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**DATE:** December 8, 2011  
**FROM:**   
 Rodney A. Erickson  
**TO:** W. Terrell Jones  
**RE:** Core Council Recommendations for Educational Equity

The Academic Program and Administrative Services Core Council (“the Core Council”) has discussed the recommendations received from Susan Welch, Chair, on behalf of the University Park Academic Review Coordinating Committee (UPARCC) regarding the organization, functions, and operations of the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity (OVPEE), and the background information and strategic priorities you have provided about the unit, its successes, and its challenges. The Campus Academic Review Coordinating Committee (CARCC) also reviewed the recommendations and these comments were taken into consideration in the formulation of the UPARCC recommendations to the Core Council.

The purpose of this memo is to share with you the response of the Core Council to various organizational and operational issues and initiatives in Educational Equity, and to make recommendations for further changes based on the analysis and deliberations of UPARCC and the Core Council. Our recommendations were formed on the basis of data provided to UPARCC, its discussions with you, and the Core Council’s own deliberations and further analyses.

**Context**

Penn State has significantly increased its racial and ethnic diversity in the past decade. Between Fall 2000 and Fall 2010, the University’s enrollment increased from more than 81,000 to more than 87,000, not including World Campus enrollment. *All* this growth is accounted for by the increase in domestic students of color (a growth of about 5,000 students), and international students (a growth of about 2,000 students). The number of white, non-international, students at the University has declined in the past decade from 69,700 to 65,800 (recognizing the less-than-precise 2010 number because of the introduction of the “race and ethnicity unknown” category in 2009). At University Park, a similar but slightly less pronounced pattern has emerged. In addition, the number of Penn State students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), veterans, or students with disabilities has also increased markedly.

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The faculty at Penn State has also become more diverse. Between Fall 2000 and Fall 2010, the number of full-time minority faculty at the University increased from 582 to 904. The number of Latino/a faculty increased from 71 to 155; Asian-American faculty increased from 387 to 536; and Black/African-American faculty grew from 117 to 169.

Increased student diversity has been accompanied by general similarities between students of color and majority students in their attitudes about Penn State. Focusing on differences between these two groups, surveys of student satisfaction in 2010 show that on most of 40-plus items included, students of color at University Park are as satisfied and engaged as their majority counterparts at University Park. But there are a few differences that need to be addressed. For example, while minority students are more likely than white students to say they have courses available to make degree progress, they are less likely to report opportunities to meet faculty outside of class. Students of color also give a somewhat lower rating to their formal academic experiences and their sense of belonging.

The mission of the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity (OVPEE) is to bring about a more diverse University and to help create campus climates that allow students of all backgrounds opportunities to excel. The OVPEE provides direct support services to students of color, students with disabilities, veterans, and other students who face special challenges to achieving success at Penn State; coordinates other services to these groups; leads diversity planning efforts; funds small grants to encourage diversity activities, particularly recruitment and retention; and provides staff and budget support to presidential commissions that focus on issues relating to minorities, women, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students, staff, and faculty.

UPARCC emphatically agrees that a focal point for educational diversity, such as the OVPEE, is necessary at Penn State. We need to continue to work toward being a more diverse university and, successes notwithstanding, we have no justification for resting on our laurels. But we also believe that it is time to rethink some aspects of the organization and refocus of our efforts in this area. We need to reaffirm and, in some cases, rethink the ways in which we are using our financial resources and devoting staff time in our efforts to promote greater diversity.

The Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity was established in 1988 in a somewhat different era than today. Since then, changing U.S. demographics have had a large impact on Penn State's students as well as the composition of the national college student population. Today's different Penn State student profile should be reflected in the way we organize services for students. We have more students of color; more women; more students calling themselves biracial; more veterans; more openly gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students; and more international students than ever before. Several academic and administrative units are involved in serving these students. The key challenge is having the right mix of services provided by multiple units while minimizing duplication of effort.

