

ADVANCE Adaptation: Leveling the Playing Field, Strategic Equity Initiatives at Murray State University

External Evaluation

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Presented By
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Executive Summary

Murray State University (MSU) was granted a no-cost extension to further extend the ADVANCE GRANT initiatives into a fourth year. This extension followed a period of significant accomplishments and valuable learning experiences for the leadership team. Throughout the 2022-23 academic year, MSU ADVANCE undertook a wide range of activities aimed at enhancing the recruitment and retention of women faculty, resulting in numerous positive outcomes.

Strengths

- There is a shared certainty and confidence that the MSU ADVANCE grant has undeniably contributed to making MSU a better place for everyone involved.
“It has made MSU better and improved our institution.”
- Active involvement of diverse stakeholders in shaping the grant and its programming.
- Successful collaboration within the Work-Life Task Force led by the president, resulting in favorable policy outcomes, including implementation of a 6-week paid parental leave policy and a modified bereavement leave policy.
- Strong support and participation from deans and chairs, contributing to the project's achievements.
- Mentoring circles that foster relationships and encourage collaboration and cross-disciplinary interactions throughout the university.
- Writing Retreats that build community and increase productivity.
- Highly regarded external speakers that brought awareness of their topics and expertise to the university.
- Dedication to shifting discussions highlighting the importance of LGBTQ+ awareness.
- Successful improvements of the Spring Break Camp, providing a vital service to faculty/staff.

Challenges

- Event attendance and active participation, especially for some activities such as the book clubs and mental health day.
- Aligning event scheduling with employee preferences/availability.
- Addressing difficult issues with leadership, such as sustainability of strategies and ongoing policy concerns.
- Communication and transparency about the future of MSU ADVANCE strategies.
- Ongoing funding limitations and perceptions among stakeholders of a lack of support for this work.
- Streamlining policy development processes.

The following are recommendations to consider as MSU ADVANCE's NSF funding ends. In addition to providing recommendations for sustaining MSU ADVANCE's overall impacts, recommendations are also provided for specific programming aspects.

Sustainability of MSU ADVANCE

- Consider various support models to identify the best fit for the continuation of successful, popular programs such as Mentoring Circles, writing retreats, the Spring Break Camp, and faculty workshops/seminars. The support needed to offer these activities should take into consideration the need for continued growth and development to ensure programming does not become stagnant.
- Work with university administration to embed policies and practices within existing administrative structures (e.g., trainings from the interactive theatre incorporated into required trainings for faculty/staff in collaboration with Human Resources).
- Work with university administration to develop a transparent and comprehensive funding plan that outlines budget allocations for staffing, programming, marketing, and other essential needs.
- Identify alternative funding sources, such as grants, endowments, and partnerships, to supplement institutional financial support.
- Work collaboratively with existing resources on campus when offering events that may overlap to increase the impact. For example, work with human resources when offering a mental health day to ensure participation counts as a health activity toward their benefits.

Mentoring Circles

- Institutionalize the Mentoring Circles, as stakeholders agree they are of high value in creating collegiality and community. As part of the institutionalization, a dedicated portion of a person's time is needed to coordinate the program to ensure it runs smoothly and continues to grow and does not languish.
- Revise topics addressed each year based on feedback from participants on the usefulness of topics.
- Continue to allow participants to remain in the same circle or join a new circle.
- Share information earlier and more often with facilitators to ensure they have the information they need.
- Facilitate communication between facilitators to allow for the exchange of information and resources, develop or add to the peer-sharing opportunities between facilitators, and continue checking-in with facilitators to ensure they have what they need to be successful.
- Continue to collect feedback from participants to make improvements and ensure the programs remain effective and relevant.
- Offer both in-person and virtual options for events.

Writing Retreat

- Institutionalize the writing retreat, as stakeholders reported it had a transformative impact on their various writing activities, fostered support, and enhanced productivity.
- Notify participants that they have been accepted earlier in the year so they have more time to manage competing priorities.
- Recognize optimal timing for events and align with participants' schedules.
- Explore a year-long commitment with dedicated writing days.
- Consider having a writing coach join in-person and have them customize the coaching based on participants' career tracks and specific writing needs.
- Sustain post-retreat support for enhanced accountability and progress tracking.

Faculty Workshops

- Institutionalize the faculty workshops/seminars and continue to host events that cover crucial subjects, such as LGBTQ+ issues, teaching strategies, diversity incorporation, and implicit bias, as they are deemed incredibly valuable.
- Expand publicity and use creative outreach to increase attendance, including using the Internal Steering Committee to recruit faculty to attend.
- Continue to host meals with the speakers; stakeholders valued the opportunity to interact during this time.

Spring Break Camp

- Institutionalize the Spring Break Childcare Camp, as stakeholders perceive this as extremely valuable, specifically, as a way to support women in academia.
- Address staffing and funding concerns for the initiative's continuity.
- Explore replicating the camp during other times of the year (e.g., fall break, summer break, K-12 teacher work days) to further support faculty/staff parents with their childcare needs.
- Extend childcare drop-off/pick-up hours to accommodate faculty and staff schedules.

Internal Steering Committee

- Continue the ISC, as it is perceived as a vital driving force to continue ADVANCE efforts.
- Be transparent with the continuation plans for the Internal Steering Committee.
- Consider modifying meeting formats to encourage more discussion and less reporting by adopting a more participatory approach that promotes open dialogue and engagement.
- Provide the agenda with specific points for contemplation at least a week before meetings to enhance participation during meetings.

Introduction

This report covers Murray State University's (MSU) no-cost extension year (4th year) of a 3-year NSF ADVANCE Adaption Grant: Leveling the Playing Field, Strategic Equity Initiatives at Murray State University, which occurred during the 2022-23 academic year. Prior to receiving this grant, MSU received an ADVANCE Catalyst grant. The current grant built upon the foundation developed by the Catalyst grant as well as continuing activities and adapting programs from other institutions to improve equity for MSU faculty.

MSU ADVANCE activities are structured around three programmatic thrusts: MSU Learn, MSU Grow, and MSU Live. The 2022-23 academic year activities included:

<p>MSU ADVANCE Learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental Health Day• Dean/Chair Workshop	<p>MSU ADVANCE Grow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentoring Circles• ADVANCE Writing Retreat• Workshops/Seminars• ADVANCE Book Clubs	<p>MSU ADVANCE Live:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy Efforts - President's Work-Life Task Force• Spring Break Camp
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Evaluation Activities and Methods

This evaluation report covers the activities that occurred between September 2022 and August 2023. The evaluation approach was collaborative in nature with support from the MSU internal team. Data collection and analysis responsibilities were shared between the internal and external partners. A summary of the data utilized in this evaluation is provided below.

Stakeholder Interviews: Mindy Anderson-Knott, the external evaluator, conducted interviews via Zoom with fifteen MSU stakeholders in May and June of 2023, including the president, provost, deans, PI, Co-PIs, members of the Internal Steering Committee, project team, and people responsible for implementation of programming.

Mentoring Circle Evaluations: The MSU ADVANCE team administered surveys to faculty who participated in Mentoring Circles in the 2022-2023 academic year. Nineteen of 27 faculty who participated in the circles completed evaluations (70% response rate).

Writing Retreat Surveys and Focus Group: To evaluate the 2023 ADVANCE Writing Retreat, two online surveys were administered to participants by the internal MSU ADVANCE team prior to (pre) and immediately at the conclusion of the retreat (post). In addition, the external evaluator conducted a focus group with participants in late July 2023. Sixteen participants completed the pre survey and fifteen completed the post (89% and 83% response rate, respectively).

Spring Break Camp Surveys: The MSU ADVANCE team administered surveys to parents who had children attending the 2023 Spring Break Camp. In total, 34 children attended the camp, with 23 parents providing feedback on the event.

Event Evaluations: The MSU ADVANCE team shared with the external evaluator the post-event evaluation results for the mental health day fair and the events: “Equity-Minded Workloads by Design,” “Recruiting, Retaining, and Engaging Diverse Faculty,” and “Queering STEM: A History of the Queer Rights in the USA and LGBT+ Advocacy in STEM.”

Findings from 2022-23 Efforts

Throughout the discussions with stakeholders, there is a shared certainty and confidence that the MSU ADVANCE grant has undeniably contributed to making MSU a better place for everyone involved. The following outlines the specific finding from the 2022-23 efforts.

“It has made MSU better and improved our institution.”

MSU Learn

Back to Basics Faculty and Staff Mental Health Day Fair

The “Back to Basics” Faculty and Staff Mental Health Day Fair was held on October 10, 2022. The event included a full day of activities ranging from webinars on drug addiction to Zumba to drumming circles to self-care workshops. A total of 46 people attended the event, including 14 presenters.

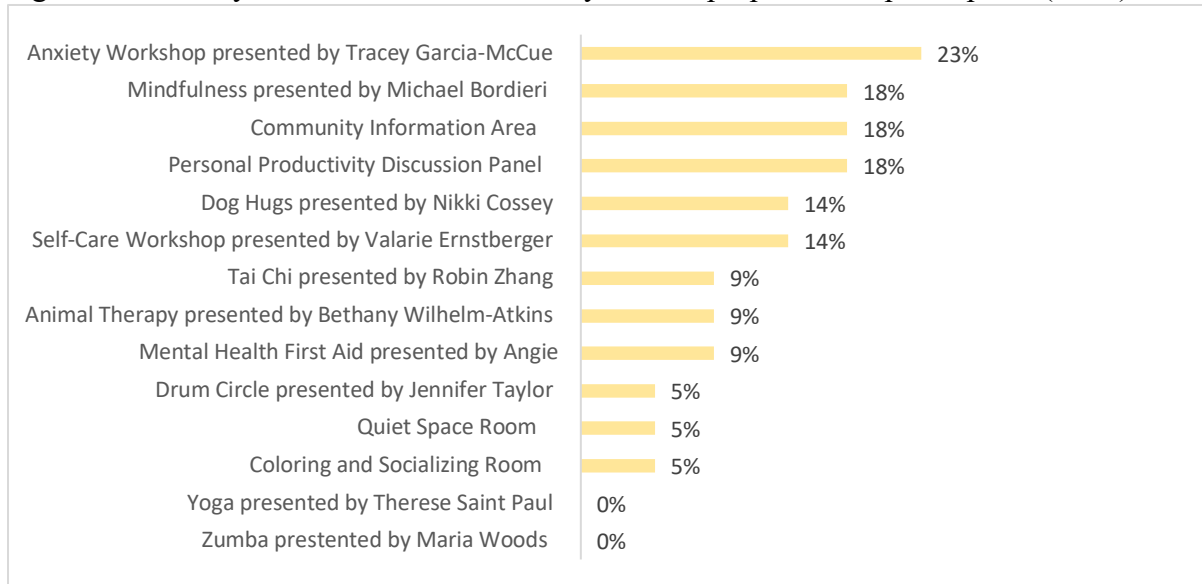
When interviewed, stakeholders described the event as well-planned and structured; however, they felt the turnout was disappointing due to faculty and staff feeling unable to take the time off to attend. It was noted that it would have been beneficial if the university had given faculty the day off from other responsibilities specifically to attend the events. An additional barrier described by stakeholders was that the event was held in October, which missed the window for faculty/staff to count the event as a health activity toward their benefits. The event was specifically held on October 10th to coincide with World Mental Health Day; however, in retrospect, hosting the event in September would likely have been more beneficial for faculty/staff because it would have allowed them to count it toward their benefits. While there was a clear awareness of the need for the mental health day, poor attendance resulted in a missed opportunity to address faculty/staff well-being effectively.

“Unfortunately, faculty didn't feel like they could take the time to attend. It would have been great if the University would have said, ‘we're going to give you this day to attend these events.’ I think a lot of people ironically didn't feel they could take time out of their very hectic schedules for a mental health day.”



A survey was administered following the event, on which 29 people reported attending the event. A variety of events were attended according to those who reported which events they attended, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. A variety of events were attended by a small proportion of participants (n=22)



Future topics participants suggested for inclusion at future events included the following:

- Stress relief
 - Stress relief tips and tools
 - Relaxation activities
 - More practical applications
 - Coping skills for stress tolerance that can be done in the office
 - A safe space for those who need a moment to decompress in each building
 - The importance of mental health and opportunities to develop better mental health for staff and faculty (there are tons of free resources for students, but not for staff and faculty. We need more free or low cost options because EAP only covers 6 sessions.)
 - The use of massage for stress reduction and a discount program for staff/faculty
 - Chair massage
- Mental health supports
 - Roundtable where HR answers how they actually support mental health on campus
 - Mindfulness & Tai Chi
 - Anxiety
 - Self-care
 - PTSD awareness
 - Working with those with mental health disorders
- Addiction supports
 - Families and Addiction (worth presenting again)
- Physical health supports
 - Yoga, movement
 - Strategies for physical health that contribute to mental health such as sleep
- Other
 - Working with IDEA and HR for accommodations

Other suggestions for future events included ensuring the event would be eligible as a wellness event and having all of the event in one central area.

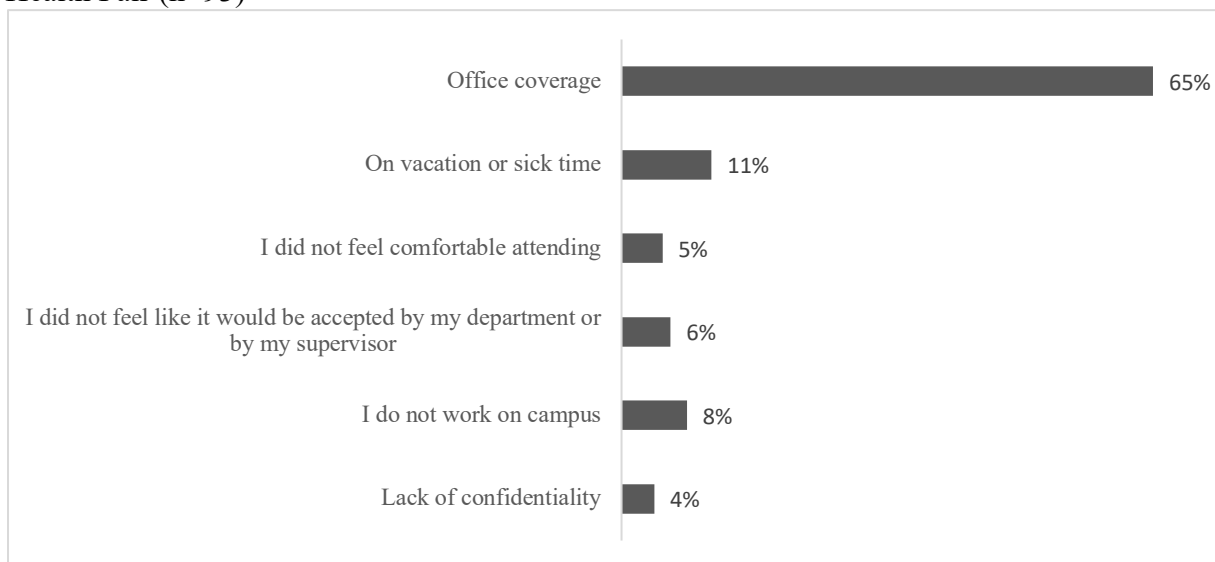
While attendance was not overwhelming, among those who participated, feedback suggests the topics addressed were interesting, the information was useful, and the location worked well (Figure 2). Furthermore, nearly three-fourths (74%) noted that they would recommend this event to incoming faculty or staff. When asked what time of day is more convenient, participants reported that later in the day is better, with 41% reporting afternoon, 38% reporting midday, and only 21% reporting morning.

Figure 2. Participants felt the information presented was interesting and useful (n=23)



Among those who did not attend the event, the majority (73%) indicated they would have liked to have attended the Back to Basics Faculty and Staff Mental Health Fair. The barriers preventing them from attending are shown in Figure 3, which shows that office coverage was the primary barrier.

Figure 3. Office coverage was the primary barrier preventing people from attending the Mental Health Fair (n=93)



KerryAnn O’Meara Department Chair and Dean Workshop

Twenty administrators (deans/chairs) attended a virtual workshop offered by KerryAnn O’Meara on October 19, 2022, entitled “Equity-Minded Workloads by Design.” Among those who participated, ten provided feedback on the event by completing a post-event survey. Those who completed the survey were primarily women (80%), with half from the Jesse D. Jones College of Science Engineering and Technology, and slightly over half (60%) being department chairs.

