Institutions Developing Excellence in Academic Leadership–National (IDEAL-N)

IDEAL-N seeks to build a learning community among 10 research universities across 2 states to create knowledge about, share, develop, adapt, and evaluate innovative and sustainable tools, practices, and policies to promote gender equality in academic Science & Engineering (S&E) disciplines. IDEAL-N includes two clusters with a total of 10 partner universities: Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), Bowling Green State University, Cleveland State University, Kent State University, University of Akron and University of Toledo (constituting the Northern Ohio cluster) and Carnegie Mellon University, Duquesne University, Indiana University of Pennsylvania and University of Pittsburgh (constituting the Pennsylvania cluster).

IDEAL-N will build on the successful transformations and outcomes achieved in the earlier CWRU *ADVANCE* project, IDEAL. Using the stages of change model related to gender equity institutional change, IDEAL-N recognizes that each university and cluster (as well as the individual administrators and faculty represented therein) participate in an on-going process of profound change in promoting diversity in S&E. IDEAL-N targets senior administrators as the locus of change and promotes intensified educational, leadership development, and support components. The project will employ an innovative technology platform, using Cisco's TelePresence, to re-imagine and stimulate cost-effective information dissemination and networking for a national audience.

The project identifies three core roles to lead institutional transformation at each university: a *co-director*, *change leader*, and a *social science faculty member*—these three persons will constitute a multi-level Change Implementation Team at each university. The co-director will be a senior administrator at the Provost's Office level. The change leader will be a department chair or senior faculty leader in an S&E department. A social scientist is included to help translate social science theory and best practice literature on gender equity to actionable projects within S&E disciplines. IDEAL-N is comprised of four elements: *leadership enhancement training*, *annual change projects*, *plenary conferences*, and *development of an equity index.*

Leadership development sessions for the Change Implementation Team members will be conducted annually in four, half-day sessions spread over the year. All sessions will be held virtually through the use of TelePresence meeting technology. Participants within each cluster will congregate in a cluster location to enable face-to-face discussion and engagement while connecting cross-cluster via TelePresence. Sessions will consist of instruction, skill training, peer group exchange, networking, and group cohesion. *Annual change projects* focused around a key institutional transformation theme will be implemented at each institution in each of IDEAL-N's three years. At IDEAL-N's start, each Change Implementation Team will select a transformational theme/issue/need relevant to their campus to improve gender equity in an identified S&E department. The annual change projects will vary in complexity and scope, but they will directly address the transformational theme within the IDEAL-N departments selected, and directly or indirectly address the larger institution. Building on another extremely successful element of the previous IDEAL project, three *plenary conferences* will be held during the early summer of each year of IDEAL-N. These conferences will uniquely gather together, using the TelePresence platform, senior academic leaders from the partner institutions, Change Implementation Team members, and national experts on academic leadership and gender equity to exchange knowledge and craft solutions to effect academic change. Based on the research and experience of previous ADVANCE projects, as well as from the literature on promoting gender equity in academic S&E, IDEAL-N proposes to develop an innovative *Gender Equity Index* to serve as an assessment and benchmarking tool for academic institutions. The criteria for this index will include best practices to promote gender diversity, equity and inclusion, with a special focus on disabled and URM women faculty.

The creation of this institutional learning community will benefit not only the practices and policies of individual universities, but additionally will inform the nation's efforts to foster science and technology careers, stimulate and redirect economic development, and reverse the drain of talent from academic S&E. IDEAL-N directly addresses the use and retention of that talent, and specifically anticipates a major national priority: that higher education institutions cost effectively leverage skills and resources through cooperation and collaboration.