Your office has 76 full-time employees, 30 of them standing positions and the rest fixed-term. The OVPEE is supported with \$4.6 million in General Funds (including allocated fringe benefits). It also oversees several programs supported by federal and philanthropic funds. The office staff roughly doubled in size between 2001 and 2002 (almost entirely in fixed terms staff) when the administration of federal grants programs for minority students was moved from the Office of Undergraduate Education to OVPEE. Since 2002, the staff has grown by only two fixed-term staff.

The major components of the Office's operations include multicultural recruitment and retention, with a budget of about \$850,000; disability services, with a budget of about \$825,000; the Multicultural Resource Center, with a budget of about \$600,000; and veterans programs, with a budget of about \$435,000. The Office also supports a number of smaller programs such as various commissions (Commission for Racial/Ethnic Diversity, Commission for Women, and the Commissions for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Equity), the Senior Faculty Mentor Program, and the Equal Opportunity Program, which transfers funds to colleges and campuses for diversity initiatives funding. About \$1.5 million is budgeted for the Office of the Vice Provost and not specifically ascribed to any of these programs. These funds support the diversity planning analysts, two assistant vice provosts, information technology support for the unit, and other support staff.

Federal grants support several programs targeted to low income students and those from underrepresented groups, including the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), Student Support Services Program, Talent Search and Talent Search York, Upward Bound, and Upward Bound Math and Science. The Pennsylvania College Advising Corps is sponsored by the Jack Kemp Cooke Foundation. These programs are dependent upon continued extramural funding and, as you've indicated, would have to be eliminated if these sources of funds were to disappear. Some of the OVPEE programs were created after a 1983 citation of Pennsylvania state-related and state-owned universities for non-compliance with a federal desegregation order (taken down in 1988 based on progress achieved within the framework of a state plan).

The OVPEE has several legacy programs that should be re-evaluated and benchmarked against other universities' programs. Many services that may have been deemed essential in an earlier era now may be under-utilized or even unnecessary, and the funds could be reprogrammed to other efforts in support of the University's diversity goals. Our recommendations below suggest some areas for trimming and reshaping with the eye toward freeing funds to invest in additional direct student aid for students from under-represented groups.

The Core Council commends the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity for the positive role the unit has played in helping Penn State to become a more diverse and welcoming university for students, faculty, and staff of color, as well as the many other groups of underrepresented and special needs populations at the University. We also commend you for your personal leadership and advocacy for diversity.

## Recommendations

The Core Council makes its recommendations on the basis of information provided by the OVPEE, your conversation with members of UPARCC, and our own discussions. The information you provided was very helpful to us as we formulated our recommendations. UPARCC also met with the Vice President of Student Affairs, at the group's request, to learn more about the interactions between Student Affairs and OVPEE. We have also benefitted from a forward-looking document developed in your office entitled, *Conceptual Framework for Restructuring, Streamlining, Cost Savings, and Opportunities for Realizing Efficiencies*. Several of our recommendations are based on this document. Core Council member Marcus Whitehurst, an administrator in your organization, did not participate in any discussions of OVPEE.

### 1. Program Assessment

The programs of the OVPEE reach across most of Penn State's campuses. However, it is currently impossible to gauge the impact of the unit's programs. Assessments, where they exist, have focused on documenting the programs and activities OVPEE has supported rather than the outcomes or effects of the programs. Trying to move an institution to change its culture is a huge task, and OVPEE has promoted that change. But, as far as we can find, there is little evidence-based assessment of whether its programs and grants are responsible for some of the significant advances we have seen at Penn State. Commissions meet, units plan for diversity, departments and programs accept generous grants from EOPC, but we can find little evidence as to the individual effectiveness of any of these programs and activities. We do not know how much of the growth in minority students, those with disabilities, veterans, and the other groups we have enumerated is due to what OVPEE programs.