Equity-Minded Workloads by Design

The unequal distribution of faculty teaching and service work is one of the most important, yet least talked about inequities that shape the experiences of faculty members within colleges and universities. In particular, faculty from historically minoritized identities and women faculty face unusually high service, teaching, and mentoring workloads. The lingering effects of the pandemic have exacerbated existing inequities. It is important for departments and institutions to identify and dismantle systems that maintain unequal workloads and avoid longer time to advancement, higher stress, increased burnout, and greater willingness to leave for women and minoritized faculty.

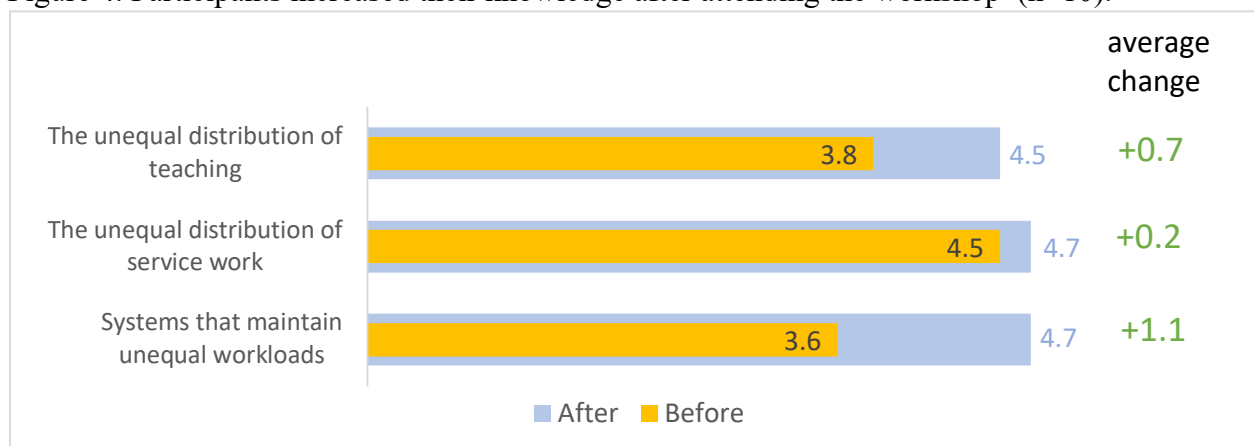
In this talk, KerryAnn O’Meara, P.I. of the NSF ADVANCE funded Faculty Workload and Rewards Project and co-author of an ACE report and set of evidence based tools, shares what she learned with colleagues during this five-year, action research project aimed at promoting equity in how faculty labor is taken up, assigned, and rewarded. She considers how workload inequities emerge in “discretionary spaces,” and the evidence-based policies and practices departments have used to identify inequalities, assess faculty and university needs, and re-design workload with equity in mind.

All Chairs and Deans are invited to attend
October 19th, 2022
3:00-5:00
Zoom Meeting
 RSVP with link above

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY
ADVANCE
GROW

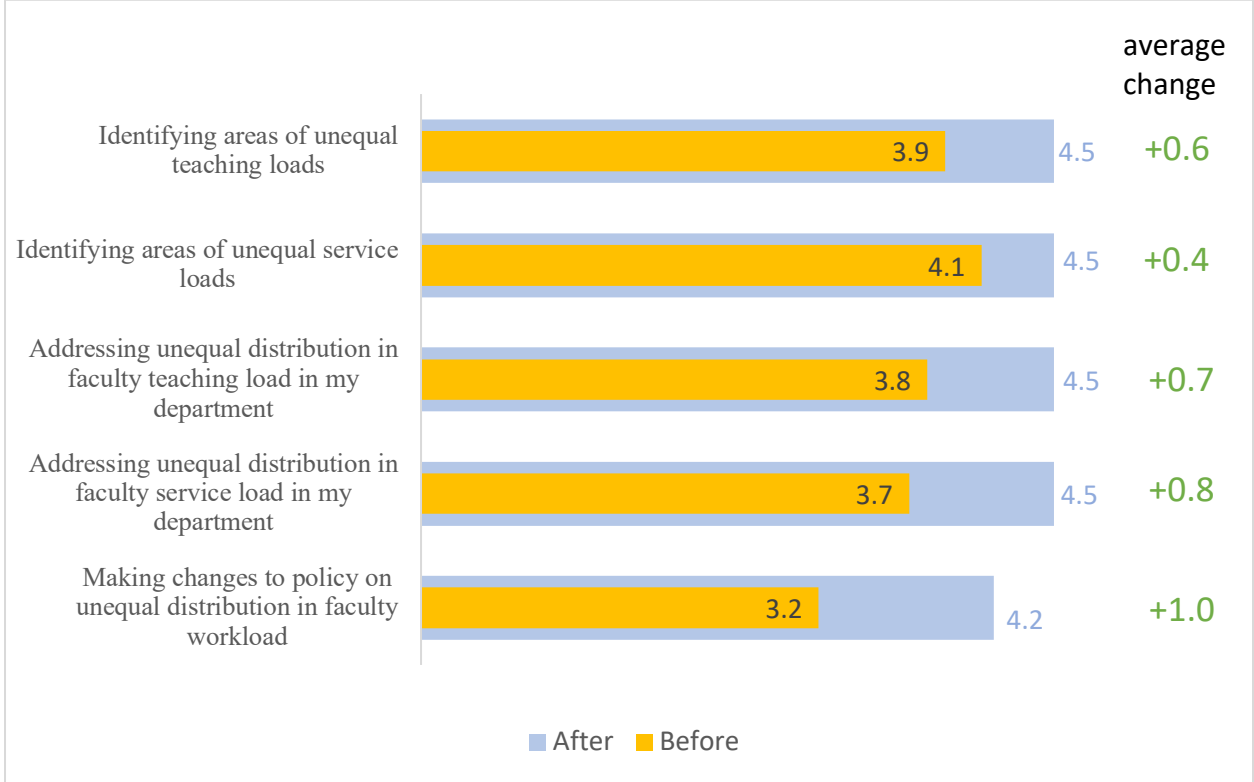
Participants were asked to self-report their knowledge of unequal distribution of workloads before and after the presentation on a 5-point scale with 1 being low. Participants entered the workshop with relatively high levels of knowledge of the topic; thus, there was little room for growth in this area. However, there were notable gains in knowledge in the unequal distribution of teaching and systems that maintain unequal workloads (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Participants increased their knowledge after attending the workshop (n=10).



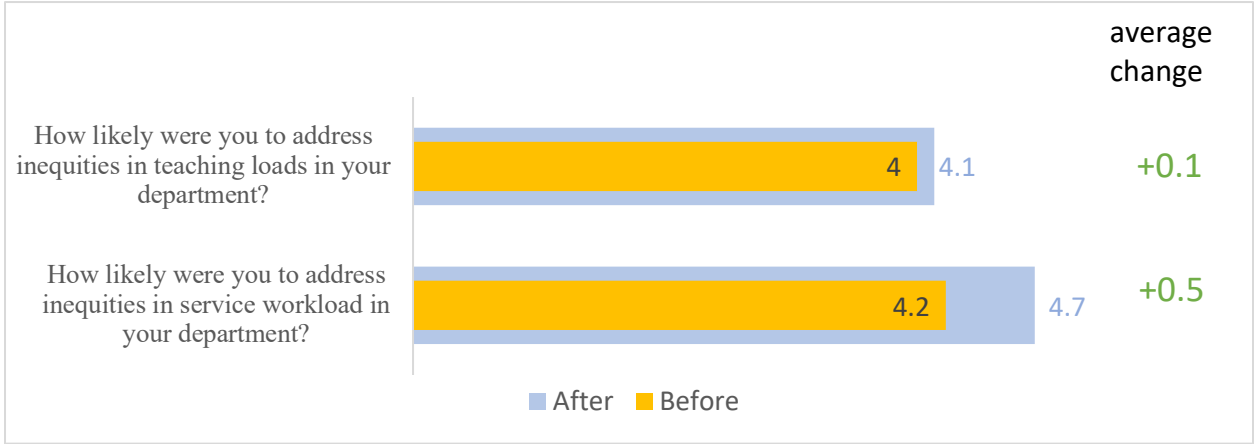
On a similar 5-point scale, participants rated their confidence level before and after in a number of areas where 1 was the lowest level of confidence. As Figure 5 shows, measurable gains were observed across many areas, with the greatest gains in making changes to policy on unequal distribution in faculty workloads.

Figure 5. Participants increased their confidence after attending the workshop (n=10).



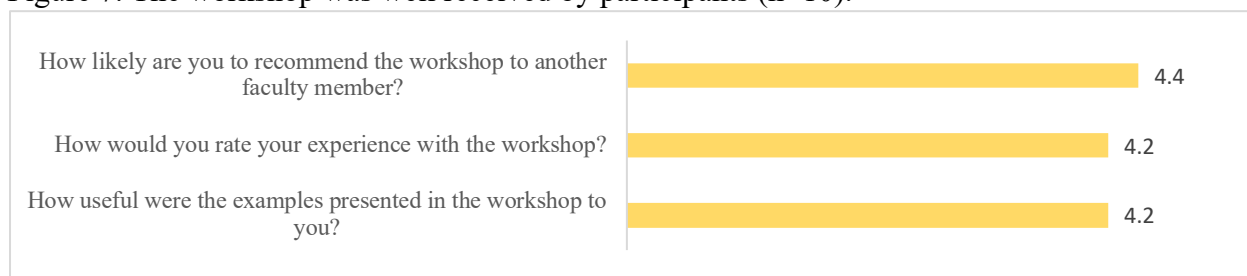
Participants reported they were more likely to be able to address inequities in their department using the strategies presented in the workshop; however, as Figure 6 shows, this primarily impacted their ability to address inequities in service workloads, rather than teaching loads.

Figure 6. Participants increased their likelihood to address inequities in service workload after attending the workshop (n=10).



Overall feedback from the workshop was positive, with a mean ranking of 4.4 when asked how likely they were to recommend the workshop to another faculty member on a 5-point scale where 1 was the lowest. On the same scale, the mean ranking was a 4.2 when asked to rate their overall experience and to rate the usefulness of the examples presented (Figure 7). The aspect of the workshop participants most often reported as useful was the small group discussion. Other useful components noted by participants were the materials, presenter’s discussion, and identifying different areas where their department needs to improve.

Figure 7. The workshop was well received by participants (n=10).



Moving forward, participants explained that as a result of the information they learned at the workshop they plan to do the following:

- Be more mindful of overall faculty workload.
- Work with departments to identify workloads, especially for service.
- Develop strategies for increasing transparency of advising loads so that faculty can see how they compare with their colleagues.
- The first goal is to promote transparency by letting all faculty know what others are doing especially in terms of service. Not sure how we will do that yet.
- Review Committee policies.
- Keep trying to make sure we're moving toward workload equality. If I can't help fix some things, then I may resign my position. I don't do well under broken systems that "can't" be fixed.
- Continue as I have been - I've already implemented most of the strategies listed since I stepped in as Dept Chair.

To further improve this workshop, participants suggested 1) using the small group discussion more effectively by providing better guidance for the goals and provide more time to come up with real solutions, 2) address how to handle issues coming from administration above your level and when upper administration isn't supportive of appropriate changes.

After the semester had ended, key stakeholders provided their reflections on the workshop through interviews. One felt the workshop was a success, noting the active participation the event received. Another explained that while the material provided during this workshop was very valuable, they felt it was less impactful when attended virtually. A third stakeholder shared their desire to have the material presented during the workshop implemented and described their concern about the ability of those who voiced these intentions to follow through. *“Obviously the proof is long-term. Are they really going to be able to implement them in their departments? But certainly, the results of the evaluations of those people indicated that they will.”*

MSU Grow

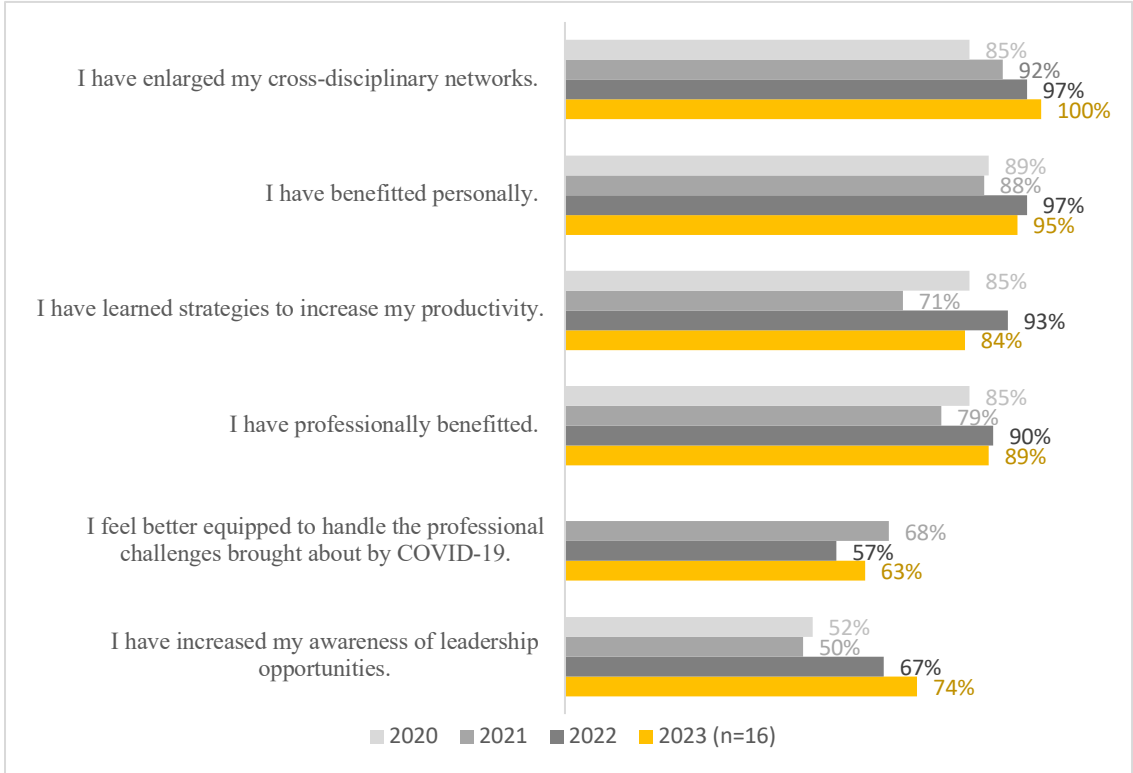
Mentoring Circles

The Mentoring Circles program is a program continued from previous years that is designed to foster community and support among women faculty at MSU. Each Mentoring Circle, consisting of 3-6 female faculty participants with one peer facilitator, meets once or twice a month to discuss a variety of issues relevant to women in academia. In 2022-2023, 27 women (plus the 6 facilitators) participated in the program across six Mentoring Circle groups, many of which included returning members from the previous year.

To evaluate the program, the Murray State ADVANCE team conducted a survey of Mentoring Circle participants, 19 participants completing the survey (70% response rate). Among those who participated in the program and provided feedback, about half (52%) were tenured, nearly one-third (32%) were tenure-track but not yet tenured, and 16% were non-tenure track. Among these participants, they reported attending an average of 7.5 of the ten mentoring circle meetings.

The Mentoring Circles have greatly benefitted participants over time, with 2022-2023 attendees showing especially strong benefits. As Figure 8 shows, all participants (100%) in 2022-2023 agreed or strongly agreed that they have enlarged their cross-disciplinary networks and nearly all (95%) noted that they have benefitted personally.

Figure 8. Mentoring Circle attendees reported many benefits from participating in the program.



Participants rated the topics covered in the mentoring circles in order of usefulness. The aggregated means (a lower mean suggests it was more often selected as a top choice), as well as the total number of times each topic was selected as the: top choice, top two choices, last choice, or last two choices is shown in Table 1. “How to deal with burnout and reenergize” was selected as the most useful topic, with 6 of the 16 participants selecting this as their top pick as the most useful and 13 selecting this as one of their top three choices, and none rating this in their bottom two choices. The “Open discussion” topic received mixed reviews, with participants either rating it extremely high (6 rated it as their top choice) or rating it extremely low (6 rated it as their last choice).

