

# **Community, Commitment, and Civility: Penn State's School of Information Sciences and Technology's Diversity Strategic Plan, 2004-09**

## **Inspiring Solutions ...**

- ... through **education** that builds problem solvers by combining theory and real-world practice;
- ... through **research** that integrates people, information, and technology;
- ... through **partnerships** that facilitate the collaboration of industry, government, and education;
- ... through an IST **community** that respects and leverages diverse experience, knowledge, and values;
- ... that improve the lives of people.

**Community is a concept integral to the very identity of the School of Information Sciences and technology (IST). By valuing and leveraging the diverse experience, knowledge, and values of its people, IST has become a difference maker, an organization that inspires solutions.**

**From the school's inception, its leadership has clearly enunciated the importance of diversity and of inclusiveness. These values are essential to our programs of education and research, and to the partnerships that we build. They guide the way in our recruitment and retention efforts. It is clear to our faculty, our staff, and our student body that tolerance and a welcoming environment are cornerstones of who we are.**

**We are realistic enough to recognize that we are not now a perfect community and that reaching that goal, like any human endeavor, will be difficult. But we believe our aspirations should exceed our expectations. And we set forth this plan with the aim of continuously becoming a better community.**

## ***Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations***

### **Challenge One: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity**

**Several years ago, the Diversity Committee developed a definition of diversity that included respect for demographic and intellectual differences and commitment to the University's nondiscrimination policy. However, we have learned that not all members of our community are aware of the definition or even of the existence of the Diversity Committee. Awareness of both is critical as they are examples of leadership's commitment to diversity and community.**

- Enhance the visibility of the definition of diversity. Our goal is to have the definition as well as the Diversity Strategic Plan a single click away from a searcher's eye on the Web site. The current intranet diversity site that has been piloted will go "live" and out to the public. We also would encourage faculty to embed the definition of diversity in

coursework; it could also be incorporated into brochures and made into framed posters placed throughout the IST building. The long version of Penn State's nondiscrimination statement will be used whenever feasible in publications.

Responsible Units: Office of Marketing and Communications  
Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Increase visibility of the diversity committee. The committee will develop a multi-year strategic plan that includes better communication with the IST community about their activities. We will contribute to educational opportunities across the University by seeking, advocating, and bringing to Penn State distinguished female speakers and/or speakers of color.

Responsible Unit: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Include attention to the definition in all student orientation activities. Sharing and repeating the definition in welcoming activities will make it clear from the start what the values of the school are as well as clearly state expectations for behavior and no tolerance for hateful behaviors.

Responsible Unit: Office of Undergraduate Education  
Timeframe: Twice yearly

- Include attention to the definition in all faculty and staff orientation activities. Sharing and repeating the definition in welcoming activities will make it clear from the start what the values of the school are as well as clearly state the role of diversity in interacting with students and colleagues and the value of diversity in the classroom.

Responsible Units: Office of Human Resources  
Office of the Senior Associate Dean  
Professor in Charge  
Timeframe: Twice yearly

- Develop "Diversity in IST" conferences. These conferences will highlight the work of our faculty and publicize to the University our philosophy of diversity.

Responsible Unit: Office of Business and Career Solutions  
Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Alternate years

## Challenge Two: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

**Developing and maintaining an inclusive climate in the School that encourages diversity of expression and appreciation of differences has from the start been a high priority. An unwelcome climate discourages the creation of learning communities. It also discourages effective teamwork, which is at the core of our teaching.**

- Conduct climate survey of faculty and staff. In 2001, a diversity climate survey was created specifically for the school by the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity. University Park participants were asked how they perceived the climate personally as well to assess it for other groups; as there is no possibility of influencing climate at the campuses, they were not included. Results were analyzed by the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity and recommendations were suggested and acted upon by the school. A follow-up survey was planned for October, 2003, but with the move and the attending stresses there was concern that the climate might be rated on dimensions other than diversity. The survey will be administrated by the Office of Educational Equity in February, 2004 following the same procedures. The survey asks questions about the perceived comfort of the climate for various groups as well as the self-report of experiences by the person completing the questionnaire. Since the time of the writing of this document, plans for surveying our community have shifted in a different direction. We are anxious to receive the results from IST participants to the Penn State faculty staff survey; we intend to use those results to design intervention strategies, if needed, to enhance our community's climate. After a period of time has passed, a survey will be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the changes.

