Executive Coaching: An Effective Strategy for Faculty Development

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Higher education researchers and university administrators alike are increasingly concerned about the persistent dearth of women faculty, the overall glacial advancement of women, and the existence of a glass ceiling in academic science and engineering (S&E) fields. The sources of these problems may be traced to individual psychological processes (gender schemas) and systematic institutional barriers, resulting in perceptions of a chilly climate for women scientists and engineers in academia (Sandler and Hall 1986), the experience of subtle discrimination by women faculty (Blakemore, Switzer, DiLorio and Fairchild 1997), the slow but steady accumulation of disadvantage over the course of women’s academic careers (Valian 1999), and the flight from academia by women scientists and engineers at every step in the educational pipeline.

Today, leading universities are beginning to undertake comprehensive remedies to address these problematic attitudinal and structural issues. Prominent within the approaches being implemented are a variety of developmental, mentoring, and networking initiatives aimed at helping women S&E faculty succeed, particularly in the early and middle stages of their careers. Simultaneously, universities are undertaking a multitude of leadership development
efforts to improve the departmental and school level micro-climates surrounding women faculty in the daily conduct of their work.

In this chapter, we report specifically on the activities, challenges, and successes of a multi-level, integrated executive coaching initiative at our university, supported through an NSF ADVANCE Institutional Transformation award. Our program is unique because we are working with both the women faculty members at all levels, and the university leaders (deans and chairs) in changing the culture of their academic units. The executive coaching experience at our university, offered to women faculty, department chairs, and deans integrates elements of leadership development, mentoring, networking, and organizational change management.

We first define coaching and its principal purpose. We then describe the primary objectives of our coaching program, and offer an overview of the structure and the content of the coaching program including its distinctive phases. Preliminary outcome data is also presented.

Coaching

Organizations throughout business and industry are reinvesting in their human capital through programs that enhance personal, professional, career and leadership development. One process that is more frequently used in the business realm is coaching, a personalized form of leadership development (Popper and Lipshitz 1992). The literature reports two primary purposes of coaching: to improve one’s current level of individual performance and to enhance leadership effectiveness (Becket 2000; Smith 2000; Waldroop and Butler 1996).

Both coaching and mentoring are essential ingredients of a comprehensive career development strategy although they vary in scope, duration and focus. Traditional mentoring is a long-term relationship with a more senior colleague who provides advocacy and advice on an
individual’s career development, helping one learn the ropes in their chosen field and providing support for upward mobility (Kram 1985). Mentors are senior counselors who transfer knowledge, wisdom, and sponsorship (both general and disciplinary) aimed at providing access to important academic and scientific resources and networks. Effective mentoring generally relies on the development of a relatively close, mutually reinforcing, long term, and stable relationship between the mentor and mentee.

Coaching is targeted, finite and focused on improving current performance and thinking strategically for the long term. A coach provides an outside, objective perspective seeking to develop an individual’s skills so they will have the capacity to better manage their present and future career and leadership development. Coaching tends to be more of a one-way process than mentoring, with the coach providing feedback, skill development opportunities, and guidance to the person being coached. Coaching is fundamentally focused on assisting an individual in achieving concrete goals that will enhance his or her learning and professional growth, as well as advancing the organization’s objectives to create an environment that facilitates the success of all faculty. Coaching in our academic context helps faculty and administrators develop skills to be more effective academic performers in the short and long run, and to implement positive change in their departments and schools. The coaches also encourage faculty and administrators to seek mentors to help them develop the long term networks and resources necessary for accomplishment in their specific academic disciplines.

In industry, many organizations are choosing to use coaching as a developmental intervention for their senior and high-potential management executives in order to bring about an organization-wide culture transformation. As Sherman and Freas (2004:7) note, “systematically coordinating one-on-one coaching interventions that serve a larger strategic objective” fosters
cultural change that benefits the entire organization. An in-depth focus group study of the state of women faculty at our university identified department chairs and school/college deans as instrumental agents in successful faculty development and university change efforts, and also found that the academic climate experienced by women is heavily influenced by the attitude and approach of these key individuals (Resource Equity Report 2003). Thus, we decided to base our change process on transformation of the attitudes and behaviors of key change agents (deans and chairs) and empowerment of women faculty to proactively and collectively address the issues affecting their academic progress within their disciplinary environments.