Table 1. Mentoring Circle participants found many of the topics useful (n=16)

Topic	Mean	# of times selected as #1	# of times selected as #1 or #2	# of times selected as #8	# of times selected as #7 or #8
How to deal with burnout and reenergize	2.3	6	10	0	0
How to say no and setting boundaries with colleagues and students	3.6	2	5	0	0
How to advocate and support other women	4.5	0	3	1	3
Open discussion	4.5	6	7	6	13
Classroom management: dealing with difficult students and mansplaining	4.7	0	1	1	1
How to navigate academic politics within units	5.4	0	1	1	5
Academic advising	5.5	1	3	2	9
HR benefits (how to choose for you and your dependents)	5.6	1	2	5	7

Similar to previous years, the most often cited benefit participants described was the network of supportive women. *“The networking was great, and I feel like I have a real group of folks who are helpful and supportive.”* Participants also specifically noted that it was helpful to connect with women outside of their department and that they discovered similar difficulties across different disciplines.

“[A benefit was] getting to know an amazing group of faculty and the ability to share concerns in a non-judgmental atmosphere.”

Similar to previous years, about three in five participants (58%) agreed or strongly agreed that they are more likely to stay at MSU as a result of their Mentoring Circle experience. This impact was most common among tenured faculty, with 70% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, compared to 44% of non-tenured faculty

(including both tenure-track and non-tenure track); however, the difference was not statistically significant. The majority of participants who completed the survey indicated they would participate in a Mentoring Circle again next year, with most (63%) preferring to stay with the same group, while about one in five (21%) expressed interest in participating in a different group.

For future topics to incorporate into the Mentoring Circles, participants suggested the following topics:

- How to increase productivity
- More on recharging
- A grant writing workshop
- Publications
- Advocating for self
- Continue with stress coping strategies, mental exhaustion, etc.
- How to build a meaningful life in west Kentucky
- Navigating university admin and policies- (i.e., tenure)
- How to add a section to a course
- How extra comp works
- How summer classes work
- Grading

Feedback from both participants and other stakeholders involved in ADVANCE efforts highlights the positive

contribution of the Mentoring Circles to the university's environment. In alignment with previous years, feedback received on the Mentoring Circles was overwhelmingly positive.

Stakeholders acknowledge the dual nature of support provided by the Mentoring Circles, both professional and social. This support structure has proven particularly beneficial for women in STEM fields, breaking down

departmental isolation and offering a diverse network for professional and personal growth. Participants described how they particularly enjoyed the networking opportunities with other women, as it helped establish meaningful connections that were lacking within their own department. Stakeholders were grateful for this support of women, stating, “*we typically don't see that in this climate.*” These circles have proven to be a valuable platform for fostering connections and structured mentoring among faculty members, and the impact of these circles, especially for women in STEM fields, has been remarkable.

"The Mentoring Circle has been really impactful. One thing I've heard, especially from some of my junior colleagues, is how important those circles have been in terms of getting a sense of connection, especially outside of the department, early on in the tenure process. I think there's a broader culture of support here that, maybe isn't easy to see. It doesn't show up on all our indicators, but I get a sense that it really has a meaningful impact, and I am really excited to get to see that those Mentoring Circles will continue as well. I think those are really important resource we've offered through ADVANCE."

The impact of the Mentoring Circles has extended to create significant cultural shifts, fostering enhanced connections among participants across various departments. This broader sense of cultural support has been well-received, with stakeholders expressing their gratitude for these positive developments and expressing a desire for their continuity. Many stakeholders acknowledged the Mentoring Circles as a central pillar of the institution's efforts to cultivate relationships, mentorship, and support among faculty members.

"The mentoring circles have been instrumental in establishing a culture of support networks."

One stakeholder expressed their appreciation for the decision to open up Mentoring Circles beyond STEM colleges in the university and emphasized that this expansion was crucial for the university's growth. According to one stakeholder, the exchange of ideas and experiences among participants from different colleges was beneficial, fostering collaboration and information

"Any woman from any college can participate in a circle, and I think for a university our size that is really important, so that there is an opportunity for cross-pollination, and you have a better idea of who maybe you could collaborate with in the future... for information or resources that you may not even have known were available."

sharing. This approach has also led to a better understanding of the university's diverse culture, which varies across its colleges. Another stakeholder shared that the flexibility to allow existing members to stay in the circles while welcoming new members has had a positive impact, ensured continuity, and has facilitated mobility among participants who may have switched to different circles for their benefit.

Beyond professional support, these circles have played a pivotal role in cultivating informal social networks, particularly for women in STEM who often face challenges in forming such connections. Specifically, the diversity of participants within the Mentoring Circles was celebrated. Stakeholders have highlighted the program's success in bringing together individuals at various career stages and life phases, emphasizing the value of the personal relationships fostered within the circles. Stakeholders have found these circles essential in facilitating active involvement in decision-making discussions. One participant emphasized the profound positive impact of the Mentoring Circles and writing retreats on their professional journey.

"The mentoring circles have continued to be really helpful for support... helping them develop those informal social networks, which is one of the goals."

While the program's merits are evident, challenges remain, such as coordinating suitable meeting times for all participants and continually refreshing discussion content with new facilitator-led questions. Notably, a positive change has been allowing participants to opt to remain in their existing circles, resulting in the formation of close-knit groups that persist over multiple years.

While stakeholders had few suggested areas for improvement, one expressed concern about the timeliness of information being sent out to facilitators in the program. *"Sometimes I think that the information could be shared sooner, or maybe like a double check to make sure that everyone who needs to get the information is getting the information."* The stakeholder also highlighted the need for better communication among facilitators.

Another stakeholder suggested the possibility of mid-semester or end-of-year check-ins with the facilitators to discuss their experiences and gather feedback. They explained that a meeting like this currently exists at the beginning of the semester, but that it may be useful at the end of the semester when experiences are fresh on their mind. Additionally, one stakeholder recommended having a shared resource platform for facilitators to exchange information and resources. Stakeholders acknowledged the current lack of interaction among facilitators and suggested more intentional communication may help.

However, amidst the praise, there is a concern about the continuity of the program. Stakeholders expressed apprehension about the potential discontinuation of the supporting office, which could hamper recruitment efforts for new faculty in the Mentoring Circles and writing retreats. The worry is that without dedicated support, these initiatives might lose momentum over time. When asked about their preferred choice for program continuity, a stakeholder expressed their desire to continue the Mentoring Circles, *“my first pick would be the mentoring circles... because of the creation of collegiality and community.”* Murray State University has been responsive to this sentiment, and despite budget constraints, the institution remains dedicated to sustaining the Mentoring Circles, recognizing their role in promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange. Notably, the ongoing funding for beneficial programs like the Mentoring Circles was highlighted as an achievement by many stakeholders. MSU administration acknowledged their office's previous financial contributions to these initiatives and noted that it will remain a priority to continue in the future.

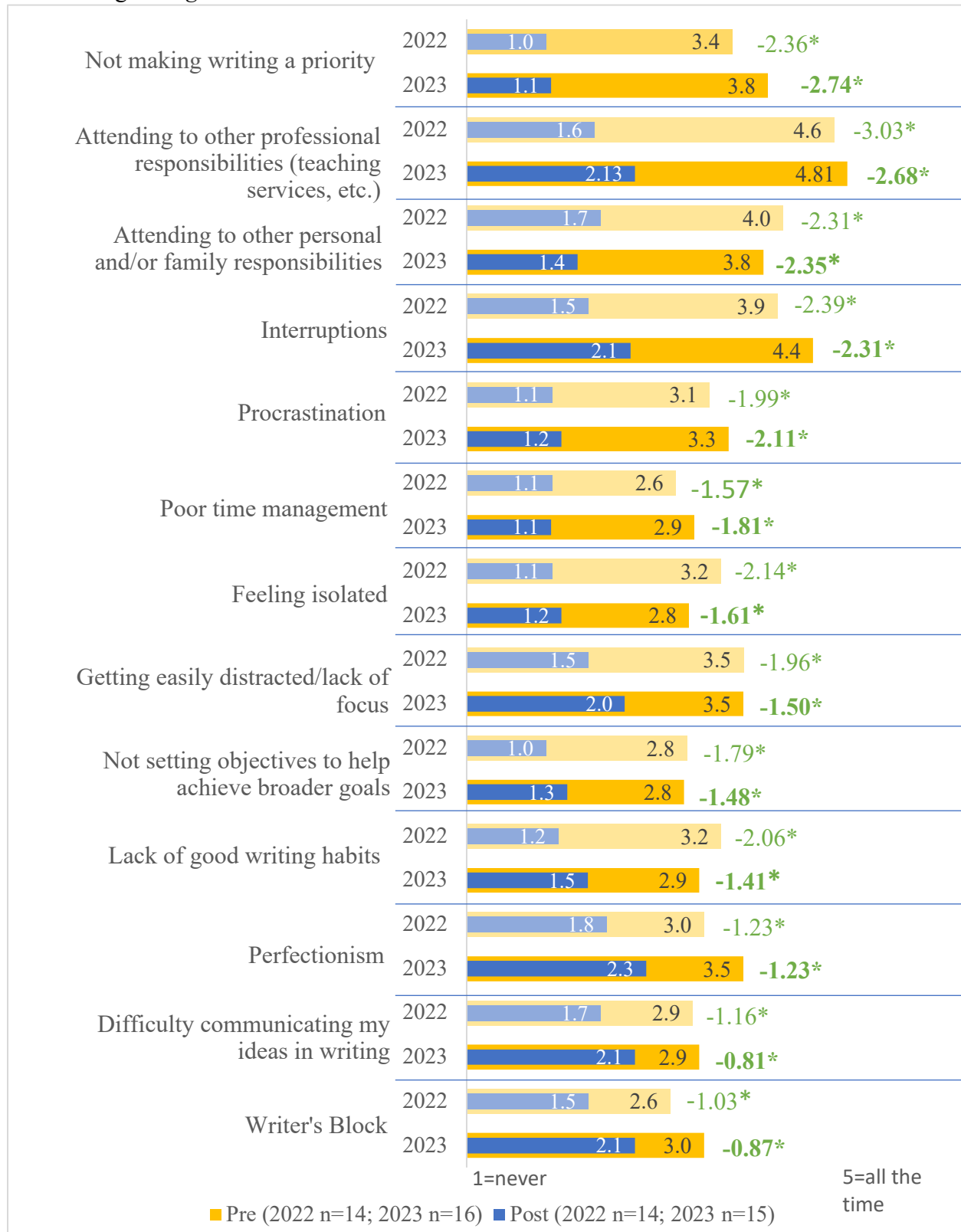
ADVANCE Writing Retreat

Eighteen faculty participated in the 2023 writing retreat, which was held in June. To evaluate the event, surveys were administered with participants prior to (pre) and immediately after the week-long retreat (post). Sixteen participants completed the pre and fifteen completed the post surveys (89% and 83% response rate, respectively). In addition, the external evaluator conducted a focus group with seven of the participants in August 2023.

The participants' departments represented a diverse range of academic disciplines: Agriculture Science, Art & Design, Biological Sciences, Communications, History, JCSET, Occupational Therapy, Organizational Communication & Leadership, Political Science & Sociology, Psychology, and University Libraries. Faculty were also represented across all ranks.

Participants reported that the retreat helped reduce barriers that impact their ability to accomplish their writing goals. As Figure 9 shows, on a five-point scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*), participants reported significant reductions in all barriers listed. The greatest reductions in 2023 were 1) not making writing a priority and 2) attending to other professional responsibilities.

Figure 9. Writing retreat participants reported significant reductions in challenges that impact their writing *during* the retreat



* $p < .05$ (independent sample t -test)

In addition to the challenges listed in Figure 9, participants also described other challenges they face including: feeling overwhelmed and not knowing where to begin, imposter syndrome, toxic work environment, lack of access to resources, balancing university requirements, funding for travel retreats, dealing with intense semesters, and having limited time. The retreat's structure and support helped them overcome some of these obstacles. One participant mentioned, *"Setting aside that time is just difficult on our own. So, having that time was really helpful,"* and another said, *"It is forcing me to do the work that I might not do if I was in my house."* Although many participants expressed difficulties with accountability, they highlighted that the encouragement to attend these sessions helped establish a sense of responsibility.

When asked about their concerns about attending the retreat in person, many of the participants responded with no concerns. However, one participant shared that they found it distracting to work in a group setting, while others found it difficult because they experience social anxiety and imposter syndrome. Another participant shared that their teaching load is a competing priority and that they will not be able to attend all of the retreat. They also suggested that to assist with scheduling of their teaching requirements that it would be beneficial to be notified of acceptance earlier in the year. One subject shared they also had competing priorities and needed to attend appointments throughout the week.

When asked about potential challenges they might face during the retreat while pursuing their writing objectives, several retreat participants shared their concerns:

- The possibility of being interrupted by administrative emails from their department, even though they were officially on leave.
- The balancing act they would need to perform between their scientific writing and creative writing endeavors.
- Apprehension about managing their responsibilities toward students working under them during the summer, while also desiring to spend time with their children.
- The challenge of having unavoidable doctor's appointments.
- Imposter syndrome was also raised as a concern, reflecting the fear of inadequacy impacting their productivity.
- A sense of worry regarding the implementation of suggestions received during the retreat, suggesting a concern about putting the feedback into practice effectively.

Overall, the retreat participants identified a range of challenges, both internal and external, that could potentially affect their ability to achieve their writing goals during the retreat, however it should be noted that not all participants reported facing challenges.

During the retreat, participants reported encountering various challenges that affected their progress toward achieving their writing goals. Some participants found that the Zoom meetings and presentations held during the retreat were less valuable to them compared to independent writing time, and they would have preferred more focused writing periods. A few participants mentioned disruptions caused by chatting during writing time, and one noted that someone even engaged in a Zoom call with a co-author, which was disruptive to their concentration. Another participant had to contend with issues involving a graduate student, which was a distraction, however, they managed to address these issues outside of the retreat's designated time. Some participants experienced feelings of insecurity regarding the quality of their research, the interest

or significance of their findings, and difficulties in organizing their arguments. These feelings hindered their progress and slowed them down. One participant expressed the desire for more time beyond the retreat to continue working on their writing goals.

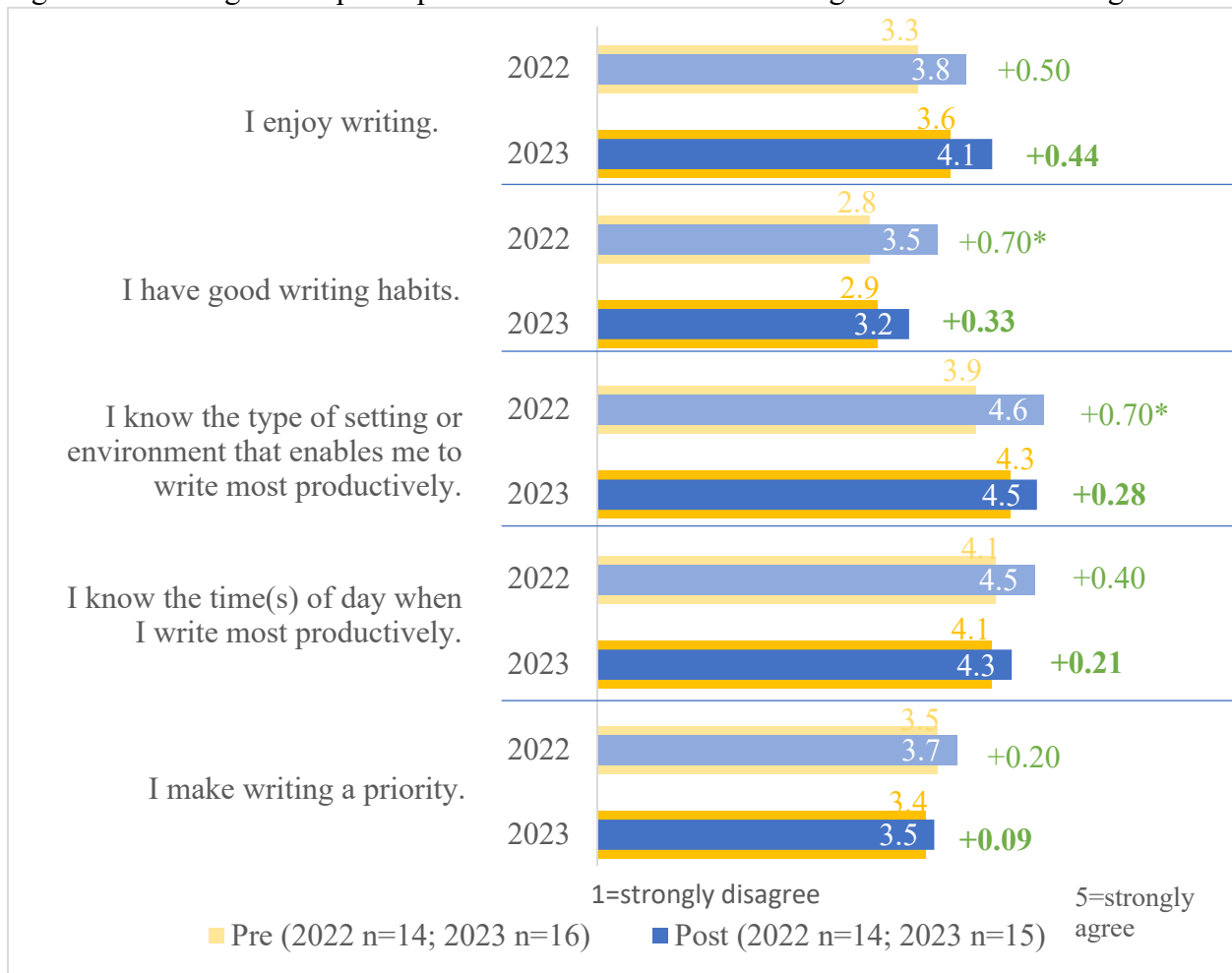
To alleviate some of the challenges experienced, participants shared they would have preferred writing their goals during the morning Zoom sessions with the facilitator, incorporating more discussions around imposter syndrome, but less discussion about procrastination, and providing additional information prior to the retreat with documents sent in advance.

