Title of Abstract:  Essential role of Dean in partnership with FOCUS WIM program to foster institutional change.

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Purpose of program/study/research: FOCUS at UPenn supports a twofold mission: advancing women medical faculty and promoting women's health research. Since 1998, FOCUS has been a Dean-funded WIM program with a significant budget and direct reporting relationship. Numerous initiatives have been developed, annual gender data analyzed, and outcomes measured, in efforts to advance women faculty. We outline key elements of the Dean’s essential role in fostering institutional change necessary for women to reach their full potential.

Methodology (including study design, analysis, and evaluation): Review of FOCUS initiatives over 8 years and reflection on key elements of the Dean’s participation with FOCUS as a change agent. Specific aspects of the Dean’s leadership emerge as vital to FOCUS efforts to succeed.

Results: Ten key elements outline the Dean’s critical role, each presented with a case study highlighting successes and areas of opportunity in our experience at FOCUS. Included are the Dean’s insistence on: adequate WIM program funding; a data-driven approach; a direct reporting relationship and “open-door” policy; access/visibility to SOM senior leadership; communicating a clear message of FOCUS goals as critical to overall SOM success; holding Chairs/Division Chiefs accountable; supporting change in policies that have disproportionate and unintentional effects as barriers to women’s advancement; supporting flexibility in career pathways, promotion criteria and leadership models that are consistent with the SOM mission; ensuring that key decision-making committees include senior women; ensuring salary equity.

Conclusion(s): The Dean’s partnership with FOCUS is critical to its success. Key leadership actions by the Dean have enabled FOCUS to become a “bottom-up” mentoring program supporting women’s faculty development and networking, and a “top-down” program promoting institutional change. Now in its 8th year as a Dean-funded program, and with improvement in some outcomes for advancement of women, FOCUS continues to partner with the Dean to impact institutional change that will benefit all faculty.