



“Recognizing our Progress Along the Path” The 20th Anniversary of the Formation of The Equal Opportunity Planning Committee

Since 1983 the Equal Opportunity Planning Committee (EOPC) has been the major funding source for diversity programs and initiatives that augment educational and professional opportunities for Penn State students, faculty, and staff.

EOPC was formed in the wake of *Adams v. Richardson*, a 1973 federal court decision in which the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was cited, along with numbers of other states, for operating a system of higher education that practiced *de facto* segregation. In order to comply with the order, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was required to publish desegregation or “equal opportunity” plans, and each public university in Pennsylvania had to submit a separate plan to augment the plans developed by the Commonwealth. Accordingly, the press release that announced the formation of EOPC indicated that the role of EOPC was to “implement the obligations set forth in Penn State’s own equal opportunity plan.

From its inception, EOPC funded numerous programs each year. Initially, the focus of the federal court order was on recruiting and graduating African American students, especially those who were Pennsylvania residents. When the courts eventually vacated the *Adams* decision, Penn State expanded its support to include other multicultural groups, women, those with disabilities, first-generation college students, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community at Penn State. EOPC funding categories presently parallel the seven challenges identified in Penn State’s diversity strategic plan, *A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009*.

EOPC programs have had a significant impact on the diversity goals of Penn State. Some programs have brought hundreds of multicultural students to Penn State and boast high graduation rates among its participants. Other programs support faculty and staff training regarding disability issues, improve the climate for the LGBT community, and provide opportunities for women to explore careers in science and engineering.

The theme for EOPC’s 20th anniversary is “recognizing our progress along the path.” Penn State has come far, but it still has a long distance to travel on the road to becoming a truly multicultural institution. Hopefully, the 20th anniversary recognition of the contributions of EOPC will provide some perspectives on the past that will translate into effective diversity goals and initiatives at Penn State over the next twenty years.

For more information on EOPC and the 20th anniversary recognition of EOPC, please visit the EOPC website at www.equity.psu.edu/eopc/.