“Less discussion of ‘procrastination’ because it feels ableist and inconsistent with the realities of working at a teaching/service heavy institution like MSU.”

Retreat participants were asked about any insights they gained during the retreat specific to addressing challenges they experience while trying to accomplish their writing goals. Participants shared they found the following insights helpful: SMART goals, tools from Dr. Carson, having an advocate for content support, the value of focused time, solidarity was greatly appreciated, the importance of reflective practices and being able to focus on the “And, But, Therefore” mission statement, the importance of taking breaks or walks, an ugly first draft is not always a bad thing, and the importance of setting daily goals.

The writing retreat helped participants with their writing, as shown in Figure 10. While there were significant gains shown in 2022, none of the areas showed significant gains in 2023; however, all followed the same trends. While not statistically significant, the greatest gain from the 2023 retreat was in the enjoyment of writing. Prior to attending the retreat, participants reported a mean of 3.6 when noting how much they agree that they enjoy writing on a five-point scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*, which increased to 4.1 immediately after completing the retreat.

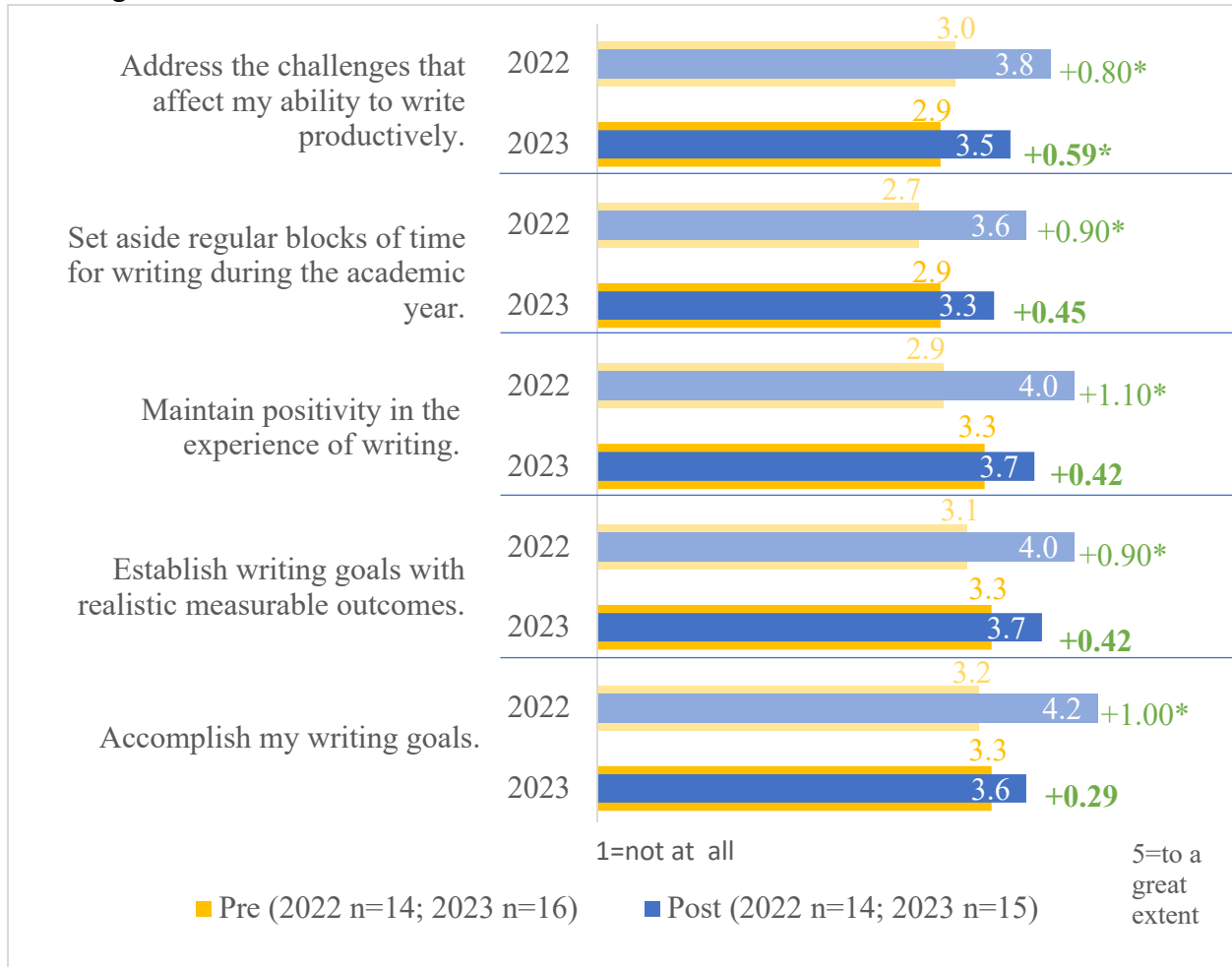
Figure 10. Writing retreat participants continued to show modest gains with their writing habits



* $p < .05$ (independent sample *t*-test)

Figure 11 shows that many participants lacked confidence in areas related to writing going into the retreat, but that their confidence increased immediately following the retreat. While the increases were statistically significant across all areas in 2022, the only significant improvement in 2023 was in their confidence to address the challenges that affect their ability to write productively. On a five-point scale where 1 = *not at all* and 5 = *to a great extent*, participants reported a mean of 2.9 when rating their confidence to address the challenges that affect their ability to write productively before the retreat, which increased to 3.5 after the retreat.

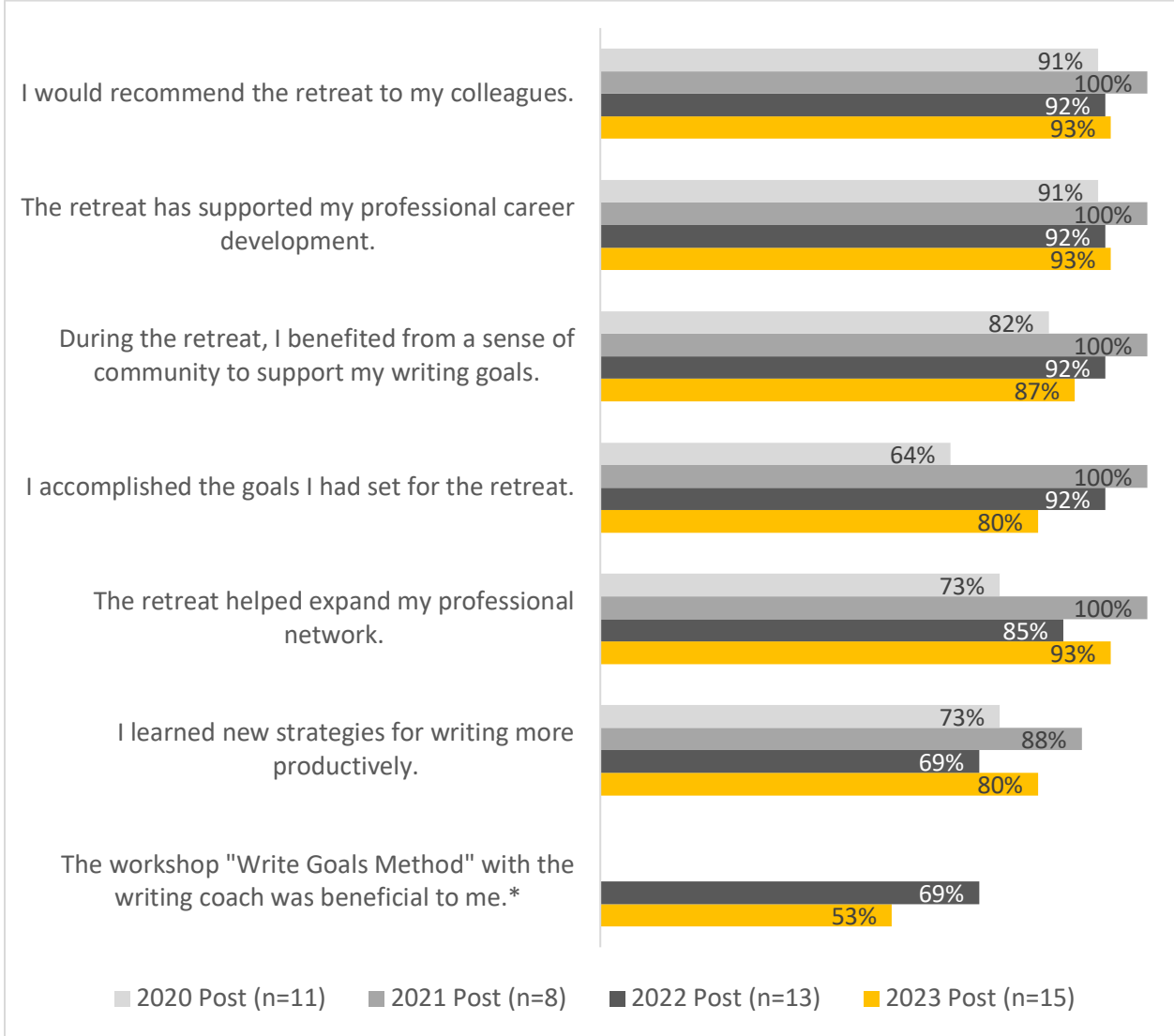
Figure 11. Writing retreat participants' confidence in their writing increased immediately following the retreat



* $p < .05$ (independent sample t-test)

Similar to previous years, the writing retreat was well received by participants. As Figure 12 shows, the 2023 retreat was perceived similarly or more favorably than the 2022 in many ways. An exception was in feeling that goals set for the retreat were met, which showed a decline from 92% agreeing or strongly agreeing in 2022 to 80% feeling this way in 2023. Another exception was in agreeing that the “Write Goals Method” workshop was beneficial, which declined from 69% to 53%. In contrast, participants from the 2023 retreat were more likely to report they learned new strategies for writing more effectively, with 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement in 2023, compared to 69% in 2022. Growth in professional networks was also greater in 2023, with 93% agreeing that the retreat expanded this in 2023, while 85% felt this way after participating in 2022.

Figure 12. The writing retreat was well received by participants each of the past four years



* only asked in 2022 and 2023

After participating in the 2023 ADVANCE Writing Retreat, participants shared their experiences

"I was just starting my next big research project, which required reaching out to people... and I hadn't been working on that. I kept saying I was going to start working on that project. It was because of the ADVANCE grant that I actually got jump started on it and then started doing it. So, I think the accountability and just having that time and space reserved and knowing that there's a community that's also doing that had a really important impact."

and goals in a focus group, expressing appreciation for the dedicated time, space, and supportive environment provided during the retreat, which facilitated the accomplishment of various writing goals. In addition, the retreat has gained a valuable reputation with all interviewed stakeholders at MSU, and was described as "very impactful," and "very important." Furthermore, the retreat's value was compared favorably to other initiatives, with one stakeholder explicitly stating that they found it the most valuable of all of MSU ADVANCE's initiatives.

Overall, participants described meeting or exceeding their goals for the retreat. One participant expressed the intention of utilizing the retreat to engage in writing, given their heavy teaching workload and the commencement of a major research project. This participant successfully achieved their goal by completing a significant portion of a book and kickstarting their research endeavors. The **dedicated time and conducive environment** provided during the retreat played a pivotal role in their accomplishments, "I do feel like having that dedicated time helped me accomplish those goals." Another participant with a similar teaching burden also found solace in

"My goal was to get some writing done. I have a hard time because the teaching load here is very high. It's kind of impossible to write during the semester... semesters are so intense... I'm too exhausted to do anything to motivate myself in the summer. So having this as something where it's a deadline, where it's actually my job to write was one of the best things. Having a space where there are other people. And there's accountability just because other people are writing was incredibly useful."

"As far as getting my goal accomplished, I thought that goal would be met by the end of summer... that goal was met by the end of the week for me. It was a game changer for me."

the retreat, emphasizing the value of dedicated time for writing amidst a demanding schedule. They were pleasantly surprised that the retreat helped them meet their goals much earlier than expected.

A participant that aimed to make progress on a book review and a website noted that they successfully accomplished these tasks and also described making a valuable decision regarding their book review after consulting with fellow colleagues during the retreat, a bonus of being surrounded by peers. The **collaborative atmosphere** and shared insights contributed positively to their experience. One participant who identified as a new member

"I'm glad that I had the solidarity and have people [with whom] I can talk it through before putting it out into the world."

shared that their experience was overwhelmingly positive because of the initial support and inspiration they experienced, noting the value for newer faculty. *“I’m fairly new faculty. This is my first time and I really appreciate the opportunity to network with other women who are writing. It was very inspirational, encouraging for me to meet all these different females from different departments that I normally don’t get a chance to meet. It was so cool to see the things that they had already published, or what they were working on.”*

Retreat participants highlighted the remarkable **increase in communication** among women across the campus, fostering strong bonds both within and beyond the workplace. They pointed out the valuable role of the writing retreat in strengthening these connections while aiding

“I’m a very focused person but it is actually good to take the time to get to know others, even if that sets you back a bit!”

women in their writing endeavors. They shared, *“Not only does it increase those bonds, but it really gives people a reason to get that writing done, and just to help them know that they can do it and feel supported toward tenure.”* Retreat participants noted that their participation not only supported productivity on the path

to tenure but was viewed as contributing to boosting confidence and overcoming imposter syndrome.

The **supportive nature** of the retreat, along with the opportunity to collaborate and come together with fellow faculty members, was highlighted as a key benefit. One participant shared,

“Anything they can do to support women that are in academia, I think is really great.”

“the writing retreat provides time to write and they even take care of the meals which has shifted the culture and makes women feel more supported.” Another participant shared their gratitude for the support from those who facilitate the writing retreat, *“[I appreciate]*

those who are there to support you in your role, to support you with your writing, to make sure that you’re getting the things done that you need to, despite all the pressures.”

Overall, the retreat participants **emphasized the significance of the retreat for productivity**, particularly highlighting its impact on women. They stressed the importance of creating a space that allows women to navigate their complex and challenging roles effectively. Writing retreat participants conveyed the alignment of their completed writing projects with their overarching professional objectives, highlighting that they accomplished tasks such as: writing a book, finishing a publication request, completing outstanding projects to focus on new projects, and defining new directions for research. Many participants commented on how it improved their productivity by reenergizing their research agendas. Several writing retreat participants reported the completion of their writing projects helped them make progress towards securing tenure and that the completion will aide in promotional career opportunities.

