

ADVANCE podcast

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SPEAKERS

James Allan, Buju Dasgupta, Emmanuel Adero, Ethel Mickey, Laurel Smith-Doerr

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-  **Emmanuel Adero** 00:13
Welcome to the dignity and respect in action podcast. This series is brought to you by the UMass Office of Equity and Inclusion and features members of our university community and other experts in the field of diversity, equity and inclusion. And these episodes, we learn more about the work and experiences of our guests and gain insight and expertise. In this edition we'll talk to the ADVANCE team at UMass and learn about their program and their work. Your host time around will be myself. Emmanuel Adero, Senior Director of D&I partnerships.
 -  **Ethel Mickey** 00:47
Imagine it's fall 2019 and you've just been hired as an assistant professor at UMass. You're excited you're settling into your new job, and you're trying to get to know colleagues in your department, all while navigating your new courses and the new campus community. When COVID-19 suddenly forces the campus to move operations online early in the spring. You teach your courses online, you attend zoom faculty meetings, but you find making connections over research and building collaborative relationships more difficult. The UMass ADVANCE mutual mentoring grant program supports faculty driven teams focused on building equitable peer communities around common goals or interests. Mutual mentoring supports faculty and developing a network of peer mentor partners where faculty provide their knowledge and experience to benefit all. This assistant professor collaborated with a faculty member from a different department to form the

interdisciplinary stem lemon mutual mentoring group, together with 10 other women in STEM faculty who share research interests. They meet monthly on zoom taking turns presenting their research, having discussions and checking in with each other. The Assistant Professor describes this group as being important for her survival as a junior woman faculty this year during COVID-19. Hello, I'm Ethel Mickey. I'm the postdoc for the UMass ADVANCE team. And today some members of our team are really happy to be here to chat more about faculty equity and inclusion in STEM, and specifically the role of mutual mentoring. So I'm going to let my team members introduce themselves.



Laurel Smith-Doerr 02:26

Hi there, I'm Laurel Smith door. I'm the principal investigator of the advanced team and I'm also a professor of sociology.



James Allan 02:35

And I'm James Allan. I'm a co-PI on the Advance program. I'm a Professor and the Chair of the College of Information and Computer Sciences.



Buju Dasgupta 02:46

Hi, everyone, I'm Buju Dasgupta, I'm also a co-PI, of ADVANCE like James, and I'm a Professor of Psychology, the director of faculty equity and inclusion in the College of Natural Sciences. I'm also the Director of the Institute of Diversity Sciences.



Emmanuel Adero 03:06

Alright, thank you all so much for joining us today. It's wonderful to have you all. So Laurel, could you please start us off and tell us about ADVANCE and its mission?



Laurel Smith-Doerr 03:14

I'm happy to do that. Thank you so much for having us here on this podcast, we're excited to talk about ADVANCE. So you know that equity and inclusion is a really big issue, right? It touches all parts of campus. And we have a particular focus on this. And we are looking at faculty equity in particular, and working on ways that we can bring inclusion, equity and success for all faculty based on research. And so why are we focusing on faculty equity? Well, for one thing, it's important in and of itself, I think, to have the main knowledge producers, the core employees at the University have access to equitable resources and a warm, inclusive climate. But also, you know, faculty are central to all functions of the

university. And it really sets the tone for inclusion and equity for students and staff, if faculty also feel included and equitably resourced. So, you know, we're not the only ones who have noticed that this is an issue. We work with many partners on campus. But you know, other campus groups have noticed that faculty equity is an important issue to - the Racial Justice Coalition, which is led by students has also noted and called attention in their demands for recognising the need for faculty diversity and equity in the big picture of racial justice on campus. So we're a group that's funded by the National Science Foundation, which is a federal funding agency that has this program for advancing women and women of color faculty in science and engineering, right. It's the National Science Foundation, but they're version of STEM includes social sciences as well. Their focus of the advanced program, which has been around now for 20 years, so many campuses have advanced programs. But more recently, NSF has focused on intersectional approaches to faculty equity. So bringing in issues of how race and gender intersect, and the importance of understanding those elements of faculty equity has been a new focus and is a focus of our program here at UMass as well. So our particular focus here on our campus that we discovered through our research is a need is a focus on collaboration. And so we argue that having a collaborative approach is something that will advance equity and inclusion for women faculty in science, including women of color, and the way we're thinking about collaboration is very broad, I should say. So we consider a variety of contexts. So of course, research, collaboration, it's important to have equitable research, collaboration for faculty, but also, you know, faculty make a lot of decisions together in their departments. And that kind of collective decision making is another kind of collaboration that needs to have that needs to be done equitably. And also inclusive communities. And the kinds of connections that we have in our networks are another kind of collaborative atmosphere that's really important for equity. So each year in our advanced program, we focus on a different theme, because this is a you know, you can tell there's a lot going on here, right. And so in order to focus our efforts, each year, we have a different theme. And I think James is going to tell you a little bit about the themes.



