UMaine lands ADVANCE grant

A five-year, $3.3 million National Science Foundation ADVANCE grant is funding a new University of Maine initiative to improve institutional conditions disproportionately affecting female faculty in the sciences, technology, engineering, mathematics and the social-behavioral sciences.

Last fall, the grant established the Rising Tide Center, which supports the initiative at UMaine and in the University of Maine System. Karen Horton, associate professor of mechanical engineering technology, served as the center's interim director.

The goal of the center is to increase the number of female faculty members in the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and social-behavioral sciences by defining the practices that attract and support the retention of female faculty, facilitating promotion through the academic ranks and to administrative positions, and providing professional satisfaction.

This past spring, the center announced its first round of grants aimed at fostering the professional development of UMaine female faculty members. Nine grants totaling more than $76,000 were awarded to UMaine faculty members in a range of academic fields in one of four granting categories: research seed, leadership development, unit climate award and climate research.

UMaine has a combined 114 female faculty members teaching in STEM and social-behavioral fields, compared with 284 male faculty members in those areas.

Five UMaine faculty members co-authored the ADVANCE grant: Susan Hunter, UMaine's senior vice president for academic affairs and provost, and a biology professor who is the principal investigator on the project; Amy Fried, associate professor of political science; Susan Gardner, associate professor of higher education; Karen Horton; and Jody Jellison, former professor of molecular plant pathology and director of the School of Biology and Ecology.

This past spring, Ellie Groden, professor of entomology, replaced Jellison on the team and now administers the Rising Tide grants program. Mary Madden, an associate research professor in the Center for Education and Research, was named director of UMaine's ADVANCE Rising Tide Center.