**The Core Council recommends that the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity undertake a major assessment of its programs, particularly in its use of University General Funds.** By assessment, we do not mean simply noting how many individuals attended programs, what was done at the programs, and who provided the programming. Our question is larger: what is the impact(s) of these programs on recruitment and degree completion of under-represented students and on recruitment and retention of faculty and staff from under-represented groups? These, along with student, faculty, and staff subjective evaluations of Penn State and its climate supporting diversity should be the targeted outcomes of all OVPEE programs. Currently, the Office's evaluation protocols do not allow us to determine whether, if a specific program disappeared, it would make any difference to the educational achievements of Penn State's students from underrepresented groups. The Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment should be consulted in helping to provide support for these assessment activities.

## 2. Equal Opportunity Planning Committee

The Equal Opportunity Planning Committee program is an exemplar of the need for assessment. The EOPC allocates about \$400,000 of its \$850,000 budget to fund long-term programs. Many provide direct support for students; the largest grants are for Bunton-Waller Fellowships and diversity grants-in-aid for education abroad. Other long term programs support graduate educational equity efforts, discussion of race in mixed racial groups (e.g., the Race Relations Project), and disability human resource funds. We note with approval a new \$100,000 student loan program from this fund. Some of the funds are also pass-through funds for existing academic units, including programming for the Africana Research Center, a course in African American Studies, funds for a fly fishing program, a Hershey program for recruitment, and programs in education and the Eberly College Science, among others. There are also funds for disability awareness month, for LGBT activities, for the Powwow, and a miscellany of others. The remainder of the funds (about \$250,000) is used to fund grants throughout the University to groups seeking to promote recruitment and retention of minority students, to mentor pre-collegiate youth, to support faculty and staff diversity, to help fund spring break experiences and other curricular integration activities, to improve the campus climate, and to support numerous other programs. The very diversity of the programs itself illustrates a lack of focus. There appears to be little accountability on the front end or impact assessment on the back end and much reporting for reporting's sake. You also reported rather late in the academic year that more than \$200,000 of the \$850,000 funds were unallocated for 2011-12.

**The Core Council recommends that the OVPEE set a few high priorities for use of EOPC funds. We urge focus on one or two objectives, in the form of specific student outcomes, rather than a plethora of smaller initiatives.** We also recommend careful assessment of the outcomes of any funded programs, and recommend that some of the longer-term programs be re-evaluated to measure their success and relevance in the current environment. EOPC support should be limited to three years maximum. By then, programs should have sufficient data to make a compelling case either for external funding or for funding the program from their own unit resources. Similarly, direct student aid funded from EOPC grants should be examined to determine if they should be allocated through existing student aid offices. Given that some of the EOPC funding is not spent, these unused funds could be repurposed to direct student financial aid for underrepresented students.

## 3. Diversity Strategic Planning

The diversity planning process has brought diversity to the forefront of the University's agenda over the course of the past two decades. *A Framework to Foster Diversity* has become a model national program for articulating diversity challenges, creative planning responses, and unit accountability.

At the same time, it has become an increasingly complex process that is too divorced from the overall process of strategic planning in individual units and centrally. The Core Council believes that diversity planning has now matured to the point that some new directions should be taken. Thus, we were pleased to note that plans were already under consideration in your unit to restructure and streamline this process, including a reduction in the number of diversity planning analysts as diversity planning is merged with overall strategic planning.

**The Core Council recommends mainstreaming diversity planning into the overall planning process. This mainstreaming should be incorporated into the next University strategic planning cycle.** There are currently four full-time and two part-time staff in the diversity analysis area and, while the Core Council recognizes that there will be a continuing need for some OVPEE staff capabilities in this function, the savings from a reduction in staff positions over time will result in significant savings that can be reprogrammed for need-based student financial assistance or other higher priority uses. We further recommend a close working relationship of remaining OVPEE diversity planning analysts with the staff of the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment to ensure that diversity planning and program assessment is well integrated into the next round of University strategic planning.

