From what context did Advancing Diversity through the Alignment of Policies and Practices (ADAPP) project at Michigan State University arise?

We wanted to look at the opportunity presented by the National Science Foundation programme for the Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers (NSF ADVANCE), as well as what other institutions had achieved with previous ADVANCE awards. The project was viewed as taking an opportunity to jump-start institutional efforts to advance diversity, not only in STEM disciplines, but throughout the campus.

Have you seen a marked change in the way in which colleges operate because of the adjustments you have now put in place?

Our project began in the three colleges housing most STEM disciplines. In subsequent years, using institutional resources, other colleges were brought on board to make the same changes in organisation and process.

In the three grant-supported colleges, there have been marked changes in the way they operate. There is increased structure in the hiring process beginning with standardised orientations of all search committees continuing with the identification of criteria, and eventually using those criteria to guide decision making.

Consistent structures have been put into place for annual reviews, and clearer guidelines and processes for reappointment, tenure and promotion have been instituted.

How do you cut the proverbial red tape and improve the speed at which policies are amended/created and implemented?

We have consciously chosen to use established methods for policy amendment and adoption, working through the academic governance process. These processes have been developed and used over decades, and have a high degree of perceived legitimacy among faculty.

We believed our ultimate success under the ADAPP programme would be enhanced because we went through the process of faculty review, input and finally, endorsement.

Are the training and development opportunities adequately addressing the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to promote the success of women faculty?

While training and development activities are occurring, much more is needed. The demands on faculty time continue to increase, so finding creative ways to engage faculty and help them develop the competencies needed to promote the success of women faculty is an ongoing challenge. New formats and delivery methods that fit the work-life demands of faculty must be discovered, created and embedded to help faculty gain and enhance these competencies.

How are you rewarding faculty for their efforts?

At Michigan State University (MSU), colleges most successful in hiring a diverse faculty and developing and advancing those faculty are being rewarded financially. These recurring budget increases have been turned into additional positions, and therefore resources, in many of those colleges.

More important than financial remuneration is the intrinsic reward associated with being part
IN A 2009 report by the US Department of Commerce, it was found that the gender gap in STEM industries was hugely disproportionate compared to other jobs. While the study showed women fill close to half of all jobs in the US economy, within STEM disciplines men accounted for 76 per cent of all jobs.

As women can earn on average 33 per cent more from a STEM job, there is a lot to gain from pursuing one of the thousands of careers that now fall under the STEM umbrella. Equally, their perspective and insights open up new opportunities for R&D and innovation.

This fact has not gone unnoticed, and it is the premise for the Advancing Diversity through the Alignment of Policies and Practices (ADAPP) Initiative which is led by University of California, Riverside Chancellor Kim A Wilcox and Theodore H Curry, Associate Provost and Associate Vice President at Michigan State University (MSU).

ADVANCE
Historically, the lack of women in STEM fields has been due, in part, to pre-existing gender stereotypes and few female role models. In addition, many believe the way these subjects are taught fail to grab the attention of females in the classroom or lecture hall.

There has been a recent surge in women obtaining STEM higher education qualifications due to a shift in priorities of women, such as the delay or refrain from motherhood, yet this has failed to translate to the professional world, with fewer women than men working in a STEM profession post-education. To address this gender gap, the National Science Foundation (NSF) established the Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers (ADVANCE) programme in 2001 to increase participation in and retention of women in STEM.

To remain competitive, every nation must invest in its knowledge economy through programmes like ADVANCE. “Our country’s ability to remain a global leader and maintain the standard of living and quality of life we wish for all of our citizens requires the development of world-class talent in STEM,” explains Wilcox. “A diverse scientific community drawing from the full array of experiences of our citizens is necessary to have both the number and calibre of professionals needed in these fields.”

In the 13 years since its inception, the NSF has invested over US $130 million to support various ADVANCE projects, including Institutional Transformation (IT) initiatives at universities and colleges. These are exclusive to higher-level education organisations that employ innovative and systemic approaches to transform organisational structures and cultures to increase female involvement and opportunities in STEM academic careers.

ADAPP MSU is one such IT project; awarded funding in 2008, over a period of five years, it sought to fulfill national objectives and measure effectiveness of diversity promotion.
INTENSE INTELLIGENCE

ADVANCING DIVERSITY THROUGH THE ALIGNMENT OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES (ADAPP)

OBJECTIVES
To align values of diversity and quality with academic human resources (HR) policies and practices.

