

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009
College of Agricultural Sciences

The plan proposes to build on the momentum gained in the 1998-2003 plan. The introduction notes that the 2004-2009 plan will be characterized by cultural and behavioral change. However, throughout the plan, there is limited discussion of the metrics that will be used to achieve these transformational goals.

RESPONSE: *When we finalize our plan, we will strengthen the correlation between the implementation strategies and the metrics so that our faculty and staff will be able to see our progress over time. Additionally, the College will be instituting an annual internal reporting mechanism so that all units will have responsibility and accountability to measure progress within their unit.*

It is also regrettable that there are no links to the metrics provided with the implementation strategies noted throughout the plan.

RESPONSE: *We will note in the body of the plan, the measures used for certain, but not all, implementation strategies. We currently have 22 measures and propose to add two (2) more for the Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations dimension.*

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The College combined Challenges 1 and 2 and selected seven targeted areas for improvement. Four metrics are provided, but are not linked to implementation strategies.

RESPONSE: *We will make the links more clear as we annotate the plan; e.g. our strategies to implement systematic climate improvement initiatives and assessment are being measured by measures 1.1, 1.3, 1.4.*

- ❖ In general, the implementation strategies appear mostly to build on existing programs and activities.

RESPONSE: *These are ongoing, successful strategies and we wish to hold the gains made in the previous framework. We will be open to new strategies and recommendations from our faculty and staff vis a vi our climate surveys.*

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The College combined Challenges 2 and 3 and selected seven targeted areas for improvement. Seven data-based and qualitative metrics are provided, but are not linked to implementation strategies.

RESPONSE: *Links will be made as stated above.*

- ❖ Several of the implementation strategies build on existing partnerships, programs and activities. The College proposes to partner with the Graduate School to initiate a speaker series.

RESPONSE: Through the efforts of Jim Locker, EEO Coordinator in our College's HR office, Cooperative Extension is having discussions with Terrell Jones' office about providing some funding for targeted hiring of minority extension educators. Daney Jackson and Jim Locker are scheduling discussions with Terrell. Also Jim Locker has been collaborating with Steve Hayes, Senior Employment/Recruitment Specialist from central HR in acquiring funding from the PEP program (Professional Entry Program) for entry level extension educators. We are hopeful that these discussions will be fruitful.

The College has pledged \$5,000 of financial support towards the 2005 MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences) annual conference. We will also be participating in the March 2005 MANRRS Conference as well as the 20th Annual Career Fair held this year in Pittsburgh, PA. Current membership in MANRRS exceeds 1,200 and consists of undergraduate and graduate students from over 50 chapters and professionals. We feel good about these ongoing strategies and will explore new opportunities as well.

- ❖ In the category of faculty-staff employees, the College offers strategies that will build on existing programs, such as ACTS and other "family friendly" HR policies. Building community is a theme in this section.

RESPONSE: We feel good about these; as noted, we will also consider these as retention strategies.

Education and Scholarship

Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum that Fosters Intercultural and International Competencies

- ❖ The College selected six targeted areas for improvement for this Challenge and offers five data-based metrics to assess progress.
- ❖ The College's successful Multicultural Infusion Project is the centerpiece for several implementation strategies. A formal evaluation of the success of this project, including outcomes, might be an important assessment for the College to consider.
RESPONSE: We have videotaped follow-up interviews with all Multicultural Infusion Workshop participants in year 2 and the responses are very positive and rich; we will summarize the response and make an assessment. A breakdown by race and gender of the participating faculty is amended to our report. Our Office of Undergraduate Education has completed two semesters now of our web based exit survey of our recent graduates; we will look to develop additional diversity curriculum related survey questions and improve the demographic questions.
- ❖ New on-line courseware will be a promising initiative for underserved populations that the College is attempting to reach.
RESPONSE: We feel good about this.
- ❖ The College's international programs play a central role in enhancing diversity and curricular integration. Are there other measures, e.g., focus groups with participating students/faculty; surveys of host institutions, etc. which might be used to evaluate the success of education abroad programs, other than the numbers of participating students?
RESPONSE: Yes we have conducted a video feedback of students experiencing an international opportunity and plan to further survey our students.

- ❖ Also, consider partnerships with the University Office of International Programs, if the College does not currently have them.
RESPONSE: We do have multiple partnerships; in fact the International Programs office has taken many of our programs and made them University wide.
- ❖ The potential for Cooperative Extension's involvement in emerging diversity-learning experiences is exciting and offers great promise.
RESPONSE: agree.
- ❖ The review team notes that there are no metrics in regards to the curriculum target areas for improvement discussed. The metrics that are listed do not connect with the targeted areas of improvement.
RESPONSE: We would like some clarification on this; we feel there is a good connection between our student participation in study abroad programs and service learning programs, such as the Cobbs creek (in Phila.) service learning project, for AG&Ext. Ed. Students. We have measures for service learning, public scholarship and international program participation noted in our 04-09 plan. We think these programs and several of the other courses mentioned in our report will provide students with the skills to function effectively in multicultural workplaces and environments.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The College combined Challenges 6 and 7 and selected eight targeted areas for improvement. For these Challenges four data-based metrics are offered to assess progress. It appears that none of the suggested targeted areas for improvement for Challenge 7 were included.
RESPONSE: We more or less treated these two challenges as one but will reconsider identifying more targeted areas for improvement such as assessing the efficacy of our existing configuration of offices, reporting relationships etc. to maximize our talent pool working in the diversity area and better coordinate.
We need clarification on how we can prioritize diversity initiatives in capital campaigns and development work.
We feel we have excellent and ongoing linkages with underrepresented communities through cooperative extension and have articulated those in the report.
Our CAS mission statement and strategic plan reflects the University strategic emphasis on diversity and we have a strategic goal (Goal E.), Enhancing Human Resources of the College, which is clearly stated and being carried out.
- ❖ The selected measures seem superficial. While head-counts are valuable and reflect an important dimension of progress, other equally important metrics might be considered, e.g., survey on perceptions related to leadership participation; focus groups on the leadership climate for diversity for women and people of color, etc.
RESPONSE: These are good suggestions and we will consider them.
- ❖ The review team applauds the College's efforts to attain external funding for diversity initiatives. However, this external funding should not be the sole source of resources to cultivate diversity management opportunities.
RESPONSE: We are not relying on external sources to finance diversity. Our financial outlay was spelled out in the mid framework assessment (over \$1,000,000) per year.