

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009
College of Earth and Mineral Sciences

The College is commended for continuing administrative support and allocating significant fiscal resources provided for diversity and involvement in the implementation of the plan at all levels of the organization. Although this plan suggests additional initiatives that further the College's diversity goals, it does not substantially differ from the Review of Progress submitted in February 2004, also reviewed by this team. Therefore, the review team suggests the addition of measures of success to help gauge the College's progress in the seven challenges, with an emphasis on action and outcomes. The lack of adequate metrics to assess the outcomes of the strategies suggested in the Record of Progress feedback and reiterated in the proposed plan make it difficult for the team to provide an effective review.

RESPONSE: The College of Earth and Mineral Sciences is committed to fostering diversity at Penn State and appreciates the efforts and comments of the review team. We will work diligently to improve our efforts based on the comments provided.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The College's inclusive definition of diversity is clear and consistent with Penn State's goals. The College's proactive approach of ensuring buy-in from all levels, including alumni involvement, is commendable.
- ❖ The addition of the director of diversity enhancement programs to the Executive Council will further the College's diversity strategies and provides access to College leadership. However, the report suggests that the Director is solely responsible for developing the metrics to gauge the success of diversity initiatives. The team recommends that other leaders in the College share this responsibility.

RESPONSE: This was not our intent, and the strategic plan has been altered to reflect this as a shared responsibility.

- ❖ Adding a diversity component to the Web site redesign will actively support the stated goals and officially reference the College's understanding of diversity.
- ❖ The plan does not address the need for developing mechanisms that assess the degree to which unit members understand the College's diversity definition and initiatives, or measures of success to gauge progress in this challenge.

RESPONSE: The College's Diversity Council has placed this topic on its agenda as part of our efforts to assess climate within the College and such assessments are now listed as part of the responsibility of the Diversity Council.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Unit leadership demonstrates visible support for diversity and active involvement in diversity implementation.
- ❖ The team notes with concern the lack of new initiatives provided when compared with the Review of Progress.

RESPONSE: The College wishes to note that the College's diversity goals and actions were substantially revised in 2003 associated with the hiring of a new Dean. The Dean directed a College-wide task force to provide recommendations to revise College diversity efforts. This task force reported to the faculty in the fall of 2002, and the College plan was revised and presented for endorsement by the faculty in February 2003. Since the goals and action plan were developed in 2003, they became a part of the Review of Progress submitted in February 2004. However, these goals and the associated actions were essentially newly formed and in progress, and therefore the apparent lack of new initiatives does not reflect the level of activity or change within the College. A comparison of the 1998 plan and review of progress and our 2004-2009 plan, as would have been typical for most colleges, would have revealed dramatic differences in the EMS commitment. We expect that the next progress report will also reveal substantial progress since we will then have had the opportunity to act on all elements of the College's strategic plan.

- ❖ It is positive that there is an assigned diversity ally in every unit within the department. It is unclear how the College communicates to faculty, staff, and students that this resource is available.
RESPONSE: The College is working to communicate this role more effectively and we appreciate having the review team call attention to this topic specifically. The assigned diversity allies (members of the Diversity Council) and the administrative leaders have agreed that these individuals should be reporting at unit faculty meetings. They are also represented on the new College Council. The College Council is composed to the student council chair, chair of the staff advisory committee, chair of the non-tenure track faculty advisory committee, faculty advisory committee, administrative representative, diversity coordinator, and is chaired by the Dean. We believe that much better communication will result because of the formation of this advisory body. In addition, the Diversity Council and its activities will be a part of the new College web page.
- ❖ The reinstatement of an elected ombudsman is a positive development in the process of identifying, monitoring, and addressing climate issues.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ The College is proposing numerous new initiatives to improve and retain a diverse student body. Departments' involvement and accountability in the graduate teaching assistantships initiative will maximize the program's success.
- ❖ The development of a more sophisticated tracking system will provide measurable outcomes to assess the effectiveness of recruitment programs. It is recommended that the College consider parallel programs and metrics for retention programs.
RESPONSE: The College will work to implement this suggestion.
- ❖ GEMS' adoption of the plan and commitment to further the College's diversity goals is commendable. Alumni involvement as role models or mentors may significantly impact the retention of underrepresented students.
- ❖ The review team applauds the College's continued efforts to establish and maintain partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's).
- ❖ The plan does not address strategies to recruit and retain non-traditional students.
RESPONSE: One of the best opportunities to recruit non-traditional students in our fields is through our extensive e-education efforts. Our progress report, for the first time, includes metrics for "Adult Professional Enrollment, Certificate and Degree Programs." However, data on these students only includes gender. We have started to gather statistics on non-traditional students indicating the College interest in these students, but we have also added this element to our strategic plan.
- ❖ Programs involving faculty as role models are not well-defined.
RESPONSE: There are several elements to our efforts. One program on role models is being developed by our alumni group but has not yet been completed. It will be then incorporated into College plans. An additional effort of the College is to promote the successes of our underrepresented faculty – e.g. through Dean Files and announcements on our web pages. We are also working to develop opportunities to have graduate students who are inclined to be "future faculty" to have the opportunities to socialize and share experiences with successful faculty from underrepresented populations. The College also now rewards faculty who mentor students and other faculty. This award specifically encourages mentoring designed to promote the success of underrepresented faculty and staff. We have not developed these elements into a formal program, but there is no reason why this cannot be viewed as a coordinated set of efforts. These efforts are now represented more fully in our strategic plan.