The participants described their expectations from the writing coaching sessions with Dr. Emily Carson as:

- The desire to gain new insights and approaches to address the obstacles they face in their writing process.
- Seeking advice and techniques to overcome obstacles that hindered their progress
- Acquiring skills and establishing a writing schedule.
- Ideas and techniques that would enhance their writing strategies.
- Gaining tools and strategies to maintain consistency and adherence to writing plans.
- An openness to receiving any and all suggestions that Dr. Carson might provide.

“This is massive for our productivity. I think every person who attended has tangible products that they've come out with, and then moved onto other projects. It is so important for women in academia to have this opportunity and time, because there are many issues for women in academia, especially as it relates to our service to the department and the roles that we take on are much more complex and difficult.”

Overall, participants identified many aspects of the coaching sessions that were helpful; however, some did not find them useful, and one participant, who attended a previous writing retreat, felt the prior writing coach was better. Specifically, one participant expressed dissatisfaction with the coaching sessions, feeling that they disrupted their writing flow and consumed valuable time. While another participant indicated that they personally did not find writing coaches particularly helpful. *“I don't find writing coaches that helpful but that's probably because I'm a fairly good 'self-starter' and know how to do what needs to get done.”* Some participants also shared that they would prefer a writing coach who would be present in-person to cater to various phases of the career tracks participants are on.

When asked which zoom sessions or activities led by Dr. Carson were most helpful, one participant noted that all were helpful, while another did not feel that the coaching sessions were very helpful. Specific session/activities participants reported as most helpful, included the following:

- ABT (And, But, Therefore)
- Dealing with motivation and inspiration for writing
- Understanding your writing purpose
- The audience worksheet
- The first one
- The sharing by everyone
- The one with a discussion

When asked which zoom sessions led by Dr. Carson were the least helpful, participants identified the sessions happening after day 3, with one participant explaining that all of the sessions were helpful, but interest waned over the week because they would rather spend time writing than on Zoom, *“As someone... who teaches writing, I need less on making writing more concise or accessible.”* Participants explained that the sessions weren't helpful because of the lecture and literature based presentation style and a lack of awareness, *“She lectured at us with subpar visual presentations (full of just quotes)... there was also no awareness of our situation at MSU, in terms of support and time (we can't manage our time better when we're all*

overworked).” In addition to these aspects, other participants identified the Thursday worksheet and the afternoon check-in as other aspects that were least helpful.

Improvements were noted from prior retreats to this one, for example noise was a challenge previously, but in 2023 quiet spaces were provided. However, **a challenge that continues**, that was noted by several participants and stakeholders who did not attend the 2023 retreat, was **allocating time in their schedule to attend**. However, despite the scheduling challenges, many shared the positive outcomes around the writing retreat, even if they didn’t attend. *“I didn't participate in the writing retreat, but I heard that last year, when they did it in 2022, that the faculty who participated in it really enjoyed it and having that carved out time to write with support.”*

Participants shared new ideas, habits, and things they learned from the retreat that they will carry forward as they are working to accomplish their goals, including the following:

- New Skills/Ideas
 - Blocking time
 - Enhanced focus
 - Writing imperfectly (*“getting words on page even when they aren't perfect”*)
 - Better sell my work to an editor outside of my field
 - Identify my overarching purpose as an academic writer
- Goal Setting
 - Creating incremental SMART goals
 - Continue chunking writing projects into smaller
 - Manageable goals
- Personal Growth
 - Confidence in personal practices (*“Don't apologize for my best practices that don't fit expectations for 'good writers'”*)
 - Advocating for their needs to be a more efficient and effective writer
 - Self-awareness of writing habits
 - Self-discovery of preferences *“I really enjoy working alongside my colleagues”*
- Writing Group
 - Create a writing group that will succeed
 - Remain in constant contact with my writing group and reach out to the community

Participants expressed their appreciation for having a dedicated meeting time for their summer check-ins. *“It's not as effective as the retreat itself, but it's similar in that if you don't show up, you feel bad, so it'll get you to do at least some writing.”* The group reported that they appreciated the check-ins from an accountability standpoint, despite facing challenges in scheduling due to geographical constraints (with some members located on the Paducah campus). These follow-up sessions involved setting goals and using Excel sheets to track progress. The process helped create a sense of accountability among participants, motivating them to work towards their objectives. The structured check-ins were particularly helpful when there was someone to engage with, facilitating progress in their writing and research.

In terms of future support, **participants expressed the need for continued assistance moving forward.** They found value in the practice of meeting a few times during the semester, as was done in the previous year. However, they acknowledged that scheduling these meetings had been a challenge. To address this, participants suggested the implementation of a virtual forum or chat platform outside of their regular groups. This platform could facilitate communication and collaboration, allowing members to discuss challenges they are currently encountering and identify their needs. Additionally, they recommended conducting regular check-in discussions at intervals to assess ongoing needs and provide the necessary support. This approach would enable participants to stay connected, share experiences, and receive the assistance they require despite any scheduling difficulties.

Participants shared generally positive feedback about the retreat space, location, and logistics, noting that the *“food was lovely,”* that they felt the space was *“perfect”* and the room was quiet and conducive to writing. They felt the retreat size was appropriate and that they expressed appreciation for Reigh. In addition to noting the many positive aspects of the retreat, they also offered suggestion to further improve the retreat in the future, including the following:

- More writing time and less time on Zoom
- Using Zoom on individual computers rather than on a projector for the whole room
- A different space, such as a space with windows or a space on campus and walkable
- A writing station with dual-monitors
- A new table set up; prevented participants from fully interacting
- Temperature control of the room
- Designated space for discussions/Zoom calls, separate from quiet writing space
- Desire for different groups with colleagues that are not familiar
- Variety in lunch options with more protein and less carbs

In the future, retreat participants would like to see the following sessions embedded in the writing retreat:

- Combatting ableism
- How to be creative
- More in-depth sessions on good writing, revision, and editing practices
- More independent writing time
- Potentially categorize participants based on experience/needs/goals

In addition to addressing these issues at future writing retreats, the writing retreat participants expressed a desire for MSU to also address the following topics through other events:

- Children and academia - not just being a woman, but being a mother navigating this space
- Concrete strategies for navigating toxicity within the university, particularly from administration, with a focus on those areas that disproportionately impact women
- How to discuss time-loads with leadership to advocate for more writing time and a slightly lighter teaching load
- How to get published
- More mid to upper-level direction rather than just entry-level

- Organizing to push back on unrealistic teaching/service/research expectations at MSU with the ever-reduced support (financial and structural), especially for tenure track faculty
- Saying no to service - Protecting writing time

The success of the writing retreat prompted discussions about embedding it further into the program's initiatives, with nearly all stakeholders recognizing its added value and advocating for its continuation. While some participants and stakeholders expressed concerns about future funding for the retreat, the positive impact it had on faculty productivity and outcomes was undeniable.

Faculty Workshops/Seminars

Several workshops were offered by MSU ADVANCE during the 2022-23 academic year, primarily in the spring semester, to support faculty.

Many stakeholders spoke highly of the leadership team, commending their outstanding efforts in curating meaningful programming for the faculty. The leadership team's willingness to work closely together on specific initiatives was also appreciated by many stakeholders.

"I would say the leadership team is outstanding. I think that they have worked really hard to put together meaningful programming for faculty."

Stakeholders commended the university for offering valuable opportunities for staff and students to stay informed about challenging topics. The material presented on these platforms was highly regarded by almost all stakeholders. However, a recurring issue was the attendance of the workshops. Stakeholders also mentioned the disconnection associated with virtual attendance, preventing full immersion in the content.

Stakeholders expressed positive feedback about the workshops, highlighting their quality. However, they observed a recurring issue with attendance, noting that the same individuals, including the grant team, tended to attend repeatedly. Additionally, the pandemic posed unexpected difficulties, affecting attendance and participation in events. *"We tried a lot of different things, and just couldn't get the attendance up in a lot of cases."* Stakeholders expressed a desire to reach those who may genuinely need the support but did not hear or respond to the messages. *"The folks who would benefit most from the training are the ones who don't think they need it."*

"People who needed to hear some of the stuff weren't there. There are people who you feel need to hear some of this stuff, but they're the ones who don't want to go, and then the ones that go are usually the ones that are really interested in investing to begin with."

Stakeholders acknowledged the effectiveness of their publicity efforts but suggested exploring more creative and persistent outreach methods to attract faculty to the events. Stakeholders discussed the importance of targeting workshops and events to reach the right audience

effectively. They emphasized the significance of engaging individuals who were genuinely interested and invested, as these attendees were more likely to spread the word and benefit from the programs. The stakeholder further shared that because of the influence from his chair, they felt empowered to reach out and recruit additional male colleagues. Another stakeholder described using personal invitations, “I was able to bring some [male] colleagues with me. I know we got last minute additions and Reigh was gracious enough to let us do some late registrations to some events. But I would say, ‘hey, I’m going here in the next hour. Do you want to come with me?’ And I was able to bring one or two folks along, and I think sometimes that pressure, or just that informal connection, can help build a little more engagement.”

“When it’s my chair asking 4 or 5 of us in particular and talking about how this would really be beneficial for male allies. I think that’s sometimes a stronger sell, and that’s certainly what is effective on a couple of occasions, you know, making that connection.”

Several stakeholders shared that there are multiple barriers to being able to attend events. One barrier discussed was access to childcare. They mentioned while the university had tried to address this concern by adding a tool on their website to connect with child care needs, it did not fully address the significant demand resulting from the closure of a large daycare facility in the town. Stakeholders expressed their hope to collaborate with HR to reserve spots at local daycares, but this plan did not materialize as intended for the workshop offerings of the year. Stakeholders recognized that forcing attendance did not yield favorable outcomes, speculating that busy schedules and time constraints might have contributed to low participation rate.

The following is a summary of each activity and any information that was collected by the internal evaluation team.

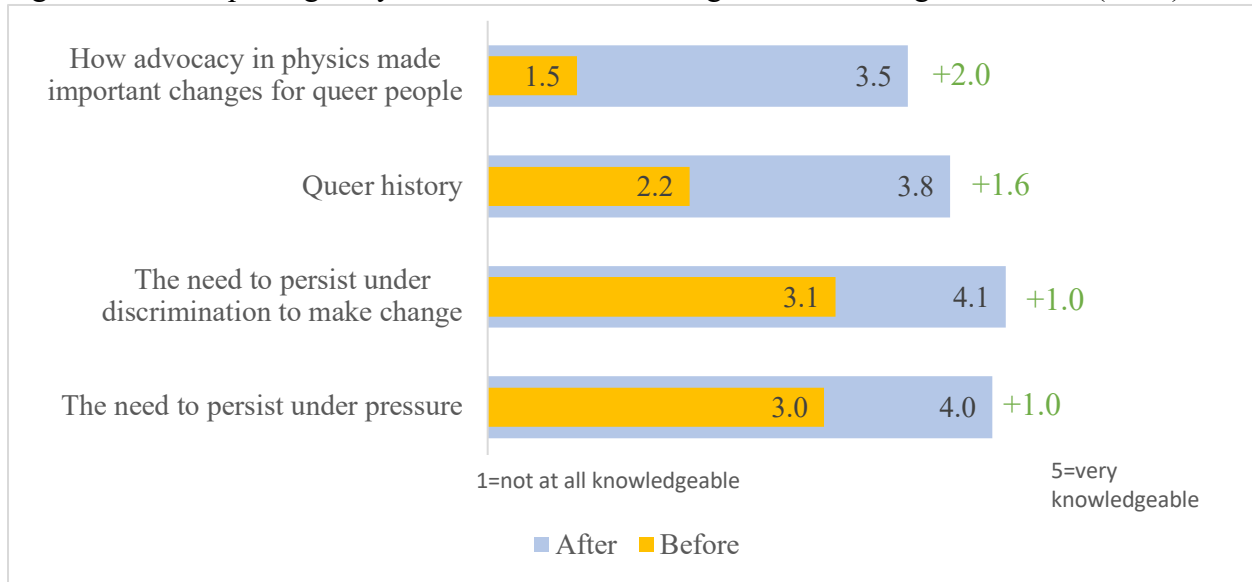
Queering STEM: A History of the Queer Rights in the USA and LGBT+ Advocacy in STEM

In late February 2023, Ramón Barthelemy presented a seminar to explore queer history and provide an in-depth look at how principles from this history were applied to physics to make significant policy changes. The presentation illustrated data that uncovered a concerning climate for LGBT+ physicists, which can be even more challenging for trans persons and people of color. In addition to the seminar, the presenter also hosted a conversation with students and a conversation with faculty. There was strong participation for this activity, with 43 people participating in either the seminar or conversations, including 14 faculty, 10 staff, and 19 students. Among those who attended, 12 provided feedback through a post-event

survey, of which most (86%) were women, but they represented a variety of college units and ranks/roles.

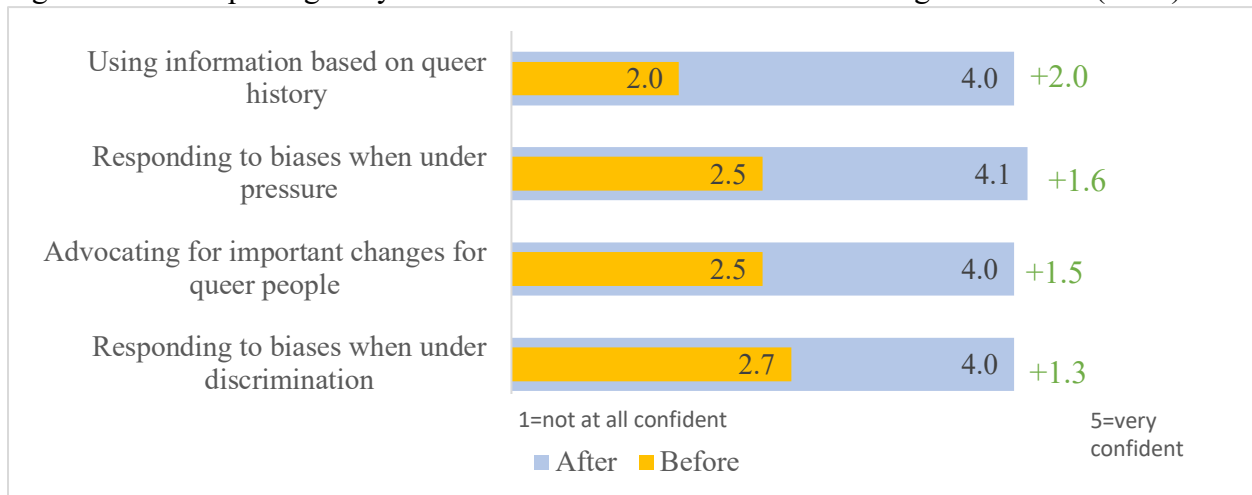
Participants entered the seminar with low levels of knowledge in how advocacy in physics made important changes for queer people. Participants left the seminar with substantially increased levels of knowledge in this area. Knowledge also increased in many other areas related to the topics covered in the seminar, increasing a full point on the 5-point scale where 1 = *not at all knowledgeable* and 5 = *very knowledgeable* (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Participants greatly increased their knowledge after attending the seminar (n=12).



In addition to increases in knowledge, there were also notable changes in confidence. As shown in Figure 14, on a 5-point scale where 1 = *not at all confident* and 5 = *very confident*, participants' confidence increased more than a full point in all areas inquired about.

Figure 14. Participants greatly increased their confidence after attending the seminar (n=12).



The overall response from the seminar was overwhelmingly positive, with 89% of those providing feedback rating it as *very positive*, and all were at least somewhat likely to recommend the seminar to others, with 63% being *very likely*. All participants also felt the examples presented in the seminar were useful, with 44% specifically indicating that they were *very useful*.

The most useful components of the seminar reported by participants were learning about the history, LGBTQ+ Pioneers in the STEM field, and having a better understanding of current terminology. Among those who participated in the conversations, they appreciated being able to discuss travel challenges LGBTQ+ people face, the open structure of the event, and being able to speak *“honestly and freely about struggles on campus and in Kentucky.”* As a result of attending the seminar, participants noted that they have a better understanding of the struggles of the community, that they intend to be more aware of language, and that they will *“be more inclusive and respectful of the community.”* Those attending the conversations specified that they want to be better advocates on campus and hope to expand the LGBTQ+ Abroad reference materials using ideas shared by the speaker.

The only suggestions offered to improve this activity were to incorporate more about the STEM-related aspects into the seminar and to have more students involved in the conversation.