Only by affecting attitude and behavioral changes at all levels will we realize sustainable, institutional change. Our program is not designed to “fix the women” but rather to raise awareness of gender equity issues at all levels and provide women faculty and administrators with the skills and tools to positively impact the university and academy environment. Empowering a critical mass of individuals who recognize the importance of creating more inclusive academic climates is one way to engender lasting change.

The Executive Coaching Intervention At Case Western Reserve University

The Academic Careers in Engineering and Science (ACES) project was created through the receipt of the university’s NSF ADVANCE Institutional Transformation award, to catalyze faculty empowerment, leadership development, and sustainable cultural transformation in the science and engineering disciplines at our university. In 2003-2004 we began this five-year university project involving the implementation of executive coaching, borrowed from business and industry and adapted for an academic environment. Specifically, this project included (a) executive coaching (leadership development) of individual S&E deans and chairs, (b)
performance, career and leadership development coaching of women faculty, and (c) related
developmental inputs for deans, chairs, and women faculty, including opportunities for
mentoring, networking, training, and development.

The ACES project offers executive coaching to administrators and chairs and women
faculty of 31 S&E departments on our campus over the five-year period of the ADVANCE
award, with the intention of institutionalizing executive coaching, mentoring, networking,
training, and other developmental opportunities after the grant ends. Invitation letters are sent to
each female faculty member, chairs and deans of the participating departments, stating the
overall objectives of the ACES program and the coaching initiative, and inviting them to
participate in the coaching opportunity. While participation is voluntary, it is strongly
encouraged as a way to further promote the goals of the ACES ADVANCE initiative which has
been championed at the highest levels of the University administration.

In the first year of the ACES project, two deans and three chairs, all male, and 16 women
faculty of four science and engineering departments received executive coaching. The ranks of
the 16 women faculty were as follows: one adjunct professor, four full time lecturers/instructors,
five assistant professors, five associate professors and one full professor. In the current second
year of the project, two deputy/associate provosts (one female and one male), two deans (both
male), two associate deans (one female, one male), 10 chairs (all male), two associate chairs (one
of each gender), and 27 women faculty of 10 science and engineering departments are
participating in the interventions. The ranks of the 27 women faculty are as follows: one
instructor, 12 assistant professors, four associate professors, and seven full professors. The
female associate chair, associate dean, and deputy provost are also included in this total of 27.
The executive coaching component of the ACES intervention is staffed by professional executive coaches who have general business/organizational experience, and are experienced in providing performance and career-related advice and leadership development guidance. These coaches are persons who had engaged extensively in executive coaching in corporate settings. Most were well known to the Co-Principle Investigator responsible for the ACES coaching intervention because they had worked with her for a variety of previous corporate leadership development engagements through the university’s Executive Education Center of the School of Management. Many of the coaches held doctoral or master’s level degrees in Organizational Behavior or Psychology and some were faculty or staff members in nearby universities. Since some of the coaches were less familiar with academic than corporate settings, there were a number of initial meetings and activities, including reading assignments and discussions, that helped the coaches gain deeper knowledge of the academic work context. Regular (bi-monthly) meetings of the coaches’ cohort group with the ACES Co-Principle Investigators were conducted throughout the first year of the executive coaching intervention to provide further context for the coaches and to enable confidential debriefing of experiences, successes, and challenges. Since these discussion-oriented meetings proved to be highly useful to the coaches, they were continued beyond the original test department phase into the full implementation phases of the ACES project. NSF ADVANCE resources as well as existing university expertise are utilized to support all executive coaching-related activities.