Responsible Unit: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Every other year

- Develop strategies to assess climate for students. It is critical to select the most appropriate methods to assess the climate for undergraduate and graduate students. A variety of forms of data collection are available. Focus groups may be a good way to learn about the student experience, both inside and outside of the classroom. If focus groups were run, a staff member not a member of the school would be the most appropriate person to ask the questions. Interviews with student leaders might provide good insights as well. Written or web-based surveys that allow respondents to describe their experiences have worked well in other academic units. Anonymous forms of providing feedback must also be made available, ranging from a suggestion box to a protected Web site. Forums that include students, faculty, staff, and administrators would be a way to help foster the community atmosphere that the School is creating.

Responsible Unit: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Every other year

- Identify additional ways for climate issues to be identified and addressed. Developing strong relationships between administrators, faculty, staff and students is maybe the best way for climate issues to be identified. If there are communities of trust, difficult issues

are more easily “brought into the light.” It is also the responsibility of school leadership to be sensitive to language and behavior of faculty, staff, and students that may be offensive to others. As in the initiative described above for students, anonymous ways of reporting must also exist.

Responsible Unit: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Provide opportunities for awareness and skill training. There are five ways to identify opportunities for diversity education: through the Office of Human Resources, through the Office of the Assistant Dean for Equity and Diversity, through the Office of Affirmative Action, and through the IST Diversity Committee; individual faculty, staff, and students also can suggest opportunities. It must be clear to supervisors that they need to support their staff’s interest in attending programs or conferences and should financially support participation when possible. Educational opportunities should be regularly posted to the IST home page’s diversity site and to listservs. As commitment to community is part of the way staff and faculty performance is assessed, it is critical that they be supported in visible ways in reaching their goals.

Responsible Units: Office of Human Resources  
Office of Equity and Diversity  
IST Diversity Committee  
Timeframe: Ongoing

### ***Representation (Access and Success)***

#### **Challenge Three: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body**

**Having a diverse student body is generally the first way in which people think about diversity. But it goes beyond demographics. Having a population of students who come to problems with different perspectives increases the likelihood that good solutions will be found. It also hones students’ critical thinking skills and, in the best scenario, enhances their abilities to have civil conversations around difficult issues.**

- Continue and strengthen partnerships with Admissions, the Philadelphia Recruitment Center, the Pittsburgh Recruiting Center, and appropriate Academic Advancement programs such as Talent Search and CAMP. One of the concerns of the School is that our story—who we are and what we do—is not clearly and consistently understood across the University. Staff members from IST have proactively contacted these offices to share the story of IST with advisors and recruiters. A recruiter has been hired to recruit for the school on a full-time basis. And, the dean has indicated that he would be available to go into high schools if appropriate to act as a recruiter. It has been made clear to our partners that attracting women and members of underrepresented groups is a priority for the school. Strategies

to diversify our student body will be developed with our partners, including the Minority Admissions Office. Our goal is to recruit recruiters as well as students!

Responsible Units: Office of Undergraduate Programs  
Office of Marketing and Communications  
Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Develop D-NET. D-NET, the student organization whose members are not necessarily members of underrepresented groups but students who are interested in diversity issues, met for the first time last year. It is anticipated that D-NET would function in much the same ways as WIST, with monthly member meetings and educational programs. They also would also serve as recruiters (as does WIST) by participating in the spring phon-a-thon, probably specifically targeting potential students from underrepresented groups as WIST targets potential female students.