The Queering STEM workshop received positive feedback for its excellent content and engaging speaker among stakeholders who attended the event. Stakeholders specifically noted positive comments about the engagement of the presenter stating, *“a lot of the upper administration came. He talked to people, he met with students at the LGBTQ+ Center, and that apparently was extremely impactful for those students.”* One stakeholder greatly appreciated how the speaker aligned with the material in their curriculum.

One stakeholder explained how these presentations support an emphasis on LGBTQ+ awareness and its significance. Stakeholders appreciated that this year's focus included LGBTQ+ awareness and reported successful outcomes with active participation from those who share similar perspectives. They expressed a desire to expand outreach beyond like-minded individuals to address these issues more comprehensively. One stakeholder shared the goal to extend this engagement to include individuals who may not hold the same views. *“We would like to reach the individuals who need that awareness more and need that information more.”*

“This Spring I’ve been dealing with LGBTQ+ issues on campus and working a little bit with the Pride Center. We had this queer speaker come in February. And then we had the Queer (In)Justice book that we were reading, all semester. Those were really good, and they raised awareness of issues.”

The discussions have shifted from highlighting the importance of LGBTQ+ awareness to actively considering strategies for embracing and supporting these individuals within the community. Additionally, this year has seen increased discussions about the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, including conversations about LGBTQ+ inclusion in recruitment efforts. The focus has transitioned from discussing the “why” of LGBTQ+ inclusion to exploring practical steps that can be taken to ensure a more inclusive environment. Stakeholders have been fully supportive of additional discussions and any presentations that facilitate discussions around

LGBTQ+. “There was much more discussion about recruitment and retention of faculty who are diverse .”

Stakeholders highlighted the valuable impact of this specific workshop and current initiatives in raising awareness of various topics within the university community. This effort addressed LGBTQ+ issues, teaching strategies related to LGBTQ+ student concerns in STEM courses, diversity incorporation in faculty recruitment, and strategies for mitigating implicit bias. The stakeholder emphasized the program's significant value in promoting diversity and awareness.

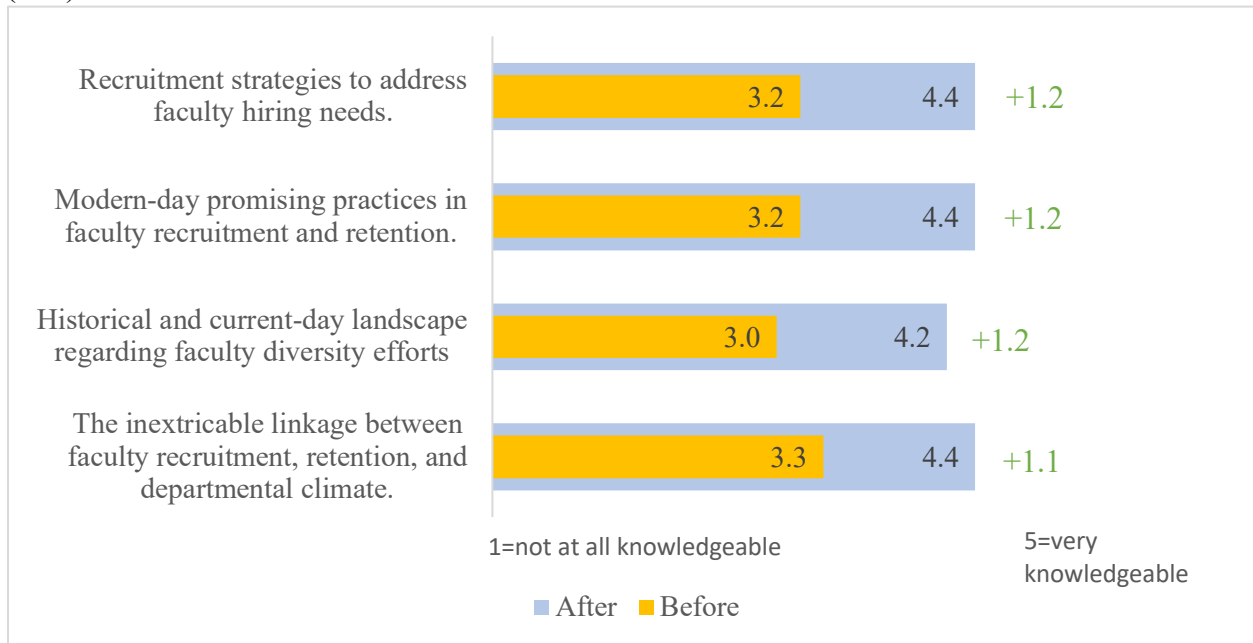
Recruiting, Retaining, and Engaging Diverse Faculty

In late March 2023, Dr. Taffye Clayton hosted several activities, including a symposium, workshop, a dinner with university representatives, and a lunch meeting the following day with university administration. The faculty workshop, “Recruiting, Retaining, and Engaging Diverse Faculty,” was followed by the faculty and staff symposium, “Strategically Building Inclusive Academic Environments Toward Excellence and Impact.” Dr. Clayton’s activities presented evidence-based concepts, frameworks, and learning materials to inform Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices. In total, 21 people attended the symposium and/or workshop, nine of which provided feedback through a post-event survey.



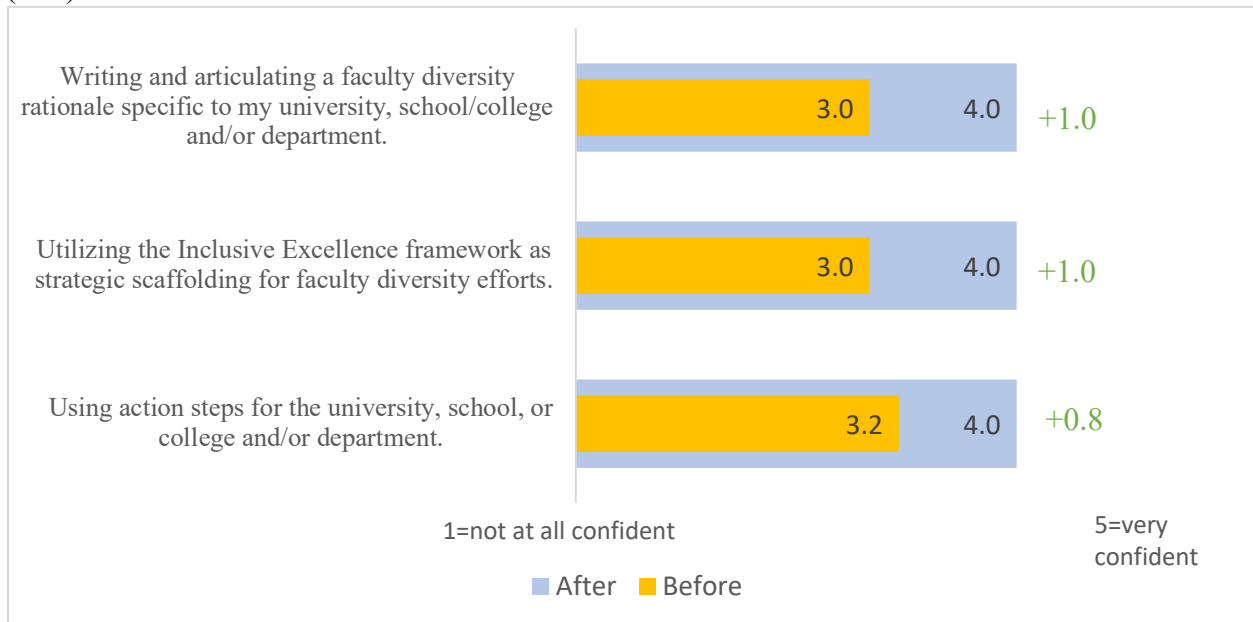
While feedback was limited and should be interpreted with caution as only five participants answered the symposium knowledge questions, among those who provided feedback, the activity showed substantial gains in knowledge of participants. Knowledge increased after attending the symposium a full point on the 5-point scale where 1 = *not at all knowledgeable* and 5 = *very knowledgeable* in all areas inquired about (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Participants greatly increased their knowledge after participation in the symposium (n=5).



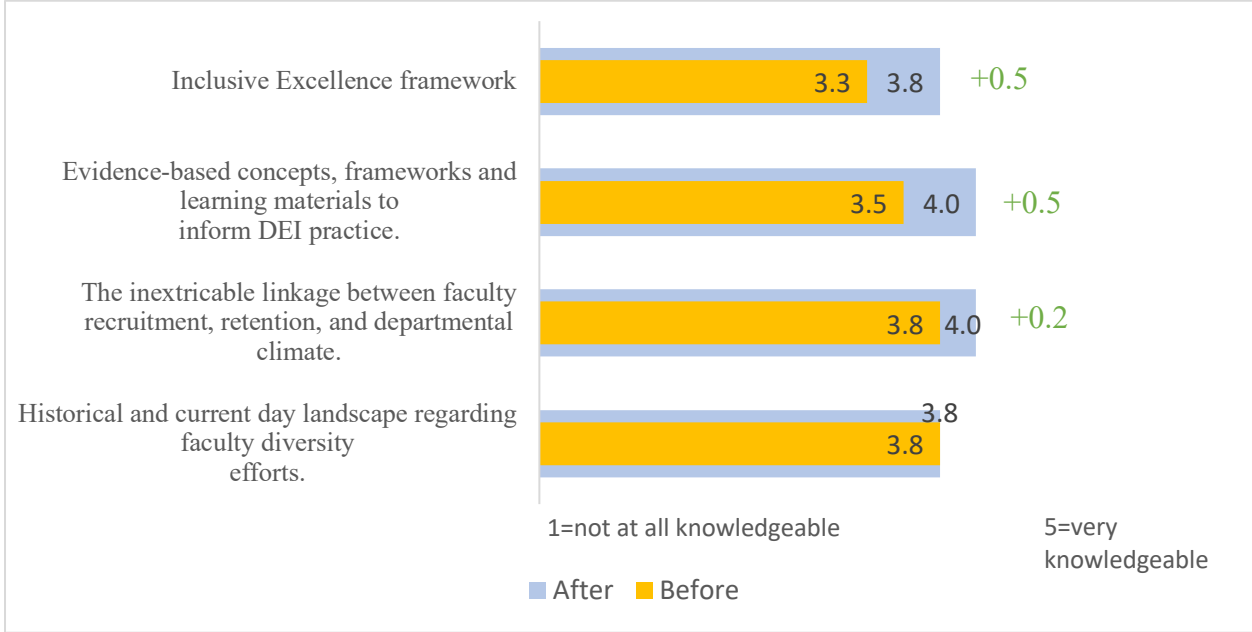
Similarly, while feedback was limited, results showed promising impacts on confidence as well. Confidence increased a full point, or near that, on the 5-point scale where 1= *not at all confident* and 5 = *very confident* in all areas inquired about (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Participants greatly increased their knowledge after participating in the symposium (n=5).



Feedback is even more limited for the faculty workshop and should be interpreted with extreme caution as only four participants answered the workshop knowledge questions. The results are shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Participants modestly increased their knowledge after participation in the faculty workshop (n=4).



Among the five participants that provided feedback about their experience from the workshop, all reported that the materials were useful, four out of the five rated the workshop as a “very positive” experience and were “very likely” to recommend it to another faculty. Participants noted that Dr. Clayton was a wonderful speaker that should be invited back and that they appreciated learning about strategies for recruiting faculty by “*considering hiring as a ‘contact sport’.*” Another aspect that was valuable was the gathering of the MSU community to work together on DEI. As a result of Dr. Clayton’s visit, one participant explained that they plan to work with the Provost’s office, chairs, and faculty to upgrade hiring practices.

“Creating a space for members of the MSU community (faculty & administration) to come together to both learn about new approaches, refine current ideas/frameworks, and to connect about DEI. It is usually very isolating working on DEI but knowing that there are others across the campus working on this and sharing in a learning/development opportunity that was really helpful was really great.”

Suggestions offered to improve the training were to increase the font size in the PowerPoint as it was difficult to read, to provide a copy of the questions within the Inclusive Excellence Model that was shared in the PowerPoint for reflection, as well as provide time to work on those, potentially with others who attended the session.

This event received high praise from almost all stakeholders interviewed, who considered it exceptional. Even those who couldn't attend heard positive feedback through Mentoring Circles, recognizing it as a valuable resource for both staff and students. One stakeholder highlighted its exceptional quality and the diverse group of faculty attendees. Stakeholders found the information provided to be valuable for discussing the recruitment of diverse faculty. The event had a positive impact on attendees, including administrators, and the stakeholder observed their dean benefiting from it. *"Hearing from Dr. Clayton, just [felt] like 'this is the information that I've been waiting for. I'm so glad this person is here talking about how we can improve recruitment of diverse faculty.' We were talking about recruiting women in the sciences, we were talking about recruiting more faculty of color, more faculty with disabilities."*

Dr. Clayton's presentation left a strong impact on many stakeholders, who felt that the information shared was long-awaited and crucial for improving diverse faculty recruitment. The event brought together a mixed crowd from various colleges and levels of administration,

"It was a mixed crowd - people coming from multiple colleges and multiple levels of administration. Having conversations. I don't think that conversation would have happened without that event occurring. I had conversations with our Dean that were really useful and saw him updating information from those presentations. There is real impact there."

fostering important conversations that may not have otherwise occurred. One stakeholder noted valuable discussions with their Dean, who incorporated insights from the presentation into their work with the DEI Committee.

"Dr. Clayton was clearly just an outstanding speaker." The speaker received high praise for their excellence, and the post-presentation dinner provided a valuable platform for meaningful interactions and feedback. Furthermore, numerous stakeholders expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to engage in further conversations with Dr. Clayton during the dinner session.

Other Activities

MSU Advance also sponsored three other activities; however, evaluation data is unavailable for these activities.

- A Woman in Motion screening with Cinema International was offered on March 2nd and March 4th.
- In early March 2023 was the Bodily Autonomy Panel Discussion for International Women's Day, which had over fifty people in attendance.
- Two ADVANCE Book Clubs were offered – one each semester. From September through December 2022, the book club read and discussed *Caste*, and from January through April 2023, the book club read and discussed *Queer (IN)Justice*.

When stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on the activities listed above, the prevalent theme was scheduling conflicts, so there was limited feedback provided as many did not attend themselves and also noted that it was difficult getting others to attend. *"Engagement and getting folks out has been tricky."* Although many were unable to attend, they referenced these activities as addressing important topics. *"I think when they're talking about bodily autonomy... I think*

that was really timely. One of the other sessions was addressing queer issues in STEM... I wish I could have attended that one... When we're talking about trying to un-gender things or being able to support all faculty. I think that's really super important."

While a select few found value from the book clubs, it generally emerged as the activity regarded with the least value according to most stakeholders. A majority of stakeholders expressed that the time commitment prevented them from participating in it. They discussed how attending the meetings was possible for some, but “*actually sitting down and reading the book*” was difficult to manage in their schedule. A stakeholder also mentioned that the book choice may have been a deterrent for some to participate in. However, one stakeholder described the value of having the book clubs, especially around queer related topics, but again noted the limited attendance. *"I've really enjoyed the Queer (In)Justice Book Club. It's wonderful, but we have 3 or 4 people, and they're mainly ADVANCE people. That's a discussion that would really benefit from some other folks at the university. I know Reigh sent out targeted invites to a list of 30 or 40 people... and then we get 4 or 5 people who attend. So it's not a lack of recruitment. It's not a lack of even targeting, like building a specific list of folks who connect with the work. I think it's just a lot to ask for folks to dedicate the time. But those discussions have been wonderful when we come in and have them."*

MSU Live

Policy Efforts – President’s Work-Life Task Force

Numerous stakeholders, including the president and provost, underscored the favorable outcomes of the ADVANCE Grant. The president attributed positive results of the grant to various aspects, including the work-life balance task force, leading to the introduction of policies like inclusive parental leave and bereavement time off. The president initiated a task force aiming to enhance the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority faculty and staff. Both the president and provost expressed pride in their initiatives to enhance work-life balance through policy adjustments. Notably, the implementation of parental leave was highlighted as a substantial victory.

