



ACCESS+ Initiative (HRD# 2017953) Summary

After two decades of NSF ADVANCE-funded research on gender-related diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), the **PROBLEM** is not so much a lack of evidence-based policies and practices, but rather varied and unsystematic awareness, knowledge, and adoption of these strategies. As disciplinary “melting pots,” STEM professional societies (ProSs) serve not only academic institutions but also academic-influencing organizations like accrediting agencies, national laboratories, corporations, and government representatives, and thus are uniquely positioned to accelerate adoption of ADVANCE evidence-based strategies. The **GOAL** of the proposed initiative is to accelerate the awareness and adoption of ADVANCE policies and practices by coordinating, and integrating efforts of STEM ProS DEI change leaders, or “Boundary Spanners.” In this context, Boundary Spanners are individuals who facilitate connection(s) between organizations for mutual benefit by finding, translating, and diffusing DEI information and resources; working to support STEM DEI reform; and “weaving” together stakeholders and partners towards collective DEI goals (e.g., Hill, 2019).

Five partners recognized for their national STEM DEI leadership will leverage their unique strengths and networks in service of the proposed work. The Women in Engineering ProActive Network (WEPAN) is the nation’s first network dedicated to advancing DEI cultures in engineering education, and brings 40 years of experience in serving women in the engineering domain. The ADVANCE Implementation Mentors (AIM) and the Association for Women in Science’s (AWIS’s) ADVANCE Resource and Coordination (ARC) Networks bring ADVANCE-specific expertise, and resources. The National Change Team connects the proposed work to the Aspire Alliance and broader national INCLUDES efforts. The Alliance to Catalyze Change for Equity in STEM Success (ACCESS) Project provides “proof of concept,” as a multi-society of DEI change leaders from 5 biological ProSs, and serves as the foundation for the proposed ACCESS+ Initiative.

The ACCESS+ Initiative **THEORY OF CHANGE** is to prepare and support motivated cohorts of STEM ProS Boundary Spanners who will act to accelerate awareness, trial, and adoption of evidence-based, gender-related, DEI policies and practices within their respective ProSs. Specific **OBJECTIVES** of the ACCESS+ Initiative includes 1) mapping the STEM ProS DEI terrain using a DEI ProS Self-Assessment tool completed by upwards of 60 STEM ProS Boundary Spanners from over 30 STEM ProSs, 2) conducting an annual convening for STEM ProS Boundary Spanners showcasing evidence-based DEI policies and practices resulting in ProS-specific DEI Action Plans; and 3) facilitating a critical STEM ProS Community of Practice to support trial and adoption of DEI Action Plan activities.

The ACCESS+ **Intellectual Merit** lies in proposing an innovative, evidence-based means of weaving together STEM ProS resources, and creating opportunities to accelerate collective awareness, trial, and adoption of evidence-based policies and practices. ACCESS+ will conduct the first known STEM ProS Gender-focused DEI Environmental Scan by compiling DEI ProS Self-Assessment information from 30+ STEM ProS to help STEM ProSs identify DEI needs and strengths. ACCESS+ ADVANCE, and URG STEM ProS Advisory Boards, composed of nationally recognized experts, will help distill and recommend ADVANCE policies and practices for STEM ProS use and dissemination.

The ACCESS+ Initiative will have **Broad Impact** by preparing and supporting cohorts of STEM ProS Boundary Spanners. STEM ProS Boundary Spanner efforts will inform, foster, and complement gender-focused DEI efforts not only within and between STEM ProSs, but also across member academic institutions, academic-influencing domains of STEM accrediting bodies, national laboratories, STEM industry, and government. Further by engaging the Council of Engineering and Scientific Society Executives (CESSE), and leaders in national DEI initiatives like INCLUDES and AAAS’s SEA Change, ACCESS+ outputs and outcomes will have broad national impact.