Through executive coaching, participants are helped with identifying their career and leadership vision, goals, plans, and actions. The coach gives advice, resources, and feedback on how best to accomplish the identified vision and to deal with other performance-based problems and opportunities. The duration of coaching sessions is approximately one year, with an average
of 6 sessions for women faculty and 10 sessions for chairs. For deans of the schools and
colleges, the coaching intervention duration is 2 years for approximately 10 sessions. Deans and
chairs undertake a 360 degree leadership competence assessment and receive feedback about
their results. The 360 degree leadership competence assessment is a multi-rater instrument
completed by the deans and chairs themselves, their supervisors, their peers, and individuals who
directly report to them. Taken together, ratings of other people provide a more complete picture
of the individual’s performance. As part of the ongoing coaching development, coaches meet
regularly to discuss progress, challenges, and strategies for future coaching sessions. Evaluation
of the professional coaching experience occurs at mid-intervention and end-intervention periods.

Targeted coaching initiatives designed to assist academic decision-makers such as deans
and department chairs in understanding their roles in creating inclusive, supportive environments
can help curb the leaky pipeline of faculty women in sciences and engineering. We also believe
that the combined focus of limited-term coaching targeted at empowering personal and
professional development together with long term mentoring, sponsorship, networking, training,
and other development inputs can help women faculty better navigate the shoals of academia.
To illustrate how the coaching program is working at our university, we provide details of the
objectives and stages of the process for chairs and women faculty members of each S&E
department.

Executive Coaching Objectives

The primary objective of our executive coaching program is to promote academic
workplace cultures characterized by equality, participation, openness and accountability, to
create a climate at the university that is conducive for faculty development, particularly for
women faculty at all levels. We work toward achieving this objective by working with deans, department chairs and women faculty at all levels. We focus on three fundamental areas in our coaching determined from the literature to be of paramount importance in career self management, leadership development, and organizational change management. First, we work to enhance the individual’s self awareness, self confidence, and personal sense of efficacy and empowerment. Second, we assist their thinking strategically about their career development, both for short-term effectiveness and for long-term contributions to their institution, profession, and discipline. Third, we work toward developing leadership within departments, across the university system, and among the fields of science and engineering, so that these coached individuals can catalyze constructive organizational change.

The third point is worth highlighting specifically since the goal of the ACES ADVANCE initiative is to create a climate conducive to faculty achievement and success. This program is designed to work at all levels to expose and shift the underlying assumptions of the university culture and to foster an environment of inclusion that benefits the entire university community. A critical component of engendering such change is working at the leadership level.

**Program Stages for Department Chairs and Deans**

During the one-year period of the program, there are approximately 8-10 coaching meetings between a department chair and the coach. While the conversations and the pace of the coaching sessions are unique to each individual chair, there is a recommended series of topics to be discussed in the twelve-month period (detailed session plans follow). For each coaching session, participants are assigned pre- and post-work that may require reading, personal
reflection, data collection or data analysis. Between coaching sessions, chairs meet informally as a group over lunch at regular intervals, building a community of departmental leadership.

Session 1 has two main objectives: first, to discuss the purpose and goals of ACES and the NSF ADVANCE program, and to provide an overview of the coaching initiative; and second, to discuss the chair’s academic/leadership experience and current areas of interest or concern. During this meeting the coach reinforces the program objectives of ACES, particularly those related to issues of gender equity throughout the university. Chairs are asked to consider how gender equity issues are reflected in their everyday management decisions. Questions the chairs are asked to reflect upon for the next session are: What are your strengths as department chair? What distinguishes your specific leadership? What have you learned as the department chair? Describe your current level of visibility and influence in your department, in the university, and in your field. What are your desired levels?

Session 2 is focused on the chairs’ academic leadership effectiveness. The follow up questions from session 1 are discussed as well as definitions of leadership effectiveness and leadership success. The objective of this session is to help the chairs determine how to increase their impact and contributions to their departments, schools and universities. For homework, the chairs are asked to pick a leadership role model in their field and determine what they admire about him/her.