James Allan 06:56

Yes, that's right, Laurel. So as Laurel said, collaboration occurs in a lot of different ways, like the obvious research collaboration she mentioned, but also how ways in which we support each other both personally and professionally. So last year's focus in light of that was on faculty mentoring. So that can that's a wide range of activities, supporting junior faculty as they just begin their their life at UMass and supporting mid career faculty as they move past tenure, to be promoted to full professor and so on. This year's focus is on inclusion, but in particular inclusion in the midst of COVID-19 in the midst of the pandemic. Now, of course, one focus doesn't replace the other. So it's not that we're looking at inclusion and ignoring mentoring, obviously, they're strongly related. Mentoring

remains an important part of supporting faculty and making them feel included. So our ultimate goal in all in, in these various activities in the mentoring and in the sense of building inclusion and supporting collaboration is to try to transform UMass, to transform UMass so that the things that we're building the we're creating, actually are sustainable, long past advance. And so how do we do that? That's an important part of all the discussions we're having in terms of how it affects policies and so on.

E

Emmanuel Adero 08:29

Would you can you give us a sense of what promoting diversity, diversity and inclusion look like and science and stem?

B

Buju Dasgupta 08:35

Sure. Um, so you know, diversity means a whole bunch of different things. First, of course, there is representational diversity, which means being inclusive of faculty across different kinds of identity lines, race and ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ status, disability and so on. Diversity also means including people across ranks from early career, mid career, faculty tenure system, or non tenure system faculty. And diversity means a diversity of ideas. So I think on the diversity front, there are sort of multiple ways in which we define it. Then there's inclusion which is separate and an important sort of complement of representational diversity. And this is, as you know, the full integration of underrepresented faculty on our campus so that people feel that they have and they developed strong trusting relationships with their colleagues, both inside the department and, and outside. And we know that this quality of relationship among colleagues, is really sort of a necessary ingredient to spark our research collaborations, and also to make people feel like this is their home and they want to be here and to enhance retention to us, diversity and inclusion matters for multiple reasons. And I think that my top three favorite is one, that there's a social justice and moral imperative for diversity and inclusion to ensure that the scientists, technologists and engineers on our campus represent the American population. Second, diversity matters here, because in order to grow the pipeline for the next generation of talented students who will become the next generation of scientists, and technologists and engineers, in order to grow that it helps the students can see people like them, you know, the same goal seeing is, is believing. You need to see some some part of yourself or people like you to spark that interest and to persist even when the stuff gets hard. So I think to grow the talent pipeline, we really need representational diversity at the Faculty ranks. And finally, there's there's a lot of work showing a diversity fosters innovation. And and you know, STEM is all about innovation in the 21st century. And so that's why we need different kinds of kinds of people.



Emmanuel Adero 11:16

All right. Ethel, could you please elaborate a bit more on the specific scientific context in which diversity and inclusion matter, and also expand a bit more on collaboration as your groups have been talking about?



Ethel Mickey 11:28

Yeah, great. Thank you. And Buju just did a great job of outlining broadly, why diversity and inclusion matter in academia, but in STEM fields specifically. And so why do we as a team focus on collaboration, so research suggests that diversity in collaborations can lead to greater expertise and create smarter and more innovative teams as Buju mentioned, but collaborations also benefit the people involved. And so in our case, this is faculty who are engaging in collaborations. So if you can imagine all of the resources gained from collaborative relationships, these can be faculty communities, these can be professional relationships, friendships, and offer a lot of sometimes invisible resources. So mentoring, support intellectual development, the exchange of ideas happens in these collaborative settings. So we know that academic careers require this kind of peer support, or what is often called mutual mentoring. And often this peer support can come through these more informal outlets through research teams, you know, in the in the age of team science, as well as collaborations. However, we've done a lot of research with the UMass ADVANCE program that demonstrates how the positionality of some scientists as women, women of color, these are often junior faculty that are in a field or department dominated by white men. And these groups of faculty experienced barriers to these more informal types of relationships and mentoring. So this can leave them marginalized on campus and also can really negatively impact their careers.



Emmanuel Adero 13:09

So I'm also interested in hearing more about this framework of mutual mentoring as you've been talking about. Laurel, can you tell us more about what mutual mentoring is and how it leads to equity?



