

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

The College of Engineering has three strategic initiatives and five specific goals to foster its commitment to create a climate that is attractive, inclusive, and diverse. The vision and overarching actions provide a solid base for College of Engineering progress. Presence of a definition of diversity, and clear articulation of core values and criteria early in the document would strengthen the discussion of action items. **RESPONSE:** *It is true that the College of Engineering has traditionally articulated its diversity statements in terms of “operational” goals, such as effective recruitment and retention, educating engineering professionals for a diverse and pluralistic society, and assessing and addressing climate issues in the College. We agree with the benefits of presenting a definition of diversity and core values, and to follow up this recommendation, the College is working on developing a new statement. A draft version will be prepared by the College’s Diversity Task Force for review and comment from the Academic Council, Faculty Council, advisory boards, students and staff during the early part of the fall semester.* Also, there are many specific action items noted, but it is unclear who is responsible for implementation and who will be held accountable. **RESPONSE:** *The most recent Academic Council Retreat, held just a few days prior to the submission deadline for this plan, provides one example of how the College addresses accountability. At that retreat, involving the executive and other administration of the College, a key task was to identify the best practices, roles and responsibilities, and measures associated with several diversity-related processes that reside most directly at the department level; namely, graduate student and faculty recruiting and climate. Although responsibility for addressing many aspects of diversity may be distributed at various levels in the College, each academic and administrative department is obligated to report on accomplishments, challenges and plans through the strategic planning process and tasked to account for these factors in personnel reviews and evaluations. When developing future reports and plans in relation to the “Framework,” we will give attention to identifying specific parties responsible for implementing and assessing the reported initiatives.*

The College recognizes the national crisis in creating the next generation of engineering talent and the relation of its diversity goals to its role as a national leader in engineering. The College may consider building upon its success with regard to women in engineering, and, to a lesser extent minority groups, and pay greater attention to issues of disability and the LGBT community. **RESPONSE:** *The recent reorganization of diversity and equity programming in the College under a common leadership is intended to address this recommendation. By recognizing the shared mission and goals of the Multicultural and Women Engineering programs under a Director for Engineering Diversity, as well as their distinct identities, staffing and programming, we envision an ability to be even more effective and inclusive in our reach.*

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity; and

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Diversity Committees continue to operate in virtually every department. The College might consider forming committees in the remaining departments. Also, the College may reconsider whether it is advisable for untenured faculty to serve as committee chairs. **RESPONSE:** *The College is sensitive to the underlying concern for this recommendation and will continue to strive for strong and appropriate leadership in diversity at the department level.*
- ❖ The December 2003 Climate Surveys of students, faculty, staff, technical service staff, and administrators is positive as is the College plan to use the results to create approaches to identify and address climate issues and to identify successful practices.
- ❖ Continued support of the Multicultural Engineering Programs and the Women in Engineering Program is positive.
- ❖ The Council of Senior Faculty Women, which has access to the dean, is positive.
- ❖ The College is planning an updated web site with diversity focus.
- ❖ Continuing to include diversity as a performance factor in annual reviews is positive.

- ❖ Offering diversity workshops and developing resources such as the “Diversity Search Toolkit” (based on the University of Washington model) are positive actions. The College may consider including workshops targeted to international faculty and staff that focus on cultural differences and gender equality. **RESPONSE:** *Attention is given to these issues in the mandatory seminar course on teaching methods, ENGR 588, for all teaching assistants and graders. These modules have been developed by our Engineering Instructional Services group and, along with the creative “In Their Own Words” workshop developed jointly by EIS and WEP with support from ECSEL at Penn State, provide a strong array of programming on equity and learning environment issues. These have been aggressively “marketed” to departments throughout the College and been featured at a number of national engineering education forums.*
- ❖ Affirmative Action training and additional diversity search training for search committees is a plus.
- ❖ Attention to ADA issues, including exterior enhancements such as an entrance ramp, is positive.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body and