#### **4. WISE Program and Senior Faculty Mentor**

Together, the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) program and the Senior Faculty Mentor has incurred annual costs of about \$170,000. There has been considerable duplication between WISE and the Women in Engineering (WIE) program in the College of Engineering and the Women's Leadership Initiative in the College of Health and Human Development. Similarly, other academic units are increasingly engaged in their own initiatives to expand participation by women in academic fields where they have been traditionally underrepresented in numbers or in leadership roles. **The Core Council understands that you have already eliminated the WISE program, and we concur in that decision.**

The Senior Faculty Mentor program supports part of a faculty line to provide advice for faculty of color as well as other faculty who seek the mentor's assistance, often revolving around the tenure and promotion process, "learning the ropes" of faculty roles in various settings, perspectives on scholarship regarding minority-based research topics, and other faculty development matters. This program costs about \$27,000 annually, and is another legacy program that has not been systematically evaluated for its effects on faculty success. **The Core Council recommends that the Senior Faculty Mentor position be evaluated to assess its impact and to determine whether this program is necessary in the current environment for faculty of color, women, and other underrepresented groups.** One alternative that may be considered is a small volunteer network of selected senior faculty who, working with the vice provost for Academic Affairs, would provide mentoring to junior faculty as appropriate.

## **5. Veterans Programs and Disability Services**

The OVPEE and the Division of Student Affairs each supervise advocacy and service units in a structure that makes for a complicated alignment of responsibilities. Offices serving women and LGBT students are in Student Affairs although the relevant commissions are administered through OVPEE. Veterans Programs are within the OVPEE while an office serving adult learners is in Student Affairs. Disability Services are also within the OVPEE. OVPEE supports the Multicultural Resource Center, but Student Affairs administers programming in the Paul Robeson Center.

Veterans' issues share commonalities with those of other adult students. Issues faced by adult learners and by veterans are becoming more prominent as the number of adult students increases with the growth of the World Campus and a growing share of veterans is enrolled at the Commonwealth Campuses. The Core Council has learned that, amongst our CIC peers, the modal placement of veterans programs is in student affairs units.

Similarly, the overwhelming majority of disability services offices of our peers are situated in student affairs units and only one other (Minnesota) is in an educational equity unit. Each of our Commonwealth Campuses staffs a disability services liaison position, generally in combination with other responsibilities. This collaboration with the Office of Disability Services appears to work well.

**The Core Council recommends that the OVPEE and the Division of Student Affairs convene regular and structured dialogues to coordinate services, programs and resources aimed at maximizing student success for veterans, women, students with disabilities, students from underrepresented minorities and LGBT students.**

**The Core Council also recommends that you consider appointing one of your assistant vice provosts to a liaison position with Student Affairs, creating a dotted reporting line to the Vice President for Student Affairs.** Given the close and sometimes overlapping portfolio of student interests in the two units, such an appointment could serve a useful liaison function. Several positions at the University have this sort of dual arrangement to the mutual benefit of both units.

## **6. The Commissions**

The report that UPARCC received on potential cost savings in the OVPEE noted that the commissions will be receiving less support from OVPEE. It's not entirely clear how much support they receive now, but the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Commission for Women together are budgeted for about \$34,000; assuming the Commission for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equity (LGBTE) gets a similar amount, total expenditures in support of the commissions are probably about \$50,000.

**The Core Council recommends that you follow through with streamlining support costs for the commissions.** We also recommend that the Commission for Women and the LGBTE chairs and OVPEE staff work closely with offices in Student Affairs that also support women and LGBT students. We also note that the Commissions often have data needs that could be accommodated with closer coordination and collaboration with the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment.

