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New institute to advance leadership opportunities for female faculty

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In her best-selling book "Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman," Gail Evans, a retired CNN executive vice president, shared her playbook for female success in the workplace with millions.



Pictured with keynote speaker Gail Evans (second from right) at the ADVANCE Leadership Institute kick off Feb. 14 at UTPA are left to right Dr. Rebecca Mitchell, associate professor of English and vice provost fellow in the Office of Faculty Affairs; Dr. Marie Mora, professor of Economics and vice provost fellow in the Office of Faculty Affairs; and Dr. Havidán Rodríguez, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs.

representation and advancement of women in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields across all faculty and leadership ranks at the University. However, organizers encourage the participation of all tenure-track and tenured faculty members employed at UTPA, regardless of gender, college, or academic rank.

Dr. Marie Mora, professor of economics and vice provost fellow for faculty affairs who helped develop the institute, said its primary purpose is to provide more faculty development opportunities across campus, primarily in STEM fields where women in particular are highly underrepresented and that the need for female role models is critical.

"The grant is focusing on women in STEM and helping them advance in their careers but we realize there are a lot of opportunities to help all faculty across campus. One concern is that there are not enough women in leadership positions so this is an opportunity for them to learn things outside their department or colleges that they may not have had an opportunity to learn," she said.

During the Spring 2013 institute, eight training sessions will be held on topics such as the role of a leader, decision making and problem solving, collaboration, strategic planning, and conflict management and resolution. Faculty who successfully complete the Leadership Institute by attending all sessions will receive a \$500 stipend and be presented a certificate at the institute's final reception in May. Institute participants will also be matched with a mentor to support their career and leadership development. The mentors will also receive a \$500 stipend. Organizers said the first institute has 21 participants, 71 percent of which are female.

The leadership institute is only one of several initiatives of the ADVANCE grant titled "Attracting and Nurturing Women Faculty at a Hispanic Serving Institution," said Dr. Maria Cristina Villalobos, associate professor of mathematics, director of UTPA's Center for

On Feb. 14, Evans came to The University of Texas-Pan American, where she presented some of the valuable lessons she learned during her rise in the male-dominated world of TV journalism at the kick off of the University's inaugural ADVANCE Leadership Institute.

"Today I want to talk to the women. The men can eavesdrop," joked keynote Evans, who spoke to an audience of primarily female faculty members about gender issues in the workplace and how women can support and empower one another.

The institute was initiated as part of a \$3.1 million, five-year National Science Foundation (NSF) ADVANCE grant awarded to UTPA last fall to increase the



Dr. Ala Qubbaj, vice provost for Faculty Affairs at UTPA, welcomed faculty and guests to the kick off of the inaugural ADVANCE Leadership Institute made possible through a NSF ADVANCE grant received by UTPA last year to increase the participation and advancement of women in STEM academic careers. Qubbaj is the grant's co-principal investigator.

Excellence in STEM and a co-principal investigator of the ADVANCE grant. It also provides graduate assistantships to help students in their research work, addresses spousal/partner hiring policies, leave and tenure policies as well as enhanced recruitment efforts and awareness on campus of gender and work life issues.

"Receiving the grant puts a spotlight on UTPA and the fact that we need more women to get tenure, to be in full professorship positions, and in administrative and leadership positions because that is really where the big decisions are being made. If we are not part of that agenda, then most of the issues that are important for woman and advancement of women are gone," Villalobos said.

Evans said the need is great for more women to role model that STEM fields are possible fields for females to pursue because in the United States 50 percent of the workforce is female.

"So you are going to miss out on great opportunities if only about 20 percent of women think they can do these jobs," she said. "Everybody has to work together on this ... the culture dictates who leads, who goes into what fields ... most of the reasons why women or minorities don't get into some of these positions are implicit biases that we all hold. The only way we are going to change some of those biases is to begin to educate people and begin to talk about it."



There are 21 faculty participants in the first ADVANCE Leadership Institute, which kicked off with a luncheon and guest speaker Gail Evans, author of the best-selling book "Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman." The institute will conclude in May.

he said. "We have put together an excellent, innovative, and intellectually stimulating program that will allow us to build strong faculty leadership at our institution. This is the inaugural year of a faculty Institute that we expect will continue for many years to come."

For more information, contact Dr. Marie Mora at mtmora@utpa.edu.

□UTPA Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Havidán Rodríguez said he's pleased that the first institute has representation from all seven colleges at UTPA and each participant has a mentor from within or outside UT Pan American. He's also excited about the opportunities and expected outcomes the institute will generate.

"The UTPA NSF ADVANCE grant is about institutional transformation. We want to achieve long-term, sustainable, and systemic change. The ADVANCE Leadership Institute will allow us to work with future generations of academic leaders at UT Pan American,"