The topic of session 3 is leadership vision and goals. Career and leadership aspirations are discussed as well as development successes and challenges. Immediate objectives as well as short and long term goals individually and for the department are discussed. The concept of 360 degree feedback is explained and the chair is encouraged to consider collecting online feedback using the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) (Boyatzis, Goleman, and Hay Acquisition Co.
2002) from his/her dean, faculty members and administrators to assist in his/her process of professional development.

Session 4 is devoted to a discussion of emotionally intelligent leadership. The concept of emotional intelligence is explained and the critical competencies of self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship skills are discussed. Strategies and tools for handling stress, managing conflict, taking initiative, and remaining optimistic in the face of administrative constraints are explored. The assignment prior to the next session is to ensure completion of online 360 degree surveys.

Session 5 is devoted to a review and discussion of the 360 Degree ECI Feedback Report. The chair’s reaction to the feedback is discussed and an analysis of the overall patterns and trends in the data is undertaken in concert with the coach. As a follow-up assignment, the chair is asked to complete a self-analysis guidebook which provides a framework for deepening the chair’s understanding of the feedback data.

The objective of session 6 is to discuss development planning. Based on the 360 degree feedback, professional strengths and professional development needs are identified. A personal balance sheet of competency assets and liabilities are created by the chair. Action plans for building on strengths and addressing weaknesses linked to the chair’s leadership vision are created and strategies for competency development are discussed. A personal development plan template is provided to the chair for guidance.

Session 7 is focused on gender implications for department leadership. Approaches and methods for improving the departmental climate for women faculty and students, as well as the recruitment, retention and advancement of women, are discussed. Throughout the entire coaching period, the chair is encouraged to talk informally with his/her women faculty on a
regular basis to determine their experiences in the department; the importance of this kind of interpersonal and relationship-building behavior is reinforced during the current session. We specifically placed the discussion of the analysis and improvement of gender relations in the department after the receipt of the 360 feedback since the chair is then guided to consider and develop specific gender-related actions and approaches addressing issues that arise from the leadership feedback.

The topic of session 8 is leveraging leadership impact and contributions as department chair. Departmental vision, goals and culture are discussed and the chair is encouraged to engage in strategic planning, resource allocation discussions, and on-going communication with faculty, staff and graduate students. The chair’s personal impact and contributions as a leader in his/her school and university-wide are discussed, as well as approaches to facilitate growth in the stature of the department in its field.

Session 9 is focused on further enhancing the chair’s interpersonal skills. Effective negotiation with higher administration and other funding sources is discussed as well as learning to interact with people of different styles and personality types. Analysis is undertaken regarding the chair’s default interpersonal styles and approaches especially in times of stress or conflict, and discussion ensues regarding how the chair can expand his or her behavioral repertoire to be more effective. Specific strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult faculty and situations may also be discussed.

Session 10 deals with the closure of the coaching relationship. The coach encourages the chair to revisit insights gained from the program, continue to clarify and implement his/her leadership development plan, practice new departmental change-related behaviors, and stay focused on the goal of creating and supporting an inclusive and empowering department climate.
Case Study of Departmental Chair Coaching Process

To illustrate the impact of the coaching program with a member of the university leadership team, we present a case study of Department Chair Matthew Price (fictional name) who made significant changes in his departmental leadership as a result of the issues raised during the coaching initiative. Matthew had an established reputation in his field of science. He enjoyed his research and continued to be a productive contributor in his discipline. Two years ago he had reluctantly assumed the position of department chair due to his seniority in the department. He chaired a department of moderate size with an inordinate number of very junior faculty members and very senior faculty members. Of the 20 departmental faculty members, there were two females who had not yet reached tenure and one senior female faculty with tenure.

As chair, Matthew was struggling with a number of issues. He wanted to improve the department’s stature and to establish some clear areas of research distinction for his department. There were disciplinary barriers that he believed were polarizing the department. The generational differences in the department also created additional sources of conflict. He aspired to continue his research productivity while attending to a new strategic direction for the department.