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Points appear positive and manageable, tried and true. The College is building on actions that have been previously identified as best practices.
- ❖ As a retention tool for current undergraduates and a bridge into graduate programs, Research Experiences for Undergraduates and Summer Research Opportunity Program offer proven tools for success as well as partnerships in the enterprise.
- ❖ Financial support at the undergraduate and graduate level speaks to the valuing of the students who receive support. The COE has demonstrated commitment and is taking steps to ensure that diversity continues to be integral to a quality engineering program.
- ❖ The College notes its success in producing women engineering graduates, despite decreased scholarship opportunities. The College is encouraged to strive for similar success in regard to minority graduates, and to develop, when appropriate, programs to support the success of LGBT students and students with disabilities. **RESPONSE:** *The College will employ the information gathered from its recent climate survey to identify appropriate programming as recommended above. The survey included significant attention to assessing the perceptions of the environment, opportunities and support in the College for LGBT students, faculty and staff and those with disabilities.*
- ❖ The College presents positive and far-reaching steps for identification, recruitment, reception and retention of historically underrepresented faculty in engineering. However, it would be helpful if responsible parties were identified and timeframes provided. **RESPONSE:** *The most recent Academic Leadership Retreat for the executive and student services leadership in the College had “graduate and faculty recruiting and climate” as a key focus. Discussion and best practices were identified, including the tasks, responsible parties and timelines that constitute effective recruitment strategies.*
- ❖ The College of Engineering may wish to consider acknowledging and appropriately valuing the contributions to diversity in the context of service within tenure and promotion process as well as in staff reviews. **RESPONSE:** *The College acknowledges the importance of valuing contributions to diversity in all personnel reviews and decisions. Supervisors are strongly encouraged to note these contributions in SRDPs and faculty contributions are to be documented as appropriate in P&T dossiers and annual evaluations.*
- ❖ Additional attention to recruitment and retention of diverse staff would complement the College’s efforts towards faculty and students. **RESPONSE:** *Our plan outlines several approaches, including expansion of the locus of recruiting to include urban areas and reimbursement of relocation expenses as ways to attract diverse staff recruits.*

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The expanded diversity component within the curriculum is positive, as is continuation of gender-balancing and clustering in course sections.
- ❖ Workshops for new faculty that emphasize classroom climate, issues of cultural diversity, and diversity in managing and organizing teams are positive.
- ❖ Given the College's diversity goals for curriculum, the College might wish to consider requiring diversity training for the instructors of the First Year Seminars, as a way to impact all the COE's first year students while providing the faculty members with new skills for all their classroom interactions. ***RESPONSE: This recommendation will be referred to the faculty coordinator of our Engineering First-Year Seminar Program.***
- ❖ The World Class Engineer program, and faculty and TA workshops addressing diversity are positive actions continued from the previous plan.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management and

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ Development opportunities for leadership and management are good, however, it is unclear whether staff and technical services staff may participate in these opportunities. ***RESPONSE: Staff and technical services personnel are encouraged to participate in the university and college-sponsored development opportunities to enhance their leadership and management skills and credentials. As noted in the plan, the Engineering Administrative Fellows Program has provided an opportunity for 26 staff members to serve fellowships in higher-level offices and 80% of these participants have been promoted to higher-graded positions. Staff members are also encouraged to participate in University programs such as Penn State Leader and Mastering Supervision and are provided with the time and active support of supervisors to do so.***
- ❖ The plan to request a written statement of diversity and professional leadership philosophy from candidates for administrative and leadership positions is excellent. This action sets forth a clear indication of the values that govern the College.
- ❖ Formation of the Academic Council is positive.
- ❖ The collaboration among MEP, WEP, and College Relations bridges communication with constituents and the inclusion of diversity in development activities, which demonstrates positive commitment to diversity.
- ❖ Specific goals for the future show insight and commitment.
- ❖ There is a significant commitment of both financial and human resources to assist the College in making progress toward their diversity goals.
- ❖ The stated collaboration among the College's student service areas is excellent.