KEY COLLABORATORS
Tamara Reid Bush (co-PI) Assistant Professor in the College of Engineering • Clair Luz (co-PI) Assistant Professor in the Geriatrics and Gerontology Program • Melissa McDaniels (co-PI) Associate Dean and Director • Mark Roehling (co-PI) Professor of Human Resource Management • Paulette Cranberry Russell, JD, Senior Advisor to the President and Director of the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives

FUNDING
National Science Foundation

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Kim A Wilcox is the ninth Chancellor of the University of California, Riverside. Before this appointment, he was Michigan State University Provost, Executive Vice President and Professor of Communicative Sciences and Disorders. As Provost, Wilcox had oversight responsibilities for more than 200 academic programmes, nearly 49,000 students and almost 5,000 faculty and academic staff. During that time, he implemented major institutional restructuring and strategic positioning initiatives, and helped lead a capital campaign that raised US $1.4 billion.

Theodore H (Terry) Curry is Associate Provost and Associate Vice President for Academic Human Resources at Michigan State University. Prior to becoming Associate Provost, he served for eight years as Director of the graduate School of Labor and Industrial Relations (now the School of Human Resources and Labor Relations) at the same institution. He is also Professor of Human Resources Management and holds graduate and undergraduate degrees in Business Administration with concentration in HR management from the University of Kansas.

By better-integrating structures and making expectations clear and resources accessible to all diversity is able to prevail

by increasing the number of women recruited; improving their retention and advancement; and improving the climate for women in these colleges. The belief is that by using six guiding principles – quality, inclusiveness, transparency, objectivity, consistency and alignment – ADAPP can achieve these goals to promote diversity.

ADAPP
Because ADAPP already had many of the instruments available at other IT universities (Family Resource Centers, Offices of Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives), but had seen little effect on female performance, it opted for a different approach. By looking at the policy rather than the programmes – underlying success, ADAPP presented an entirely novel view into ADVANCE’s strengths and weaknesses.

Using tenants of the human resources department, Wilcox, Curry and their colleagues set out to revolutionise MSU. “Instead of attempting to ‘level the playing field’, our approach sought to ‘rebuild the playing field’ with objective, consistent and transparent policies designed to recruit, hire, develop and advance a high quality and inclusive faculty,” Wilcox enthuses.

To remain focused, Wilcox, Curry and their colleagues targeted the three colleges with the highest levels of STEM employment – Engineering, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. Using principles taken from the business world, known as Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Wilcox was able to address the contributions of the University’s human resources (HR) functions to the achievement of important goals. “Research in SHRM has shown that by developing objective and transparent criteria and practices in our target areas, and consistently applying them across individuals and units, potential bias, both intentional and unintentional, is reduced,” he adds.

In essence, SHRM is concerned with vertical and horizontal alignment. Vertical HR alignment is the degree to which HR initiatives are linked to support the organisation’s overall mission, values, goals and so, in the context of MSU, how well HR-related objectives, policies and decisions support the strategic objectives of the university as a whole.

Horizontal HR alignment, on the other hand, is the degree to which HR policies and practice are effectively coordinated and integrated with each other across the whole organisation. Thus, it addresses recruitment and selection, pay and benefits, training and development, promotion and tenure to contribute to the university’s mandate of improving female employment, inclusion and retention.

By better-integrating these structures and making expectations clear and resources accessible to all, diversity is able to prevail. This was highlighted in 2006 by Cornell University, which theorised that by aligning employees with the firm’s larger strategic goals, they are able to manage human capital effectively (optimising talent, learning agility and innovation capabilities) and ultimately attain strategic success. ADAPP proves this works in practice.

The most effective way to create an environment where staff can work dynamically is through the establishment of Faculty Excellence Advocates (FEA); senior faculty members within each college who will assist with successfully implementing best practices. These FEA worked with Wilcox’s grant personnel to conduct surveys and collect data on the current practices in departments and the faculty perceptions of hiring, evaluation, resource allocation and advancement.

While early results indicate that best practices and current policies are not always followed, Wilcox has since tried to reverse this situation by incenting colleges that hire and support the most diverse faculties. Additionally, the establishment of regular workshops throughout the University meant its staff could be fully educated on the matter and therefore provided the tools to succeed.

Substantial changes in policy and practice have been documented and as a result faculties have become more diverse. Major changes in the selection and hiring process have been the most noticeable improvement: with greater structure, standardisation and regular review, the process can seek out the highest level of talent from men, women and minorities.

EXPANDING
As the lines of communication are now clear, and new methods have been implemented, it is expected that these tools – which have seen great success in business – can become useful for academic diversity and overall performance. Although the ADAPP programme was initially created for and aimed at women in STEM, Wilcox does not want to restrict its reach: “It is our belief that a newly created and integrated academic HR system should be of benefit to all faculty member of the university, and especially those who have traditionally been disadvantaged, in order to bring greater equality and success to all.”

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