



## MCTEN IN 2021-2022

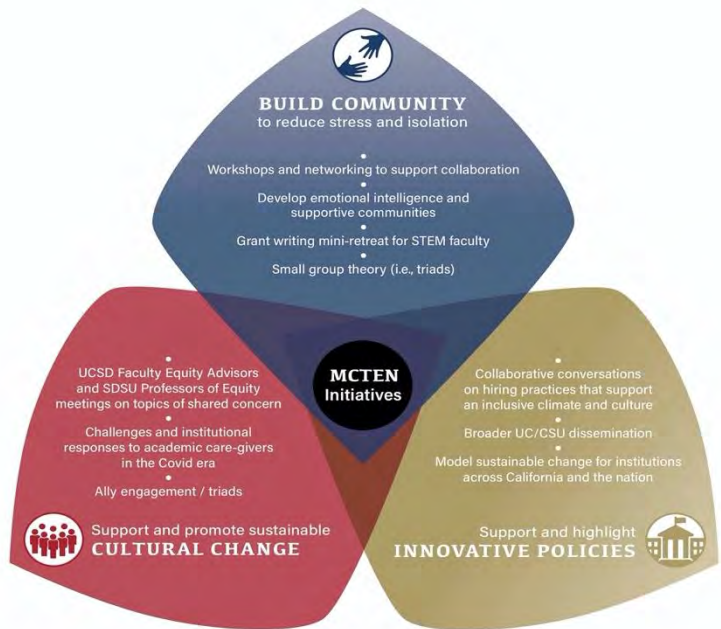


### **SDSU Team Members**

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## Executive Summary: MCTEN 2021-2022

The Multi-Campus Transformation and Equity Network (MCTEN), an NSF ADVANCE partnership between San Diego State University (SDSU) and University of California, San Diego (UCSD) is in its second successful year. MCTEN uses established ADVANCE and related practices to coordinate campus activities in support of faculty productivity and advancement, by providing mentorship/sponsorship, networking, and expanding institutional and disciplinary leadership capacity for women and other underrepresented faculty in STEM.

At the core of the MCTEN approach is the intentional design, formation and curation of activities that leverage Small Group Theory. One key application has been the formation of Action Collaboratives, small peer groups that leverage the strength of peer-to-peer learning and support, buoyed by powerful senior faculty allies as sponsors. Our intentional design also relies on sponsorship as a more effective form of mentorship - where we define

sponsorship as the practice of engaging in externally facing actions such as advocacy, visibility, promotion, and connection to engage with and support a protege. Our metrics of success for MCTEN include self-reported feelings of stress, feelings of isolation, and community engagement.

### 1. MCTEN Activities 2021-2022

In Year 2, there have been four primary MCTEN activities.

These include launching Action Collaboratives (ACs), monthly AC meetings, monthly community mixers for AC faculty and sponsors, weekly Dedicated Writing Spaces (DWS), and writing retreats. These activities are ongoing at SDSU and will expand to include or be mirrored by the UCSD team as the UCSD ACs become established this month.



SDSU Writing Retreat, January 2022



### 1.1. *Action Collaboratives (ACs): SDSU*

After a year of listening and talking to faculty and campus leaders (via 1-on-1 conversations, surveys, focus groups, and a formal project kickoff meeting with SDSU and UCSD campus leaders in October 2020), we launched Action Collaboratives (ACs) at the beginning of Fall semester 2021 at SDSU. ACs are designed to directly reduce feelings of stress and isolation experienced particularly by women and women faculty of color in STEM. Currently, there are 7 ACs, which include 38 junior faculty from 7 Colleges, with 2 faculty sponsors per AC, for a total of 52 participating faculty. ACs are composed of faculty with related research interests, typically from different departments or colleges. Each AC has one faculty sponsor with expertise in the unifying discipline and a second sponsor who is an experienced JEDI master (**J**ustice, **E**quity, **D**iversity and **I**nclusion). Self-reported demographics of the AC faculty are 95% female with 55% of members reporting as women of color (26% Latinx, 8% Black/African-American, 16% APIDA), and 45% white.

*“Just having that ability to talk to people outside your department and be like, ‘Is this thing going on for you guys, too? Or is this just a weird thing in my department?’ And just to try to have some sense of, ‘What are other people going through?’ Just another opportunity to have those connections and people to talk to and to get to know people that wouldn’t normally be in my orbit was important for me.”*

### 1.2. *Action Collaboratives (ACs): UCSD*

The UCSD MCTEN team is developing their own campus-optimized set of ACs. The sequential timeline has allowed the UCSD team to use the SDSU experience to improve and refine MCTEN activities. To facilitate progress, the UCSD team will focus activities at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UCSD (SIO, MacKinnon and Burton’s home department). The SIO focus also leverages the findings of a recently completed report by SIO’s Junior Faculty Advisory Board (J-FAB), which is led by PI MacKinnon and Director of Diversity Initiatives Keiarra Auzenne. ACs at SIO are launching this month.

