



TECAID
Transforming Engineering Culture
To Advance Inclusion And Diversity

WEPAN
Women in Engineering ProActive Network

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TECAID Team Representative Interview: Oregon State University

The following interview was conducted by Diane Matt (original TECAID PI, WEPAN Executive Director) and Rob Stone (Oregon State University, TECAID Team representative) at the 2017 Women in Engineering ProActive Network's (WEPAN's) Change Leader Forum.

Interview with Rob Stone (Oregon State University)

[00:00:06]

Diane: So, Rob.

[00:00:08]

Rob: Yes.

[00:00:09]

Diane: We've been here talking about TECAID today and I've been thinking about what stands out for me about your team.

[00:00:16]

Rob: Okay.

[00:00:19]

Diane: And I'm thinking about what a great job you all did at tapping into resources on your campus. And as I think about your team I think that was a standout thing in terms of being able to do that. So could you talk a little bit about how you came to understand that was a possibility and what some of those processes were with the idea that that could help other people think about those sorts of things in their own spaces?

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Rob: Sure, yeah. Well, I think one of the things is that Kendra Sharp, who was one of our – actually was the project lead, and I had both sort of gone through this ADVANCE program's seminar.

[00:01:05]

Diane: Right, right.

[00:01:09]

Rob: And so they had like a two week program on diversity, equity and inclusion and which was really a good sort of longer version of what we actually got in the TECAID Workshop 1 and so we sort of learned as part of that the OSU resources that were available and made some good connections there. We also --

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Diane: And that was a workshop that was actually on your campus?

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Rob: Yeah, that was on the campus and it was part of that ADVANCE grant. The provost had sort of committed that all deans and then all sort of unit leaders would sort of go through this process so that was sort of like part of the cost share if you will.

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Diane: Oh, that's huge, yeah.

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Rob: And so we spent two weeks in the summer doing that and it was a good – good experience a lot of ways. I think one of the biggest things was just really recognizing what resources were already there so that we didn't duplicate those things and then just sort of having, in addition to like our TECAID group, we sort of could identify like a local campus cohort that we could go to to work through issues. [00:02:20] So that was one. The other thing is that Oregon State had hired a chief diversity officer and so we knew that there was some resources there from sort of those communications and then in the midst of our TECAID project, we sort of got this new update on our promotion and tenure guidelines which like brought in diversity and inclusion as sort of an identifiable metric they were going to look for in that – in folks' dossiers during the either tenure and or promotions. So all of those together just sort of pointed to sort of like the perfect storm, if you will, that we got to know the resources that were there and there was a motivation for faculty to become, if not engaged, more aware of this of an issue.

[00:03:09]

Diane: Right, and there was probably a steady drumbeat of conversation.

[00:03:12]

Rob: Right.

[00:03:13]

Diane: So recently I've bumped into learning that on a different campus that I was talking with someone about, they had someone on their campus who was responsible for organizational development and in many ways what TECAID does is an organizational development kind of initiative. And so I'm wondering if that's

something that you know exists on your campus and would that be a resource that you could potentially tap into at some point in the future if you wanted to?

[00:03:48]

Rob: Right. So I am not really aware that we have that sort of across the board. I mean, there are a few, I think, within the College of Engineering there's a person who's sort of there to help with professional development of our, what we call "professional faculty." So that's there but sort of across at the university level, I'm not sure we have that but it seems like it would be a great –

[00:04:17]

Diane: Yeah, could we get one of those?

[00:04:19]

Rob: -- yeah, we'll take one of those. Yeah, to be able to, as you told the story, like to have someone come in and sort of say, "Hey, here's what I'm seeing about what your –

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Diane: Right.

[00:04:30]

Rob: -- what organization you're in or what you're trying to do these are some of the things you need."

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Diane: Right, some expertise in that regard would be helpful.

[00:04:37]

Rob: Right, yeah.

[00:04:38]

Diane: When you all were making connections to different groups on the campus did you need any informal or formal "letters of introduction" or were you able to reach out and build those relationships on your own or is that something that required some support from someplace? How did that materialize?

[00:05:02]

Rob: So it was actually pretty easy to make those connections like, particularly, once we just sort of became aware of where the resources existed. And I don't know if OSU is unique or just sort of special in that way but there's a good spirit of collaboration

across colleges and units there. And so folks are like really willing to help for the most part.

[00:05:28]

Diane: Nice.

[00:05:29]

Rob: And it's, particularly, the ADVANCE program and sort of in the social studies area, social sciences area, all of the women and gender studies folks, they're just – they're more than willing to sort of engage. I think they see us in engineering sort of coming to them is like a, an awesome thing like a great playground and place where they can do some work.

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Diane: And on the flip side of side of that how did your faculty react, did they take some cajoling or were they ready to engage with something that really is outside the realm of what engineering typically is and does and thinks about?

[00:06:15]

Rob: Typical – yeah, I would say it was mixed, right, and so and maybe I'll give a short back story on the environment we had within the School of Mechanical, Industrial and Manufacturing.

[00:06:24]

Diane: Sure, sure, sure.

[00:06:26]

Rob: So five and a half years or so ago we had about 25 faculty, right, and we went through what, I'm guessing, is probably a once in a lifetime sort of opportunity to grow. So our student population more than doubled. Resources from the provost level came down to –

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Diane: To support that –

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Rob: -- support that group and so over five years we hired 26 new faculty members.

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Diane: Doubled.

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Rob: So we doubled our faculty population and they were, by and large, most of them were younger, sort of assistant professor level, we did some senior hires along the way but by sort of that unique situation is with half or more of your faculty who are younger, they were much more willing to engage. It was like this was sort of they've experienced these things, they were much more sort of literate with diversity and inclusion sort of concepts and they got it and so they were much more willing to sort of take part. Some of our, we'll say, longer time faculty, it was a little – a little bit of resistance from them on saying this doesn't look like typical mechanical or industrial engineering –

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Diane: This does not feel like engineering.

[00:07:49]

Rob: -- or things like that. But one of the things I loved about Oregon State was that our faculty could have those conversations and then still move on and not be like upset over it and so it worked out okay. I mean, there are still some folks who probably choose not to do much there but they're – my take is that they're understanding that as the times and expectations have changed that the new folks are going to be playing in that arena and be okay with it.

[00:08:26]

Diane: So that, of course, makes me think about the Force Field Analysis [a worksheet available in the TECAID Model Resources] and I'm wondering if you understood that sort of situation as a strength beforehand or did you discover that as a strength as you went along?

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Rob: So I think innately I had some faith in our faculty but sort of going through the TECAID process and sort of looking at some of those more formal approaches like the Force Field Analysis it became obvious, apparent, to it's like, oh, wait, these are – these are not just how we are, these are like assets... these are things that work to our advantage it was – it was good.

[00:09:21]

Diane: Cool. Well, I appreciate you sitting down and chatting with some of these drilled down topics. It's been fun working with you, I enjoyed it a lot and I appreciate your willingness to sit and chat.

[00:09:34]

Rob: Well, thanks, we had a great time with the project and I think learned a lot.

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Diane: Good luck with next steps.

[00:09:40]

Rob: Thank you.