

**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS  
UNIVERSITY PARK CAMPUS**

**A Framework to Foster Diversity  
at Penn State: 2004 – 09**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

**A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09**

	Page
Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding .....	3
Creating Welcoming Campus Climate .....	6
Recruiting and Retaining Student Body .....	8
Recruiting and Retaining Workforce .....	10
Developing Curriculum .....	11
Diversifying University Leadership and Management .....	12
Coordinating Organizational Change .....	13

## **A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State 2004-2009**

### **Division of Student Affairs**

#### **Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity**

The Division of Student Affairs strongly supports the University's efforts to recruit and retain a more diverse community of students, staff, and faculty. Likewise, the Division promotes a learning environment that helps students and staff advance their appreciation for and understanding of diversity through educational programs, residential experiences, student activities, and staff development seminars. An emphasis on the promotion of diversity is an integral part of the vision and mission of the Division of Student Affairs. The Division's concept of diversity includes all of the following:

- Ethnicity
- Race
- Gender
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Adult learners
- Disability
- Religious practices
- Geographic origin/cultural background
- Veteran status

The Division interprets diversity with efforts to ensure an inclusive, caring and open learning environment that is responsive to an increasingly pluralistic, international, interrelated global community.

Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs Art Carter organized and facilitated a diversity retreat for directors and other senior staff in Student Affairs. During the retreat, brainstorming sessions were held to explore new ideas for responding to specific challenges in the revised "Framework to Foster Diversity." (Action Strategies from the retreat are **bolded** within this document.)

**Action Strategy 1: Create structures that provide for sustained, deep, and broad engagement in activities that promote the understanding and appreciation of diversity.**

## Initiative Examples

A. Create a work group of student affairs directors to discuss new strategies for developing a more supportive environment for diversity. The purpose of this on-going workgroup will be to: a) guide the Division's collective and collaborative efforts and, b) to enhance and complement the initiatives of each individual department. Examples of programs/activities that will be sustained and/or strengthened between 2004 and 2009 are listed in this paper for further clarification during ensuing years.

Staff members will continue to seek answers to the questions: How do we publicly promote our values and beliefs? How do we more clearly articulate and measure our efforts to appreciate diversity? How do we help others understand and embrace the process of developing a more diverse community?

Several units within Student Affairs have specific educational missions that are "diversity focused." Their mission is to stimulate learning experiences for all students by focusing upon values, integrity, collaboration, leadership, service, and active engagement in learning about differences and similarities. Staff members in the Center for Women Students, the Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs, the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Ally Student Resource Center, the Center for Adult Learner Services, and the Paul Robeson Cultural Center are positioned to engage students, including those from diverse populations, in active learning.

Other Student Affairs units focus on diversity as part of their service to the larger Penn State student community. For example, Career Services disseminates disability career related information to University Park and Commonwealth Campus offices. In addition, a "Disability Information Kit" is provided to companies that participate in on-campus recruiting and career fairs.

B. Convene a new student advisory council by spring 2004 to broaden the diversity of student voices. Known as the Vice President's Cabinet of Student Leaders, the group will be formed by Vice President for Student Affairs Vicky Triponey. It will be comprised of a large base of student leaders representing registered student chartering organizations, leadership groups, multicultural organizations, and major event planning groups. The cabinet will meet monthly and serve in an advisory role for the vice president and other leaders of the University. Potentially, their advice will inform decision-making and facilitate collaborative efforts to enhance student experiences outside of the classroom. As a result, the Cabinet will support student learning and build a more civil, cohesive, caring, and inclusive community for the benefit of all Penn State students.

Groups represented on the Cabinet will be selected based on their campus-wide perspective and/or responsible organizational endeavors. Additionally, each group will be

chosen because of demonstrated effectiveness in representing a specific and significant constituency within the Penn State student body.

