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December 18, 2014 | Diverse 3
Recruiting more women to STEM fields, and particularly to the traditionally more male-dominated fields, takes a little ingenuity. Representatives from Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (A-B Tech) in North Carolina shared their method at the League of Innovation’s annual STEMtech conference, in Denver, Colorado, in early November.

Women at North Carolina community colleges earned 28 percent of the associate degrees in computer and information sciences, and 10 percent of the degrees in engineering and related fields in 2011, according to the Department of Education’s IPEDS data. At A-B Tech, women made up only 12 percent of students in information-systems security, computer engineering, computer information, electronics engineering, mechanical engineering, and networking and sustainability in the 2010-11 academic year.

With an NSF grant of nearly $200,000, which the college received in the fall of 2012, A-B Tech was able to increase the number of women in those seven targeted STEM programs from 39 to 75, nearly doubling their numbers. The recruiting efforts resulted in an overall enrollment increase among male and female students alike.

“I learned that women do not see themselves in STEM professions,” says Pamela Silvers, grant principal investigator and chair of business computer technologies. “They don’t picture themselves as being in a technology or engineering profession. So we knew that we needed to create an outreach campaign.”

The first problem, Silvers says, was one of perception. While many women were willing to go into nursing with the goal of helping others, few realized that a profession such as IT would feature the same amount, if not more, customer interaction and

North Carolina Community College Helps Increase Women in STEM

By Catherine Morris

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University presidents and diversity officers will receive Convergence through a door-to-door distribution during the American Council on Education Annual Meeting and the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education conferences—providing you with direct access to some of the most influential leaders in academe.
To counteract these perceptions, Silvers and her team decided to rethink their existing recruiting and marketing materials. Whereas students shown in previous marketing material were only 10 percent female, Silvers says they sought to equalize it and show more women.

“We came up with a theme: Picture yourself,” Silvers says. Silvers says they created marketing sheets featuring images of successful women in STEM, such as Dr. Sally Ride, the first female astronaut to travel to space. But for students primarily interested in obtaining an associate degree or certificate at a community college, Ride’s academic trajectory, which took her literally into the stratosphere, may not be relatable, says Silvers.

So the campaign also featured success stories of local females who were able to find good jobs through an associate degree.

“We got graduates from the program who on the whole only had an associate degree and have good jobs,” Silvers says. “[Students] might actually know the company that they’re working for.”

Next, Silvers says they rethought where they were extending their recruiting efforts. For example, college career fairs at middle schools — albeit good for overall awareness — were not going to result in additional students at A-B Tech the following year. Instead, Silvers and her team targeted students in ASPIRE, GED students, JobLink and students still in high school.

The team also focused their efforts on retention. “Once you get them into college, the next issue is you want to make sure you keep them in the seats and then you get them to graduate,” Silvers says. So she and her team incorporated problem-based learning into their teaching methodology.

“It’s a way for [students] to get in and use their hands and use their brains, and really develop their soft skills,” says James Sullivan, another principal investigator on the grant and chair of civil engineering and geomatics technology. “Our overall retention went up,” Silvers says, adding that their methodology proved to be effective for men and women alike.

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE STAR

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ith a five-course teaching load every semester, one can’t help but wonder how Dr. David Lucander manages to find the time to research and write.

But for Lucander, 34, a rising star at Rockland Community College (RCC) — which is part of the State University of New York sys-
tem — the process of putting pen to paper simply requires discipline.

“It’s a real challenge,” says Lucander, who is a tenured assistant professor of plural-
sim and diversity at the community college located in upstate New York. “You sit down and you got to make time for it. It’s part of doing this work.”

His latest book, Winning the War For Democracy: The March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946 (University of Chicago Press), has been praised by scholars for its ability to focus on the lives of ordinary, everyday individuals who helped to propel the historic March on Washington Movement.

“This is a work of historical recovery that you put in the time, you can continue to do more research, a corpus of knowledge about the civil rights movement of later decades,”

Dr. Eric Arnezen, a professor of history at The George Washington University, praises Lucander for writing a “deeply researched and nuanced account of the movement, its members, their aspirations and [their] accomplishments.”

