Women Having Impact: How women of color are making a difference in STEM at minority serving institutions

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The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields will drive the global economy in the foreseeable future. And yet, women – and particularly women of color—continue to be significantly underrepresented in most STEM disciplines worldwide. These discrepancies are particularly alarming in the United States, where women make up more than 60% of the nation’s student population, and 70% of the African American student population. While several remedies for addressing the issue have been suggested, few have focused on the challenges of preparing women for academic leadership roles in higher education. And yet, the evidence suggests that women academic leaders tend to produce higher retention and graduation rates of women students in STEM. In response, the focus of this book is to document the extraordinary experiences and successes of women in academic leadership positions. In often deeply moving narratives, these authors describe how they used their knowledge and experience to impact their minority serving institutions to advance a broad participation of women (and men) in STEM at all levels. In doing so, their essays provide a strong source of guidance for women at all academic institutions. This book is a sequel to an earlier volume, entitled Women Called to Lead. That book focused on the personal leadership journeys of several women who had participated in an NSF-funded academic leadership certificate program at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, and later at Fielding Graduate University, known as OURS (Opportunities for Underrepresented Scholars). Many of the authors of this book are likewise OURS graduates.

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This book is a unique collection of individual stories by women that vividly describes their challenges in achieving academic leadership positions. The book is an outflow of the Opportunities for Under Represented Scholars (OURS) Program, led by Dr. Orlando Taylor and funded by the National Science Foundation. Its purpose is to support the preparation of women from the STEM disciplines for leadership roles on their campuses, either in STEM or elsewhere in the academic leadership structure. As such, these deeply engaging women’s stories may serve as an important reference for the debate around academic leadership, particularly for women of color. The book is divided into two parts: • Part I details the stories of the women in their journey to becoming a leader. Many of these stories are deeply personal and reflect the unique events and experiences that shaped their lives. The stories also show how these experiences have helped them grow into the women they are, and demonstrate which strategies were successful in growing their self-efficacy. • Part II of the book moves from theory to practice, and highlights a range of tangible solutions for the leadership challenges faced by women of color in STEM disciplines. This candid book is perhaps the first to directly address the challenges and leadership aspirations of women of color in STEM disciplines. As such, it provides a wealth of insights, advice and wisdom for mid-career women, and particularly minority women, who are on the cusp of becoming change agents at their universities.