Members of the Cabinet will work to build more trusting and effective partnerships among student leaders and with University leaders. Additionally, it is anticipated that this process will help student leaders refine their ability to serve as effective advocates and representative spokespersons for their specific constituencies and for diverse voices within the student body.

C. Assess the impact of the Dialogues Program within the Counseling and Psychological Services unit. This initiative consists of two primary components: “Dialogues on Race” and “Facilitating Intergroup/Intercultural Contact.” The goal is to help students address prejudice, racism, and discrimination by discussing deeply rooted feelings and attitudes. Program outcomes include increased cultural competence among students around issues of culture, race relations, and broad aspects of experiential and affective learning. The current structure greatly expands this learning process by addressing a broad array of diversity topics and groups, and by studying national models for promoting dialogue on diversity. Expansion of current initiatives will require new funding support, possibly from Development sources or grants.

**Action Strategy 2: Expect the leadership and staff in the Division of Student Affairs to develop a vested interest in “valuing others” and exhibit “diversity advantaged behaviors.”**

Genuine commitment to diversity requires a vested interest by staff members in the welfare of fellow workers and students. The Division will devote resources necessary to convey the values critical to an affirming, inclusive university community.

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Increase staff-student interaction to create mentoring, advising, and consultation relationships with members of student organizations. In addition, provide increased opportunities for staff to participate in classroom activities to model and discuss the benefits diversity brings to student learning. Care will be taken to have broad ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation representation in student leadership groups, student advisory boards within Student Affairs units, nominations for both academic and service awards, and recreational and other co-curricular activities

B. Implement a value-based Code of Ethics that will set the tone in 2004 and beyond for acceptance of difference and continued commitment to developing students as active learners. The concept may apply to any unit within Student Affairs. For example, campus spiritual leaders who are affiliated with the Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs (CERA) recognize that a successful community results only through trust, mutual respect, shared struggle, and invitations to cross boundaries and explore beyond the familiar. Therefore, its members pledge:

- To nurture spiritual and ethical development among students, staff and faculty.
- To create a safe climate where all can practice their religion and/or spirituality.
- To work, through education and example, toward eliminating prejudice, hatred, and violence.
- To recognize, accept, and respect differences and promote religious harmony.
- Not to coerce or diminish, so as to take advantage of anyone's vulnerability.
- To support students' commitment to academics, self, and family.
- To promote integrity in matters of professional ethics.

## **Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate**

The Division of Student Affairs seeks to validate, through educational programming, advising, and service to students and fellow staff, our values and beliefs about developing and maintaining a diverse and welcoming campus climate.

**Action Strategy #1: Cultivate shared principles of community among students and staff.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Discuss "shared principles of community" as impetus for identifying values, behaviors, and expressions of caring critical to a welcoming campus climate. This community-focused exercise within Student Affairs has implications for all staff and students, as well as administrative, professional, technical support, and physical plant employees.

B. Support and advise a student-led effort to promote civility known as the "We Are" campaign. Planning efforts for the campaign began in September 2003; two Student Affairs staff members have met weekly with Undergraduate Student Government (USG) leaders. Throughout March 2004, a series of public awareness messages will be widely disseminated on and near the University Park campus via radio, television, and poster ads. The campaign is intended to encourage discussion about what it means to be both a "Penn Stater" and a positive member of the University community. The campaign will focus on the basic elements of civil behavior through more serious concerns such as relationship violence, sexual assault, and incidents of hate.

The vice president for student affairs has committed pilot funding for the campaign. Other funding will come from the University Park Allocation Committee (UPAC), the Alumni Association, and USG. This effort is expected to continue and grow in future years.

**Action Strategy 2: Student Affairs will continue to actively seek feedback from students to better understand what they need to feel welcomed, engaged and valued.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Refine existing data on student satisfaction and educational outcomes, and measures from classroom and co-curricular activities and programs. The scope of current assessment activities will focus upon campus climate issues, student behavior, and shared Divisional/University learning objectives.