Responsible Units: Faculty advisor Lynette Kvasny  
Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Spring semester, 2004 and ongoing

- Focus on faculty outreach and research as sources of potential students and as a retention strategy. How can we build on the community based field research, especially research around diversity issues, of some of our faculty and leverage it to attract new students? One way is for faculty to go into the classrooms of high schools and middle schools and share the results of their work. Another might be to engage IST students as quickly as possible in faculty research. Female faculty and faculty from underrepresented groups would be particularly effective in the middle schools. It is at that time in the lives of young girls that they become disengaged from science and math.

Responsible Units: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Office of Undergraduate Programs  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Continue to develop and fund programs that reach middle and high school students. As stated above, it is important to reach out to female students to show them that math and science are not only for “nerds.” There are a number of programs statewide that have effectively done so: WISE Summer Camp, Pennsylvania Governor’s School, Expanding Your Horizons, and Upward Bound Math and Science are just a few. A new initiative is the creation of an IST Girls Camp, which will target rising high school freshman, sophomores, and juniors and bring them to the University Park Campus for a week-long residential program. Program activities will focus on program participants developing web-based business for actual clients. Corporate partners will be asked to serve as both

teachers and clients. Future programs could also focus on the digital divide and invite young people from underrepresented groups to campus.

Responsible Units: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Office of Undergraduate Programs  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Benchmark student profiles with other similar schools to develop recruitment goals. It is not enough to state that we want to increase the numbers of students who are female or are members of underrepresented groups. Numeric goals are needed, and they need to be “stretch” goals. Once institutions with whom we want to compare ourselves or with whom we share similar institutional characteristics have been identified, those institutions will be contacted so that we can learn not only about their numbers but also about specific recruiting and retention strategies that have worked best for them. Recommendations for other offices to be involved in benchmarking will be solicited from the diversity committee.

Responsible Units: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Office of Undergraduate Programs  
Timeframe: Annually

- Continue and enhance mentoring programs. This year, Lockheed-Martin provided funding to support a multicultural, multigender program for IST students. Training was offered to mentors as was a program on cross cultural communication delivered by the Human Resource Development Center. A proposal has been submitted to Lockheed-Martin to continue the program whose effectiveness will be assessed at the end of the academic year. Under consideration is a mentoring program for Ph. D. students. Mentoring programs are an effective way to retain students. Faculty and staff also are proactive in identifying students who may need some additional attention.

Responsible Units: Office of Undergraduate Programs  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Create a database of IST-related scholarships available for women and members of underrepresented groups. Given the rises in tuition over the past several years, especially recently, potential students might not even consider applying, or might not be able to continue their education after a certain period of time.

Responsible Units: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Office of Undergraduate Programs  
Timeframe: Annually

- Encourage student organizations to continue their partnerships with Lion Scouts and the Pennsylvania Governor’s School. Lion Scouts is a program in the Office of Admissions that trains current Penn State students to return to their high schools as recruiters for the

School. WIST students are also heavily involved with the Pennsylvania Governor's School in the summer, working as program aides. These two direct points of contact are effective recruiting strategies because of the personal nature of the relationship. It is anticipated that members of D-NET will become involved as well.

Responsible Unit: Office of Undergraduate Programs  
Timeframe: Ongoing

## **Challenge Four: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Work Force**

**Having a diverse workforce is necessary to provide students with different ways of thinking and doing and helping them to work and learn in a global society. We are proud of our successes in diversifying our faculty, less so in diversifying our staff.**

- Engage current faculty and staff in identifying and recruiting candidates. The assistant dean for Equity and Diversity serves on the faculty recruitment committee while the director of Human Resources is part of every staff search committee. While this approach provides administrative support to ensure that the appropriate processes are followed, it is the faculty and staff, through their networks and professional relationships, who are critical in identifying candidates that are strong in their areas of endeavors and who are known as individuals. We also work closely with the Office of Human Resources utilizing their resources such as the Minority Vita Bank.

