



EEES

Engineering Equity Extension Service

How Can I Help?: Working with Engineering Faculty to Change Classrooms

Much faculty development consists of simple workshops and colloquia—evangelizing experiences that don't affect faculty behaviors. (Buckley, 2002)¹

Unfortunately, little work has been done at the college level to assess the impact of professional development on faculty; however, many who work with faculty have found the following strategies to be effective.

I. Work with faculty on an ongoing basis.

While there is no agreement about how much time is needed for professional development to be effective, it is clear that one day/one session professional development events are not effective. When you work with faculty, plan to have multiple sessions or some other type of follow-up.

II. Actively involve faculty in developing products.

People are most likely to invest their time and energy when they are actively involved and have an opportunity to provide input into what is being done. By asking the faculty to be participants, rather than simply audience members, you increase their engagement *and* the resources available to you.

III. Let faculty know what's in it for them.

WIIFM (What's In It For Me?) is a legitimate question for faculty to ask. Even when it isn't asked, it should be answered. The benefits to faculty may be educational, psychological, financial, or even culinary (we give out homemade chocolate chip cookies). Seeing the benefits to them, or to their students, can help faculty get engaged and stay involved.

IV. Actively recruit faculty to participate in your efforts.

Legendary Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill liked to tell the story of the elderly lady who told him that even though he had done a lot for her, she wasn't going to vote for him. "Why not?" he asked. Because, she said, he hadn't asked her. So if you want faculty to be involved in your efforts; ask them. Flyers and e-mail can only take you so far. Ask individual faculty members, either in person or by phone, to be involved and explain to them why you want them to be a part of your efforts. This is more time consuming but it is also much more effective.

V. Focus on solutions and responses to problems rather than on whose fault the problems are.

It is often important to provide an overview of the problem, including both statistics and stories. Your emphasis needs to be on what participating faculty can do to make things better. Blaming people, particularly the people with whom you are working is, well, dumb. It is also usually wrong to blame individuals. It may be tempting to fault all men for sexism and see all women as oppressed,

¹Buckley, D.P. (2002). In pursuit of the learning paradigm. EDUCASE. p. 29.



but we all know women who are sexist and men who aren't.

VI. Give participating faculty a chance to be heard and to influence the next steps you take, both in training and in actions.

As the companion handout, “What Can I Do? Making Engineering Classrooms More Effective for Women (and Men) Students” indicates, there are a number of research-based strategies available to improve engineering classrooms. That said, there are always good ideas to be added. In addition, soliciting ideas from people can encourage them to feel invested in the process and more willing to listen to your suggestions.

VII. Be realistic in your expectations of change.

Jo Sanders² does an excellent job of providing an overview of agents of change versus those who would be roadblocks: “You should assume that there will be a continuum of acceptance of the need for gender equity action on the part of participating faculty. I find it is helpful to think of people affected by change in five groups:

- Leaders**, who are committed to change and will work hard for it.
- Supporters**, who will help but not lead.
- Fence-sitters**, who won't do anything to help or to hinder.
- Skeptics**, who may passively resist the change.
- Resisters**, who will actively work against the change.”

Not everyone will get to be leaders. Your goal is to move everyone up the ladder.

VIII. Don't reinvent the wheel! Build on what others have developed.

Among the free, available materials are:

Tutorials for change:

Gender Schemas and Science Careers. The Data on Sex Disparities in Rank and Salary
Gender Schemas and Our Evaluations of Others
Gender Schemas and Our Evaluations of Ourselves
Remedies: What You Can Do
<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/gendertutorial/>

In pursuit of the learning paradigm: Coupling faculty transformation and institutional change.
<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERM0202.pdf>

Guidelines for a gender equity workshop.
<http://www.josanders.com/Pdf/Ge%20workshop.pdf>

² Sanders, J. (2003). Guidelines for a gender equity workshop. Retrieved January 6, 2007 from <http://www.josanders.com/pdf/Ge%20workshop.Pdf>



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