Dear Dr. McNamee,

Attached is the report by the site visit team that reviewed the Virginia Tech ADVANCE Institutional Transformation project. I hope that you find it useful. The site visitors noted a number of encouraging developments connected with the ADVANCE program at Virginia Tech. There are also a number of concerns that were raised by the reviewers, and I would appreciate your response to these concerns. I have highlighted several below that are of particular concern.

1. Evaluation: The cooperative agreement governing this award requires that "Awardee shall implement both formative and summative evaluation. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis will be employed to evaluate the impact of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Institutional Transformation program." As noted by the site visitors, to date there has been no external evaluation. In addition, the internal evaluation efforts do not appear to be a systematic formative evaluation. These are necessary and required. **We therefore request a plan for the following:**

   - An external review to be arranged to be conducted as soon as possible so that the remaining years of the grant can be used for the greatest benefit.
   - Plans for further formative and summative evaluations. Activities of the four Working Groups should be documented and evaluated. Written annual reports that include results of interviews with constituent groups (plus quantitative data, where appropriate) would be useful in making changes that better meet constituents' needs. In particular, follow-up interviews on the impact of the "education" and "awareness" activities in regard to search committees should be conducted. This could be done via a comparison of differences in recruitment outcomes for those departments most involved and departments minimally or uninvolved. Finally, it is advisable to document and track the effect of the work ADVANCE has done with department chairs to see if those with whom they have worked most closely are changing in ways that others are not.

2. Leadership: NSF concurs with the concern of the site visit team that divisiveness among the leadership of the project has slowed progress on the award. NSF agrees with the finding of the site visit team that use of NSF funds for counseling or mediation services for Project directors who continue, after three years, to be unable cooperate is inappropriate. These funds, if necessary, should in the future come from university operating costs, not Federal grant funds. The opportunity cost of this leadership contention has been significant, and is a continuing concern for the Foundation.

   Two of the original members of the Leadership Team are leaving the project, and it is required in the cooperative agreement that the institution inform NSF of changes in key personnel. **NSF requests a plan from the PI that will address these concerns, to include a plan for reconstituting the leadership team.**

3. Work with Department Chairs: The site visit panel recommended instituting regular and on-going meetings or workshops through which chairs who have had success in meeting ADVANCE goals can share their knowledge with other chairs. The proposal (p. 6, last full paragraph) discusses the reasons for having such structured interactions, and specifically mentions retreats and structured activities. The implementation of such interactions is crucial to effecting departmental change. Given the hiring accomplished so far under the award, failure to address departmental climate could undermine the success of the program at Virginia Tech.
NSF requests a plan, including a schedule for the next year, to be updated annually, for instituting structured workshops with chairs.

In order to ensure the most productive use of the award for the remaining two years, these items must be addressed. I would appreciate your response no later than August 15. The budget should be revised to accommodate a meaningful evaluation effort. Given the success of the leadership development activities, funds for that effort could be picked up by the university in order to free up funding for the required evaluation activities.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Regards,

Alice Hogan <<VA Tech Report final.doc>>