



Michigan ACE Network for Women Leaders in Higher Education Strategic Plan 2003-2008

Vision Statement

We envision an open and just higher education environment in which women and men share their talents and voices equally in management and policy making to improve the quality of higher education. Therefore, we focus on building a substantial network of women in Michigan higher education by providing leadership, resources, and services such as professional development, networking, partnering with women's networks in other professional fields, and engaging in public advocacy to empower our members to achieve career success and gain a greater voice.

Mission Statement

In concert with the American Council on Education's (ACE's) Office of Women in Higher Education (OWHE), the Michigan ACE Network for Women Leaders in Higher Education is committed to improving the general climate and professional environment for women by identifying, developing the leadership of, encouraging, advancing, linking/networking, and supporting women in higher education throughout the state.

Values and Guiding Principles

We value

- quality leadership
- inclusive leadership
- diversity
- teamwork
- mentoring
- collaboration with other groups/building alliances
- support for women in higher education, including balance in work and family pursuits.

Our planning efforts and actions will be based on these values and guiding principles because we believe that quality higher education governance is best practiced in a fair, equitable, and supportive environment for both women and men of different ethnicities and backgrounds.

Environmental Scan

A. Internal Strengths

1. The national ACE office provides a strong foundation on which we can build in the State of Michigan.

2. The Michigan Network has been an active member of the ACE Network since 1978; and a strong network of contacts already exists at the local, regional, and national levels.
3. A strong, loyal leadership team and a well-established format/structure ensure the effective operation of the organization.
4. We have established a Presidential Advisory Board that is committed to supporting the Network's mission and efforts.
5. Collaboration among women and men at all levels of higher education institutions in Michigan creates a wide range of available resources, not only for the organization but also for each individual institution and participant.
6. The Michigan ACE Network provides accessible and high-quality professional development programs at minimal cost and distributes information about available professional development opportunities at the local, regional, and national levels.
7. As the state affiliate of ACE, the Michigan ACE Network provides visible leadership opportunities (e.g., service as an Institutional Representative, Executive Board member, or officer of the Michigan Network) at the state level.
8. We support women in higher education administration by offering networking and mentoring opportunities and by recognizing outstanding women leaders.
9. The presidential appointment of the Institutional Representative has the potential to be a tremendous strength.

B. Internal Challenges

1. We need to maximize the Institutional Representative's influence on her or his campus as well as his or her access to the president of the college or university and to other women's groups campus-wide.
2. One of our major challenges is lack of staff and technical support. Since our Executive Board members are extremely busy decision makers, the absence of such support has had a negative impact on the efficacy, outreach, and development of the Network.
3. There is a significant lack of public awareness and media exposure for the Michigan ACE Network. Being known and recognized at the local, regional, and national levels is a challenge for the Michigan Network.
4. The passion of women who actively support other women appears to be diminishing. One possible reason might be that some women assume they are going to move into administrative positions without difficulty.

5. The Network will be successful if Institutional Representatives are “engaged” in their roles. Therefore, we need to continue to motivate our Institutional Representatives to become more actively involved in programming and supporting women on their campuses as well as in participating in Network activities.
6. Given the minimum staff support and other resources, responding to different professional development needs of women at various stages in their careers is another challenge for the Network.
7. A large number of higher education institutions and senior-level women administrators do not participate in the Michigan ACE Network. Some may not know about the Network; some may not feel that we meet their needs; and still others may not feel “invited” by the Network.