Responsible Units: Search Committee Chairs  
Office of Human Resources  
Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: During searches

- Strengthen the partnership with the Senior Faculty Mentor. The Senior Faculty Mentor is a role that is a nationally-renowned innovation. Dr. James Stewart works with untenured minority faculty to maximize the probability of successful navigation of the tenure and promotion process. Services include individual consultations and workshops on topics like the promotion and tenure process, publishing, proposal writing, and vitae preparation. Once recommendations have been received from the senior faculty mentor, they will be carefully considered. An informal faculty mentoring program is already in place.

Responsible Units: Professor in Charge  
Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Continue to educate all search committees about appropriate hiring processes and affirmative action procedures. All faculty and staff search committees will be educated on the rules surrounding hiring and interviewing. It is essential to follow these rules in

the same ways for all candidates should a question be raised later concerning decisions related to hiring.

Responsible Units: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Office of Human Resources  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Provide opportunities and funding for professional development. Both central and unit funding needs to be provided for regular diversity-related on the job and off-site training to build champions for change. The majority of these education and training needs will be identified during either the Staff Review and Development Plan or the annual faculty review sessions performed between April and May. The assistant dean for Equity and Diversity and the director of Human Resources will identify and publicize programs as they become available.

Responsible Units: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Office of Human Resources  
Timeframe: Ongoing

### **Challenge Five: Developing a Curriculum that Fosters Intercultural and International Competencies**

**Information sciences and technology is one of the forces that created a global economy, yet most of us remain benignly ignorant of other cultures and their rich histories. Our students across the state need to understand how to effectively work in cultures different than their own as well as perhaps living in societies that are radically different from where they came from.**

- Increase international education and internship opportunities. IST's relationship with the Office of International Education will continue to be strengthened as study abroad opportunities that support the IST curriculum are located. In addition, the internship coordinator will collaborate with businesses and industries that have international subsidiaries to seek out additional internship experiences for IST students.

Responsible Units: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Office of Business and Career Solutions  
Timeline: Ongoing

- Assess degree of inclusiveness in problems used in problem-based learning. To assess the degree of inclusiveness in problems used in problem-based learning, faculty will identify and document the diversity components of the problems used in the curriculum.

Responsible Unit: Office of Undergraduate Learning Initiatives  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Develop classroom problems specific to diversity issues. A group of faculty will research classroom problems specific to diversity issues; this information will be compiled in a report and shared with IST faculty.

Responsible Unit: Senior Associate Dean  
 Timeframe: Annually

- Incorporate more diversity content into course outlines in the IST curriculum. First, IST faculty will identify the diversity content in the current IST curriculum. Then, input will be solicited from IST faculty, the assistant dean for Equity and Diversity, and business and industry representatives on ways to inject additional diversity content into the IST courses, course outlines, curriculum, etc.

Responsible Unit: Senior Associate Dean  
 Timeframe: Annually

- Identify internship opportunities in female and minority owned organizations. Current internship liaisons with women and minority owned businesses will be identified. This list will also include women and minority owned businesses that have employed IST graduates. In addition, a new liaison will be created with Purchasing (Duane Bullock - Diversity Suppliers) to identify women and minority businesses contracted/affiliated with Penn State.

Responsible Units: Office of Equity and Diversity  
 Office of Business and Career Solutions  
 Timeline: Ongoing

- Engage minority- and female-owned companies in class projects. One of the defining characteristics of the IST curriculum is its focus on using information technology as a tool to solve problems in the workplace. To help achieve this goal, in every IST course student teams are required to find solutions to real-life problems from a variety of work environments. The Office of Business and Career Solutions will work with faculty members to seek examples from minority- and female-owned businesses to assign to their student teams.

