

English department receives Advance FORWARD award

Published: 11 September 2014

The NDSU Department of English received the 2014 Advance FORWARD Department Award at the annual FORWARD kick-off event held at the President's House Sept. 2. The Commission on the Status of Women Faculty presents the award annually to recognize and reward significant department efforts to improve campus climate and gender equity within the faculty ranks.

A review panel evaluated the award nominations and applications, guided by a weighted rubric reflecting each of FORWARD's five target areas: climate, recruitment, retention, promotion and leadership.

The Department of English provided evidence of systematic efforts to improve the climate for persons within the department. Modified duties and other work/life accommodations are extended to graduate students as well as faculty to improve climate and productivity. Promotion and tenure guidelines have been made more transparent, recognizing a range of good work, including historically gendered research. Outcomes include a clearer path for advancement of lecturers to senior lecturers, and promotion of women to associate and full professor ranks.

Proactive recruiting has transformed the department from 10 male and three female faculty in 1997, to eight female and seven male faculty members today. The department encourages and supports faculty members, including women, to take on leadership roles. Presently, department women faculty members have leadership roles at the university, college and department levels.

The award review panel was especially impressed with spousal/partner accommodation guidelines the department has formally put in place in its bylaws, as well as department collaboration with other departments on campus to support dual career hiring. Embedding initiatives in policy is recognized as one way to facilitate climate change and enhance the sustainability of changes made.

Gary Totten, department chair, accepted the award on behalf of the department. He credited previous department chairs and faculty for longstanding efforts toward gender equity and climate improvements, noting the broad participation of department faculty involved in diversity initiatives throughout the university as well as in the department.

Another \$5,000 Advance FORWARD Department Award will be given in 2015. In preparation for next year's award, departments are encouraged to think about strategies, policies and practice, and outcomes that show conscientious and systematic 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.

NDSU is recognized as one of the nation's top 108 public and private universities by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education.