One stakeholder spoke highly of the president's initiative in assembling a policy board to implement grant-proposed policies, highlighting the successful collaboration and outcomes achieved by the team. *"The president put together a policy board to try to implement some of the policies that were proposed in the grant, and the team worked well together."*

Several stakeholders believed that the President's Work-Life Task Force marked the beginning of campus improvements. While acknowledging the effective efforts of the president and provost in policy implementation, some stakeholders expressed a need for ongoing open discussions, frequent updates, and leadership engagement to actively seek feedback for continuous enhancements.

While nearly all stakeholders mentioned the updates to the FMLA policy as a positive change, others also mentioned the desire for the policy to extend support to those caring for sick partners

or parents. Additionally, stakeholders acknowledged the desire for additional efforts towards flexible work arrangements.

According to one stakeholder, the Presidential Task Force was particularly effective in successfully implementing policies; however, it was believed by a stakeholder that the president perceived the task force as a temporary endeavor. From this perspective, once the proposals were formulated, the need for ongoing meetings ceased. *“We’re going to come with some proposals, and then we’re going to stop meeting and so our task force was not continuing to have authority on campus.”*

As the grant comes to an end, stakeholders expressed uncertainty about the future and a desire for more sustained commitment. While acknowledging the challenging realities, they highlighted the need for greater buy-in for policy changes, especially regarding work-life balance and equity in the context of the pandemic. *“I think it would be nice to see a little more buy in and push around some of the changes that are coming out of the ground.”* The perception is that leadership doesn't always prioritize these issues, lacking a clear understanding of the long-term benefits and impact on the university.

Spring Break Camp

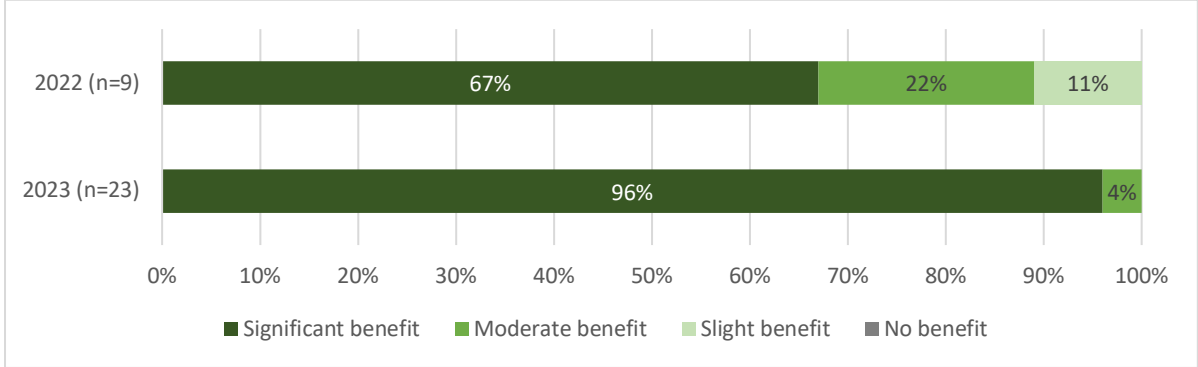
MSU ADVANCE offered the second implementation of the ADVANCE Kids Camp in the spring of 2023 during the local area school system’s spring break. The camp, offered to children in grades K-5, provided an opportunity for faculty and staff to have a safe place for their children to go during spring break while they were working because the MSU spring break does not align with local school schedules. In total, 34 children attended the camp, with 23 parents providing feedback on the event. Among those who provided feedback, about three-fourths (74%) were women and nearly all (91%) were White. Parents with children attending the camp



represented the spectrum of campus, including staff and faculty from the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, Jesse D. Jones College of Science Engineering and Technology, School of Nursing and Health Professions, Arthur J. Bauemfeind College of Business, Hutson School of Agriculture, as well as College of Education and Human Sciences. Those primarily benefitting from the camp were assistant professors, associate professors, and staff; however, other roles of parents included directors, coordinators, and administrators.

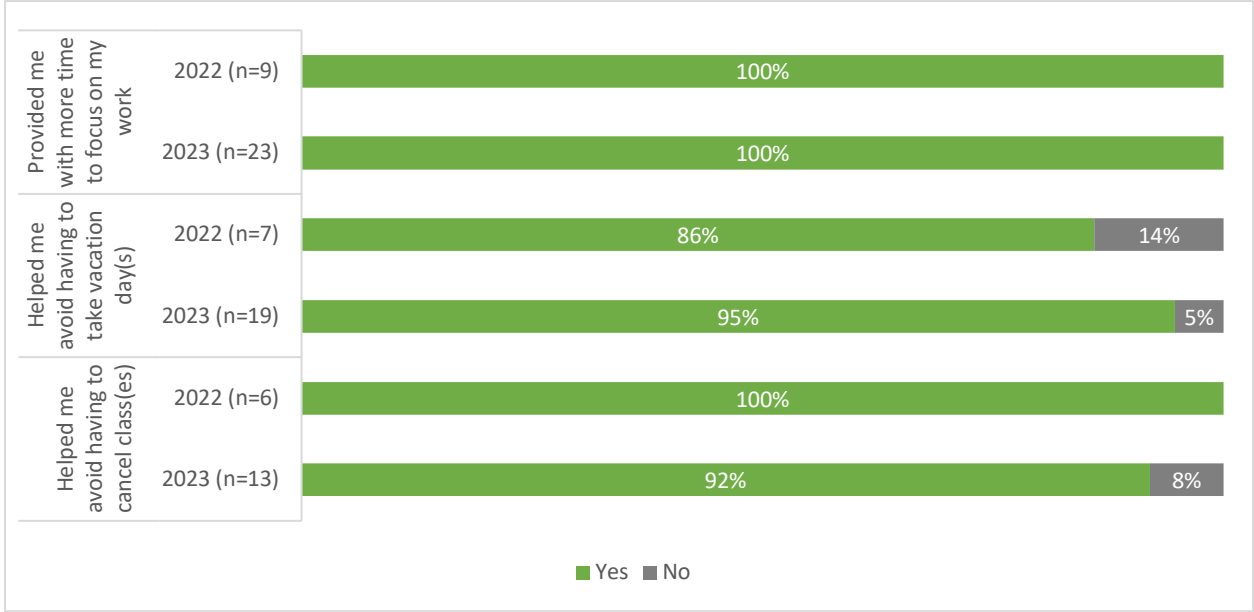
Figure 18 shows that nearly all parents who completed the survey in 2023 (96%) viewed the camp as a significant benefit, with the remaining 4% perceived it as a moderate benefit. While the camp was also perceived as beneficial in 2022, the significance of this benefit increased in 2023.

Figure 18. Faculty/staff parents felt the Spring Break Camp was a significant benefit.



The specific impacts of the camp on faculty/staff lives are illustrated in Figure 19, which shows that all parents (100%) felt it provided them with more time to focus on their work. Nearly all respondents also felt it helped them avoid having to take vacation days(s) and cancel classes.

Figure 19. The Spring Break Camp helped faculty/staff parents by providing them with more time to focus on work and avoid taking vacation days and cancel classes.



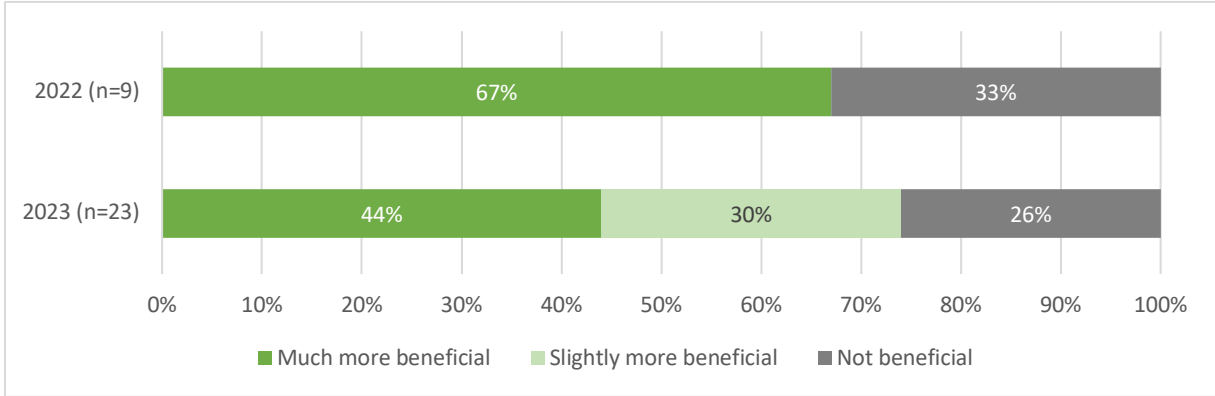
When describing the ways the camp impacted their work life, parents most often commented on the impacts of the camp on their children and how that helped them. Parents described the camp as “an enriching environment” that “helps prepare my child for their future... opens their minds to new interests, enhances interpersonal communication, introduces them to potential future educational and career interests” and that made many parents feel even better about sending their children to the camp – it was more than just childcare, which benefited faculty/staff mental

health, as well as the children participating. In addition to this benefit, faculty/staff parents commonly described how the camp helped them focus on their work and reduced the stress in their lives because they did not have to spend time and energy worrying about childcare and they could resume their regular work schedules. Some parents also specifically noted their appreciation for the full-day nature of the camp, as the drop-off and pick-up hours allowed for workable schedules.

As mentioned earlier, the Spring Break Camp was offered to provide a place for faculty and staff to send their children during the local schools’ spring break. Another potential avenue to avoid this issue would be to move MSU’s spring break to align with the local school district. When faculty/staff parents who participated in the Spring Break Camp were asked how beneficial it would be to move MSU’s Spring Break to the first week in April, two-thirds noted that it would be much more beneficial in 2022 (Figure 20). Fewer felt this extreme in 2023, with only 44% reporting it would be much more beneficial; however, 30% added that it would be slightly more beneficial. It is possible that as parents experience success participating in the Spring Break Camp, they see alternative options to moving MSU’s Spring Break.

“Having a fun, stimulating, safe place for my child to go during spring break was a HUGE benefit to my mental well-being and my ability to focus at work. I didn't have to spend time setting up childcare. I didn't have to worry that she was safe. I can't emphasize enough how much this camp reduced my stress during MISD spring break, and allowed me to focus at work. Also, my daughter had a great time at camp!”

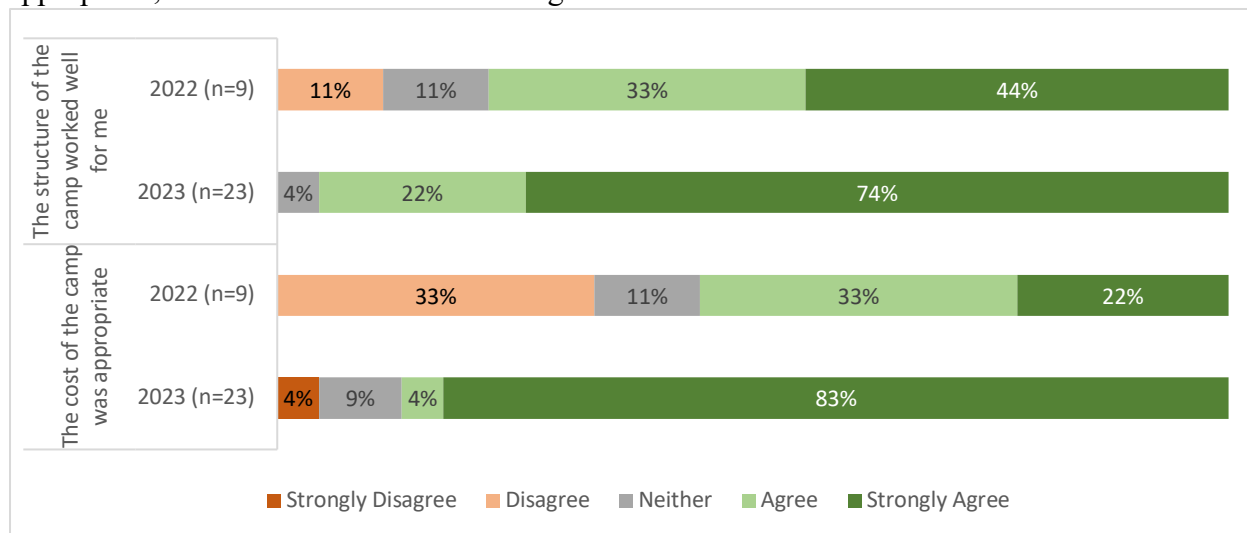
Figure 20. Most faculty/staff parents feel moving MSU’s Spring Break to the first week in April would be beneficial.



The structure and cost of the camp received more favorable reviews from parents for the second administration of the Spring Break Camp. Nearly all (96%) faculty/staff parents who completed the Spring Break Camp survey in 2023 agreed or strongly agreed that the structure of the camp worked well for them, which was an increase from 2022 where 77% felt this way (Figure 21). While opinions were more divided when asked about the costs of the camp in 2022, with slightly over half (55%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that the cost was appropriate and one-third (33%) disagreeing, the vast majority (87%) in 2023 felt the cost of the camp was appropriate. The one participant in 2023 who did not feel the cost was appropriate suggested

\$100 would be appropriate (the cost in 2023 was \$50, so this person was suggesting an increase in cost).

Figure 21. Nearly all faculty/staff parents in 2023 felt the structure worked well and the cost was appropriate, which reflected increases in agreement from 2022.



Overall, parents provided very positive feedback from the Spring Break Camp. The only suggestions offered to further improve the camp were to offer more flexibility with drop-off and pick-up times to accommodate variable schedules (e.g., classes/office hours that go until 5:30 or 6pm) and consider offering it multiple times per year. The time of year that parents most often wanted services and support like this camp, beyond spring break, was during fall break, but participants also noted it is needed during the summer break and whenever schools are closed (e.g., teacher work days). One participant also noted that Calloway/Murray independent days off do not line up with the MSU days off.

Nearly all stakeholders shared that the Spring Break Camp has been an essential resource for faculty, particularly addressing the childcare needs of participants, *“The university spring break does not overlap with the school spring break. People really struggle to find care.”* A stakeholder explained why childcare is so difficult to find, *“being rural, we really struggle with having enough daycare spots.”*

Stakeholders also shared that the administration team does recognize the stress staff members feel surrounding spring break. The administration team offered, *“we think that with some tweaks it will add great value and provide faculty, staff administrators and opportunity to make sure that that spring break period is not a burden on them.”* The camp has alleviated stress and allowed stakeholders to focus on their tasks while their children engage in enriching activities.

Stakeholders felt the institution has recognized the positive feedback and impact of the camp, leading to efforts to sustain it despite challenges with staffing. Several stakeholders highlighted the university’s attempts to improve the spring break offering from the previous year. *“That first spring break camp just didn't seem to go very well, but that's nobody's fault. First of all, it's just one of those activities that we tried for the first time, and the first time didn't go well, we tweaked*

it, tried it again, and it went better.” Stakeholders noted that they appreciated the extended hours for dropping off children before work and stated that it met the needs of faculty members with childcare responsibilities.

Despite a rocky start in its initial year, adjustments and improvements resulted in increased success and positive outcomes in subsequent years. Even stakeholders who weren’t able to use the service were quick to mention the value, *“my children are too old for it, but I think that that is a really great resource.”* Several stakeholders questioned the university’s intention of continuing the service, many adding that they would like to see the school continue this service, emphasizing its value to faculty and staff. While celebrating achievements from the grant, both the president and provost readily acknowledged areas for enhancement, like the spring break camp’s initial hurdles. Both were determined to continue making the camp more beneficial for faculty, staff, and administrators.

“Helping caregivers to feel like they are supported is huge.”

Other Findings

Steering Committees

Stakeholders credited a portion of the grant's success to the active involvement of a diverse group of stakeholders who played a vital role in shaping both the grant and the programming by serving on the Internal Steering Committee (ISC). Their invaluable input has been crucial in identifying and implementing valuable programming.

“I think having a broad group of stakeholders together really helps that Internal Steering Committee be an important voice in shaping the grant.”

When prompted to reflect upon the changes implemented following the previous year's evaluation of the ISC, most stakeholders noted that the meetings did not undergo significant alteration. Dr. Zhang led meetings during the second semester due to Dr. McCarthy’s sabbatical. Feedback from ISC members suggests that contributions in meetings were tapering off as the project progressed. *“She would run them [ISC meetings] like a lecture, and at the end asked for any questions, comments, discussion. Nobody had any by that time, because we either forgotten them or were like, ‘okay, whatever, time to go.’ So, I didn't see the meeting format change.”* While stakeholders noted little change from the previous year, a stakeholder also explained that a change in structure may not have had any impact on decisions regardless, *“I'm not so sure, however, that even if the meeting formats had changed, it would have had any difference of an outcome. I don't think how Maeve ran the meetings had any impact on the decisions that the administration has made.”* In contrast, another stakeholder explained that the meetings that occurred with the smaller PI group involved more open discussion and conversation and that they wished the ISC meetings would have followed that format.