C. External Opportunities

1. Technological advances have expanded the scope and format of professional development programs, providing the Michigan ACE Network with more options in terms of offering its programs on individual campuses. The Network should consider posting video-tapes of exemplary presentations on the website for viewing by constituents; advertising and linking to webinars that allow you to attend the session from your own desk and telephone simply by connecting to a website; and providing information about audio conferences, webcasts, online seminars, other e-training, and e-conferencing.
2. By partnering with the national ACE and the Office of Women in Higher Education, we can develop high quality regional programs in the State of Michigan.
3. Opportunities exist to increase linkages and to network with women’s professional organizations in other fields such as service organizations and businesses.
4. Women have assumed key leadership positions in higher education and state government in larger numbers than ever before. For instance, Michigan’s first female governor took office in January 2003 and the first woman president of the University of Michigan was appointed in 2002.
5. By working with former members of the Connections group, a well-established network among women leaders in Michigan higher education, which disbanded in April 2003, we can build a stronger network for women in Michigan higher education.
6. External funding opportunities, both public and private, are available that the Michigan ACE Network can pursue to support its strategic initiatives or programs. Options for funding exist from small to medium-sized private, family-held foundations in the State; the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Skillman Foundation, various units within the United

States Department of Education, and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), to name a few.

D. External Threats

1. Many financially strapped Michigan institutions of higher education are not renewing membership in organizations like the Network. Consequently, large numbers of Michigan women in the academy are not being served by or participating in the Network.
2. The Network competes with other women's organizations for the time and attention of women leaders in higher education.
3. Given the downward economic situation and the drastic reduction in state support, colleges and universities in Michigan will face more financial struggles and challenges. In times of scarcity, institutions often revert to past practices and "what's familiar," thus creating difficulty for women leaders who are relatively new to senior management positions.
4. Adequate institutional and statewide data about women in higher education are not readily available. Moreover, there is no centralized database nor are statistics available about the demography of women leaders in Michigan higher education. Consequently, research about and analysis of needs of women in Michigan higher education are very difficult.
5. While females are now the majority of students enrolled in American higher education, female faculty and administrators remain in the minority. Furthermore, women administrators are more likely to be pigeon-holed into assistant and associate positions and are less likely to be encouraged, mentored, or adequately prepared to pursue senior- or executive-level positions and to exercise more authority.
6. The external information and communication capacities of the Network need to be improved to promote awareness and accomplishments.
7. Lack of continuity of executive officers, deans, and department heads requires continuous awareness training of new members to maintain sensitivity to women's issues. The high turnover rate of women in different positions and levels in Michigan higher education also makes continuous linkages among women leaders more difficult.
8. While gender inequity persists as both a visible and invisible social problem that has not been fully corrected yet, many people not only question the necessity but also the legitimacy of women's organizations.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Identifying Women Leaders in Higher Education

Objectives:

1. Identify women, particularly emerging faculty leaders, women new to administration, and women with new administrative positions as well as women in middle- or upper-middle management positions, with leadership potential on individual campuses. Send congratulatory letters to newly appointed women leaders and include them on the mailing list and/or other activities.
2. Continue to identify, recognize, and actively engage the Network's Presidential Sponsors who are interested in advancing and supporting women in Michigan higher education.
3. Develop a nominating and screening process to identify outstanding higher-level women leaders on individual campuses and nominate them to participate in the OWHE National Leadership Forums. To support their participation, the Network will establish a cost-sharing scholarship; the Network will pay no more than half of the expenses, and the nominated candidate will be required to raise the rest.

Goal 2: Developing the Leadership Skills of Women in Higher Education

Objectives:

1. Provide professional development opportunities and/or experiences for identified (potential) women leaders in Michigan higher education.
2. Plan a one-day/half-day training session and an ongoing orientation for Institutional Representatives to familiarize them with the expectations of the Network, their roles and responsibilities, the Network's Strategic Plan, and the suggested strategies for implementing professional development/leadership/mentoring programs on their respective campuses.
3. Develop Michigan-on-the-Road programs or a list of preplanned/recorded programs and post these resources on the website. Meanwhile, explore the possibility of sponsoring e-training or e-conferencing in the future.
4. Collect and analyze information about activities provided at the campus level and about Institutional Representatives' needs. Establish a clearinghouse of successful strategies for the advancement of women leaders based on "best practices" being implemented on member institution campuses.

5. Establish an inventory of leadership development programs or resources available at the national, regional, or local levels. Provide links to professional development opportunities offered by national organizations as well as by member campuses (e.g., the University of Michigan's Center for the Education of Women, Davenport's Leadership Institute, etc.) on the website to help women improve their leadership and career advancement skills.
6. Work with member institutions to develop future leadership workshops or seminars for women of color and for department chairs/directors.

