

FORWARD awards women faculty at NDSU

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The NDSU animal department received the advance FORWARD award for the efforts to create a better work climate for women faculty

The FORWARD committee presented awards to NDSU women faculty and staff members at its kick-off event on Aug. 30 at the president's house.

FORWARD, which stands for "Focus on Resources for Women's Advancement, Recruitment/Retention and Development," is a committee focused on bettering the climate for women at NDSU.

Bruce Rafert, NDSU provost, and Ann Burnett, director of women and gender studies, started the event with a few short speeches, and Burnett awarded the Course Release and Leadership Development awards.

The Course Release award winners are released from one course in order to use that time for research, Burnett described. Award winners included the departments of biological sciences, psychology and mechanical engineering.

The Leadership Development award is a grant given to women faculty to attend a leadership conference. One of the more popular institutes is the HERS Institute in Denver, Burnett said. The departments of theatre arts and health, nutrition and exercise science were among award winners.

Karen Froelich, professor of business, presented the Leap Research and the Leap Lab Renovation awards.

The Leap Research award gives substantial funding to help faculty "leap" into an experiment. With this money, faculty can begin a research project and have something to help back them up when asking for bigger grants. Award winners included departments such as biological sciences and computer science.

The Leap Lab Renovation awards give women faculty money to update a lab on campus. The biological sciences department received both awards and will be using the money to help build a "baviary," or a facility to house both birds and bats.

The last award given was the NDSU Advance FORWARD departmental award. This award is given to a department that has taken steps to enact FORWARD by creating a better climate for women and striving to obtain and retain women faculty. This award was given to the animal sciences department.

“NDSU FORWARD is committed to establishing a university culture in which all are nurtured and supported to develop to their fullest potential,” Canan Bilen-Green, a professor of industrial and manufacturing engineering, said. “We envision an environment where women are leaders and decision makers at all levels of the University.”

In 2002, a group of concerned faculty and administrators formed the FORWARD committee in order to try and obtain the National Science Foundation ADVANCE Institutional Transformation grant.

This committee met monthly and succeeded in securing the grant in 2008.

Today, FORWARD is committed to creating a climate where both women and men are nurtured and supported.

According to Bilen-Green, the committee has five goals for their project: to improve the climate across the campus for everyone; enhance recruitment of women faculty by employing targeted recruitment strategies; increase retention of women faculty through the probationary period and the promotion/tenure process; promote women associate professors; hire women at advanced rank to build a critical mass of senior women in all departments; and create leadership opportunities by promoting and hiring women into academic leadership positions.

In addition, the committee provides mentoring and networking to faculty and administrators and researches effects of policies.

FORWARD accepts both male and female volunteers and is always accepting members to the committee.

For more information on FORWARD, visit <http://www.ndsu.edu/forward/>.