Laurel Smith-Doerr 13:19

Sure yes. Usually when we think about faculty as mentors, we're thinking about faculty mentoring students, right. But faculty also mentor each other. And that's a really important part of, of what we do. And, you know, faculty have peer networks, with, you know, mentors for a variety of different purposes. So some colleagues might be really good at giving you instrumental information about grant opportunities. Others provide

moral support after your grant proposal was rejected, right. And those are probably not the same people, you need a whole network of mentors, a team of mentors. And so this perspective that we bring based on research is different from the kind of traditional sort of Guru mentor sort of top down senior mentor. Junior, you know, protege. Instead, right? We're promoting this mutual mentoring model where it's non hierarchical, it's collaborative, and faculty are providing knowledge and experience to each other. Right. And it's, it's mutually beneficial. So it as part of this ADVANCE project, we have these \$6,000 grants for teams that are faculty driven, they are proposed by the faculty people come up with great ideas. And and so we have selected you know, some of the best proposals and funded those on a variety of topics. And so we're going to tell you a little bit about some of these, these mutual mentoring groups just so you get a flavor of what that looks like. I know James had talked to a few different And he's gonna tell us about one of them.

J

James Allan 15:03

That's right. You mentioned, faculty peer groups that pulled together to help not only themselves, but also their larger community. There's a one of the groups we funded was a group of UMass sociologists. They recognized that there was a lack of transparency around the infrastructure in place to help faculty with the post award process of grants. I don't mean a lack of transparency in the sense that it was secret, or there's a conspiracy, but a lack of transparency in the sense that no one really knew everything that people had bits and pieces of information. And that meant that it felt like it was a secret. So they use their award to create what they called a better collaborative working operations in Award Management and execution within the department. So what that means is that they got together as a group, they researched all the resources that were available to them, put in their own knowledge as well as the information they could get. And they developed a guidebook set of best practices to share their knowledge. And to generate these guidelines that would help people in the context of the COVID pandemic, they also had to figure out how to deal with talking to people when they couldn't actually get together. And so they actually found that an interesting idea was to help mentor the junior faculty at the same time they were pulling all this information together, junior faculty here being the very new people, they actually got together outside around a fire. I think it was before it was snowing. But they got together to talk about what the issues were and to help people understand. One of the group leaders said that there's no way this would have happened without this whole group working together. So it was definitely the case that by supporting and mentoring each other, they resulted in a product that increased the equity for the entire department, because now everyone has access to this information. I think Buju you talked with the group that provides some scholarly and social support networks for its members.

B

Buju Dasgupta 17:04

Yeah, thanks, James. So this is like a nicely different kind of group. This is a group that we funded and that I spoke to several of its members recently called 'Blacklist'. So it's a group of women and non binary faculty of color. Hence, the tongue in cheek named 'Blacklist'. And it's sort of a grassroots organization, they found each other in through sort of a snowball way. And it's a group that includes both people who are in senior leadership roles, as well as mid career as well as very young, new assistant professors on our on our campus. And participants in this group come from multiple colleges on our on our campus. And the primary goal of this group is to increase a sense of community and reduce isolation. So as you might imagine, women and non binary faculty of color are typically one of a kind in that department and the only one of a kind. And so the only way for this group to find others like them, is to essentially stretch out and cross hands across colleges, and create this alternative community that can complement what they have in in their, in their department. So one of the things I realized is that the topics they cover capture a wide, wide range, they share knowledge about how University functions sort of inform a lot knowledge of the sort that James was talking about. A lot of their conversations is about sharing strategic advice about depending on their career stage, if they're coming up for tenure, or whether they should come up for fall and those kinds of things, whether how they should negotiate or navigate obstacles, discuss something with the department head or chair about a research leave or about resources, things that are really sort of non written kinds of things where you really need to lean on a colleague for how do you do this well. And then also, each semester they have these particular topics or themes like surviving or thriving at the university living in the valley, setting your priorities, other kinds of family responsibilities, and so on. So that's, that's the group that that I sort of spoke to recently. And I know Laurel has a has a different example of another group that we funded

L

Laurel Smith-Doerr 19:31

Yeah, I talked to the group that was organized out of the Center for evolutionary materials, which is material scientists. And sort of like the group that the James was talking about. They're focused on grant funding, but instead of looking at what happens after you get the award, this group is like, how do junior faculty actually find the funding in the first place and in particular, for people in that part of STEM, getting access to funding from industry, from corporate sponsors is really important as a variety of one of the kinds of funding sources that they that they often tap for their research, right, which requires a lot of resources to do. And in order to address the gender gap that exists in access to, especially to industry sponsors, and to research scientific research that leads to patents. This group, this mutual mentoring group has provided some spaces where there can be meetings with people who have successfully received industry funding, and with some

sponsors, who are in who are in research and development in companies themselves. So they've had a very successful event that they had to pivot like everything else from in person networking to a zoom meeting. But the panel, by all accounts was really well received and very helpful, especially for junior faculty, and including women, junior faculty and faculty of color, who got to meet people who could connect them with stories of how to get funding from industry, and actual connections with people in industry. So that's just one of many approaches to this mutual mentoring that that we've seen. And yeah, I think Buju has like the big picture of this maybe and can tell us about that.

