The Department Enhancement Program

About The Program
The DEP, originally referred to as Collaborative Transformation, began in 2006. Initially funded through the National Science Foundation, DEP is a part of ADVANCE, which helps to transform university structures, cultures, and practices to recruit, retain, and promote a diverse, highly-qualified, and cohesive faculty.

DEP is now an institutionalized part of Iowa State University. An innovative action-oriented program suited to improve departmental climates, DEP features a systematic method for collecting and analyzing data from chairs and faculty about the department climate. DEP is designed to cultivate faculty satisfaction, inclusion, and engagement.

Dr. Mack Shelley, University Professor, Chair of Political Science

The Department Enhancement Program assisted the faculty of Political Science to develop a more holistic and synergistic approach to how we operate individually and as members of an academic unit. The Department has experienced less turnover and higher productivity in research and teaching. The DEP provided the opportunity to assess our gaps in communication and decision-making across subfields, generations, gender, and faculty status and rank. We became more sensitized to the need for better work-life balance particularly for more junior faculty, and established norms that have made it possible to incorporate more fully term and tenure-track faculty together into a more cohesive entity.

To learn more about the Department Enhancement Program (DEP), visit our website: https://www.advance.iastate.edu/initiatives/dep

DEP IMPACT

76.9% OF ACTION ITEMS WERE IMPLEMENTED

MORE THAN 30 DEPARTMENTS HAVE PARTICIPATED SINCE 2006

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Program Components
Department chairs can request DEP for their units.

A trained DEP facilitator conducts separate, confidential 90-minute interviews or focus groups with:
- Department chairs
- Faculty by rank across term, tenure-track and tenure classifications

In exploring the department’s structures, processes, and climate, interviews cover:
- Recruitment and retention of diverse faculty
- Responsibilities in research, teaching, extension, outreach, and service
- Advancement and evaluation
- Mentoring and leadership development
- Resource distribution
- Faculty relations, collegiality, and networking
- Faculty satisfaction
- Career flexibility
- Work-life integration
- Programming and future initiatives
- Facilities, administrative support, and technical support
- Governance and policies

DEP is useful as departmental leaders and faculty prepare for external program reviews, re-configure departmental structures in response to program development and implementation, develop a greater understanding of their strengths and opportunities for growth and support, and other long-range planning.

“The feedback received helped the department to prepare for our external departmental review and to help improve the environment in the department for all faculty and staff, especially with respect to creating a more welcoming environment.”

Dr. Steven K. Mickelson, Charles R. and Jane F. Olsen Professorship in Engineering and Chair, Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering

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