The Student Satisfaction Survey provides feedback across multiple campuses regarding student perceptions of service availability, responsiveness, efficiencies, and compliance with student expectations.

Though they are not controlled, empirical studies with longitudinal implications, Student Pulse surveys provide excellent snapshots of student perspectives on important issues that shape the campus climate.

Staff members will continue to monitor important aspects of campus life including student conduct infractions and the ethnicity of individuals charged and sanctioned by the Office of Judicial Affairs. Data for the past three years suggest that students of color are not disproportionately represented in the student judicial process.

B. Continue expectation for staff to play significant roles on the Centre County Domestic and Sexual Violence Task Force and on the University's Coalition to Address Relationship and Sexual Violence. Considerable staff time is committed to issues of sexual assault and violence against women both on campus and in the larger community. Excellent collaboration between counselors, police, judicial officers, residence life staff, and the Centre County Women's Resource Center enable the university and community to immediately assist victims by utilizing systematic and effective protocols.

**Action Strategy #4: Develop programs designed to impact the actual and perceived needs of students and to build a more inclusive and welcoming climate.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Continue to expand Vice President Triponey's new initiatives to build a more supportive community for all students at Penn State. Focusing on her role as the "chief advocate" for students, Dr. Triponey met with campus and college student leaders at a leadership conference at Seven Springs Resort in August 2003. Student leaders at the conference, and at numerous meetings since, have been encouraged to freely communicate concerns and ideas for improving the University community. Additionally, the annual Encampment (student and administrator leadership retreat) was re-structured to help build more trusting relationships and facilitate open dialog among student leaders and with senior officers of the University. Since the fall semester of 2003, the vice president has been holding weekly 'drop-in' office hours for students. To create a more welcoming physical environment, the vice president's office suite in Old Main was remodeled. Additional efforts will be undertaken in the months and years ahead.

B. Return Greek System to prominence. By involving hundreds of individuals from Penn State's fraternity and sorority community in a communication process designated as "Appreciative Inquiry" (AI), the division is expecting to develop a healthier and more supportive relationship between the University and fraternities and sororities. Staff, fraternity and sorority students, local and national advisors, housing officers, State College residents, and Borough Officials are being engaged in a systematic effort to return to the values and behaviors that successfully and historically guided social fraternities and sororities. The commitment to student diversity in this project is a given. Greek system survival and growth hinges upon developing a broad definition of diversity.

C. Support growth of the LGBTQA Student Resource Center. An assistant director position will be added during this phase of the Framework to Foster Diversity. The physical space committed to the Center will be expanded; it is moving to a larger facility in summer of 2004.

Students who are members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities, their allies, and other students who are exploring their sexual and gender identities, are finding support from the LGBTQA Student Resource Center to be an important factor in their personal development and socialization at the University Park campus. Student usage of the Resource Center and its outreach into the larger university community have been impressive and a clear indication that the needs of this population had been underserved.

Professional staff from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) will continue to support a formal Peer Mentor Program in the LGBTQA Student Resource Center. This program is the result of a year's planning and consultation.

D. Provide programs and activities that target specific student populations. Asian, African, and Latino cultural programs, for example, funded and hosted in the Paul Robeson Cultural Center, will create a foundation for a welcoming and supportive campus environment.

### **Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body**

The demographics of the nation and, to a lesser extent, Pennsylvania clearly indicate that higher education must be effective in recruiting and retaining a broad population of diverse students. Division staff members will work collaboratively with academic colleagues and staff in student support offices to ensure that students actively seek leadership experiences, student organization involvement, and contacts with individuals from diverse communities. The goal is to help students become culturally competent while they pursue their academic programs.

**Action Strategy #1: Ensure that the broadest definition of diversity is communicated as part of the Student Affairs mission.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Actively participate in a joint Student Affairs/Academic Affairs Steering Committee focusing on the first year experience. This steering committee is co-chaired by Don Leslie, Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Philip Burlingame, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs.