- ❖ As noted in the 2001 and 2003 feedback, the review team suggests that the College develop quantifiable measures of climate.
RESPONSE: The College began a process of a college-wide climate assessment in 2003, but was advised that either the assessment would be biased or that participants would not feel free to participate honestly because of the small numbers of underrepresented faculty, staff and students. As a result, the College abandoned these plans. The Diversity Council has placed this subject back on our agenda given this review comment. However, we believe that we may not be able to employ traditional assessment mechanisms. We are currently contemplating a team of external visitors to acquire an independent assessment rather than utilizing a survey method. We also note that the concern about metrics and quantifiable measures of climate occurs in several different categories of the review team report. Rather than include this element in each challenge, we have included it in Challenge 1, as a role of our Diversity Council, administrators, and Director of Diversity Enhancement Programs.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Expanding the job openings advertising efforts is a positive step toward broadening the diverse applicant pool.
- ❖ The College might consider expanding the role of the Diversity Council's retention role to address staff as well as faculty.
RESPONSE: The role of the Diversity Council in staff as well as faculty retention is listed in Challenge 1, "Diversity Committee Roles, Functions and Composition," and was not repeated under Challenge 4. Staff members are members of the Diversity Council and staff issues are certainly on the agenda of the Council.
- ❖ The availability of leadership development opportunities for underrepresented staff is not addressed.
RESPONSE: The College prides itself in providing and encouraging development opportunities for all staff members. However, we would like to address leadership development opportunities for underrepresented staff specifically. Unfortunately, our first issue is the diversity of our staff. We need better mechanisms to develop a more diverse staff. It is the opinion of the College, that current University-wide rules for hiring staff make it difficult for the College to develop effective strategies for recruiting underrepresented staff. We believe that this issue should be addressed by a University-wide task force. Without better opportunities for recruitment, retention and development are moot when of 69 staff members only one is from an underrepresented group.
- ❖ AESDA appears to be a promising initiative, but without providing information on outcome assessments, the program's success in recruiting faculty from underrepresented groups will be difficult to assess.
RESPONSE: The College most certainly will provide information on outcomes for AESEDA, but it should be recognized that this program has just started. The Director began in March 2003 with our first budget. Already, AESEDA has helped to attract two African-American faculty members and one African-American research associate. We are currently in the process of additional recruiting.
- ❖ As noted in the 2003 feedback report, there is a lack of metrics to identify the success of recruitment and retention programs for faculty and staff from underrepresented groups, specifically regarding race/ethnicity and gender.
RESPONSE: The College's progress report includes tables by year for both gender and race/ethnicity for undergraduates, graduates, tenured and tenure track faculty by professorial level, standing academic appointments, fixed-term appointments, and for staff. Our lack of success in the early years of reporting, and growing success over the last two years, provide a strong metric of recent successes. We can add tables that sum individual job interviews. However, beyond these very specific measures, the College is uncertain as to what metrics are available. The College would appreciate guidance on other metrics for success of recruitment and retention so that these can be a standard element of reporting rather than each college developing individual sets of metrics. However, we have also provided this as a specific task of the Diversity Council and the College leadership.

- ❖ Targeting administrators for participation in diversity insight and training programs is laudable and a best practice. The review team encourages the College to provide these same opportunities for faculty and staff.

RESPONSE: *A good idea and we will work to do so.*

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The College's Biogeochemical Research initiative for Education (BRIE) integrates research with opportunities for students to work and collaborate in an international, multicultural setting.
- ❖ The College also has a unique opportunity to infuse diversity into the curriculum outside of the current GI course (e.g. Urban Geography, Human Geography, Economic Geography, etc.). The team suggests that the proposed new courses listed in the report (p.24) be recommended as new US Cultures/International Cultures requirements.

RESPONSE: *The College is eager to take up this recommendation and has already formed a task force designed to develop a comprehensive College effort for the new US Cultures/International Cultures requirements.*

- ❖ As noted in the 2003 feedback, Professor Yapa's Philadelphia Field Project is an exciting research project whose impact requires assessment to be considered a best practice. The current development of the AESEDA project also has the potential to be a best practice if metrics to measure its success are provided.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The review team commends the College on diversifying two administrative positions, which form part of a small executive team that has been historically dominated by males. A results-oriented plan for the recruitment and retention of diverse administrators should be included in the plan.
- ❖ A new representative body for the College's faculty—which includes wide representation of non-tenured faculty, staff, and students—may provide potential leadership opportunities for underrepresented groups who have administrative aspirations.
- ❖ Efforts to develop women's issues forums and a leadership center demonstrate the College's support of women in leadership roles within the disciplines of the College.
- ❖ Measures of success are necessary to gauge the College's progress in this challenge.

RESPONSE: *The College does intend to track our progress in this challenge. Each specific case of a leadership hire within the College is now detailed in the report.*

- ❖ Leaders are actively participating in the College's diversity efforts. Their involvement at all levels of the College is a best practice.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The College has allocated significant monetary resources in support of its diversity plan. The team strongly encourages the College to develop metrics to more effectively measure the success of these programs.

RESPONSE: *The College will work to consider metrics in addition to success in recruiting and retaining faculty, staff and students. It would be helpful to have a University-wide listing of successful metrics for coordinating organizational change.*

- ❖ By realigning its development priorities to match the diversity plan, the College demonstrates commitment to advancing its diversity goals—including retention strategies—such as identifying sources for need-base students and the endowment of student-centered activities.