

Stephanie Adams

2005-2006 AAAS Fellow at the National Science Foundation
Directorate for Engineering, Division of Engineering Education & Centers

Now serving as program director in NSF's Division of Engineering Education & Centers

For most of her childhood, Stephanie Adams wanted to become a doctor. While she was recovering from knee surgery during high school, she read an article on bioengineering of prosthetics that inspired her to pursue the use of engineering in medicine. However, after receiving her bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from North Carolina A&T State University, Stephanie decided to forgo medicine for an academic career, receiving her PhD in interdisciplinary engineering from Texas A&M University in 1998.

Today, she serves as associate dean for undergraduate education in the College of Engineering and associate professor of industrial and management systems engineering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In 2003, Stephanie received the prestigious CAREER award from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to support the development of a model to facilitate effective team-building in engineering classes.

Once she was eligible for a sabbatical, Stephanie began looking for fellowship opportunities that would allow her to delve more deeply into issues pertaining to the sustainability and diversification of the U.S. workforce. While visiting a colleague at NSF, she met a former AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellow.

"I wanted to go to the national level and look at the policies that are accompanying the rhetorical push to encourage students to choose engineering careers," she recalls. "I also wanted to look at policies that affect workforce issues such as diversity and developing a pipeline of talent."

Stephanie applied to the AAAS Fellowships with the goal of working at NSF. After obtaining a placement in the Division of Engineering Education & Centers (EEC), she spent her year participating in the Engineering Education Working Group, representing NSF and the Engineering Directorate at nationwide outreach events; coordinating the review of 70 proposals by the Engineering Education Program Panels; planning symposia and events; and creating and implementing training materials for EEC employees.

Stephanie will remain at NSF through summer 2007, serving as program director in EEC. She will return to her academic career in Nebraska in time for the 2007-08 school year.

"My life and thought process will forever be changed because of this experience," says Stephanie. "I have been on the cutting edge of what's coming next; I couldn't have gotten here in any other way."