Responsible Unit: Office of Business and Career Solutions  
 Timeline: Ongoing

- Ensure intercultural and international issues are taken into account when identifying and selecting guest speakers. The Diversity Committee will work with IST faculty members (1) to identify intercultural and international issues germane to their particular courses and (2) to identify guest speakers who can address those issues.

Responsible Unit: Diversity Committee  
 Timeline: Ongoing

- Ensure minority and female students receive leadership opportunities on project teams in the classroom. One of the defining characteristics of the IST curriculum is its emphasis on problem-based learning and team projects. IST faculty members will work to ensure that team leaders are selected and that work assignments within the team are distributed in a fair and balanced manner.

Responsible Units: Office of Undergraduate Programs  
 Professor in Charge  
 Timeframe: Ongoing

- Identify and promote courses that foster intercultural and international competencies. IST faculty members will be encouraged to offer special topics courses and to propose permanent courses whose subject matter deals with topics of intercultural and/or international significance. For example, the school currently offers two special topics courses (“Globalization Trends and World Issues” and “Information Technology in an International Context”) at University Park. IST faculty members also will be encouraged to develop study abroad and foreign travel programs of interest to our students. We currently offer a course entitled “Multicultural Aspects in Information Systems” as part of the Brazilian Culture, Portuguese Language, and Information Systems program in Salvador, Brazil. The assistant dean for Equity and Diversity is currently working with the Office of Study Abroad and the Council on International Programs to identify opportunities and barriers for students in “technical” programs.

Responsible Units: Professor in Charge  
 Office of Equity and Diversity  
 Undergraduate Advisory Committee  
 Timeline: Ongoing

- Bridge research and teaching. Several faculty members are actively engaged in research into topics of an intercultural and/or international nature such as qualitative research; the human context of information processing; global informatics; and national information policy; relationships among IT use, training and organizational culture; slow emergence of IT labor unions; socio-political aspects of computerization; the roles of information technology in societal and organizational change; the uses of information technologies in historically underserved and underrepresented communities; and ways in which culture structures technology access and consumption. The professor-in-charge, the Undergraduate Advisory Committee, the assistant dean for Equity and Diversity, and the director of Undergraduate Learning Initiatives will work with IST faculty members will be encouraged to bring the results of this research into the classroom in the form of reading assignments, discussion items, projects, etc.

Responsible Units: Professor in Charge  
 Undergraduate Advisory Committee  
 Office of Undergraduate Learning Initiatives  
 Office of Equity and Diversity  
 Timeline: Ongoing

- Identify research opportunities (undergraduate and graduate) that focus on intercultural and international related issues. IST faculty members will identify topics and will be encouraged to offer independent study opportunities to undergraduate and graduate IST students dealing with intercultural and international related issues.

Responsible Units: Professor in Charge  
Office of Equity and Diversity  
Office of Undergraduate Programs  
Timeline: Ongoing

### *Institutional Viability and Vitality*

#### **Challenge Six: Diversifying University Leadership and Management**

**This is one of the biggest challenges facing the University and the School of Information Sciences and Technology. As all units have a natural tendency to hire people who “look” like them, conscious and deliberate efforts must be made to nurture future leaders, leaders who are not only women or from underrepresented groups, but leaders who “walk the talk.”**

- Include women and members of underrepresented groups in leadership training. There are a number of leadership programs available at Penn State. The Penn State Leader, Mastering Supervision, the Leadership Academy, The Power of One, the Office Professional Certificate program—these are just a few of the programs available for faculty and staff at all levels. Supervisors should encourage staff to build such programs into their annual professional development plan. While it is often more difficult for faculty to attend professional development programs outside of their content areas, the dean certainly supports such activities.

