



**The Office of Women in Higher Education**

is pleased to name

***North Dakota State University (NDSU)  
FORWARD Program***

as the recipient of the

***2009 ACE Network Award***

for the

**Advancement of Women in Higher Education**

We also extend our congratulations to every nominee for this award, each of which has given much time and effort in the cause of advancing women in higher education and is much deserving of our thanks:

**Access to Success: The Presidential Leadership Program for Women**

Park University  
Parkville, MO

**Center for Gender Equity**

University of California at San Francisco Diversity Pipeline Initiative  
University of California, San Francisco, CA

**MindPrime**

Northwood University  
Midland, MI

**The Women's Center**

Tennessee State University  
Tennessee State University, Nashville, TN

## **North Dakota State University FORWARD Program**

The name of the group, FORWARD, stands for Focus on Resources for Women's Advancement, Recruitment/Retention and Development. This talented and dedicated group of women faculty at North Dakota State University has been working tirelessly for more than two years to develop an institutional plan to specifically address the recruitment and retention of women faculty in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) disciplines.

Several years ago, North Dakota State University was cited in a ranking conducted by the American Association of University Professors for having a significant underrepresentation of women within the ranks of tenured faculty, especially within the STEM disciplines. This finding underscored an issue of which the NDSU women faculty had been aware. It also served as a catalyst for the work of FORWARD, under the direction of Canan Bilen-Green and a small team of researchers, to tackle this problem by developing a plan and receiving funding to carry it out.

FORWARD fully exemplifies the **IDEALS** honored by the ACE Network Leadership Award – Identifying talented women leaders – developing, encouraging, advancing, linking and supporting them.

Founded in 2002, FORWARD has been actively engaged in acquiring federal grants to promote their work and in advocating for the issues that women faculty cite as problematic. FORWARD has helped to educate faculty search committees on the need to conduct search processes that provide fully representative samples in applicant pools. Through these efforts, FORWARD has helped search committees identify new women faculty candidates for positions, especially in the STEM disciplines which have previously been under representative of women. The group established a mentoring program for women faculty that provided them with opportunities to meet with more experienced (men and women) faculty who are committed to helping them be successful here at NDSU – through their research, teaching, and ongoing professional development activities. These mentoring relationships can not only assist in the retention efforts for women faculty, but can also help in guiding them through career advancement – receiving tenure and promotion or advancing into administrative roles at the University. All of these efforts are instrumental in the identification, development, encouragement and advancement of women leaders at NDSU. FORWARD pushed for the development of several on-campus lactation rooms (a benefit for all women on campus) and the expansion of the campus childcare facilities and hours of operation. These two issues had long been cited by women faculty as problem areas in creating a truly inclusive, welcoming environment for women on campus. FORWARD continues to

advocate among administrators for the development of an inclusive family leave policy. These efforts have all been important in supporting the women on our campus.

In order to maximize the impact of their work, FORWARD has tirelessly engaged in collaborative work with other campus entities addressing diversity. These collaborations have helped to develop a stronger sense of unity among all underrepresented groups and have helped to enlighten us about the benefits of creating a supportive and inclusive campus environment for all community members. The leaders of FORWARD recognize that by linking the women leaders on campus together to address issues of inclusivity, they can better achieve their mission.

In August 2008, FORWARD learned that they were recipients of a \$3 million National Science Foundation (NSF) ADVANCE grant. The funds received from this grant will directly impact the status of women faculty at NDSU – in terms of recruitment, retention and advancement. The primary initiatives of this grant include: assessment of the current status of women faculty at NDSU to establish an appropriate benchmark; hire a recruiter to assist faculty search processes in obtaining appropriately representative applicant pools; and, provide resources to assist in the advancement of women faculty, both through the tenure process and into administrative positions. In addition, the funds will help FORWARD to continue the important work they have been doing to advocate for various work/family balance issues on campus (childcare facilities, lactation rooms, family leave policy) and to further develop the current mentoring program for new women faculty. As posted of the website for this group, "NDSU FORWARD is committed to establishing a university culture in which all are nurtured and supported to develop to their fullest potential, and the criteria for success and achievement incorporate unique skills and contributions of both men and women." FORWARD has definitely lived up to this vision statement. As a women-led campus entity, they are doing exceptional work to ensure that NDSU improves as an institution that will be fully supportive and inclusive of all community members. Their contributions to the campus have been undeniable. Their continued work at NDSU to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for women leaders is instrumental to the transformation of our campus.