To further enhance the utilization of the ISC, one stakeholder proposed utilizing the members as liaisons to increase attendance, so *“they could speak on behalf of ADANCE to their faculty and*

staff to encourage them to come to events.” Another stakeholder described the need to accompany the agenda with specific points for contemplation, thereby fostering meaningful engagement. This stakeholder emphasized the importance of providing ample time for complex problem consideration, acknowledging that valuable insights could be generated if individuals were given the opportunity to ponder over critical matters beforehand.

When stakeholders were asked about their perspectives on the potential continuation of the ISC after the conclusion of NSF funding, most were unsure what would happen, but many expressed a desire to continue the ISC, noting that it serves an important function in driving ADVANCE efforts.

When asked for suggestions on better utilizing the External Steering Committee (ESC), some conveyed a desire for greater involvement of the entire PI team in ESC meetings but were unsure if the ESC meetings would continue in the future. They highlighted the potential benefits of integrating and coordinating efforts between the ESC and the ISC, acknowledging that these groups serve distinct purposes. A stakeholder suggested that improved communication and leadership from the grant team could facilitate this connection. They also appreciated the brainstorming discussions that the ISC engaged in and suggested that similar sharing of ideas and insights from experts could enhance the role of the ESC.

Campus Support and Partnerships

Stakeholder feedback on institutional support of the ADVANCE work was mixed. Some stakeholders highlighted the positive connections with leadership and spoke about the right amount of oversight received from leadership, *“It’s one of the few times on campus where I’ve seen the administration, say, ‘OK, this is great, go for it’ and just be a part of the process, but then not hampered the process.”* This was an approach that was greatly welcomed by the stakeholder describing this, as it allowed ADVANCE to move forward with implementation more easily. Other stakeholders noted that institutional leadership has been consistently active and engaged, participating in crucial discussions during ISC meetings. This active involvement has set a precedent, underscoring the significance of the initiative. Notably, the provost's attendance at events has effectively communicated the administration's commitment to faculty.

“They have set a tone where it matters. I think you know our provost attends some of the ADVANCE events. He makes it a point to be there and be visible, and I think that does send an important message to faculty. I really appreciate when we see upper administration leadership engaging with some of our programming.”

Beyond the president and provost level, stakeholders also credited MSU ADVANCE’s success to the significant support provided by the deans, emphasizing that it went beyond mere *“lip service”* to include active involvement in the project. Stakeholders expressed that having two respected deans as co-PIs was instrumental, as they possessed the authority and dedication to contribute meaningfully to the work.

Stakeholders also expressed their approval of involving deans and some chairs in the decision-making process, which had a positive impact and influenced the engagement of more individuals. They acknowledged that without this leverage, it would have been more challenging to garner support. The group made a commendable decision to pivot away from exclusive women-only initiatives during the grant, particularly after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. They realized that meaningful change necessitated involving a broader range of perspectives and experiences, rather than limiting the conversation to only women. This shift in approach made a significant difference. One notable example of their inclusivity efforts was initiating a conversation about male allies. They noticed that males on campus were not aware of their initiatives, prompting them to take action. As a result, they decided to invite males and have speakers who could address topics relevant to both women, underrepresented minorities and broader themes. Additionally, they became actively involved in the pride office and gender equity caucus, contributing to their visibility and influence on campus.

It was also shared that leadership at the chair level has shown a keen understanding of the challenges in recruiting diverse students and faculty, bridging the gap between administration and faculty concerns. However, as one moves up the hierarchy, the dynamic becomes more politically nuanced, *“Chairs are just one step away from faculty, and so I think they really do get it. They understand the struggles of recruiting diverse students and recruiting diverse faculty members because they're boots on the ground. They're trying to do it. It's when you get a little higher up, that it becomes more political, and that you don't want to make anybody angry.”*

On the contrary, other stakeholders expressed their dissatisfaction with upper administration's dedication, perceiving their support as more superficial. They felt that the administration acknowledged the importance of the initiatives but were unwilling to provide the necessary resources and commitment needed to sustain MSU ADVANCE. For example, there was great disappointment among some stakeholders regarding the inability to retain a fulltime staff member to lead the MSU ADVANCE office after the grant funding ends. *“I think they could have done better. And they didn't. They knew what we needed. They're not giving us what we need.”* Despite efforts to advocate for change, some stakeholders felt that upper administration remained hesitant, *“the status quo remains the status quo and that's very frustrating.”* A stakeholder described the administration's approach as hands-off, which has resulted in a lack of support due to not being involved in the day-to-day operations. While administration was involved in vital tasks, the stakeholder added, *“I think they could have been, or shown perhaps a little more of a vested interest at the administrative level.”*

Numerous stakeholders observed that leadership tends to offer broad support when circumstances are uncomplicated, but challenges are encountered when assistance is required during more complex decision-making processes. One stakeholder expressed the sentiment that the administration appears content to mention the presence of the ADVANCE grant, yet some stakeholders perceive a lack of genuine commitment in terms of funding support. They expressed a desire for a more distinct and specific affirmation of support through clearly defined measures. This stakeholder cited instances where they have attended meetings in which the provost stressed the significance of certain initiatives, such as the spring break camp. However, there remains uncertainty about the administration's capacity to provide backing, leading to a sense of disappointment. Despite an understanding of limited resources, this stakeholder hopes that the

administration recognizes the pivotal role these initiatives play in fostering faculty morale and a desire to remain with the institution.

One stakeholder shared an additional challenge as they noted a disconnect in their interaction with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) office. They mentioned that the office's director lacked the

availability to attend meetings and couldn't delegate a staff member to participate. This situation resulted in a gap between the DEI office and the ADVANCE project, posing difficulties in the process of institutionalizing initiatives beyond the grant period. While the stakeholder explained that the director is not against the efforts of the grant, there is no ability to be able to support the efforts from the DEI office. *"It's difficult and also presents a challenge, obviously, for institutionalizing things after the grant if one of the primary people who should be on board and be advocating for institutionalizing these things isn't on board. They have not been on board for the entire two grants that we had, so that's been an ongoing frustration."*

"I think there is always just this desire for the administration to offer more, I just wish administration would see the importance of these kinds of programs to make faculty like me want to stay. I think women, and especially caregivers, often stay because they find support in one another I feel like they don't always feel supported by the administration, so I think I would say that is the biggest challenge."

It was also expressed that more efforts could have been made to establish connections on campus. The group realized that engaging with various campus groups, such as the faculty senate, black faculty and staff association, and other smaller organizations, would have facilitated the institutionalization process even without direct administrative involvement. Building stronger connections with these groups would have allowed them to pick up essential pieces to further the initiative's success. The stakeholders acknowledged that with more collaboration and willingness from faculty, they would have had a greater chance at successful institutionalization.

Sustainability

When stakeholders were asked about their understanding of how MSU ADVANCE efforts will be sustained after the National Science Foundation (NSF) funding period, stakeholders expressed a shared concern about avoiding regression and maintaining the progress achieved through ADVANCE initiatives. While it's acknowledged that minimal funding may be allocated, there is a determination to prevent sliding backward on the advancements made.

Stakeholders voiced concerns about the potential consequences of reduced support for ADVANCE initiatives. They worry that without adequate support, ADVANCE might be perceived as separate from MSU, leading to a sense that the institution does not prioritize the well-being of its faculty. While funding requests for programming, such as coordinator roles, mentoring circles, writing retreats, and spring break camps, have been submitted, there are concerns about sustaining these efforts without proper staffing. Stakeholders worry that sustaining programming without dedicated staff might lead to challenges in adapting, innovating, and maintaining the identity of ADVANCE. The potential impacts of reduced staffing on faculty engagement and support were highlighted. Stakeholders expressed concerns about the decline in the number of faculty who could benefit from ADVANCE initiatives and the loss of the support and resources that ADVANCE currently provides. Some stakeholders emphasized the determination of participants to continue supporting each other, even if the formal ADVANCE office diminishes.

Sustainability is seen as lacking from a majority of the stakeholders. Many are hoping for a dedicated chief diversity officer apart from the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Access (I.D.E.A.). The absence of a dedicated diversity officer has limited their influence and ability to advocate for underrepresented groups on campus, leading to a narrower impact than anticipated. Concerns were raised to the president and provost, but it remains unclear how those concerns were received. One stakeholder commented that leadership fell short in their view because of their inability to see the value of the ADVANCE grant. *"I don't think they really see the vision of why it's important. Maybe I'm just an idealist, but I think that if they really understood the vision of it, and why it would strengthen our university then, obviously, we would go that way. It could be that they just don't want to. Maybe they do see the vision, and they just don't want to."*

A pervasive theme among stakeholders interviewed was the perception of financial constraints, where there is limited funding available for various initiatives. This financial constraint impacts decision-making across different areas within the institution. *"I mean the culture right now is there's no money for anything. So that's, I think, one of the biggest challenges."*

When stakeholders were asked about the programs or activities that should be sustained, several opinions were expressed. There is a strong consensus among stakeholders that the writing retreat and Mentoring Circles should be sustained. These programs have been highlighted as valuable platforms for professional and personal growth, fostering connections, and providing much-needed support for faculty members. The idea of continuing the Mentoring Circles for both new hires and existing faculty, possibly through group mentoring, was suggested. *"First pick would be the mentor circles just to have, because of the creation of collegiality and community."* The

Spring Break Camp also received support for continuation due to its positive feedback and beneficial effects. This program provides opportunities for children of faculty members to engage in educational activities during the break, contributing to a supportive work environment for parents. Stakeholders also mentioned the importance of external speakers and video resources for hiring practices. These activities contribute to enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within the institution and promoting a more inclusive hiring process.

When stakeholders were asked about the optimal structure for ensuring sustainability, several perspectives were shared. One stakeholder suggested keeping the current office structure intact, and if necessary, consider moving it under the provost's purview. This arrangement could help ensure continuity and dedicated oversight, preventing the potential discontinuation of programs like Mentoring Circles and writing retreats. This stakeholder emphasized the importance of having an office responsible for these initiatives to avoid potential dilution of efforts and loss of communication that might occur if responsibilities are spread across multiple offices. Another stakeholder also advocated for a standalone funded office with a full-time director and staff. This would provide the necessary leadership and support to maintain the programs effectively. Some stakeholders suggested embedding the initiatives into existing offices, such as Human Resources or the Provost's Office, to make them more sustainable and streamlined. However, it was noted that decisions related to HR matters should be managed within HR. The role of a dedicated director was emphasized as an advocate who could champion and oversee the initiatives. *"Someone needs to be a head cheerleader."*

Another suggestion was made to integrate part of the faculty development efforts under the provost's office, managed by a staff member. This arrangement could potentially operate with a .5 FTE staff person for the existing programs and potentially a 1.0 FTE staff person if the spring break camp is added. Another idea was to have a department chair take on the role of coordinating the initiatives. This individual would command authority and respect due to their leadership position and could ensure the successful continuation of the programs.

One stakeholder proposed integrating the ADVANCE programs, such as Mentoring Circles and writing retreats, into the university's quality enhancement plan. This approach would align these initiatives with the university's strategic priorities and ensure ongoing support.

Stakeholder interviews suggested that it is unlikely the ADVANCE office will continue overseeing the supported programs with the same structure as it currently utilizes with grant funding. It was explained that it's practical to avoid having a separate ADVANCE office making decisions for various campus units. The focus instead should be on embedding these initiatives within existing structures, like the provost's office, to streamline and manage tasks more efficiently. This approach was seen as preferable due to the numerous overlapping responsibilities of different offices, ensuring smoother coordination and management. It was acknowledged that creating new offices doesn't necessarily solve problems and can lead to additional complications due to overlapping functions. Thus, streamlining processes under existing units, such as the provost's office, was considered a more effective strategy.

While many expressed pride in what ADVANCE has accomplished and in continuing efforts, they acknowledged the financial concerns within higher education. Despite these challenges,

there is unwavering support for the MSU ADVANCE initiative from upper administration; albeit, the financial support is less than what some stakeholders would prefer to see to continue implementing efforts at the current level. Upper administration lauded ADVANCE leadership's role and emphasized the institution's commitment to sustaining successful initiatives. Upper administration expressed that the structure's continuation was vital, indicating the importance of continuing a dedicated Internal Steering Committee for longevity. *“I think that the structure will continue. If the steering committee dissolves..., I would question the success of longevity. I would hope it would continue. I'm personally committed to it.”*

Recommendations

The following are recommendations to consider as MSU ADVANCE's NSF funding ends. In addition to providing recommendations for sustaining MSU ADVANCE's overall impacts, recommendations are also provided for specific programming aspects.

Sustainability of ADVANCE

- Consider various support models to identify the best fit for the continuation of successful, popular programs such as Mentoring Circles, writing retreats, the Spring Break Camp, and faculty workshops/seminars. The support needed to offer these activities should take into consideration the need for continued growth and development to ensure programming does not become stagnant.
- Work with university administration to embed policies and practices within existing administrative structures (e.g., trainings from the interactive theatre incorporated into required trainings for faculty/staff in collaboration with Human Resources).
- Work with university administration to develop a transparent and comprehensive funding plan that outlines budget allocations for staffing, programming, marketing, and other essential needs.
- Identify alternative funding sources, such as grants, endowments, and partnerships, to supplement institutional financial support.
- Work collaboratively with existing resources on campus when offering events that may overlap to increase the impact. For example, work with human resources when offering a mental health day to ensure participation counts as a health activity toward their benefits.

Mentoring Circles

- Institutionalize the Mentoring Circles, as stakeholders agree they are of high value in creating collegiality and community. As part of the institutionalization, a dedicated portion of a person's time is needed to coordinate the program to ensure it runs smoothly and continues to grow and does not languish.
- Revise topics addressed each year based on feedback from participants on the usefulness of topics.
- Continue to allow participants to remain in the same circle or join a new circle.
- Share information earlier and more often with facilitators to ensure they have the information they need.
- Facilitate communication between facilitators to allow for the exchange of information and resources, develop or add to the peer-sharing opportunities between facilitators, and continue checking-in with facilitators to ensure they have what they need to be successful.
- Continue to collect feedback from participants to make improvements and ensure the programs remain effective and relevant.
- Offer both in-person and virtual options for events.

Writing Retreat

- Institutionalize the writing retreat, as stakeholders reported it had a transformative impact on their various writing activities, fostered support, and enhanced productivity.
- Notify participants that they have been accepted earlier in the year so they have more time to manage competing priorities.
- Recognize optimal timing for events and align with participants' schedules.
- Explore a year-long commitment with dedicated writing days.
- Consider having a writing coach join in-person and have them customize the coaching based on participants' career tracks and specific writing needs.
- Sustain post-retreat support for enhanced accountability and progress tracking.

Faculty Workshops/Seminars

- Institutionalize the faculty workshops/seminars and continue to host events that cover crucial subjects, such as LGBTQ+ issues, teaching strategies, diversity incorporation, and implicit bias, as they are deemed incredibly valuable.
- Expand publicity and use creative outreach to increase attendance, including using the ISC to recruit faculty to attend.
- Continue to host meals with the speakers; stakeholders valued the opportunity to interact during this time.

Spring Break Childcare Camp

- Institutionalize the Spring Break Childcare Camp, as stakeholders perceive this as extremely valuable, specifically, as a way to support women in academia.
- Address staffing and funding concerns for the initiative's continuity.
- Explore replicating the camp during other times of the year (e.g., the last week of the summer before the school year begins) to further support faculty/staff parents with their childcare needs.
- Extend childcare drop-off/pick-up hours to accommodate faculty and staff schedules.

Internal Steering Committee

- Continue the ISC, as it is perceived as a vital driving force to continue ADVANCE efforts.
- Be transparent with the continuation plans for the Internal Steering Committee.
- Consider modifying meeting formats to encourage more discussion and less reporting by adopting a more participatory approach that promotes open dialogue and engagement.
- Provide the agenda with specific points for contemplation at least a week before meetings to enhance participation during meetings.