

Animal sciences receives Advance FORWARD award

The Department of Animal Sciences received the Advance FORWARD Department Award at the Aug. 30 FORWARD kick-off event for the 2012-13 academic year. The award is presented annually by the Commission on the Status of Women Faculty to recognize and reward significant department efforts to improve campus climate and gender equity within the faculty ranks.

A traditionally “male” department in terms of student and faculty numbers, changes in demographics and majors gradually resulted in greater than 50 percent female students at both undergraduate and graduate levels in NDSU’s animal sciences department – yet no women faculty were hired until the early 1990s, and the initial hire was not retained. Since then, a total of seven women faculty members have been hired and retained through their accomplishments in teaching, research and service. Several women have moved into administrative leadership positions or are recognized nationally or internationally as leaders in their academic areas.

According to the nomination, “these successes are all substantial and are reflective of a general attitude of striving for excellence in the Department of Animal Sciences. The department ... has long had a history of hiring the very best people and providing them as much encouragement as possible to be successful.” The department practices a family-friendly philosophy and well-organized mentoring program for both men and women. A family leave policy dates to 2007, and a more flexible developmental leave policy has been developed. Some practices have been modified to address the unique challenges faced by women faculty, enabling the department to more fully tap the talents of each individual faculty member.

Another \$5,000 Advance FORWARD Department Award will be given in 2013. In preparation for next year’s award, departments are encouraged to think about their strategies, policies and practices, and outcomes that show progress toward the five core FORWARD goals:

- Improve climate: provide strategies to improve department climate and narrow the gap between men’s and women’s perceptions of campus climate.
- Enhance recruitment: employing recruiting strategies to recruit women, women of color and women with disabilities.
- Increase retention: strategies to retain women in the department through the probationary period and the promotion/tenure process.
- Promote and advance women: strategies to support women associate professors as they move to full professor, and hire advanced women.
- Open leadership opportunities: strategies to promote women faculty in academic leadership positions.

The Commission on the Status of Women Faculty was created as part of NDSU’s National Science Foundation-funded Advance FORWARD program. The commission is structured as a formal link between the university’s academic administration and Advance FORWARD in order to support program goals and institutionalize related activities after the five-year grant period has elapsed. Membership of the commission includes faculty from across the campus appointed by the provost.