This new oversight committee for first year programs began meeting during the fall semester 2003 and will be reviewing Penn State's Freshman Testing, Counseling and Advising Program (FTCAP), convocation, orientation, and the first-year seminar classes. One of the primary concerns of the committee is to understand more about the first year experiences of students, including how diversity education can be improved during the first year. A challenge for the committee is to find ways to make Penn State a more welcoming and supportive community for first year students, especially first year students of color.

B. Reposition staff members in more effective advising/mentoring/coaching roles with key student organizations and their leaders to have a more positive influence and impact on their educational experience. The recent reassignment of staff resources from Student Activities to the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life is one example of repositioning that will create more effective coaching/advising for students. Efforts toward this goal will continue during the 2004-2009 Framework timeframe.

**Action Strategy #3: Provide student development opportunities for students new to University Park.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Provide skills development opportunities related to diversity for all students. Formal leadership programs bring very diverse groups of student leaders together from all Penn State campuses. There is considerable potential for growing this Penn State tradition as a leadership empowerment experience that networks students across campuses and: a) builds upon shared perspectives of institutional pride and real world leadership skills, and b) develops a broad appreciation of ethnic, religious, gender, physical challenges, and sexual orientation differences that comprise student leaders across the state.

**Action Strategy #4: Engage students with out-of-classroom learning and involvement opportunities.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Continue to plan and develop opportunities for students to become involved in service learning projects through increased collaboration with faculty programs. In addition, we will continue administrative leadership within Student Affairs for a project titled "Urban Service Adventure." The program brings together teams of entering first year students

for a week of work in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg; it is a project of Shavers Creek Conservatory. Students entering University Park campus live together and learn about urban issues from a “hands-on” perspective by networking, bonding, and developing communication skills prior to spending time on campus.

B. Reactivate Omicron Delta Kappa National Honorary (ODK) and its long tradition of recognizing academic excellence and service to the University and larger community.

Faculty modeling for student professional development is the heart of ODK’s national mission. Student Affairs recognizes the importance of national service honoraries by providing direct support to Alpha Lambda Delta, the National Collegiate Scholars Association, and a host of other service and professional development societies.

C. Increase Adult Learner enrollments and involvement. Examples include the Women’s Education Career and Life Planning Seminar series, the Adult Learner Information Sessions, publications, and web sites. An Adult Data Partnership involving Outreach and Continuing Education, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs will continue to provide new insight into the demographics, enrollment patterns, financial resources, and other factors that influence recruitment and retention of adult learners.

D. Appoint a task force to draft a Student Focused Framework to Foster Diversity. This Task Force will include: a) representatives from student groups who have sanctioning authority over PSU student organizations; b) student leaders with a passion for building a more caring, civil, and inclusive university community; and, c) Student Affairs and Educational Equity professionals with expertise in student development and cultural diversity. After an engaging dialog with students across the University, the group is expected to draft a document that will guide students in creating a more diverse and inclusive community. The document will be presented to various student organizations, governing councils, and others for their consideration, reaction, and endorsement.

#### **Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce**

Student Affairs employees reflect a diverse continuum of experiences, skills, and perspectives. They include young professionals entering the Division and highly experienced administrators and staff who are well respected by their colleagues across the country. Recruiting and retaining this diverse workforce over the next five years is a high priority for the Division.

**Action Strategy #1: Continue mandatory diversity training for all Student Affairs staff and administrators.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Consider increasing the minimum number of staff development hours spent on diversity training, as well as the breadth of skill enhancement programs for working with fellow employees and students of color. Focus staff development programs offered staff and administrators upon informational updates, training, and skills development on issues such as the growth of Islamic Religion in America, LGBT employee perspectives and work challenges, and national trends on diversity within the profession.