Responsible Unit: Leadership of each unit  
Timeline: Ongoing

- Develop a School of Information Sciences and Technology Fellows program. At the university level, the Administrative Fellows program was developed to increase the competitiveness of women and members of underrepresented groups for leadership positions. Protégés work with senior administrators for an academic year to learn how the University operates and the ways in which decisions are made. They also work together to develop goals for the protégé and strategies to meet those goals. Such a program in the School need not be as extensive to meet the same program objectives.

Responsible Units: Office of Human Resources  
Office of Equity and Diversity  
Office of the Dean  
Timeline: In place in 2005

- Encourage and reward participation in the three commissions for equity. The existence of Penn State’s three commissions for equity—Commission for Women; Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity; and Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equity are not well known across the School. These commissions serve as advisors to the President on issues related to women and members of underrepresented groups. Membership can be formal or volunteer. This activity can be included in staff professional development plans and for faculty, is evidence of service to the University.

Responsible Unit: Leadership of each unit  
 Timeline: Ongoing

- Assess commitment to diversity on the part of candidates for faculty and staff positions. If we are serious about maintaining a community that is committed to diversity, civility, and collegiality, then we must include those types of questions during the interviewing process for positions at all levels of the school. We are currently conducting a search for two faculty positions and developed a list of characteristics against which all applicants are reviewed. We look for evidence of character in their materials and will continue during interviews and reference checks.

Responsible Unit: Each search committee  
 Timeline: Ongoing

## **Challenge Seven: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support our Diversity Goals**

**In 2003, the School’s leadership structure was reorganized to include a new position: assistant dean for Equity and Diversity. The creation of a position at this level clearly demonstrates the school’s moral and financial commitment to diversity. The assistant dean reports directly to the dean and serves on the leadership groups of the dean’s Executive Council and Council of Deans. A full-time student recruiter was also hired.**

- Prioritize diversity efforts in development activities. In the higher education economy where increasingly we are asked to do more with less, it is often diversity initiatives and programs that are lost first. To demonstrate our commitment to diversity, and to be sure that our corporate partners understand our values, development efforts focused on diversity are important. If we want to be able to financially support our students and offer them a high quality education that is based on the latest technology, such efforts are essential.

Responsible Unit: Office of Development and Alumni Relations  
 Timeline: Ongoing

- Continue and expand diversity initiatives with corporate partners. At the present time we partner with Lockheed-Martin and IBM on diversity initiatives. These partnerships take the form of financial contributions such as scholarships and support for student organizations and a cross gender, cross cultural mentoring program. An upcoming

program sponsored by WIST will be offered by Lockheed-Martin and focuses on leadership skills; last semester, a staff member from IBM offered a program, also sponsored by WIST that described women's roles in the company and how they have changed.

Responsible Units: Office of Development and Alumni Relations  
Office of Business and Career Solutions  
Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Encourage each unit in the school to develop internal diversity initiatives. While diversity initiatives that the school as a whole undertakes are important as they build community and communicate expectations, unit level programming is essential to reflect the particular culture in each unit. There also may be opportunities for units to partner with each other in programming, or for a unit to sponsor an event for the school as a whole. As mentioned previously in this plan, this will help staff meet their diversity goals in their professional development plans.

Responsible Unit: Office of Human Resources  
Timeframe: Ongoing

- Identify linkages between the Office of Equity and Diversity and all units within the school. The assistant dean for Equity and Diversity began work on September 1, 2003, charged primarily for crafting strategies to diversify the school's students, faculty, and staff. This requires working closely with each unit to understand their processes and look for ways that diversity can be incorporated into business and other processes. Such an institutionalization of diversity into the way the school does business will ensure our vitality and viability. This also will lead to a balanced and equitable distribution of responsibilities and accountability. Input will be sought from the diversity committee.

Responsible Unit: Office of Equity and Diversity  
Timeframe: Ongoing

**In summary, we know that this is an ambitious plan and one that will require system-wide commitment and diligence. We do believe, however, that to be a world class school we need to stretch ourselves and challenge each other to be a leader in strategies to achieve meaningful diversity outcomes.**