B

Buju Dasgupta 21:42

Yeah. Thanks, Laurel. So it seems like we've described a manual to you like these three types of groups. But in total this last year, we funded seven mutual mentoring groups, and sort of across the seven, the other ones that we didn't say much in detail about this one group called Publish not Perish. And this is a group of plant biologists who are working with journal editors on open access publishing and other kinds of publishing new publishing strategies. Then there's a another really interesting group of lectures. And they are interested in enhancing department governance, so how they can play a more important role, both in department committees and department decision making, as well as campus wide, so university wide committees. And then there's another group of women in Civil and Environmental Engineering, who hosted a grant proposal writing workshop. So this is sort of another one that is grant focused in a different department than the one that James had talked about before. And so in sociology, so the three sort of key takeaways of these groups is, is first that that they allow these groups of faculty to leverage multiple kinds of resources, sometimes material resources, sometimes expertise, sometimes sort of informal advice. Second, that all of these groups involve different kinds of faculty have tenure system, non tenure system, early career, mid career and senior. And what they do together as a group has also varied quite widely, sometimes using sort of formalized institutional structures, other times, much more social and, and trying to create a social glue in a way that maybe is more difficult for them in their in their department. So I'm going to hand off to Ethel who I think has an even bigger picture that she can share with us.

E

Ethel Mickey 23:44

Yeah, so we're moving away from our from our stories from these wonderful groups who've been quite successful to, to really tie back to the mission of the UMass ADVANCE program. And so we really believe mutual mentoring is really key to our mission of equitable collaborations, and the role of equitable collaborations and creating faculty success and creating inclusion for diverse faculty members. And so mutual mentoring is

really key to faculty collaboration. We see from these examples, that these mutual mentoring groups are offering insights into research procedures on campus, how different research can be practiced, providing resources like funding or networks to industry contacts. It also that these groups are providing some personal support and mutual reciprocity, over shared research interests, and also just collaborating on shared experiences and brainstorming. What's it like to be a faculty member right now in this moment, and COVID-19? And how can we collaborate and come up with really just some survival mechanisms, so we're hearing a lot of that too. And so we really believe that mutual mentoring awards really served to level the playing field In terms of who has access to support that is sometimes invisible, or inaccessible to different groups of faculty.

E

Emmanuel Adero 25:08

Thank you for that Ethel. I think you've all really indicated obviously, that, you know, mutual mentoring is just one aspect of the larger ADVANCE program at UMass. So, um, could you give us a sense of what opportunities are available for faculty to get involved with ADVANCE? And Laurel, if you want to take that part of it?

L

Laurel Smith-Doerr 25:28

Sure, yes. And so I'll tell you about five ways that faculty can get involved with ADVANCE. One, you can get together with a group of colleagues and apply for a mutual mentoring grant. Two, you can attend one of our many ADVANCE workshops or events. Three, you can nominate someone for a faculty peer mentoring award. So we also recognize the importance of mentoring. And that happens every spring semester. So faculty should nominate their colleagues who are especially good peer mentors for you can apply for a collaborative research seed grant. So we also fund actual new research projects that faculty are working on together. And five, you can collaborate and work with your own departments, ADVANCE faculty fellows. We have 38 Faculty Fellows across departments at UMass. Or nominate yourself for next year's group of advanced Faculty Fellows. And this is a lot of information. It's all available on our website at umass.edu/advance or just google "UMass advance" and you'll find us. You can email me LSMITHDOER@umass.edu. And I'm also on the website and we look forward to collaborating with faculty on equity and, an just also really grateful, thank you, Emanuel, for having us on this program.

E

Emmanuel Adero 27:14

I want to thank each of you as well, Laurel, Biju, Ethel, and James for for joining us today for a really kind of giving us a summary overview on your work promoting equity for faculty. Now there are a lot of us who have heard a lot about ADVANCE, this has been a

wonderful chance to, to get to know it and do a lot better. And obviously it goes without saying that his work remains crucial, especially in this landscape where we have these broader challenges that emerge to intersect with it already historical inequity, like COVID being the major one. So I think we I look forward to hearing and seeing more as you continue. So thank you all for joining. Thank you so



Buju Dasgupta 27:50

Thanks Emmanuel. It was it was really fun. Thank you.