## **7. Multicultural Resource Center and Other Student Support Services**

The Web site for the Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) indicates that it... *provides professional counseling and educational services for African/Black American, Latino/Hispanic American, Asian/Pacific Islander American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and all other undergraduate students* [emphasis Core Council]. *MRC's staff is dedicated to helping students succeed and graduate from Penn State....* The site goes on to report specific services provided including tutoring, career counseling, internship and study abroad counseling, assistance with financial aid, and other academically related areas. It also lists services targeted to conflict resolution and helping students with bias and prejudice.

While we applaud the effort to be inclusive, the MRC mission statement reveals that this unit duplicates many other advising and counseling services provided to Penn State students, both at the central level through the Division of Undergraduate Studies (DUS), Student Affairs generally, and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Similarly, the MRC often duplicates college advising programs and the work of the college multicultural coordinators. Career counseling, internships, and study abroad help is also available in other central and college offices.

There are many success stories from students who have found the services of the MRC incredibly valuable. But there are also examples of other students who have found the advice received in the MRC confusing or erroneous (e.g., certain curricular advice) and counter to that received from other advising entities.

The OVPEE memo on potential cost-cutting strategies outlined a plan to restructure this office while downsizing through attrition or reassignment. The MRC plans to develop priorities focusing on four categories of multicultural students: first-year students, transfer and change-of-assignment students, first generation and low income students, and those students whose cumulative grade point average is 2.3 or less. These are students most in need of the MRC services. The estimated savings through staff attrition were in the range of \$115,000 to \$145,000. This is a significant step toward streamlining the \$520,000 budget, but we believe that the streamlining could go further.



**Rather than the MRC being a “one stop shop” even for this narrower group of students, the Core Council recommends that the MRC focus on a) helping students find appropriate advising and counseling resources for mainstream concerns (finances, mental health issues, academic issues; and b) providing services targeted, as their mission statement reads, to conflict resolution and helping students with bias and prejudice. MRC staff should also be a facilitator if there are concerns appropriate for the Affirmative Action Office. What this office should *not* be trying to do is be an academic advising office, career services advising office, affirmative action office, or a counseling service for general problems, all functions that are provided by other offices around the University Park Campus. By narrowing the focus, a smaller staff should be sufficient to carry out this refined mission. Similarly, we need to improve the diversity and sensitivity of central and collegiate support and advising groups rather than simply perpetuating particular organizations devoted to specific subgroups.**

**The Core Council recommends that, given the multiple units that provide services to students, the executive vice president and provost appoint a high level task force to study and report back on best practices for Penn State to ensure that underrepresented students are advised well, make steady progress in their academic programs, and find the resources to help them meet their professional and personal needs. This task force would include senior representation from OVPEE, the Division of Student Affairs, and the Office of Undergraduate Education. The task force would also include student representation from underrepresented groups, and should seek to gain information and develop insights from a broad range of student stakeholders.**

## **8. Multicultural Coordinators**

The positions of the 24 multicultural coordinators (who have different titles in different units) were established after the 1983 desegregation order in a very different era in Penn State history. In the early 1980's, much of the academic advising was still done by faculty. As student demographics have changed over the ensuing years, so, too, has advising. Now much more is done by professional advisors, who are trained and responsible to college or central administrators. Although the multicultural coordinators are neither funded nor administered by OVPEE, the Core Council is addressing their role here because they are part of the duplication of services upon which we are focusing.

The roles of the multicultural coordinators are not well defined, and while there are certainly notable successes, the value added of these positions is not perceived as uniformly high in all units. Although the coordinators are accountable to their colleges or campuses, the absence of a clear sense of responsibilities creates a wide divergence of resource allocation represented in this position and, for the most part, an absence of any consistent metrics by which to judge the successes and value added of these positions. Much time appears to be spent on travel to recruitment events, for example, with little or no substantive evidence of impact on student recruitment or retention. Although there are

informal ties among some coordinators and between the OVPEE and the coordinators, no formal relationships exist nor are there expectations about joint activities, ways to avoid redundancies, or sharing of best practices. Moreover, the range in the number of students from underrepresented groups varies widely across colleges and campuses. Yet, at University Park, every college has such a coordinator. Few other Penn State resources are distributed in this manner.

