



NEWS RELEASE

American Association of University Women Legal Advocacy Fund

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Northeastern University Program Wins AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund Progress in Equity Award

Connections Program Recognized for Contributions to Advancing Gender Equity

Washington, D.C. – The American Association (AAUW) Legal Advocacy Fund, a program of the AAUW Educational Foundation, has named the Connections program at Northeastern University its 2005 Progress in Equity Award winner, noting the program's unique and expansive approach to supporting women and girls in math, science, and engineering fields.

"The Connections program is a great response to a serious issue. They've focused on the areas where women and girls continue to be underrepresented and developed a program that addresses the challenges they face at all levels of their education," said Barbara L. O'Connor, President of the AAUW Educational Foundation. "This is a great working model that exemplifies what the Legal Advocacy Fund Progress in Equity Award is all about."

The Progress in Equity Award recognizes a college or university program that promotes equity on campus for women and comes with a cash award. Since 1987, the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund has recognized more than 38 campus programs throughout the United States for their progressive and innovative advancements on behalf of women faculty, staff, administrators, and/or students.

"We are honored to receive the Legal Advocacy Fund Progress in Equity Award. It is a badge of honor for Northeastern University to join the family of institutions who have made progress in equity," said Sara Wadia-Fascetti, director of Connections.

In 1996, the percentage of women in the College of Engineering at Northeastern University was far below the national average. The college also had a pressing need for improved mentoring of women as they matriculated through and graduated from the engineering program.

To respond to these issues, the Connections program was developed. The initiative targets women and girls at different points in their educational development – starting with middle school and spanning into their professional training – to both inspire their interest in science and engineering and provide support for them in what is frequently a male-dominated discipline.

Middle school girls are offered programs on math, science, and engineering that can be incorporated into existing activities – like Girl Scouts or any school programming. They also have access to the Connections Computer Center for formal or informal activities located on Northeastern's campus. Meanwhile, high school students have opportunities to participate in Northeastern University-sponsored events, and are supported by college students in e-mentor groups. When these women attend Northeastern as college students, they can choose to live in on-campus housing with other students in the Connections program, participate in networking events, and get customized advice on career selection. Finally, as graduates and professionals, women in their fields help them discover opportunities as they navigate the often-chilly climate of academia.

Two other distinguished programs received an honorable mention in this year's Progress in Equity Award: The Pennsylvania Center for Women, Politics and Public Policy (PCWPPP), Chatham College, Pittsburgh, PA, and the Program & Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

CEREMONY INFORMATION:

The Progress in Equity Award Ceremony & Reception will be held tomorrow (November 16) at Northeastern University's Boston Campus in the Egan Research Center (Room 440) from 4-6 pm. (For directions to the site, please visit <http://www.egan.neu.edu>.)

Quick clicks:

- > To learn more about the Connections program, visit their website at <http://www.coe.neu.edu/connections/>
- > Find out more about the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund Progress in Equity Award: <http://www.aauw.org/laf/pie/index.cfm>
- > Get more information on the work done by the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund: <http://www.aauw.org/laf/index.cfm>

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The AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund, a program of the AAUW Educational Foundation, provides funding and a support system for women seeking judicial redress for sexual discrimination. LAF is the nation's largest legal fund focused solely on sex discrimination in higher education.

The American Association of University Women, with its nationwide network of more than 100,000 bipartisan members and 1,300 branches, has been a leading advocate for equity for women and girls since 1881.

AAUW: Because Equity is Still An Issue