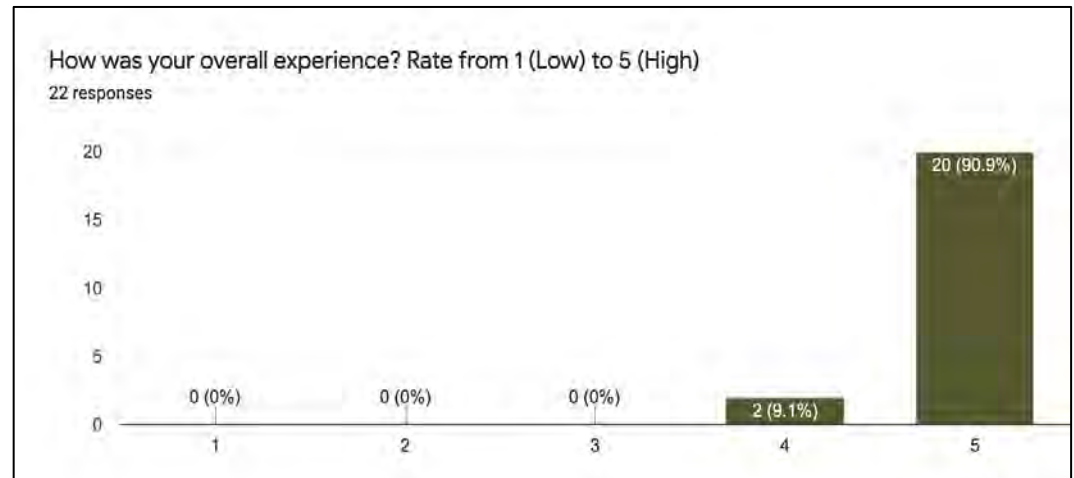


### 1.3. Writing Retreats

In January 2022, we convened our first MCTEN writing retreat for SDSU faculty. As academic institutions, colleges, and departments are composed almost entirely by the interactions of the individuals who participate in them, the breakdown of in-person interaction from COVID closures caused further breakdown in the stability of units that faculty rely on to feel connected and productive.

The writing retreat was an important MCTEN activity to address this breakdown. With COVID safety top of mind, we selected a conference facility that provided rooms with separate outdoor entrances, and with all outdoor eating and working spaces. We recognize the challenges of care-giving, participants with caregiving responsibilities were provided stipends for dependent care. This setting enabled participants to engage in both individual and collaborative work in a safe, low-pressure environment while making real connections with colleagues.

Twenty-eight SDSU faculty attended the retreat, and post-retreat survey respondents indicated that they would attend the retreat again if given the opportunity.



*“It’s so rare to feel truly completely supported in academia and the retreat did that for me. It just felt so nurturing. It was also amazing to just be trusted to do work and learn from each other and make a community without a bunch of ice breakers or required structured activities.”*

## 1.4. Dedicated Writing Spaces (DWS)

Building a community of practice has been shown to strengthen connection and foster a sense of belonging among participants. One way we have fostered a community of practice for our Action Collaboratives is through a virtual Dedicated Writing Space (DWS). Each week, SDSU runs 4 one-hour virtual DWS convenings. DWS leverages influential effects of community building, superordinate identity, new-start theories, commitment devices, and mutual accountability. DWS sessions started in 2020, before the formation of ACs. With the formation of ACs, session attendance has been high in Fall and Spring (in progress) semester, with 5-10 faculty attending each session. By providing the structure for faculty to set aside and then attend DWS sessions has significantly elevated both productivity and feelings of connectedness and belonging among MCTEN faculty. UCSD will be invited to existing DWS sessions this semester as soon as ACs are formed.

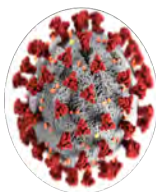
*“DWS helps me feel that I belong to a community of researchers. I joined SDSU during the pandemic and haven't been able to socialize and network with fellow researchers the "regular" ways. DWS creates spaces for me to meet researchers, share experiences with the possibility of developing partnerships.”*

At SDSU, we are also gauging faculty interest in Black Power Hour, a DWS/professional development space specifically established to support our Black faculty.