Goal 3: Encouraging Women Leaders to Make Full Use of Their Abilities

Objectives:

1. Communicate continuously about professional development opportunities/events/positions to encourage development of leadership skills and abilities. (Communication is an "encouragement" in-and-of itself.)
2. Recognize and encourage outstanding women leaders in Michigan higher education formally by continuing to sponsor the Network's annual Distinguished Woman in Higher Education Leadership Award.
3. Encourage shadowing/mentoring relationships and support among women in Michigan higher education.
4. Encourage women faculty to assume leadership roles in Michigan's colleges and universities.

Goal 4: Advancing Women into Senior-Level Positions

Objectives:

1. Establish a scholarship fund and develop an application procedure for use by Institutional Representatives who do not receive reimbursement for travel to the IR meetings and/or the annual State Conference to encourage participation.
2. Promote institutional awareness of the Michigan ACE Network through publicizing the Network's programs and the outcomes of the annual conference and using the website as well as other tools to increase the Network's visibility and communication capacities.
3. Advance Institutional Representatives and other women leaders in Michigan higher education by increasing their visibility through public relations and press releases.

4. Provide links on the website to human resource departments in member institutions and to other job sites.
5. Actively identify, nominate, and promote women of color for scholarships or other advancement opportunities.

Goal 5: Linking Women Leaders at All Levels to One Another

Objectives:

1. Develop internal linkages by connecting women leaders in Michigan higher education, especially those involved in the Michigan ACE Network, through different programs, conferences, and activities.
2. Distribute information about ACE's activities and members, current women's issues, and available resources so that others will know and recognize ACE's national stature and ability to serve, educate, and influence.
3. Develop external linkages by partnering with other women's organizations, service agencies, nonprofit organizations, or corporations such as Zonta and the American Association of University Women (AAUW) that hold similar goals.
4. Provide opportunities through state or regional forums for emerging women leaders in Michigan higher education to interact with college and university presidents and other established leaders in the academy.

Goal 6: Supporting the Retention of Women in Higher Education

Objectives:

1. Support and celebrate women presidents by recognizing them at the annual state conference.
2. Establish a public policy advocacy agenda to support university, state, regional, and federal policies that enable women to pursue higher education, start a career in higher education, and succeed within the academy.
3. Inform campus presidents about contributions to the advancement of women made by their Institutional Representatives or Executive Board members.
4. Publish and widely distribute the Michigan ACE Network's electronic newsletter; present stories that highlight the success of women in leadership positions in higher education.

Evaluation Process and Timeline

The attached Gantt Chart presents the projected operational timeline for the 5-year strategic plan. At the beginning of each year, a separate year-by-year action plan will be developed to identify the priorities to be addressed in that year as well as the associated timeframe.

The Executive Board will re-evaluate the plan annually in May and propose changes to the IRs at the annual conference each June. At the end of the 3rd year of the plan's implementation, another IR survey and environmental scan should be conducted; and a new Strategic Planning Committee should be formed. At the beginning of the 5th year, another full planning cycle should begin.

Funding Plan for the Strategic Initiatives

A financial plan must be developed to support the implementation of the Michigan ACE Network's 2003-2008 Strategic Plan with costs associated with each goal and strategy. (In order to remain financially viable, the Michigan ACE Network must have an approved multi-year budget that specifies revenues and disbursements.)

Note: Some ideas included in this plan were extracted from the following sources: American Council on Education (ACE), Office of Women in Higher Education (OWHE), Women Administrators in North Carolina Higher Education's (WANCHE) 1999-2002 Strategic Plan, South Carolina Women in Higher Education's (SCWHE) Mission Statement and Strategic Plan, Eastern Michigan University's (EMU) Strategic Plan, and notes/archival materials of the Michigan ACE Network of Women Leaders in Higher Education.

Approved unanimously by the Executive Board and Institutional Representatives (in separate meetings) on June 10, 2003, at the Henry Center for Executive Development in East Lansing.