During his first meeting with his coach, Matthew wondered what would enhance the possibilities for recruiting outstanding female faculty members. He fully supported the university’s objectives to improve the environment for female faculty, yet was uncertain what might be done to accomplish this end. When asked what his expectations were for the coaching relationship, he offered that he wanted to learn about the impact of his behavior upon the faculty
and upon the female faculty in particular. He believed that his distinctive strength was his fairness while his area for improvement was his decision-making style.

After completing a 360-degree feedback process, his coach met with Matthew to review the results. In addition to a self-assessment of his strengths, this feedback reported that other strength areas included his teamwork and collaboration, his optimism, and his adaptability. Areas for improvement identified in the feedback report were his conflict management and his inspirational leadership skills. Matthew was open to the feedback and was enthusiastic to begin working on developing these competencies in order to improve his leadership development. He spoke with his coach about strategies for changing his behavior. For example, while Matthew had expressed reluctance to continue as department chair during his first meeting with his coach, he became more interested in leading his department through their transitional time. His coach and he discussed his leadership vision and his goals for the department, and why they were important to him. He then went to work to pursue his vision and his goals. One strategy Matthew undertook in order to demonstrate his inspirational leadership competency was to pursue opportunities to articulate his vision for the department with his colleagues both in group meetings and individual conversations. In the past Matthew had been reticent to do so because of his over-reliance on a democratic leadership style. He also actively directed a department strategic plan effort as another way to display his inspirational leadership.

As the coaching relationship came to an end, Matthew told his coach that he had already witnessed his improved effectiveness as a leader. He was working on his conflict management skills and offered some stories to illustrate his success to date. He was leading his department through their strategic planning and believed that progress was being made on that front. He felt that he had improved his relationships with his faculty members and was paying special attention
to the thoughts and feelings of his female faculty members. Anecdotal reports (during informal conversations with the principal investigators of the award) from all three of his women faculty indicated that they felt their chair had changed substantially over the coaching period, primarily to increase his sensitivity to and awareness of the issues and challenges facing women in academia, and also with regard to his actions to improve his effectiveness as the department’s leader. Toward the conclusion of the coaching activities, Matthew was excited about the future possibilities for himself and for his department.

Program Stages for Women Faculty Members

Another critical constituent group for the coaching initiative is the women faculty. In addition to working at the university leadership level, it is also important to work at the individual level to assist women faculty in developing the skills and resources necessary to achieve academically in the university system. Approximately six coaching sessions occur between the individual women faculty members and their respective coaches in the course of one year. The program is very similar to the program for department chairs, but the recommended topics for discussion are targeted at assisting women faculty in leveraging their professional contributions for maximum impact.

The first coaching session is intended to introduce the program goals, review the career history and highlights of the faculty member as well as their current areas of interest or concern. Women faculty members are asked to assess their distinctive strengths and contributions as scholars and professionals. Problematic performance issues or areas of opportunity for development over a woman faculty member’s career are discussed, including issues of performance, scholarship, work-life integration, mentorship, and inclusion.
The second meeting centers on the topics of professional excellence and academic success and what might increase the woman faculty member’s influence and contributions in her department and in her field. Participants are asked to reflect on the meaning of academic success and effectiveness, as well as the methods by which they may gain greater professional visibility and reputation. Women faculty members are encouraged to consider who their role models and mentors are, and how they can widen their network of connections and influence in their academic sphere. At this session, each participant is asked to begin the process of creating a mentoring committee, consisting of a senior departmental colleague, a university colleague, and a senior visible scholar in her specific discipline or academic area, that will meet periodically over the next two years to assist in her academic development and advancement.

Immediate, mid-term and long-term career aspirations, challenges, and goals are discussed in the third coaching meeting. In the interim period between the second and third coaching meetings, participants observe a role model’s style, behavior, presence, and influence, and interview him or her about their development journey, choices, advice, etc. Based on their insights from this interview, participants identify a personal vision of academic and professional excellence, which they are encouraged in future sessions to translate into more specific goals and actions.