**Action Strategy #2: Utilize professional organizations and personal recruiting to assist in attracting and retaining diverse candidates.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Consider becoming host to a National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Minority Fellows graduate student. Fellows program helps minority graduate students experience student services from a variety of access points, establishes a mentoring relationship within an institution of choice, and creates a potential hire at some point after completion of a graduate program.

## **Challenge 5: Develop a Curriculum that Fosters Intercultural and International Competences**

The Student Affairs curriculum is initiated through hundreds of programs and activities and through the course objectives of staff members who teach courses that embrace both the general education and diversity goals of the University.

**Action Strategy #1: Focus assessment of the effectiveness of educational programs designed to foster diversity.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Assess the efficacy of co-curricular programs structured around intended learning outcomes considered critical to effective student engagement with faculty, campus administrators, and the larger community. Over the next five years, Student Affairs staff will place emphasis upon learning objectives that are foundational to intercultural/international understanding.

**Action Strategy #2: Identify new ways for staff to enhance existing graduate and undergraduate courses taught in formal classroom settings by increasing student cultural competence.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Create learning modules for first-year students that address developmental issues and student living concerns using a range of presentation options. Examples are technology, interactive learning, and in-class presentations by staff and student-peers. Develop learning modules for first-year seminars that address living in a diverse community. Issues/opportunities regarding race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, faith tradition, abledness, age and social class will be addressed through collaboration with faculty and the office of Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education.

## **Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management**

Limited resources, but unlimited human potential, will enable the Division's management to creatively work and capture the energy and diversity of thought and practice that exist by redefining leadership.

**Action Strategy #1: Initiate inclusive decision-making that transcends traditional models and honors multiple voices.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Explore more inclusive models of leadership that bring individuals from varied campuses and job titles to the table for decision-making and planning. Leadership models found in higher education are historically hierarchical, with only a few individuals in identifiable leadership positions making decisions. The goal will be to take advantage of the wide-ranging experiences and expertise that individuals bring to their work in Student Affairs.

B. Implement a mentoring project for diverse staff to help them acquire and further develop important competencies. Examples proposed are internships within the Division, shadowing of staff members, sponsorship in University staff training programs, and access to national leaders within their respective Student Affairs areas.

**Action Strategy #2: Cultivate future leadership through student involvement and utilization of staff.**

### **Initiative Examples**

A. Stimulate greater minority student awareness of current career opportunities in Student Affairs. One of the ways this can be done is by helping undergraduate and graduate students enter mentoring/internships that expose them to Student Affairs professional challenges.

## **Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals**

As mentioned earlier, organizational changes within the Division of Student Affairs are being initiated by the new vice president and her leadership team. The changes will focus upon making the organizational structure more responsive to and accountable for addressing critical student and institutional priorities.

**Action Strategy #1: Improve organizational effectiveness through restructuring and partnering.**

### **Initiative Examples**

- A. Realign the fraternity and sorority system with the Office of Unions and Student Activities by Spring 2004. This change will eventually help the administration address the need for structuring the processes registered organizations currently have for: a) recognizing student groups; b) establishing training programs for organizational officers; c) establishing community standards; and d) defining new Greek leadership models.
- B. Create formal partnerships with faculty to strengthen student engagement in learning communities. Examples include: a) collaboration within the Public Scholarship Program with the Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and b) The Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs' collaboration with Liberal Arts faculty and music faculty with the College of Arts & Architecture.
- C. Utilize emerging technology to impact upon the organizational structure of the Division. This initiative will create opportunities for Student Affairs employees to employ new electronic communication devices, teaching materials, assessment and evaluation techniques, and educational tools for outreach and extension, which will have significant impact upon the organizational structure of the Division and its ability to serve an increasingly diverse student population.
- D. Explore possible partnerships with the Templeton Foundation and The Southern Poverty Law Center. Through efforts such as these it may be possible to create student internships, faculty research, consultative projects, and other opportunities that will address the importance of integrity, justice, spirituality, and human relations in higher education.

