

Transforming the Climate and Advancing STEM Women at JSU, an HBCU in the South (*JSUAdvance*)

Project Summary

Jackson State University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), has accepted the challenge to transform the overall work climate for women faculty in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and the Social and Behavioral Science (SBS) disciplines. Although women have a definite presence on the campuses of HBCUs, women faculty with backgrounds in the STEM disciplines are disproportionately over-represented in lower faculty ranks and instructor positions, and are notably less visible in lower, middle, and upper administration levels. This is also true at JSU.

JSU has made some progress in identifying challenges which exist for female STEM faculty members. However, a greater challenge still exists because of the ongoing gender disparities and the lack of understanding of gender issues at HBCUs. Therefore, the overall purpose of the *JSUAdvance* program will be to enhance the overall work climate for women faculty in the STEM and SBS disciplines, while informing the larger academic community about issues that are relevant to women at HBCUs. The goals of the *JSUAdvance* program are to:

1. Advance the careers of all women faculty in the STEM and SBS disciplines by reinforcing their career and professional development at JSU in order to increase the number of tenured women at the Associate and Full Professor ranks and in administration at JSU with STEM-SBS backgrounds.
2. Develop and support a network of research and career mentors for women faculty in the STEM-SBS disciplines at JSU.
3. Foster and sustain a climate and culture which seeks the inclusion of all faculty regardless of gender, race, and other target characteristics at the university and in the department.
4. Establish a proactive disposition regarding the assessment of university policies, procedures, and practices, which supports all aspects of diversity and ensures the greatest contributions from all members of the JSU community

Intellectual Merit:

There is very limited research that has been conducted on the advancement of females within the STEM disciplines at HBCUs. This proposal plans to implement several strategies that have been utilized at other Advance Institutions; however, not all have been proven at HBCUs. Additionally, the Social Science Study will provide a better understanding of gender issues at HBCUs, while identifying the success factors and barriers.

Broader Impact:

The proposed project will have a great impact on advancing women which have been traditionally underrepresented in the STEM related disciplines. It will add an understanding of the issues that impact women and will promote strategies that can be adopted by other HBCUs. Results will be widely disseminated through traditional means and commitments have been obtained from other HBCUs in EPSCoR states. This will ensure that there is a broader adoption of positive practices for advancing women.