



Introduction: In These Unprecedented Times, We Choose to Keep Advancing

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Abstract: This introduction reflects on the research, challenges, hope, and commitments that continue to move faculty, students, and independent researchers in STEM forward. As we conclude this volume, we reaffirm our commitment to sustaining this work despite significant challenges. Although our journal lost National Science Foundation funding following cuts to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, we remain committed to publishing scholarship that advances equity, community, and transformation, and we look forward to continuing these conversations in future issues.

Keywords: faculty, leadership, community, equity, transformation

In this “regular” issue of 2026, following two special issues in Volume 3 devoted to Behind Enemy Lines, we reflect on the immense challenges of this past year. These challenges include the loss of our National Science Foundation funding following the Trump administration's cuts to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; the growing job precarity experienced by many of us who work on the journal amid a recession the administration claims does not exist; and increasing pressures on colleges and universities to abandon equity initiatives. The list, unfortunately, goes on and on.

For the last several years, beginning with the COVID-19 pandemic, we have repeatedly heard the phrase *"unprecedented times."* Yet these moments feel increasingly preceded as immeasurable traumas continue to unfold across the globe. Rather than backing down or quieting ourselves, we refuse to allow the challenges of these times or their so-called "unprecedentedness" to bring this journal to an end.

We are profoundly grateful to everyone who has helped sustain this journal, from authors and reviewers to the many volunteers who have edited, proofread, and prepared each issue for publication. We continue to find hope in what might appear to be small acts: scholars who persist in conducting research, writing, mentoring, and building community even while facing profound uncertainty about their futures.

The manuscripts in this issue examine faculty and researcher experiences related to equity, leadership, institutional policies, and organizational change across STEM and higher education. While they acknowledge persistent barriers and inequities, While they acknowledge persistent barriers and inequities, they also highlight concrete actions that have been taken and continue to be taken to resist efforts to silence, dismantle, and marginalize equity-focused work.

In **"Defining, encouraging, and evaluating 'expanded scholarship' as productivity in academic institutions,"** Ellen D.B. Riggle and M. Cristina Alcalde draw upon both personal experience and research to explore the concept of

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expanded scholarship: approaches to research, teaching, and academic engagement that move beyond hegemonic definitions of scholarly productivity. They argue that meaningful systemic change is possible when institutions adopt more holistic and intersectional approaches to scholarship, evaluation, and faculty success. The article concludes with discussion questions intended to foster dialogue and institutional change.

Angela D. Carter, Cynthia Sims, and Stephen Brown III examine the Wayfinder Program, a leadership development initiative implemented over five years at a university in the southeastern United States, in **"Beyond the Leaky Pipeline: An Evaluation of Leadership Mobility in a Gender Equity Focused Leadership Development Program."** Their findings demonstrate the importance of institutional structures that not only promote equity but also provide meaningful and sustained support for faculty.

In **"Guiding Faculty Equity Reform Strategies for Primarily Undergraduate Institutions from a Comparison of Administrator and Women STEM Faculty Perceptions,"** Cara Margherio, Chavonda Mills, Wendy Pogozeleski, Josephine Rodriguez, Sally A. Wasileski, and Karleen West build upon previous research documenting inequities experienced by women in STEM at research-intensive institutions by analyzing data collected from 30 primarily undergraduate institutions. Their findings identify several opportunities for policy reform and institutional improvement.

Stine Eckert, Salam Aboulhassan, Keena S. Neal, Fatima Albrehi, Nicole E. Gerring, and Krista M. Brumley similarly examine faculty equity in **"Dissatisfied and Frustrated in Academia: Women Faculty Members' Experiences of Inequitable Workloads,"** exploring how unequal service and workload expectations shape women's experiences within higher education.

Laura P. Naumann, Samantha Jewell, and Erin Rider examine faculty data management systems such as Interfolio in **"Leveraging Faculty Data Management Systems to Address Workload Inequity."** They argue that these systems can become important tools for advancing equity by making often invisible forms of faculty labor more visible and ensuring that workload is more accurately documented in promotion and tenure processes.

In **"'Everything Is on Fire': The Uneven Impact of COVID-19 on Women Faculty,"** Cindy Blaha, Anne Cox, Beth Cunningham, Anne-Barrie Hunter, Rachel Ivie, Kristine P.H. Liu, Idalia Ramos-Colón, and Barbara Whitten review effective and cost-efficient approaches to supporting women faculty and faculty who are parents. Through their examination of eAlliances, a peer mentoring program in which women faculty met regularly in small support groups, they demonstrate the vital importance of sustained support networks during periods of profound disruption.

Olayinka Mohorn-Mintah's autoethnographic article, **"Supported by the Sisterhood: Relationships With Black Women Science Professionals as Counterspaces for Black Woman's Pursuit of a Career in Science,"** employs Critical Race Feminism to examine relationships among Black women in STEM and the essential role these relationships play in sustaining careers within science. Mohorn-Mintah illustrates how these counterspaces provide support, belonging, and resistance while navigating persistent inequities within science and science education.

We close this issue with **"Privileged Logics: An NSF Conference Interrogating Equity's Place in Conceptions of Scientific Quality,"** a critical reflection summarizing participant perspectives from a National Science Foundation conference and workshop examining the relationship between equity and scientific quality. David J. Hartmann, Sandra L. Borden, and Susan R. Stapleton synthesize participants' reflections while emphasizing that significant work remains to bridge persistent equity gaps throughout STEM.

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Finally, Brooke Long-Fox reviews *Equity for Women in Science: Dismantling Systemic Barriers to Advancement* by Cassidy R. Sugimoto and Vincent Larivière, described as "the first large-scale empirical scientometric analysis focused explicitly on gender inequity in scientific careers." Long-Fox highlights one of the book's central arguments: equity extends well beyond representation to include compensation, authorship, recognition, and opportunity. The review provides a thoughtful overview of the text and identifies the audiences who will benefit most from engaging with its findings.

As we conclude this volume, we return to the commitment reflected in this introduction's title: to keep advancing. We do so with gratitude for the scholars, practitioners, students, reviewers, volunteers, and readers who continue this work alongside us. Even amid uncertainty, we remain committed to nurturing scholarship that challenges inequity, builds community, and imagines more just futures.