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WEPAN Leads $1,314,999 NSF ADVANCE Partnership Grant:
Amplifying the Alliance to Catalyze Change for Equity in STEM Success (ACCESS+)
Leveraging STEM Professional Societies to Accelerate Gender Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Washington, DC – The National Science Foundation (NSF) announced on August 21, 2020 the award of a three-year, $1,314,999 NSF ADVANCE Partnership grant (HRD #2017953) led by the Women in Engineering ProActive Network (WEPAN). Partners on the grant include the ADVANCE Implementation Mentors (AIM) Network; the INCLUDES Aspire Alliance: National Change Initiative; the Association for Women in Science’s (AWIS’s) ADVANCE Resource and Coordination (ARC) Network; and the Alliance to Catalyze Change for Equity in STEM Success (ACCESS). Together leaders from these groups seek to amplify and extend the STEM professional societies engaged in the Alliance to Catalyze Change for Equity in STEM Success (ACCESS+). The ACCESS+ Initiative is one of four 2020 ADVANCE Partnership awards funded by the NSF.

“We are pleased to receive funding from the NSF to help advance a national priority of fostering diverse, equitable and inclusive STEM cultures, especially in light of the nation’s dual pandemics of COVID19 and anti-black racism,” said Dr. Leibnitz (ACCESS+ PI). “Given the influential role that STEM professional societies play in defining discipline-specific cultures, we believe these organizations are key to promoting and fostering change to support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). By creating opportunity for selected cohorts of STEM professional society DEI champions to become informed about, and supported in, the adoption of evidence-based DEI strategies, we expect to amplify awareness and adoption of inclusive practices so that more diverse talent will be involved in solving the complicated STEM issues we face now and in the near future.”

Leibnitz is WEPAN’s Research and Grants Consultant, is the Founding Director of the ADVANCE Implementation Mentors (AIM) Network, consults with the INCLUDES Aspire Alliance, serves as co-PI of the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE’s) NSF ADVANCE-funded Engineering Deans Gender Equity (EDGE) Initiative, and has been PI/Co-PI and Project Director on six NSF DEI-related grants.

“As the nation’s first network dedicated to advancing cultures of inclusion and diversity in engineering higher education and workplaces, and having been engaged in multiple NSF funded endeavors over the past 30 years, WEPAN is especially well positioned to lead this project,” adds LeeAnn Cochran, WEPAN Executive Director.
ACCESS+ Co-PI’s include:

- Ershela Sims, Ph.D. (Engineering), WEPAN’s Executive Director
- Heather Metcalf, Ph.D. (Higher Education, Gender Studies, Computer Science, and Math) WEPAN’s Director of Research and Constituent Relations and PI on numerous grants including the NSF-funded ARC Network;
- Donald L. Gillian-Daniel, Ph.D. (Cell and Molecular Biology), INCLUDES Aspire Alliance Co-PI and National Change Team co-lead, and Director of Inclusive Teaching Programming at the University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Verónica Segarra, Ph.D. (Biology), Co-PI of the ACCESS project, and Interim Biology Dept. Chair at High Point University.

Specific objectives of the ACCESS+ Initiative include supporting upwards of 60 representatives from over 30 STEM professional societies in a critical community of practice that shares evidence-based policies and practices, engages in professional development to enact effective change, and works to create societies that practice DEI values. The community will begin its work with the first known comprehensive DEI environmental scan at the societies to guide its specific activities moving forward.

By leveraging the diverse expertise and networks of the ACCESS+ collective, the leaders of the ACCESS+ Initiative aim to bring about a systemic, nation-wide transformation in support of more inclusive STEM academic professional cultures.

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