He adds that the book, which grew out of Lucander’s doctoral dissertation, “is a sophisticated contribution to the history of Black protest and politics in the 20th cen-
tury”

Lucander’s productivity could have easily landed him at a research-centered four-year institution a long time ago. But as a product of TRIO Programs during his undergradu-
ate years at Westfield State University, he’s come to appreciate how support programs and community colleges can help to refocus a student’s educational trajectory.

“I want to challenge the taboo that com-
unity colleges are not rewarding places to work,” says Lucander, who will appear on a panel in April at the annual conference of the Organization of American Historians. “If you put in the time, you can continue to do important research.”

The former high school teacher, who has also worked as a park ranger, is one of two full-time instructors charged with teaching courses in multiculturalism at RCC. Several years ago, he developed a popular course on the civil rights movement.

“I am the guy who does Black studies,” he says about his role at RCC, which boasts a remarkably diverse student population, including a burgeoning Haitian population. And though he’s White, he’s never received pushback from students — many of whom are much older than him — about his ability to teach the subject matter.

“People recognize good work when they see it,” he says matter-of-factly. “If you can see a Black family in the White House, they can see a White person in Black studies.”

Still, it’s a challenge to help his students understand the long struggle for equal rights.

“There is often very little consciousness of the civil rights movement,” Lucander says of his students. “When they enter my class, they know Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, but by the end of the class, they know a whole different cast of characters.”

In January, Lucander will publish a co-ed-
teled book of about 80 of Randolph’s speeches with historian Dr. Andrew Kersten. He has a plate full of ideas about other scholarly endeavors.

“David was one of my brightest lights and it’s almost inevitable that he’s doing what he’s doing,” says Dr. Kamal Ali, an associate pro-
dessor of ethnic and gender studies at West-
field State University who has mentored Lucander through the years.

“He is an exceptionally gifted writer whose goal was to inspire and teach students and he’s doing exactly that.”

— Jamal Eric Watson can be reached at jwatson1@diverseeducation.com.

Padrón to Receive 2015 Diverse Champions Award

Diverse Issues In Higher Education is pleased to announce that Miami Dade College Presi-
dent Eduardo Padrón will be the 2015 recipi-

ant of the Diverse Champions Award.

The Diverse Champions Award recognizes higher education leaders who have shown unwavering commitment to equal opportunity and access for all, particularly at the commu-
nity college level.

Padrón’s career has been marked by a number of academic achievements and accolades. In 2011, Padrón was awarded the 2011 Carnegie Corporation Centennial Academic Leadership Award. In 2012, Padrón received the Citizen Service Award from Voices for National Ser-
vice, the TIAA-CREF Hosea Award for Leadership Excellence and the Aspen Institute Ascend Fellowship.

Padrón has made an effort to significantly boost graduation rates at Miami Dade Col-
lege (MDC), particularly among students of color.

“Though Dr. Padrón has been the recipient of numerous accolades, perhaps most notable is the tremendous work Dr. Padrón has done to help the most disadvantaged of MDC students succeed,” says Diverse Executive Editor David Plavnic: “The student success models built under Dr. Padrón’s leadership at MDC have set the standard of ex-
cellence in the community college movement. Dr. Padrón is indeed most deserving of the Champions Award.”

Padrón is slated to receive the 2015 Diverse Champions Award during the Haul and Farewell Luncheon at the 95th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Com-
munity Colleges in San Antonio, Texas, on April 19, 2015.

Med school hopes

The University of the Virginia Islands is seeking to offer the only U.S.-accredited, English-speaking medical school in the Caribbean. The land-grant HBCU’s board recently approved an application for medi-
cal school accreditation.

In April, the university an-
ounced plans to build the school, thanks to a $30 million gift from New Generation Power. It also plans to seek out a Department of Education loan through one of the department’s pro-
grams to help develop HBCUs. The univer-
sity hopes to open the medical school by fall 2016.

— Compiled by Diverse Staff and Crystal Davis

Quote of note

“As a political matter, state officials have made the judgment they don’t want to pay for higher education for our citizens. What were once public universities are now private universities that receive some subsidy from the states.”

— David Plank, an economist at Policy Analysis for California Education, on California colleges’ tuition increase