Moving the Needle Initiative
Call to Purpose
Blueprint for Action
Final

Adopted by
ACE's Women Network Executive Council
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While many Americans believe that women's battle for gender parity in the workplace has already been won, recent data collected by the American Council on Education (2012) and others (Colorado Women's College, 2013; Catalyst, 2011; Deloitte, 2011; Forbes, 2011) suggest that this is far from reality. Although women now earn the majority of all college degrees and are well represented in entry- and mid-level positions in most sectors of the economy, they have made surprisingly little progress in advancing to chief executive positions. In higher education, women occupy just 26% of all college presidencies (ACE, 2012). The American Council on Education's Women's Network Executive Council will lead the effort to raise national awareness of the importance of achieving parity and to suggest practices aimed at achieving the goal of equal representation of women in senior leadership positions in higher education.

Mission Statement: Create parity for women holding, and aspiring to hold, leadership positions in the academy through collaborative partnerships with higher education institutions and other related organizations, profit and nonprofit, with mutual goals of advancing women to senior level decision- and policy-making leadership positions.

Our Vision: At least 50% of chief executives at higher education institutions are women.

Our Challenge: Achieve the vision by 2030.

Our Value Statement: Today, 26% of college and university presidencies are held by women. Progress has been at best incremental and has taken a decade to move the needle three percentage points. The vision of parity necessitates creating a national imperative for advancing women leaders and carefully crafting a national agenda to guide its implementation. In short, there must be a renewed effort to achieve in two decades what amounts to doubling the progress realized over many decades. No single organization can accomplish this alone; collaboration among like-minded organizations can and will make the difference.

Four Specific Goals:

Goal One: *Generate a national sense of urgency elevating the need for advancing women in higher education leadership positions.*

Today women hold nearly half of all jobs in the U.S. labor force (47 percent in 2010) and earned the majority of degrees at all levels. Women have more than tripled their share of managerial and professional positions (51 percent) since the 1950s; yet few make it all the way to the top. Gender diversity in organizations' top offices and in the boardroom is not just a matter of social justice and advancement but a smart business move as well. Research has well established that companies with the highest representation of women in leadership positions financially outperform those with few women in their senior management (Catalyst 2011; Colorado Women's College, 2013; Deloitte, 2011; Desvaux, Devillard, & Sancier-Sultan, 2011; Forbes, 2011; Herring, 2009). Moreover, recent studies (Forbes 2011 and Deloitte 2011) show that organizations truly embracing diversity and inclusion are not only more profitable but also more productive and innovative. A diverse set of experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds is crucial to encourage different perspectives and foster innovation that is particularly important at higher education institutions responsible for educating and training future leaders, workers, and citizens (Forbes 2011). Until the decision-makers acknowledge and embrace the

connection between diversity and success, the development and implementation of diversity strategies will languish (Deloitte, 2011; Forbes 2011).

American Council on Education's Women's Network Executive Council will lead in collaboration with associations and organizations with active women's leadership agendas in order to raise national awareness and national visibility of this issue. Working together will allow us leverage our individual efforts more effectively.

Goal Two: *Encourage governing boards and other higher education institutional decision- & policy-making bodies to consider practices for recruiting and hiring women to chief executive offices.*

An opportunity exists to significantly increase the diversity of the next generation of presidents as well as other senior leadership positions. As of 2011, almost 6 in 10 college presidents (58 percent) were over the age of 61 (ACE, 2012). If half of these individuals choose to retire in the next coming years, one-quarter of college presidencies will become vacant. The governing boards and others who will select the next generation of leaders genuinely must be committed to recruiting highly qualified and diverse candidates. With the Association of Governing Boards (2010) reporting that men on the governing boards outnumber women by more than two to one, governing boards must be intentional in their recruiting and hiring processes to establish a more inclusive culture enriched by diverse backgrounds and experiences.

American Council on Education's Women's Network Executive Council will lead an effort to suggest practices to be used in recruiting highly qualified women of all races and color to create a richly diverse pool of candidates for senior leadership positions. Additional practices will be suggested to ensure that through the interview and selection process all candidates are given fair and due consideration regardless of their gender or ethnicity.

Goal Three: *Achieve women's advancement to mid-level and senior-level positions in higher education administration by building capacities in women and in institutions.*

Ensuring that women and persons of color are increasingly represented in mid-level administrative positions is essential to the goal of increasing the diversity among senior leaders. As of 2011, women accounted for 55% of instructors and lecturers, 49% of assistant professors, and only 29% of full professors. The pool from which many senior administrators are chosen—tenured faculty—is disproportionately small (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). This drop-off has significant consequences, as many senior administrators are chosen from the ranks of tenured faculty – exactly where the numbers of women are smallest, especially at the more selective institutions. Decreases, albeit less substantial, also occur as women move through the administrative services leadership pipeline which also supplies candidates for more senior positions in the academy.

Increasing the number of women advancing into leadership positions requires recognition that barriers and obstacles still exist, hampering women's advancement. Among other institutional policies and practices that should be examined, recommending workplace flexibility practices and models not only will result in the retention of talented women desiring to work part-time, but also affords organizations significant additional benefits, including reduced work/life conflict for men and women, enhanced productivity for managers (male or female, with children or without), and improved well-being and reduced absenteeism for all employees (Deloitte, 2011).

American Council on Education's Women's Network Executive Council will lead an effort to create a more robust leadership pipeline by establishing recommended practices and programs to remove barriers and improve flexibility in higher education workplaces, resulting in an increase in the number of women advancing into more senior leadership positions. American Council on Education's Women's Network Executive Council will

continue its commitment to identifying, encouraging, training and supporting women in faculty and entry and mid-level administrative positions as they seek and hold administrative positions and gain leadership experiences.

Goal Four: *Suggest practices and models that recognize success in advancing women in higher education.*

Research has affirmed that public recognition of good or exemplary performance encourages such performance by inspiring people to do more, thereby driving greater levels of discretionary effort.   Recognition of an organization's success further motivates its people to participate.   Awareness can be raised across the higher education community by publicizing institutional success stories and practices, perhaps through an annual program that recognizes high-achieving colleges and universities.

American Council on Education's Women's Network Executive Council will lead an effort to highlight practices and models aimed at advancing women in higher education and create a recognition program that highlights successful initiatives.

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