## Taking Action: COVID-19 Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Challenge

AN IDEAS CHALLENGE FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION



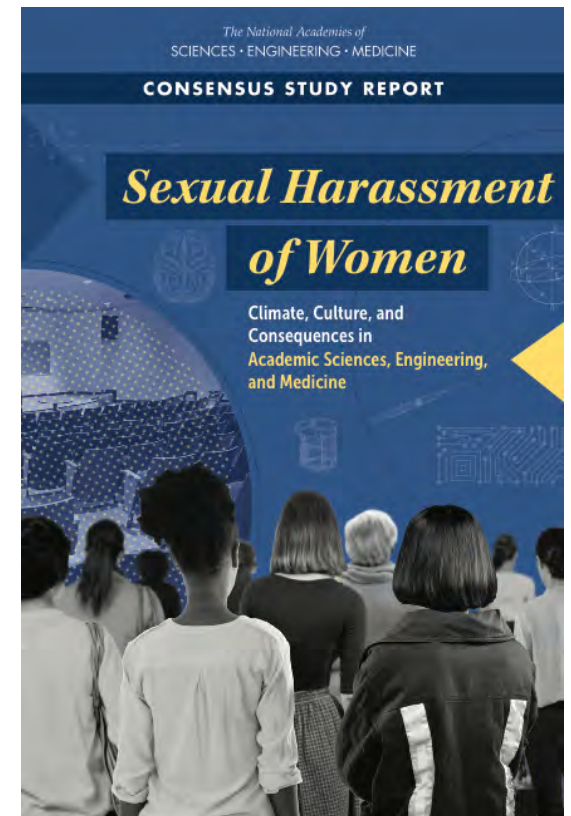
## 1.5. New Grant Collaborations

MCTEN is supporting new collaborations, grant proposals, and productivity of our participating faculty. AC participants have reported that they submitted a direct grant submission titled “Small Grants for New Investigators to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research (R21 Clinical Trial Optional)” and a MPI NIH grant as a result of the writing retreat. Another grant proposal sparked by AC meetings is NSF RaMP “Accelerating Bioinformatics Capabilities and Opportunities (ABCO) for Diverse Post-Bacc Students in Biotech Rich San Diego” all members of that specific AC group are mentors on this proposal.

The MCTEN team are also submitting related grants, e.g., a recent proposal for NSF Challenge titled “Taking Action: COVID-19 Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

*Challenge*”, which described the steps that IHEs have taken, or will take, to mitigate the long-term negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on DEI in STEM.

The MCTEN team is currently working on a proposal for NSF titled “*Cultural Transformation in the Geoscience Community (CTGC)*”. With this grant, we propose collaborative activities at San Diego State University and the University of California San Diego, Scripps Institution of Oceanography to establish a regional center of excellence/gravity for Latinx/Chicanx/Hispanic scholars at all academic levels by braiding existing programs and experiences into a novel, comprehensive service environment where historically excluded scholars can see their identities reflected in geoscience work and scholarship.



## **1.6. Supporting inclusive policy changes**

### ***Anti-Pass the Harasser***

Another aspect of the MCTEN project is to support policy changes that are relevant to advancing women in STEM. MCTEN was instrumental in working with SDSU and UCSD administrators to build, support, and ultimately implement an Anti-Pass-The Harasser policy at SDSU, a policy which began at UC Davis and was already in place at UCSD at the start of MCTEN. In this policy program, potential hires at the Associate and Full Professor level are asked to voluntarily approve access to any investigations or findings of harassment at their prior institutions. Investigations are conducted by Title IX investigators and findings are provided to the search committees. Because of the MCTEN partnership and the leadership of UCSD administrators, SDSU is now piloting the same policy as UCSD. The SDSU team is also in conversation with administrators at the CSU level to discuss how this policy could be adopted by the entire CSU system, with the goal of making all CA public institutions (CSU/UC) inhospitable to serial harassers.

