

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

The College's diversity strategic plan does not respond to all of the Challenges in the *Framework* and its organization made review difficult. Most of what is planned appears to be a continuation of current activities, and new strategies are difficult to identify. **RESPONSE:** *The College's diversity strategic plan does indeed respond to all of the challenges in the Framework. A careful reading of the College's strategic plan will show that it is divided into four overarching objectives, each with multiple strategies and outcomes. All seven of the PSU challenges are embedded within the four objectives because the College concluded that insofar as several of the challenges relate to, build upon and intersect with one another, organizing its strategic plan under four interconnected objectives made for a more thematic and coherent approach. Because the review team apparently preferred the plan to be built upon the seven individual challenges, the College has converted its four currently intertwined objectives into a seven-challenge format.*

The College also agrees that much of the new plan is a continuation of current activities and strategies – and purposely so. That is because we concluded that most of the current strategies have brought significant progress and we intend to continue building from that stable and solid plan, while clearly being constantly on the alert to develop additional innovative approaches.

The College may consider following the structure of the *Framework* to make it easier to recognize the College's goals and accomplishments and understand its challenges with regard to diversity goals. **RESPONSE:** *The College's revised seven-goal (rather than four interrelated goals) diversity strategic plan can be found at the end of this report.* More details on implementation strategies, responsible parties, timeframes, assessment measures and accountability are necessary.

While the College experienced success in its diversity-related initiatives during the 1998-2003 *Framework* period, particularly those related to recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, the Review Team strongly recommends that the College reflect on the feedback report and develop goals, strategies, and measurable outcomes to address recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce and diversifying University leadership and management. Additional consideration should also be given to developing new strategies for recruiting and retaining underrepresented graduate students. **RESPONSE:** *The College certainly will continue to strive to develop new strategies for recruiting and retaining underrepresented graduate students. It is important to note, however, that the College has employed several strategies to recruit and retain a diverse graduate-student body, as outlined on pages 21-23. In 2003-04, 37 percent of the College's American graduate students were from underrepresented groups; our minority graduate enrollment has increased 114 percent since 1997; and our cohort of students earning graduate degrees in 2003 was our most diverse ever: 44 percent were students of color.*

Much of the responsibility for leadership, oversight, and accountability of the College's diversity efforts rests naturally with the assistant dean for multicultural affairs and his staff. The College notes also that its diversity efforts are broad-based, with the Office of Multicultural Affairs functioning in geographical proximity to and in tandem with several faculty and staff members in the College's Office of Student Affairs, its four professional academic advisers, its director of internships and his staff, and the dean and associate deans.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ This Challenge was not specifically addressed.
- ❖ The planned continuation of regular diversity scholar, ambassador, and general student meetings with the assistant dean for multicultural affairs to discuss diversity-related objectives and initiatives is positive.
- ❖ Continued sponsorship of a variety of cultural heritage recognition events and endowed lectures is planned as well as communication of the University and College's "diversity, cultural and sexual orientation objectives and initiatives."

- ❖ Continuation of the diversity committee is planned. Specific information about the anticipated activities and impact of the committee should be included.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ This Challenge was not specifically addressed.
- ❖ The College plans to continue to connect students socially and professionally through chapters and clubs.
- ❖ The College makes available a variety of student organizations that emphasize the importance and value of inclusivity and Continuation of cultural heritage event sponsorship is planned.
- ❖ The assistant dean for multicultural affairs plans to continue conducting informal climate assessments. More information on assessment mechanisms and how the results will be used to identify and develop action items would be helpful. **RESPONSE:** *As noted in the report, the College conducted a climate survey in 2000 – and it paid careful attention to the diversity results in the comprehensive Faculty/Staff Survey conducted by the University in 2004. The College was gratified by the positive percentages on virtually all items. The College carefully considers whether action-item responses are needed based on the data.*

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Strategies to recruit and retain students of color include: personal visits, partnerships with high schools, establishing and maintaining peer support groups, offering high school workshops for students of color, scholarship utilization and fund growth, and networking with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- ❖ The College is encouraged to expand on efforts that have been successful in recruiting and retaining African American students to address additional populations such as Hispanic/Latino and American Indian students. **RESPONSE:** *In fall 2004, the College recruited a top Hispanic scholar as one of its Bunton-Waller Fellows. Five American Indian undergraduates also accepted our offers of admission for fall 2004. We will continue to network with Penn State Regional Recruitment Centers that are located in New York, Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Pittsburgh high schools. We also plan to continue to network in New Jersey, Washington D.C., and Maryland. We will identify key high school administrators who can assist us in recruiting outstanding Hispanic and American Indian students. We will continue to use Professor John Sanchez as a consultant to assist us in recruiting American Indian students. We also plan to increase our efforts to recruit more Hispanic and American Indian students to our summer multicultural journalism workshop.*

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Strategies for recruitment of faculty and staff members of color and women include making personal contacts, networking, and advertising to appropriate media and academic organizations. The assistant dean for multicultural affairs participates in all faculty searches.
- ❖ The College is encouraged to approach local demographic factors not as a barrier to recruiting and retaining a diverse staff but as an opportunity for creatively addressing this Challenge. **RESPONSE:** *The College considers this good advice and will continue to work toward further diversifying its full-time staff, which already is 8 percent.*
- ❖ The Review Team notes the absence of a focus on retention strategies for underrepresented faculty and staff. **RESPONSE:** *As is noted above, pages 32-36 of the College's Final Assessment report include several strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce – and several successes are noted. Retention has not been a major problem for the College.*

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The College plans to develop a curriculum that fosters intercultural and international competencies. The College plans to continue to offer stand-alone diversity-focused courses.
- ❖ It is positive that the College plans to continue supporting faculty research that examines the experiences of underrepresented groups and the impact of international media coverage with the goal of infusing a multicultural and international foundation throughout the curriculum.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ This Challenge was not specifically addressed.
- ❖ The Review Team notes the lack of attention to this area, beyond the assistant dean for multicultural affairs position. The College is encouraged to develop mechanisms to identify faculty and staff members from underrepresented groups who have leadership potential or aspirations and assist them in developing their leadership skills and identifying leadership opportunities. ***RESPONSE: The College does emphasize in its plan the key role played by its assistant dean for multicultural affairs. No plan can be all-inclusive, and many faculty and staff members of the College who are from underrepresented groups play leadership roles. Two faculty members from underrepresented groups are co-directors of a key research institute and research lab respectively; one played the major role in this year's very successful Pow Wow; one served on a committee this spring that evaluated PSU diversity plans and progress; several hold leadership positions or are very active in national academic associations. It is important to note, too, that some of our faculty members joined our ranks in senior positions with already strong backgrounds as leaders in both the academy and the media professions. Thus, their leadership qualities already have been honed.***

The dean's senior leadership staff consists of women, two of whom are from underrepresented groups, in the following positions: director of development, director of human resources, director of operations, facilities manager and financial officer.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The Review Team notes the lack of attention to coordinating organizational change to support diversity goals.
- ❖ The College plans to continue the work suggested by the diversity committee, which includes evaluation of diversity goals and assessment of climate.