At the fourth coaching meeting, women faculty members are introduced to topics of interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and strategies for enhancing interpersonal competencies. Unlike the department chairs, women faculty are not routinely asked to participate in the 360 degree feedback process with the exception of senior, tenured women if they so choose. Since many of the environments in which women faculty are embedded are “chilly climates” (Sandler and Hall 1986), and since the majority of women faculty being
coached are junior professors, the coaches are careful to invite 360 degree feedback only in situations where women faculty specifically seek out this information or where they are placed in leadership positions requiring feedback on their leadership competencies.

The remaining two meetings between individual women faculty and their respective coaches encompass the continued identification of goals, professional strengths and developmental areas, a personal development plan, as well as ideas for sustaining career development. Discussion is also focused on further enhancing the faculty member’s interpersonal skills especially for handling difficult faculty colleagues and situations. Finally, the coaching relationship concludes with the discussion of plans to sustain individual performance and contributions, and overall career development.

Like the process for the chairs, for each coaching session women faculty are assigned pre- and post-work that may require reading, personal reflection, data collection, or data analysis. Between coaching sessions, participants meet informally over lunch at regular intervals, as well as attend formal educational events such as workshops on topics of academic career success, mentoring, and negotiating.

**Preliminary Evaluations**

The results of the executive coaching initiative have been most encouraging to date. Participants’ ratings of their specific coaching experiences were extremely positive. Overall, in the first year of the program, effectiveness of the coaching process was rated at 4.46 out of 5 at the mid-intervention period (N=13), and final coaching evaluations for first year participants averaged 4.56 out of 5 (N=9). In the current second year, mid-intervention ratings of overall
coaching effectiveness were 4.19 out of 5 (N=21). While these are small numbers, the positive trends are encouraging.

Anecdotal descriptions of the effectiveness of executive coaching from women faculty in the first year of the program indicate that they have utilized their broadened networks to obtain a variety of valuable job and career supports, including assistance on tenure package write-ups, review of their curriculum vitae, classroom teaching performance assistance, visits to external universities, invitations to panel discussions at conferences, and advice to more effectively manage their labs, post-docs, and graduate students. Feedback comments from women faculty at different academic levels included:

- “My coach has been very effective in directing me to communicate with my colleagues and my chair.”

- [my coach was] “Helpful in getting me to set priorities and to stop procrastinating about accomplishing an important work goal. Also my coach held me accountable to move ahead with my mentoring committee meeting which turned out to be very helpful.”

- “Initially I felt the coaching was a bit of a waste of my time. The sessions seemed very unfocused and ‘chatty’ rather than specifically helpful. However they took a dramatic turn for the better as they progressed, and I found the overall experience very positive. My coach helped me to clarify my career and life needs and goals, and helped me recognize when I was living my values and when my actions were torpedoing them. This reduced my stress level considerably and made me more effective.”
• “Overall this was a good experience. The one downside is that the sessions did raise issues about gender inequity that I have managed to suppress over the years in order to survive. So in a way this experience has opened a “Pandora’s box” and I am more aware and angered by these inequities. It is now a matter of finding some balance in identifying some issues that can be realistically addressed and putting the others back in the box. I think it is difficult to achieve success if you only focus on the negative aspects of the culture. Admittedly sometimes it is easier if you pretend they don’t exist.”

The evidence thus suggests that women are finding the coaching practical, applicable and relevant in developing a strategic career development process. Executive coaching is effective in empowering women faculty to gain control over their academic careers and performance.

