit Team:

The National Science Foundation's funding of the URI ADVANCE Project has had a profound impact on the life of our university community. We have recently reaffirmed our commitment to our foundational values and one of the most compelling is our dedication to an inclusive environment that values diversity, openness, and fairness. Through ADVANCE, we have had the essential assistance to focus our attention on an underrepresented group, i.e., women faculty in the STEM disciplines. Since its inception, the URI ADVANCE project has joined forces with the Women's Center and the President's Commission on the Status of Women not only to place the specific issue of the paucity of women in STEM disciplines front and center but also to initiate climate change that will be sustained once the time period of this funded project comes to an end.

I recently submitted the *Strategic Plan: 2006-2009 Steps Toward Transformation* to the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education (RIBGHE) and am pleased to report that many of the strategies and metrics relate to the core values and practical steps which will ensure that the URI ADVANCE Project leaves the institution a better place for women in all fields.

Furthermore, the work of ADVANCE is a constant reminder to us all to develop a sustainable view of equity and to nurture the commensurate opportunity that will benefit all members of the institution. The following are but a few of the strategies and metrics we will employ as we work our way through the strategic plan. They are representative of all areas of the University, e.g. Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and University Advancement, but they resonate with a single awareness that inclusion is superior to exclusion, that a climate that is warm for all is better than one that is chilly for some, and that a focus on equality for any single group will improve the environment for all.

Increase hiring and retention of faculty and staff from underrepresented groups by divisions.

Continue to develop and expand a mentor system for new hires from underrepresented groups.

When the opportunity arises to hire a qualified individual from an underrepresented group, move forward to employ that person, if in the judgment of the Provost an appropriate vacancy within that department or program is projected within the next three years.

Plan a dual career couples program for faculty and staff that includes a regularly updated list of searches in the area.

Identify specific positions that are traditionally defined by gender and recruit to achieve better diversity.

Through leadership in Human Resource Administration, enhance the workplace environment and develop family-friendly work policies that promote a positive environment for dual career couples and women in the workplace.

Use all Advancement communications to demonstrate the achievements and the participation of women and persons of color (alumni, faculty, and students) as well as publicize URI programs that promote diversity.

Develop Alumni Relations programming that attracts and involves women and persons of color.

Ensure that a female serves as Co-Chair of the Annual Fund, and at least four women serve on the Capital Campaign leadership committee.

Create a visible and vibrant institutional commitment to multicultural competence (awareness, knowledge, skills).

Develop a comprehensive URI Diversity Climate Assessment program with methods and instruments, beginning with existing data and developing new sources.

Each college will develop and implement programs to eliminate identified barriers and strengthen existing programming that foster feelings of inclusion.

Chairs of college diversity committees meet regularly to share “pockets of excellence.”

Develop and offer faculty and staff “cultural competence” training.

Our commitment to diversity and support of underrepresented groups is not new. We have focused intensively on inclusiveness among our faculty, staff and students for over a decade; however, the ADVANCE Project has assisted us in breaking down specific gender barriers and preconceptions that had eluded us in the STEM disciplines. We are very proud of our ADVANCE Fellows. Their achievements to date speak most eloquently about the value of their presence among us. Perhaps more importantly, they embody possibility for our student body. Young men can see women as esteemed colleagues in these traditionally male dominated fields and young women can see themselves as successful participants on an equal playing field.

Members of the ADVANCE Leadership Team have provided me with wise counsel and strong support for my overarching goal of inclusiveness for URI. I am fully persuaded that their role with ADVANCE has strengthened their voices to the benefit of the entire community. I look forward to meeting with you to further explore the value this NSF support has provided to the University of Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Carothers  
President

cc: ADVANCE Leadership Team