### ***Tenure and Promotion***

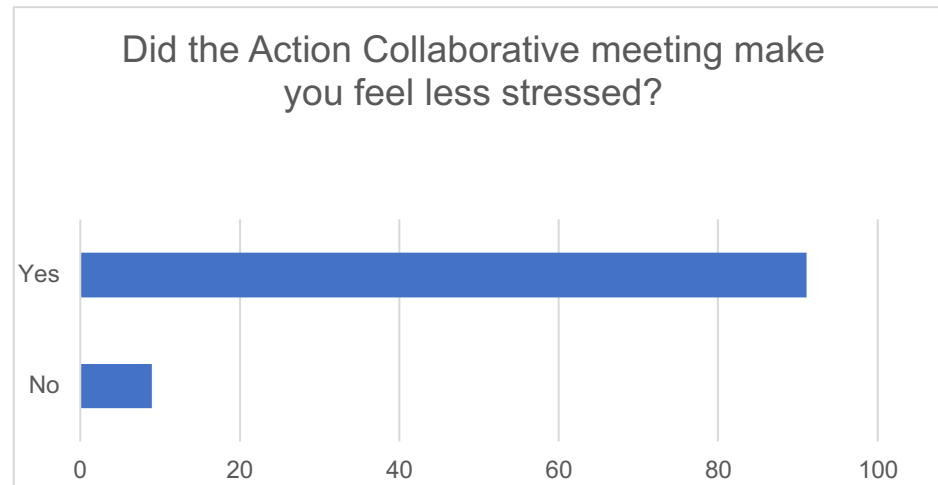
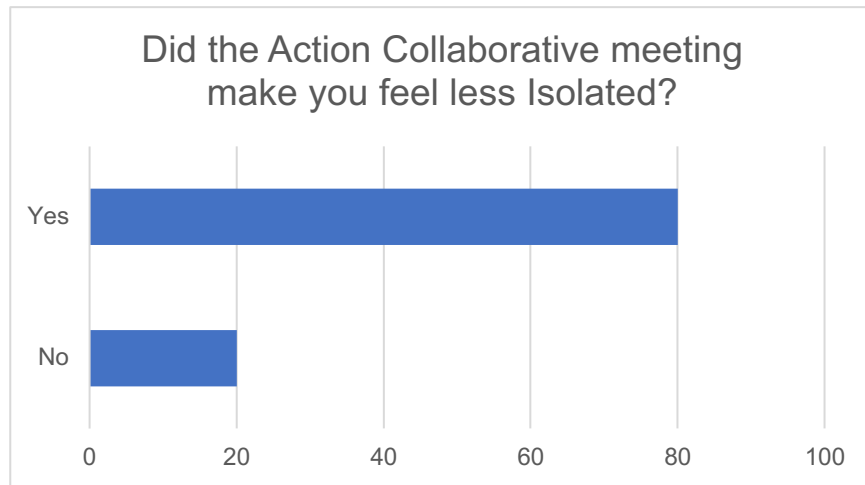
A future area of relevant policy that MCTEN is interested in supporting regards the tenure and promotion process. The MCTEN PI team is interested in convening a 2023 workshop on how tenure and promotion can better support women and faculty from under-represented identities in STEM. This nascent idea has been inspired by the conversations around re-envisioning promotion in the wake of both COVID-19 (flexibility in timelines, evaluating advancement relative to opportunity, holistically seeing people not just as scientists but full community members) and a renewed attention to racial injustice and the implications for equity and inclusion in academia. For the workshop, we will draw on insights from the national workshops sponsored by the National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Mathematics and from Blair-Loy’s new book, *Misconceiving Merit* <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/M/bo161019313.html>. Potential themes for the workshop could include:

- Flexibility in the tenure timeline. There has been discussion for many years that the tenure process typically coincides with the years in which many faculty have infants and young children. Renewed awareness of those constraints in the wake of Covid impact discussions may allow a crack in the door for re-evaluating current tenure timelines

- What is excellence? Within the tenure and promotion process, there is a wide latitude for qualitative interpretation of how excellence is evaluated, e.g., putting a high value on certain journals or metrics like h-index that are known to have systematic bias. How does team science factor in? How do epistemic biases confer advantages for a given field over others?
- How do institutions value and evaluate citizenship?

## 2. Measuring Impact

Our primary metrics to measure the impact of MCTEN interventions are feelings of isolation and stress experienced by our participating faculty. Both metrics have been shown to disproportionately impact women faculty before and even more during COVID-19, particularly women faculty from under-represented identities. To understand how both factors change in response to our activities, we employ Ecological Momentary



Assessments. Ecological Momentary Assessments (EMA) involve repeated sampling of subjects' experiences in real time in a subjects' natural environments. EMA aims to minimize recall bias, maximize ecological validity, and allow study of micro processes that influence responses in real-world contexts. We used EMAs after every small group meeting to assess how participants' feelings of isolation and stress were affected by the intervention. In Fall 2021, 91% of respondents indicated that their participation in Action Collaboratives made them feel less stressed and 80% reported it helped them feel less isolated.