**The Core Council recommends that colleges and campuses re-evaluate the position and role of the multicultural coordinator in serving their students' needs.** Some units may wish to retain the multicultural coordinators in their current roles, but others may not. Some units may wish to incorporate the multicultural coordinators into college or campus advising services with special multicultural responsibilities or engage them further in instructional roles. Colleges and campuses should be encouraged to diversify their advising staff and to make sure that some of that staff (or faculty if they are doing most of the advising) are trained in multicultural issues and make special efforts to reach out to students of color or students from other groups including adult students, veterans, LGBT and women students. Multicultural coordinators might also be shared between two or more colleges in some instances.

The Core Council recommends that, in collaboration with the Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education and the Vice President for Students Affairs, you work to develop further the network of college and campus advisors specializing in multicultural, disability, veterans, women's, LGBT, and adult students issues for the purpose of training and sharing best practices, and evaluating student outcomes of programs at Penn State. We are aware that the Administrative Council on Multicultural Affairs (ACMA), which you chair, is regularly attended by most, but not all, of the college or campus multicultural coordinators. It will be important that information shared and decisions taken in the ACMA meetings are communicated back to the deans and chancellors so they are more fully apprised of the issues, programs, and practices that impact this critically important aspect of student success.

## **9. Student Aid**

Students of color and first-generation college students, on average, come from families with fewer resources than majority students, so financial aid is crucial to retention and graduation. Given that funding is limited, there is obviously a trade-off between spending for programs targeted to minority and first-generation students and spending on direct student aid. Penn State needs to find the right balance between the two in an increasingly resource-constrained world.

**The Core Council recommends that savings from streamlining and paring down some programs in OVPEE be re-invested in additional need-based financial aid for students from underrepresented and first-generation student groups.** Highlighting these new student aid resources should be helpful in coping with some negative reactions to reducing some OVPEE programming. Moreover, we may need some rethinking of the

financial aid for underrepresented students that Penn State currently offers. With regard to the University's Bunton-Waller funds, for example, our understanding is that there are three levels of scholarships for these students, all of which are renewable for up to four years total based on achieving a 2.7 grade point average: 1) Bunton-Waller Fellowships: These fellowships are awarded to the 50 top student applicants meeting the program criteria. The fellowship provides the fellows with full tuition and room and board. These students have very high graduation rates, well above the average for all students; 2) Bunton-Waller Scholarships: These scholarships are directed toward excellent students who receive \$3,000 scholarships; and 3) Bunton-Waller Grants: These are grants of \$2,000 for students who meet normal admission standards.

You have expressed considerable concern about out-of-state minority students who enroll at Penn State, but can neither meet the academic requirements nor cope with the high costs of their education. You have suggested that Bunton-Waller Scholarships be doubled for out-of-state students (from \$3,000 to \$6,000), and that Bunton-Waller grants be reserved for in-state students. In other words, out-of-state students who appear to have the academic credentials to succeed at Penn State should receive more aid that is appropriate to their circumstances. Of course, any reallocation of this targeted financial aid should be based on data on student performance and student need. Your ideas for changes in our student aid packages strike us as a good approach that will better match resources to student success.

**The Core Council supports the efforts of the Vice President for Undergraduate Education to convene a committee to study and make recommendations on the allocation of financial aid to underrepresented students.** You or a senior member of your leadership team in OVPEE will need to be a part of this committee. A careful, data-based study seems to us to be the right way to make a decision on any reallocations. This committee should also consider the potential benefits of providing ninth semester financial aid for students who are doing well and have financial need. The rationale is that the Bunton-Waller fellowships/scholarships provide four years of financial support, but many students do not complete their degrees in eight semesters because of study abroad, internships, double majors, or many other legitimate reasons.

Please report back to the Core Council the actions that have been taken or are planned in response to this memo by February 15, 2012.

Cc: Core Council