The University of California, Irvine, is requesting NSF support to change the culture of the institution. Gender inequities, in terms of numbers of women, their rank, their salaries, and their level of participation in academic leadership positions, continue to plague academic science departments at UCI, as elsewhere. The central administration of UCI is committed to diversity and equity and realizes that the institution will lose its competitive edge if it does not address these problems immediately. This sense of urgency is compounded by the impending growth of the campus as a result of “Tidal Wave II.” With the influx of new students comes a rare opportunity to hire up to 50 new faculty, which added to the turnover in hiring, results in a projection of 70-80 new hires a year for the next decade. This growth will either condemn the campus to a mediocre future of uniformity, stagnation and lack of diversity, or, if we seize the opportunity, it will transform UCI into a diverse campus with flexible approaches and innovative solutions to problems, both social and scientific.

Our goals are: to increase the recruitment of women into Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology (SMET) disciplines, provide a network of support and guidance through to tenure, monitor progress by collecting and analyzing data about the objective and subjective aspects of equity, promote networking and mentoring activities for tenured women to ensure that they develop to their fullest potential, including facilitating nominations for awards at the local, national and international levels. To accomplish these goals, we will appoint a senior faculty member as an Equity Advisor in each of the eight SMET schools, to tailor an equity program for that school that meets its particular needs. Their involvement in recruiting will include assisting search committees to develop diverse candidate pools containing highly qualified women. They will also set up a mentoring program for junior faculty based on a successful UCI model. To increase awareness among administrators and search committees of the ways in which our judgment of individuals is altered by their gender, we will make use of workshops successfully implemented in the corporate world by one of our faculty. To encourage networking among women scientists, we will organize a series of scientific conferences, focused on different scientific disciplines, at which women scientists will be invited to speak about their research. Workshops will allow an exploration of the issues standing in the way of full participation of women in academia, and all women faculty, students, and postdoctoral fellows will be invited to participate. Finally, to provide a tangible demonstration of the value of activities that promote gender equity, we will establish two ADVANCE Chairs, to be awarded to tenured faculty in the sciences with excellent academic credentials as well as demonstrated commitment to gender equity. These Chairs will be continued after the period of the grant by funds raised from private donations. To evaluate the success of these strategies, our annual self-assessment surveys will be complemented by two assessments by external evaluators, to be conducted in years 3 and 5.