### 3. Program Evaluation

Another critical aspect to evaluating success of MCTEN is our formal project evaluation, conducted by Mariko Chang and associates. Because of COVID delays, our first formal evaluation occurred in Nov/Dec of 2021, but we anticipate having regular annual evaluations to coincide with our annual reporting for NSF starting this Spring/Summer. Our most current external evaluation report covered the period from September 2020 (grant start date) to October 2021, corresponding approximately to the grant's first year of funding. For simplification, the time period is described in the report as "Year 1." The Year 1 external evaluation (see full evaluation report in Appendix 1) incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data derived from interviews with faculty and administrators at SDSU, and additional program documentation from Year 1 activities, such as the annual report to NSF, surveys, event information, and Action Collaborative materials.

Below are some of the quotes taken from the evaluation team's interviews about MCTEN activities (NOTE: these interviews were conducted before the Writing Retreat in Jan 2022).

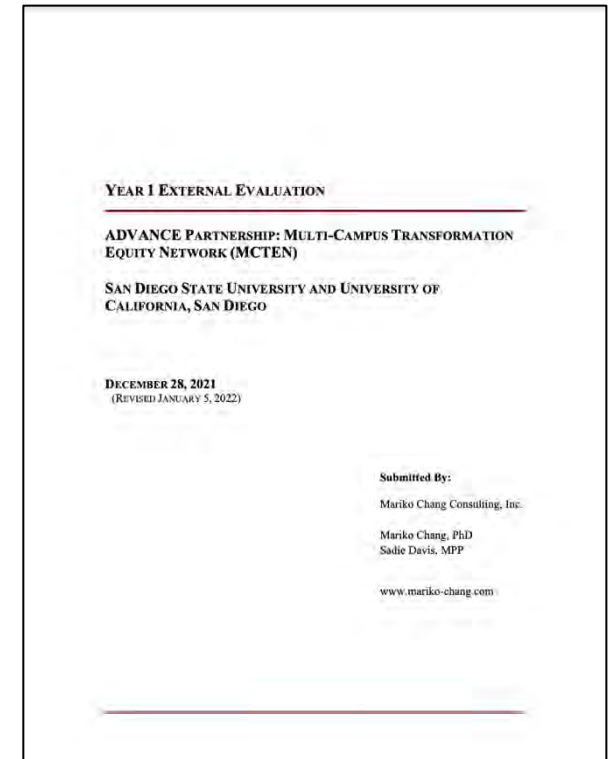
**DWS:** *"I've been joining twice a week and it's been great. It's a good time to have in my schedule and really does force me to sit down and actually write. It's nice to have other people doing the same. I enjoy it."*

*"When you have several people working together...you will push each other to be more strict on doing things. And I think that will be helpful."*

**Action Collaborative Networks:** *"Talking with [someone involved] was wonderful! Aspects of our research are connected, and we were able to debrief about teaching and writing during the pandemic and possibilities to connect."*

*"So often we are siloed, especially women. We can support each other and have positive relationships with each other. I think that would just be great... Positive relationships to help each other support and grow through the university and move up, be promoted and things like that...I'm also hoping that the network will help de-silo us so we have a better sense of what's going on throughout the university."*

**Writing Retreat:** *"You put a bunch of faculty together in the space, maybe you're talking about something and you develop some new ideas and maybe you start developing new proposals. Where proposals with other people are more transdisciplinary, visions might emerge. I think those are valuable."*





## 4. Final thoughts/Sponsorship in action

We are optimistic about the positive outcomes of MCTEN both within and between campuses, particularly as we look forward to connecting MCTEN activities across the SDSU-UCSD campuses. Core to the principle of sustainable change by MCTEN are efforts related to *cultural* change on the campuses, where culture may be reflected in such things as expectations, traditions, ceremonies, symbols, and language - where change is difficult to make and difficult to measure. We are gratified that we have been able to observe some leading indicators that Action Collaboratives are a meaningful instrument of organizational and cultural change and serve as a countermeasure to individual stress and isolation. Critical to this change has been the formation of new approaches and pathways of sponsorship. We have documented several instances where AC participants have turned to MCTEN sponsors to ask for help in navigating workplace obstacles or challenges, i.e. events or exchanges that occur “below the waterline” on the iceberg of harassment. Because of the nested support system of the ACs, AC participants have received support, redress, and acknowledgment of the challenge experienced, which appears to substantially reduce the feelings of stress, isolation, and emotional taxation that these experiences can introduce. The symbolism and function of ACs, in a real and public way on campus, has allowed the institution to more broadly signal clearer values and expectations and begin the transformation needed for an equitable campus.