More importantly, we also conducted an analysis of pre- and post-data on attitudes and knowledge about career and professional success. Women faculty rated themselves higher on a variety of factors after executive coaching was implemented for a year. Post-intervention ratings increased for items such as clarity about career direction, articulation of career goals to others, exercise of initiative toward attaining career goals, mentoring sought from outside the department, influence exerted and success experienced in the department and the field, and colleagueship and leadership exercised in the department (see Table 1). Interestingly, post-intervention ratings dropped for mentoring received and given by women faculty within their departments, as well as for ratings of career progress and academic/scholarly contributions. These latter ratings suggest that for some women faculty, the coaching processes may have provided a more realistic view of their career progress, successes, and contributions to date; women faculty appear to have received newer external feedback and engaged in different
internal reflections about their career success, career prospects, and career actions through the executive coaching processes.

\[Insert\ table\ 1\ about\ here.\]

Conclusions

In this chapter we have described a comprehensive program intended to advance the status of women faculty in the science and engineering disciplines in a university setting through individualized leadership development of key change agents (deans and chairs) and individualized empowerment of women faculty to take control of their academic careers. The program is unique for two specific reasons. First, the executive coaching initiative encompasses multiple professional developmental activities (i.e. mentoring, networking, negotiating, development planning, leadership development, strategic thinking), and second, it is targeted at multiple levels within the university hierarchy (i.e. junior and senior women faculty, department chairs, and deans). The executive coaching intervention facilitates empowerment aimed at academic performance improvement, career development, and faculty leadership enhancement. Preliminary evaluations indicate that this kind of developmental program has the potential to positively contribute to how school/department leaders and women faculty approach change efforts in the university.

The implications for women faculty from our executive coaching initiative are already evident at this early stage in the process of institutional transformation. Women faculty members are becoming more aware of the need to be strategic in planning for their long-term academic career success. In addition to systematic career development planning, they recognize the critical importance of establishing a network of individuals in their respective disciplines who can help them gain access to resources necessary for academic achievement. They feel
more in control of their career outcomes, and are taking steps to increase their overall visibility, contributions, and impact, not just within their departments and university, but also in their larger academic fields.

The preliminary impact of our coaching interventions for department chairs and deans has resulted in a greater awareness of the importance of leadership development training within the academic hierarchy, and an enhanced knowledge of the subtle institutional biases against women that may exist in traditional academic systems. For example, one of the chairs mentioned in his evaluation of the coaching program that “I am a more aware and communicative leader as a result of this coaching”. Another chair strongly advocates that all male faculty should be required to read Why So Slow by Virginia Valian, a book that explains the existence of gender schemas and lays out the systemic prevalence of gender bias. Other chairs have indicated that they would like further opportunities for peer-driven leadership development; subsequently our project has organized more frequent networking opportunities for chairs, and a more formalized leadership development program for chairs through the Provost’s office. Thus, the first step toward institutional change is the recognition of problems that need to be redressed. Working with the system leadership (chairs and deans) to highlight existing issues of gender inequity and to develop strategic plans to work at both the individual and the systems level is critical to engendering lasting organizational change.

Fully measuring the degree to which the multi-level coaching initiative results in organizational change will require longitudinal research. Quantitative measurements and in-depth qualitative studies to gauge numeric changes and behavioral shifts in individuals as well as to determine modifications in the university systems can assist our understanding of the coaching program’s impact on both individual learning and organizational transformation.
Organizations are systems of patterned behaviors, and cultural transformation is a slow process. This is particularly true in traditional hierarchical organizations such as universities. Profound and sustained change occurs when there are shifts in the norms, mental models and shared assumptions leading to a transformation in the systems and the practices of the departments and schools within the university. Organizations that sponsor developmental activities such as those employed in our executive coaching initiative may witness improved retention rates (Higgins and Thomas 2001) and enhanced organizational success (Tannenbaum 1997). The multi-level integrated coaching program described in this chapter is designed to support a shift in the perspectives and mindsets of faculty members, department chairs and deans. We believe changes in the gender schemas of a critical mass of university faculty and administrators can effectively result in a cultural revolution positively impacting the entire university system.

References


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2 We could not utilize tests of significance for these pre- and post-data analyses since the sample sizes were small and it was not possible to match responses by the same person over the two data collection points.